**Your memories, my memories?**

***Gentrification, identity and heritage in the Tophane neighbourhood in Istanbul***

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1. CONCLUSIONS
2. ***Introduction***

Istanbul, the city which has been the capital of different world empires, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, for sixteen centuries, experienced many different pasts, which all left their traces in tangible and intangible shapes. Istanbul is going through many globalizing developments since the last decades and this globalizing process even accelerated these days.

Everyone who has not been in Istanbul for a while, notices with surprise that the city seems to have unrecognizably changed upon their return: the city almost explodes of new construction projects, shopping malls arise from the ground at rapid pace as mushrooms in a wet autumn forest, buildings being built or renovated in the historic center, high rise office and residential buildings (social mass housing and gated communities) at the borders of town. Large billboards with announcements of ‘shopping fest’ and renewal projects, opening of many commercial chain companies.

Therefore it is very interesting to see, how, in the current globalizing urban developments, politics and social changes, all the different layers of pasts of Istanbul are considered and dealt with nowadays by various individuals, groups and authorities. Who decides which tangible remains will be focused on, preserved and which pasts are ignored? The recollection and preservation of the past is not a neutral activity. The past can be used to create cohesion within a group, exclude others, as well as for the legitimization of the current state of affairs. Therefore heritage should not be considered as something self-defining and does not exist disconnected from our own times. Therefore the current globalizing developments taking place in Istanbul influence the ways in which the past is being regarded and dealt with and vice versa the past is ‘used’ in various ways in these globalizing developments.

One of the results or characteristics of globalization in both Istanbul and other large cities in the world is the phenomenon of gentrification. In order to study these different pasts, the way in which they are considered and dealt with nowadays in Istanbul, a the neighbourhood of Tophane, located in Istanbul, was chosen to serve as a case-study.

***Tophane***

From a social-historical perspective, Tophane is one of the most dynamic areas in Istanbul; located in the Beyoğlu-district, the area was renowned for its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition: Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Roma and Muslims. During the first decades of the Turkish Republic most of the non-Muslim minorities left or were forced to leave the city. The uninhabited houses in Tophane were re-inhabited by migrants, many of them from eastern Anatolia. Additionally, Tophane became a transition point for people migrating from Turkey to Europe. Currently Tophane is undergoing a rapid process of gentrification with many physical and social changes. Art galleries, hostels and boutiques appeared in the neighbourhood, which is the result and at the same time the cause of ‘newcomers’ or ‘gentrifiers’, higher-class people with ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘globalizing’ lifestyles pushing out lower income groups; ‘original’ inhabitantswith often more ‘traditional’ lifestyles, mainly due to increasing rents. The historically turbulent environment provides the area with a variety of pasts to be studied. Both in the past and the present, Tophane has been subject to rapid urban and social change, which resulted in differing and conflicting perceptions on the area.

This paper aims to present the results of a pilot research, which is part of the larger Tophane Heritage project set up by the author and the NIT in 2012. In this project the neighbourhood of Tophane in Istanbul is used as a case-study to study the role of the past and heritage in Istanbul’s present-day globalizing urban, social and political developments. The pilot research discussed in this paper will explore the relations between gentrification, identity and heritage. Below a short description of the NIT’s more general Tophane Heritage Project is given.

***The Tophane Heritage Project***

The NIT-Netherlands Institute in Turkey- located in Istanbul, is a research centre, supporting, facilitating and carrying out research related to cultures and societies of Anatolia and Turkey.

The NIT’s interdisciplinary Tophane Heritage Project, focusing on the heritage of the neighbourhood of Tophane, functions as a mainstay for interdisciplinary research, encouraging researchers, MA and PhD students from a variety of academic backgrounds and from Turkish and Dutch universities to shed new light on Tophane’s heritage in this ‘Tophane research network’ created and maintained by the NIT. These different academic backgrounds include disciplines such as history, art history, social geography, anthropology, sociology, urban studies, heritage studies, architecture studies, political studies, and art. Within this research project the NIT posits itself as a facilitating partner for innovative research, connecting and assisting students during their research and at the same time I, in the service of the NIT, also carry out research on Tophane, researching archives, secondary literature and carrying out interviews. By combining all these different studies, the NIT hopes to create different biographies of the neighbourhood, in terms of built environment and people, through the ages until now.

***Research questions***

Neighbourhoods are not just built environments and given realities, but worlds of ideas, memories and identities, which are constantly produced, reproduced and changed by their social actors. As stated by Mills (2010) it is often through the daily urban life in a neighbourhood that people negotiate memories and identities. Therefore the process of the creation of and changes in identities often occur through transformations in the urban landscape, with its different layers of tangible and intangible pasts. Urban landscapes can produce particular narratives of the past in their visual, material forms and may even legitimize certain contemporary social differences/inequalities (Mills 2010). Consequently the past may, in my opinion, be actively used for the creation of new identities in neighbourhoods as well as for exclusion of people and legitimization of positions of ethnic, religious or social groups in the neighbourhood, during globalizing developments, such as a gentrification process. In this sense the urban landscape does not merely represent or commemorate memory but is the means through which memory and identity are performed by the inhabitants and authorities. Therefore, identity of the neighbourhood, as regarded in different ways by different groups of inhabitants, might change due to gentrification processes and, conversely, the past can be actively used in constructing new identities in the neighbourhood during the gentrification process.

The historically and contemporary turbulent environment provides the neighbourhood of Tophane with a variety of pasts to be studied in relation to these gentrifying developments in contemporary times. This paper intends to find preliminary answers to the following main question related to heritage and current urban and social developments in Tophane, including the on-going gentrification process:

*To what extent is the tangible and intangible past of Tophane important for the identity of inhabitants of this neighbourhood, their sense of belonging and their inclusion or exclusion in social practices in the neighbourhood, social cohesion, conflicts and spatial segregation, and which role does this heritage play in the globalizing developments going on, such as gentrification?*

In order to answer this main question the following sub-questionsshould be answered first:

● How do the contemporary different groups living in Tophane interact with one another? What is the nature of the social relations between different groups in the neighbourhood and which connections, tensions, problems exist between them? Who are included in and who are excluded from the ‘Tophane community’?

● How do different ethnic, socio-economic groups of inhabitants consider and deal with (in sometimes contesting ways) the neighbourhood’s different pasts within the globalizing developments taking place in Istanbul? Do ‘gentrifiers’ and ‘original’ inhabitants experience the neighbourhood and its pasts in different ways?

● How do real or imagined pasts contribute to the creation, recreation and maintenance of identity, ‘sense of belonging’, social cohesion and segregation of different groups in Tophane nowadays and are the different ways in which heritage is considered influenced by the gentrification process currently going on, and vice versa?

***Methodology***

In the Tophane Heritage Project in general, different methodologies are used for each individual research within the project. Overall, however, the project intends to use oral history in combination with primary sources from archives, secondary literature, images and photographs.

Oral history implies the collection and study of historical information about individuals, families, important events, or everyday life using unwritten stories and memories of people, mainly through interviews (individuals, groups, families). In an oral history approach, memories and perceptions of different pasts are documented, as experienced by interviewed people themselves or passed on to them by earlier generations. Through oral history research not only views on the very recent but also some light on a more distant past can be shed. In this way oral history contributes to a more complete understanding of different and sometimes contesting views on tangible and intangible pasts.

This paper will present the preliminary results of interviews with inhabitants with different relations to Tophane’s past and the gentrification process going on in the neighbourhood, such as inhabitants with different ethnic and religious backgrounds (Kurdish, Muslim, Roma, Jewish), young inhabitants, several generations of migrants in the neighbourhood. Additionally secondary literature is used to support the data from the interviews. Additional research will be done in July 2013, when the NIT will carry out a pilot fieldwork in Tophane, in cooperation with students from Dutch and Turkish universities.

1. ***Heritage in current urban developments***

Before turning to neighbourhoods as microcosms and Tophane as a specific case-study, I would first like to pay some attention to the consideration and preservation of heritage within Istanbul’s current urban developments.

Heritage is not something self-defining. The past does not tell a story itself, different stories about different pasts are being told nowadays in our contemporary time, through physical remains and intangible memories, through the preservation of certain pasts, the erasure of others. Therefore the past cannot be considered separately from the present and, even stronger, both tangible and intangible heritage does not even seem to exist without the present. Remains and stories from the past do not simply reveal what happened, but show to a large extent a past of our own creation, moulded by selectively pointing out certain pasts as important, ignoring others (Lowenthal 1985). The recollection of the past is not neutral; the past can be used as a ‘political tool’ in the cohesion between different present-day groups, inclusion and exclusion of people, and the legitimization of certain present-day positions of individual people or groups in a community or human society.

***Current urban developments in Istanbul***

Istanbul in the past decades has gone through many globalizing developments, which are still rapidly changing the city these days. These developments started to take place after the coup d’état that took place in Turkey on the 12th of September 1980. One of the coup's most visible effects was on the economy. On the day of the coup, the economy was close to collapsing: there was large-scale unemployment and a lack of foreign trade. The economic changes which were carried out after the coup in the 1980’s aimed to integrate Turkey’s national economy in the ‘global economy’.

With this integration of the Turkish national economy into the global economy in the 1980’s, neo-liberal globalizing developments started to take place. Istanbul slowly became ‘a business platform for the transnational corporate elite as well as a playing field for the cosmopolitan consumers of global lifestyles’ (Keyder 2009).

The emergence of new service sectors, including tourism, culture, and real estate development is part of this economic change, in direct relation with the emergence of a new urban elite (higher middle class) looking for ‘nice’ and ‘safe’ places to live. This causes a movement of higher income groups to low income neighbourhoods in the historical centre of Istanbul-gentrification (Keyder 2009). Due to the fact that a large part of these new higher middle class looking for places to live, moved into low-income neighbourhoods in the centre, changing the social composition and the physical environments also. In this way a gentrification process generally continues until the ‘original’ inhabitants are displaced Glass 1964). Many of these gentrifying and gentrified neighbourhoods in the centre of Istanbul share similar architectural styles, Rum architecture, often stone houses, and Muslim Ottoman architecture, often wooden buildings, as well as European neoclassical buildings. Most of these neighbourhoods were populated by Greeks, Armenians and Jews until the 1950’s and 1960’s after which migrants from Anatolia started to move in (Özata 2012). In the last decades these people made place for a higher middle class.

During the 1980’s and the 1990’s these gentrification processes in Istanbul neighbourhoods were relatively slow. During the more rapid globalizing process taking place for a decade; starting with the AKP being elected in the national government, neighbourhoods in Istanbul saw a rapid gentrification.

Since the 1980’s the control and management functions of global capital shifted to the great cities of the world. Speculative investment surged, making urban real estate development a leading sector. This political economic shift does not explain Istanbul’s performance on its own: the world economy may provide an opportunity but projects of the globalizing elite cannot always be implemented (Keyder 2009).

From the 80’s onwards municipalities of Istanbul received financial support from the national authorities for the reconstruction of urban spaces. In the cause of positioning Istanbul as a global city, authorities accomplished dramatic and drastic changes in the urban form and fabric of the city. In the 1980’s and 1990’s these projects were still mostly isolated and scattered projects of the city’s globalizing elite (Aksoy 2010).

Since the 1990’s these globalizing developments accelerated with the pro-business conservative, religious AKP (Justice and Development party) winning the local elections in Istanbul in 1994. These authorities governing Istanbul started to look for new ways to market the city and give the city a global image, through which it could equal other globalizing cities in the world such as Paris, London and New York. When the AKP was also elected for the central government in 2002, strategies to put Istanbul on the global stage were reinforced (Keyder 2009).

***Urban renewal projects and heritage***

During the 2000’s authorities have become aware of how to use Istanbul’s heritage in the service of tourism and economy in order to create an image of Istanbul as a global city and put Istanbul on the ‘global stage’. Due to the direct link existing between the central government of Turkey and the local government, municipalities from then on received financial support from the government for the reconstruction of urban spaces (Aksoy 2010).A new law (Law 5366) was introduced in 2005, which gave new directions to how Istanbul’s heritage is dealt with. It described the protection of heritage through use and renewal and which practically speaking confers upon municipalities the full authorization with regard to urban renovation/renewal. Municipalities, sometimes together with private real-estate developers, are turning historic areas over to new uses (museums, retail development, tourism, recreation, entertainment) (Aksoy 2010).

In the name of this law, in many parts of the city designated as renewal areas, large-scale projects have taken place to ‘clean’ and upgrade urban spaces, often in the service of tourism, commercial and political ends and in the name of Istanbul’s image as global city (Keyder 2009). Critiques on this approach of heritage are that it can be considered as ‘fake’ rebuilding of the past. Most of the time only the facades of the historic buildings are kept or demolished and rebuilt ( Keyder 2009). Secondly, due to the ‘upgrade’ of these areas gentrification takes place fast, the ‘old’ inhabitants are displaced, often sent to social mass housing in high rise buildings, often located at the borders of the city, sometimes more than 30 kilometres from the centre. This also might imply the loss of intangible heritage, such as traditions, memories and identities of displaced groups. ‘Freezing’ the physical appearance of urban spaces to a specific period in the past as well as renewal for commercial and political ends, i.e. ‘hypothetical’ reconstructions that fit the expectations and desires of the tourism industry, can be criticized, because recent histories, both in terms of buildings as in terms of communities are ignored in such a way (Aksoy 2010). The heritage plans and renewal projects are carried out top-down, through decisions made by the authorities. At the same times, as Aksoy (2011) states, residents of the city are the authors of the city as well. How do they consider and deal with the city’s heritage? And how is this heritage affected by the globalizing process? (Aksoy 2010).Since different individuals and different groups of people have different views on the city’s heritage, it is important and also challenging to research this complexity and diversity of pasts and how they are considered and dealt with nowadays, as well as to show some of this present-day and past multi-vocality, which I hope to do in this paper.

1. **Neighbourhoods as microcosms**

In an urban context the memories, history of a city, current social and urban developments as well as the actual physical appearance of the city have inextricably related and complex relationships. For a more profound understanding of such relationships between urban, historical, architectural, social issues, specific neighbourhoods and their streets can be regarded as ‘microcosms’, case-studies on a micro-scale (Yeḡenoḡlu 2010) within a larger urban context.

Neighbourhoods are not fixed facts, but worlds of ideas and memories constantly changed by its social actors. They are interesting case-studies on heritage in relation to urban developments at a micro-level in order to understand these relations and developments on a more general urban scale for Istanbul and other globalizing cities in the world.

The NIT chose the neighbourhood of Tophane as a microcosm. This neighbourhood has, from a historical and social perspective, for a long time been one of the most dynamic areas in Istanbul.The area was renowned for its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition. It is, however, also one of the most understudied areas in Istanbul. The interdisciplinary research project of the NIT aims to study different facets of the neighbourhood of Tophane through different times and to provide opportunities for innovative research on buildings, places, people and memories.

Continuities and transformations in the life of a neighbourhood over time reflect both its social and physical form. A neighbourhood’s spatial and historical development should be examined in relation to the concrete practices, experiences and memories of its inhabitants (Yeğenoğlu 2010). A study of both the inhabitants and the physical appearance of the neighbourhood over time are valuable for the investigation of the heritage of a neighbourhood.

Changes in ethnic or social groups inhabiting a neighbourhood are often materialized through changes in space, houses, living manners and identity of the neighbourhood.

Especially in globalizing a city, localness seem to be important, which implies objects, memories, buildings and traditions that are valued locally and give a place a distinctive quality. ‘*Often common places in national terms are deeply engrained with local significance and are special to those who live there*.’ (Mills 2010). Especially in this globalization process, localness appears to be important, since people might feel disconnected from the city as a whole.

The historic environment is often an aspects contributing to the ‘sense of place’ (Schofield and Szymanski 2010). Since neighbourhoods exhibit socio-spatial processes through which diverse people imagine, express and sustain their identities, it would be interesting to see how the knowledge of the past actually forms a sense of identity in a particular place? (Mills 2010) A shared memory of the past can work as a bonding element for a cohesive group identity. Material remains in the landscape are triggers for that memory and can serve as symbols of the past (Mills 2010).

Neighbourhoods and their pasts have been meaningful in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways to its residents, the government, tourists and researchers who objectify a neighbourhood, a street or a group of buildings for their own ends (Amy Mill). The pilot research described in this paper aims to analyse the different meanings ascribed to the neighbourhood of Tophane, both to its pasts and to the current urban developments, expressing the neighbourhood’s multi-vocality through time.

***Pilot research: Interviews in Tophane***

In the next part of the paper I would like to sketch an impression of different social/religious/ethnic groups and identities in Tophane nowadays to get an understanding what actually defines Tophane, what role the past plays in this and in the construction of these identities, inclusion and segregation within the neighbourhood. First of all it needs to be mentioned that Tophane is a complex neighbourhood in different respects.

Tophane is complex due to all its different layers of history on a relatively small scale, starting from Byzantine times, through Ottoman times, to the foundation of the Republic in 1923 until now, which also implies different functions of the neighbourhood, compositions of inhabitants, rapid influx and outflow of people through time. Tophane has always been very different in social terms, in terms of occupations, in terms of functions, industry and geographical position from Galata and Cihangir in the past up to the present. I argue that the different developments in the past also account for the developments of Tophane nowadays, which took a different direction and speed than the surrounding neighbourhoods of Cihangir and Galata, in terms of the globalizing developments taking place today, including gentrification, renewal projects, physical appearance and composition of the inhabitants in social, economic and political respect. Another complex aspect is the fact that Tophane is not an official district (*mahalle*), but consists of parts of different districts. What actually defines the neighbourhood of Tophane?

I am well aware of a few complicating matters in my research on Tophane: the fact that there are tensions between people due to the gentrification (see examples of this in the next paragraphs), which means that questions need to be dealt with carefully in interviews. Secondly, having lived in Turkey since 2011, my Turkish is decent enough to carry out the interviews with people, but I am not a native speaker and the fact that I am from a foreign (Dutch) background, makes it both easier and more difficult to cooperate with inhabitants of Tophane. I have built up a strong trust connection with some families over the last year, people sometimes open up to me as an outsider, about politics and private lives. It should be kept in mind, though, that a researcher is somehow also part of the gentrification process.

Although more and more attention is paid to Tophane in academic research and artistic projects, Tophane still remains the area on which scholars, authorities, artists or inhabitants themselves do not seem to get a full grip on. This also makes this specific neighbourhood so fascinating as a microcosm.

In the next paragraphs I intend to voice people from different current-day groups identifying themselves with different pasts by showing preliminary results of my oral history pilot research in the neighbourhood. This multi-vocality of the present-day inhabitants of the neighbourhood as well as the former inhabitants is not even half expressed in this paper, due to the fact that this preliminary paper does not present quantitative data yet, neither does it give a representative voice to all the groups living in Tophane. This paper presents the preliminary outcomes of the interviews with inhabitants of Tophane whom I was able to speak with, which includes people who came to Tophane as migrants from the Anatolian countryside, people who have lived in Tophane almost all of their lives, and people who moved to Tophane relatively recently, such as academicians and artists. In this way both ‘gentrifiers’, which I will call the people with higher-incomes and global lifestyles, and the ‘original’ inhabitants of the neighbourhood, often migrants from other parts of Turkey, will be heard. I am aware of the fact that these terms are generalizing, but they serve the purpose of pointing out different social groups in Tophane.

Their stories and memories are used in order to shed some light in the relations between current inhabitants and Tophane’s different pasts, how they remember and ignore certain pasts, how they use the past to create group identities and how they are influenced by current urban developments. More profound and structured oral history research will be carried out during fieldwork with students from Dutch and Turkish universities in July 2013.

In the following paragraphs, both interviews with inhabitant as well as secondary literature on heritage, the neighbourhood of Tophane and Istanbul in general, will be used as main sources.In order to protect the privacy of the interviewees their names in this paper are fictional.

1. **Memories of Tophane’s Ottoman past**

Although the area, where, during the Ottoman rule the neighbourhood of Tophane was formed, also saw a Byzantine past, not many physical remains from the latter period have survived until now. Two Byzantine churches[[1]](#footnote-1) were located in the areaof which by ground radar research in 2003 some remains were seen under the soil of a neglected green hilly area in Tophane, where the remains of an Ottoman *hamam* (bath house) and military complexes are still visible on the surface. Furthermore some Byzantine relics and reliefs times were found in this area. When asking inhabitants of Tophane about the area, their stories mostly start from Ottoman times onwards. Although the Tophane neighbourhood was non-existent in Byzantine times, it should be kept in mind that activities were already taking place in that geographical area.

When asking inhabitants about the earliest history of the neighbourhood, most inhabitants point out the *Tophane-i-Amire* as one of the earliest indicators. *‘It is a symbol of Tophane,’* says Burak[[2]](#footnote-2) ‘*Sultan Mehmet built it. It is the place where cannonballs were produced. Sultan Mehmet came there and decided that this is the spot to build it*.’

The name *‘Tophane’* for the districtis derived from a monumental structure known as *‘Tophane-i Amire’*, cannonball foundry**,** which was built during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II after the conquest of Constantinople between 1453 and 1470. Since the Ottoman Empire was in the process of expansion, cannonballs were needed for various battles and were produced in this foundry. Since Tophane was a more or less derelict land at that time, it was a suitable area for military industry with the added bonus of its strategic location along the Bosphorus.

This first version of the imperial armoury, however, did not survive until today. The structure of the building that can be seen nowadays was most probably built by Selim III in 1803 and the building is used today as an exhibition hall by Mimar Sinan University. Apart from this foundry, in which cannons and cannon balls were produced, the Tophane area also housed a gunpowder factory and other artillery works during the Ottoman era (Geçkalan and Sezgin 2011). A large number of ‘cosmopolitan’ employees were involved in the military, industrial and administrative works: Jewish blacksmiths, German gunsmiths, French, Venetian and Genoese experts, Armenians and Greeks. In the travel accounts of Christian travellers, such as Nicolas de Nicolay[[3]](#footnote-3), the Christian experts in the military industries located in Tophane are referred to as people ‘producing cannons, muskets, gunpowder, shots and other military munitions for the Turks, in a way that would greatly harm the Christian world’ (Geçkalan and Sezgin 2011).

In the light of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople Ibrahim[[4]](#footnote-4) tastefully describes the story of the chain that was being spanned over the Golden Horn by the Byzantines to keep the Ottomans from invading the city. ‘*They* (the Ottomans) *carried the boats from the water at Tophane on their shoulders all the way up to the Galata tower and down to the Golden Horn. After that they could sail to the beginning of the land walls on the other side. They followed the land walls until they came to the spot where they broke through the walls and conquered the city. The Byzantines were smart you know; they had dug a moat on the outside of the walls. But they had to surrender*.’

Apart from serving as an area for military industry Tophane also functioned as a main port for the transportation of industrial goods, as well as for transporting people who were to access Beyoğlu, where, during the 19th century foreign embassies were located. Yavuz[[5]](#footnote-5) states that ‘*Tophane in Ottoman times was famous for its sailors* *and for their entertainment*’. Murat also associates Tophane’s history with Meyhane culture, Tophane’s tough guysand sailors’.

In this respect Burak bey mentions the Kılıç Ali Pasa complex located just behind his house, as the neighbourhood’s second important building after the Tophane-i-Amire. The complex was built between 1578 and 1580 in the name of the grand admiral Kılıç Ali Paşa, an Italian who converted to the Islam. It is one of the outstanding masterpieces of the architect Sinan. It exists as a mosque, a *medrese* (Koran school), a *hamam* (bath house) and tombs. The outside architecture of the mosque resembled the Hagia Sophia although their scales and inner decorations differ from each other. It is questioned whether the used architecture is the decision of Mimar Sinan himself, the demand of Kılıç Ali Paşa or maybe just a practical shape for a domed building, having to house large numbers of sailors from the shipyard and the navy during gatherings.

From the end of the 19th century until the 1920’s, construction of facilities like the customs building, warehouses, storage and administration buildings were built by different institutions, all somehow involved in commercial and transportation activities (Geçkalan and Sezgin 2011). Already in the 17th century Tophane had an important harbour where ships from Europe berthed. Almost all of the military and industrial buildings have disappeared. These docks were very important to Istanbul in Ottoman times and during the Turkish republic and were essential as connections to the outside world. It also led to the cosmopolitan composition of the inhabitants (Sezgin and Geckalan 2011).

Burak bey, among other inhabitants with whom I spoke, also points out the Tophane fountain as an important building from Tophane’s Ottoman past. Especially after the foundation of Tophane’s military industry in early Ottoman times the Tophane fountain (officially the Meydan Çeşmesi- Square Fountain), built by Mahmud I in 1732, supplying the area with water, was the starting point of a flourishing, cosmopolitan, residential neighbourhood around the military industries. Around the fountain a market and more and more *kahvehaneler* (coffeehouses) arose. In this way the space around the fountain became a place of entertainment where people from different social classes met each other (Theunissen, 2011). This should be seen in the light of 18th century changes, such as the revitalization of open spaces, as a focus for social life (Aslı Odman 2011). Nowadays Tophane is still famous for its nargileh cafe’s which in some way refer to the coffeehouses where men could drink coffee and smoke the nargileh in Ottoman times.

According to Burak bey the nargileh cafes located in Tophane nowadays are one of the most important physical elements that contribute much to the atmosphere of the neighbourhood. Ibrahim, however, emphasizes that the contemporary cafes here do not resemble the Ottoman coffee houses much. ‘*Not many people used to smoke nargileh in the coffeehouses nowadays, just some of them, and they did not smoke these fruit tastes, such as apple, but real tobacco*.’

Summarizing, when asking Tophane’s inhabitants about Tophane’s past, they generally mention the past that is not too distant and what they have known and experienced themselves, as eye-witnesses or as far as their family’s memory goes back. The majority of people living in Tophane these days migrated into the neighbourhood from Eastern Turkey relatively recently. This might be the reason why, when talking about Tophane’s past, mainly the Tophane neighbourhood of about thirty or twenty years ago is described by them.

When speaking about the Ottoman past they mainly mention the remains that they know are still there, which are often religious monuments, such as mosques. It seems that most of the migrant inhabitants identify themselves with especially the religious remains of the Ottoman past and not so much with the ethnic-religious composition of the Ottoman neighbourhood of Tophane, and the remains left behind by *Rum* (Ottoman Greeks) and other minorities.

Furthermore references made to the Ottoman past by the ‘re-construction and imitation of Ottoman buildings and habits, such as the nargileh cafés and the Muhtar’s building are sometimes mentioned, with which inhabitants either identify themselves or from which they dissociate themselves, depending on their political preferences. Cemil‘s[[6]](#footnote-6) words are an example of this: ‘*Since Turkey became a republic there is no attention to the Ottoman past, it is forgotten. So most of the time we can’t tell you anything about it either. Much of it is in archives and libraries, you can find everything there. But you can’t really learn the Ottoman past from the people, because we don’t know much about it*.’

***Preservation and Renovation of the neighbourhood’s Ottoman past***

After Turkey became a republic in 1923, the modern secular nation state disassociated itself from the preceding Ottoman past. Therefore, during the early decades of the 20th century, authorities were looking for a national idiom in, for instance, the architecture and other physical and non-physical elements in Istanbul, struggling with how to deal with the remains from the past and the creation and continuation of a modern state at the same time. The modernizing developments in Istanbul, in terms of the expansion of infrastructure, construction and widening of roads, construction of concrete, multiple floored buildings, starting in the 1950’s, led to a loss of many of the historical buildings, but at the same time stimulated the renovation of specific Ottoman monuments, which were kept in totally renewed urban spaces (Altinyildiz 2007). For a long time the heritage of ‘more common’ historical buildings, such as residential buildings, has been ignored. In the last decades and especially during the last ten years, authorities seem to have become aware of the heritage of the city and especially of how this heritage can be used in the service of economy and tourism and how to put Istanbul as a city on the ‘global stage.’ Therefore large urban renewal projects are taking place in which the renovation of historical buildings often means demolishing the historic building (or just keeping the façade) and replacing them by historical-looking ones. These new buildings are often inhabited by ‘new’ groups of people with higher-incomes or as tourist facilities due to which the former inhabitants are forced to leave This might be considered a loss of heritage, both in terms of historical buildings (including more recent adaptations), original communities with their social structures, their memories, their stories and lifestyles (Aksoy 2010).

Opinions of inhabitants about which physical remains from the past should be preserved differ from one another. Burak bey proudly points out the Kılıç Ali Pasa mosque and then the medrese, which had not been renovated at that time (December 2011). He explains: ’*The medrese should be renovated, because it is an important building. It will also attract more tourists, which is a good thing*.’ Burak bey states that the restoration of the residential historical houses is less important and less necessary than the restoration of important monuments, such as mosques ‘*but of course if people would like to renovate them themselves, I would not stop them*.’

According to Burak bey the most important buildings for tourists in Tophane are the nargileh cafes, the old mosques and the Tophane-i-Amire. Then he adds ‘*Tophane is also full of ugly buildings*.’ In this respect the concrete buildings built in Tophane from the 1950’s up till now are discussed as well as the concrete warehouse in which the modern art museum Istanbul Modern is located. This latter building, although pointed out as one of the most important buildings in Tophane by their youngest son who studied graphic design, is pointed out by Burak bey and Ayşe hanim as the least attractive building in Tophane: ‘‘*it is very ugly, we don’t mind if it would be taken away’*.

According to Necat, who is proud of the historical environment of Tophane as well as the location of his house in the vicinity of the Galata tower, not all the historical buildings in Tophane should be renovated since sometimes they look more ‘authentic’ before their renovation. As an example he mentions the Erkann Apartment building, which is located in the Galata neighbourhood and, built by the wealthy Belgian family Helbigs in 1895, is one of the oldest multi-storeyed buildings in Istanbul: ‘*It used to be more beautiful in the past before it was ‘over-renovated’*.

At the same time among some inhabitants the fear exists that the historical buildings will disappear or will be torn down to be replaced by new buildings. Aslı[[7]](#footnote-7) explains: ‘*There are also some very new apartment building down at Tophane. It is such a pity, there used to be an old wooden house there. I think they burnt it in order to put something new there now*.’

Aslı also mentions another historical building in her street. It is a stone building probably from the beginning of the late 19th/beginning of the 20th century. ‘*It is getting completely refurnished. I hope they won’t take it down, but I don’t think so. There used to be Roma inhabitants, who put furniture, couches and chair out there, they were actually living more or less outside. Sometimes they spontaneously started a party, playing music and singing*.’

Generally the inhabitants of Tophane, who migrated from other parts of Turkey seem to identify themselves with the Ottoman past, often related with religion and with the current politics feeding the ‘revival’ of the Ottoman past. Therefore, in these inhabitants’ views, Ottoman monuments, such as mosques and tombs, should be preserved and renovated, while residential houses (often related to Tophane’s Ottoman ethnic-religious minorities) do not need such attention in their view. ‘Gentrifiers’, however, seem to put value to the individual houses and other material remains and memories of the cosmopolitan Ottoman neighbourhood, probably also identifying themselves more with the mixed Ottoman neighbourhood, than with the traditional views and political ideas of Tophane’s current inhabitants.

**5) Composition of inhabitants through times: memories and narratives**

The composition of inhabitants as well as various identities in Tophane saw many changes during the neighbourhood’s history. Below I will sketch an impression of the developments which took place, how the ethnic-religious minorities of the Ottoman empire left after Turkey became a republic, how migrants from Anatolia’s countryside moved in, how different identities are shaped in the neighbourhood nowadays, often based on ethnicity, religion, the past, common memories, income, and lifestyles. I will not discuss the term ethnicity here further, but I would like to note that ethnicity is a highly debated phenomenon in current-day Turkey and that these difficulties should also be considered while discussing ethnic groups in Tophane .

***Ethnic compositions during Ottoman times***

In ethnic-religious terms, Tophane was a mixed neighbourhood during Ottoman times. The cannon factory and the other military industries and their administration required experts, who were of German, French, Venetian, Genoese, Armenian, Greek and Jewish ethnicity. Not less important is the fact that the Tophane docks account for the cosmopolitan composition of Tophane’s inhabitants during Ottoman times and the beginning of the Republic (Sezgin and Geckalan 2011).

Throughout the Ottoman history Istanbul (and also Tophane on a micro-scale) attracted many Spanish and Portuguese Jews. The Jews who lived in Tophane mainly descended from the Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492. Until far in the 20th century most of the Jewish inhabitants of Istanbul spoke Judeo-Spanish (‘Ladino’) (Hans Renes 2012).

The *Rum*, Greeks who lived in Turkey and Istanbul during Byzantine times already and continued to live there during Ottoman times, are said to have inhabited mainly the lower parts of Tophane, while the upper parts were inhabited by Armenians, Jews and Muslims (e.g. Roma and Turks) (Sezgin and Geçkalan 2011). Ibrahim says about remembering the Rum who lived in Tophane: ‘*Many people think that the food that is there now is typically Turkish, but the meze you eat at the meyhane’s as well as the whole Meyhane culture were inventions by the Rum.*’

During the 20th century this composition of inhabitants changed drastically due to certain ‘actions’ from the authorities. At the time Turkey became a Republic, the secular state of Ethnic Turkish Muslims, the authorities intended to break with Turkey’s Ottoman past: the Turkification of the country. In this context ‘repatriation’ based on religion took place between Greece and Turkey. Orthodox Greeks living in Turkey were forced to move to Greece and Muslims in Greece were forced to move to Turkey. Istanbul was excluded from these developments and remained cosmopolitan until the second half of the 20th century (Mills 2010, Hans Renes 2012).

During the 20th century, however, due to several ‘actions’ from the authorities the Turkification of Istanbul took place as well: the ethnic-religious minorities that lived in Tophane during the Ottoman times were forced to leave Tophane and Istanbul in general. In 1942-1943 taxes on wealth were introduced, which officially applied to all high-income/high-class people, but practically speaking mainly affected Greeks and Jews (Source: Hans Renes of Sezgin and Geckalan?).After 1948 many Jews moved from Istanbul to newly founded Israel. Probably the most important events, causing the ethnic-religious minorities that still lived in Istanbul to leave, are the pogroms in the night of September 6th/7th 1955.

After false news appeared in the newspapers that Ataturk’s birth house in Thessaloniki was bombed, an angry Turkish mob in Istanbul attacked and destroyed shops, houses and other properties of Greek inhabitants as well as of Jews and Armenians, in Istanbul’s centre. The news triggering these events appeared to be false in the end and can rather be regarded as a ‘trick’ from the Turkish authorities in order to reach this desired effect of ethnic-religious minorities leaving the city, making Istanbul a ‘Turkish’ city. In the 1960’s most of the remaining Greek Orthodox minorities left after a law introduced in 1964 which claimed that Greeks in Istanbul without Turkish citizenship should be deported to Greece (Mills 2005).

About this forced leaving of ethnic-religious minorities Yavuz explains: ‘*I don’t know exactly about the history of Tophane itself, but probably the September 6-7 pogroms might have done this* (by this he meant that the neighbourhood became dilapidated and religious) *to Tophane. Tophane was one of the main targets.* *As a Turk, I am ashamed of that piece of history. It is worse than the Armenian pogrom. You should read about it if you didn’t read it before. You will see how Adnan Menderes and his party are behind these pogroms’*.

A very small amount of Rum stayed in Istanbul after these ‘Turkification’ developments, many of them nowadays living in Greece, the USA and other countries. The Jewish community of Tophane, part of which stayed during the early 20th century, could afford more luxurious and expensive places and during the 1960’s and 1970’s moved to neighbourhoods such as Ortaköy, Şişli and Nişantaşi, where the houses were equipped with central heating and electricity (Sezgin and Geckalan 2011).

We can conclude that after the foundation of the Republic, but especially in the second half of the 20th century, with the ethnic-religious minorities disappearing and migrants from Anatolia moving into the neighbourhood, the composition of inhabitants of Tophane changed drastically.

***Ethnic composition in the second half of the 20th century up till now***

From the 1950’s onwards many of the real estate properties of these minorities were sold or confiscated. Cosmopolitan culture in Istanbul and Tophane had disappeared. During the same period the population of Istanbul as a whole, which counted one million in 1945, increased rapidly up to an unofficial 17 million today. Tophane saw different waves of migrants in various periods from the 1950’s onwards, starting with various waves of migrants from the countryside of Anatolia and Eastern Turkey, looking for jobs, in the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s. In Tophane the main job opportunities were to be found in Tophane’s industry and docks. At the same time Tophane functioned as a transition point for migration to Europe. An office of the Public Employment Service, sending workers abroad, was located in the neighbourhood (Sezgin and Geçkalan 2011).

Some of the migrants who left for Europe during the 1960’s and 1970’s returned to Tophane years later.Ibrahim left Istanbul with his family in the beginning of the 1960’s when he was six years old. The family moved to Germany where his father found a job in a factory. ‘*When I was 23 years old I returned to Turkey to go into military service and I stayed afterwards. This made my family to come back as well.* *I am Turkish and that is something you cannot change*.’

With all these migrants from the countryside moving to Istanbul, there were not enough housing facilities in Istanbul. Where should all these new inhabitants live? In Istanbul in general a large amount of the migrants coming to Istanbul lived in *gecekondu’s*, literally meaning ‘*built-overnight*’, shanty towns at the borders of the city ( Kuyucu and Ünsal 2010).

In the case of Tophane, however, housing opportunities were created in different ways: concrete buildings were constructed in the city centre, sometimes in between and sometimes in place of historical buildings. A certain amount of migrants started to inhabit the houses in the centre of the city, left empty by the Greek ethnic religious minorities, sometimes became the official owners, sometimes ‘squatting’ the home, sometimes renting it from a ‘new’ owner.

Yavuz: ‘*These flat/land owners are not real owners, most of them stole these flats from Greeks and Armenians. Some of these flats were given to them by the government. For example my flat owner in Tophane came from Greece around the 1930’s, and the government gave them a couple of apartments in Tophane.*’

Necat tells me that their house is more than a hundred years old. Nowadays the building looks deserted and dilapidated. Three families are living in self-created apartments with hardly any facilities. Necat: ‘*Our house belonged to a foreigner, a Greek or an Armenian, who left. We moved in*.’ The family is not paying any rent.

Only few Jews, Armenians and Greeks remained in Tophane nowadays. Ibrahim bey explains that ‘*Greeks who stayed in Istanbul after the events in 1955 often remained in other neighbourhoods than Tophane, such as Samatya. Some of them earned a lot of money and moved again to new neighbourhoods. One of my best friends is Rum. He became rich through all kinds of merchandise and moved to a more luxurious neighbourhood. The same goes for Armenians. More of them live in more luxurious neighbourhoods, such as Bayrampasa*.’

The ethnic-religious minorities still living in Tophane now are mainly elderly people. I met with an elderly Jewish man in the streets of Tophane, who lives in the Jewish *Huzur Evi* (elderly people’s home) in the upper part of Tophane/Galata. He describes the neighbourhood as following: ‘*Tophane is not a neighbourhood to walk in at night. It is an unsafe neighbourhood. I hardly go outside. There is nobody I know. Tophane changed a lot*.’

Physically the neighbourhood also changed drastically from the 1950’s onwards. Apart from the many concrete buildings that were built under the supervision of Menderes, new roads were constructed and widened, such as the widening of the road running through Tophane, clearing areas around monuments in order to make them more visible (Sezgin and Geckalan 2011). During these processes many historical houses were demolished. In the 1950’s the Tophane docks were modernized, new warehouses were constructed at the shore, in one of which since 2004 Istanbul Modern, Istanbul’s modern art museum, is located.

The 1990’s saw many Kurdish people from the east moving into the Tophane, due to their displacement from Eastern Turkey by war. In Tophane they established their own communities and at the same time became part of the urban mainstream. Nowadays the majority of Tophane’s inhabitants are Kurds originating from the province and city of Bitlis in Eastern Anatolia. There even is a coffeehouse called Bitlis in Tophane, mainly meant for the ‘Bitlis community’, but others are welcomed as well.

Ali Can: ‘*You cannot compare Tophane with other neighbourhoods, such as Tarlabasi. Because Tarlabasi is very mixed, they are expelled, out of society people. But Tophane is un-mixed, very heterogen small example of true face of religious Turkish people, who also govern Turkey. Many of them are from Bitlis and many of them are Kurdish. They are religious Kurdish*.’

According to Murat[[8]](#footnote-8) the majority of present-day inhabitants of Tophane are Arabs: ‘*There is no hospitality, there are no foreigners. The Greeks are gone. Not many Kurdish people stayed. Most of the current-day inhabitants are Turkish Arabs, many from Siirt. The neighbourhood is not very mixed*.’

Ayşe[[9]](#footnote-9) points out the existence of differences within ethnic groups. According to her the Kurdish people living in Tophane also belong to various smaller groups.’ *There are different groups of Kurdish. For instance Kurdish people from Bitlis are very different from the Kurdish people from Van*.’ About herself and her husband Burak she tells: ‘*We are not Arabs neither Kurds, we are nothing. We lived in Adana, which is why we have an Arab accent, but we do not speak Arabic. My family comes from Malatya and moved to Adana. Burak’s family officially comes from Bulgaria and have lived in Istanbul for already some generations, with some ancestors buried in the Beylerbeyi cemetery.’*

Şükrü emphasizes the differences between different ethnicities in Tophane. ‘*Hardly any Karadenizler* (People from the Black Sea region) *live in Tophane. Tophane is mainly inhabited by Arabs and Kurds. Arabs are very different. They are disgraceful, they never do anything for free, they think about themselves and money. We* (Karadenizler) *do certain things for free just to help people. Kurds are also very different. They invite yabancilar (strangers/foreigners) to their funerals or weddings for instance. We* (Karadenizler) *would never do something like that. We are all very different*.’ When I ask him whether he feels connected with Tophane he answers: ‘*I don’t live here, I work in Tophane. But I spend all my time here. Even in the weekends. What else should we do at home? All our friends are here*.’

A Roma community ([Turkish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_language): *Roman/Çingene*) still live in Tophane nowadays. Roma are an ethnic minority of [Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey), descending from Byzantine times. Part of the Roma in Tophane might have lived there from the beginning of the existence of the neighbourhood in Ottoman times onwards. Further research is needed to look into these details and to learn whether any of the Roma families living in Tophane nowadays have been there for generations. The few Roma referents that I met with had not lived in Tophane for generations, but came from cities at the Black Sea and Izmir. Serkan[[10]](#footnote-10), for instance, tells that he was born in Istanbul. He shows his identity card with shows his place of birth, Istanbul, of which he is proud. His family, originating from Thessaloniki, came to Istanbul from Zonguldak 36 years ago. Serkan calls him himself ‘Tophaneli’ (an inhabitant of Tophane). When I ask him about Tophane’s past, he tells: ‘*Tophane used to be nicer 20 years ago. Dinners were still shared. There were more Roma people living in Tophane then. Everyone knew each other and we did not need to lock our doors. Now that is totally different. There are still some Roma, but there are mainly Kurds and Arabs now and the relations between people are less strong.’*

Other ethnic minorities and foreigners came and still come from Eastern Europe to Istanbul and Tophane, especially from the former USSR, such as Turkmens, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other Central Asian Turkic-speaking people. Burakbey and Ayşe are always into much contact with many people from these countries. They helped two women from Kyrgyzstan working in a hotel in Karaköy to get residential permits, they drink tea with another woman from Kyrgyzstan who is herself also living in Tophane, they know Lena[[11]](#footnote-11), from the Ukraine, who has her café close to their house, and Süleyman[[12]](#footnote-12), from Turkmenistan works in their motor repair shop in Tophane. Süleyman came from Turkmenistan around 2 years ago: ‘*Turkmenistan belonged to Russia, you know, and in 1994 it became independent. The time under the rule of Russia was economically speaking much better. After that many problems appeared, people are poor and there are no jobs. That’s why I came to Turkey with my son*.’

Some Russians fled from Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 as well as socialists and communist revolutionaries who fled the USSR in the 1930’s. Ibrahim recalls these Russians being in Tophane through stories of his father, who lived in Tophane at that time: ‘*These Russians started all kinds of business down at Tophane close to the shore and also in the direction of Karaköy, mostly businesses in leather and clothes and such.’*

By many of the people that I spoke with in Istanbul in general, the cosmopolitan period is often referred to with nostalgia; the collective memory says that despite the drastic population shifts it was a time of tolerance, brotherhood and close connections to one another (Mills 2006). The people whom I spoke with in Tophane, however, mainly describe the period of around thirty years ago as nostalgic with strong community connections. That might have to do with the fact that I only got to speak with a certain wave of migrants who came after the 1970’s and who do not feel a connection with the cosmopolitan past of the neighbourhood. Although they still mention a ‘strong Tophane community’ they also point out that this community used to be stronger in the past. The fact that they do have strong nostalgic feelings for the neighbourhood of thirty years ago, might very well have to do with the situation that Tophane is rapidly gentrifying nowadays and that these ‘older’ inhabitants of Tophane who once were migrants from the East, start to feel ‘less at home’ in the neighbourhood, due to the moving in of a new higher-income group of people with global lifestyles.

The elderly Jewish and Armenian people whom I got to speak with all told me that they feel lonely in the neighbourhood nowadays. For them the cosmopolitan past is the nostalgic past that they would like to return to. The same seems to go for the ‘gentrifying’ inhabitants of Tophane. Although these are not their own memories, but memories passed on by family members as well as learned from books, they always refer to Tophane’s cosmopolitan past and the fact that they regret it that the ethnic-religious minorities were forced to leave. After that, in their eyes, everything went down in the neighbourhood.

Nowadays many foreigners from western Europe, such as Germans, British, Italians, Americans and Dutch, including myself, came to Istanbul for work and some of them do live in Tophane, mainly due to its vicinity to one of the cultural city centres of Istanbul, full of offices and entertainment, the area around Istiklal Caddesi, Beyoglu, and Taksim. This change also becomes clear from Hasan’s[[13]](#footnote-13) words:’ *Tophane used to be a neighbourhood that was very mixed: Roma, Kurds, Arabs, Turks. Now it changed very much and almost only Arabs and foreigners* (by which he means Western Europeans and Americans) *are living here*.’

These expats, for instance, are part of the change in composition of inhabitants in Tophane nowadays. The neighbourhood is rapidly gentrifying, both through higher-educated and higher income and Turkish people and foreigners moving in. In the next paragraph attention will be paid to this gentrification process and how the composition of inhabitants changed through that, which groups were included and excluded and which role the past plays in these recent urban developments, how memories and remains from the past are used in, but also influenced by, this process.

It should be kept in mind that the ideas and conversations expressed here are just preliminary thoughts, more research should be done in order to be able to make real statements about the present-day composition of Tophane’s inhabitants, cohesion and segregation.

Although in these inhabitant’s words it seems as if present-day Tophane is only about narratives of harmony and close relations between inhabitants, my observations, however, seem to show stories of tensions and segregation as well. These tensions and segregation seem to be related with differences in ethnicity, religion (different religions and secularism), the past, common memories, amount of income, and (traditional versus global) lifestyles.

1. **Tophane community, inclusion, segregation and tensions**

Since Tophane is a neighbourhood (*semt*) and no official district (*mahalle*), it is located in several different *mahalles* and it seems that Tophane’s borders cannot be very precisely indicated. When asking inhabitants about it they all point out different borders for Tophane. Tophane does not only indicate a geographical area nowadays, but also, and maybe even more importantly, a social community. Inhabitants belonging to that community call themselves ‘Tophaneli’.

In the interviews with inhabitants of Tophane, this strong community is almost always mentioned. In this paragraph I would like to research the role of the creation and maintenance of this community and the tensions between people being included or excluded, the past, ethnicity, religion and income do play. How can the present-day urban and social developments in the neighbourhood be considered in this respect?

***Tophane community***

Some of the people whom I spoke with seemed to be in the centre of this ‘Tophane community’. Ibrahim says: ‘*I am like a father to most people in Tophane, because I know so much. I travelled the world. People come to me with all kinds of questions.*’

Ibrahim feels very connected to Tophane and the community. The Muhtar is one of his best friends. Clearly both Ibrahim and Ibrahim are central people in this community. The Ercan family somehow also plays a central role in this community, but more in trying to include people who are excluded from the Tophane community. They seem to be a binding factor between the Tophane community and marginal people who not totally included in the general Tophane community.

Another group of people feels excluded from the Tophane community and feel tensions between inhabitants who were already inhabiting the neighbourhood and gentrifiers. Erkan[[14]](#footnote-14) seems not to be in contact with his neighbours: he once tried to greet people and there was no reply, so now he disassociated himself from them. ‘*It is a small community and I do not belong to it,*’ he says. ‘*I live in Tophane because it is close to Taksim and to my former Galatasaray highschool. Apart from that Tophane does not mean anything to me*.’

Aslı tells that she is mainly in contact with the people living in her apartment building, mainly foreigners from the USA or Britain. Aslı tells me that ‘‘*Tophane people form a community in which everyone knows each other and helps each other*. *Weddings do take place with many rituals and music in the neighbourhood and that one very important bonding element of the Tophane community is the Tophane soccer team. I am not part of that community*. ’Although Aslı feels like not being part of the Tophane community, her superficial connections with inhabitants who are part of that community seem to be good.

Outside of her apartment building Aslı also feels comfortable with the neighbours: ‘*They are all family of each other and they visit each other with children at night. Women as well. There is family life late at night and therefore the street is never empty.*’ Furthermore she does not know much about these neighbours she talks about. She knows that they came from somewhere in Eastern Turkey, but she does not know the exact cities. They greet each other, they have small talk, and furthermore Aslı does not seem to be much in contact with neighbours outside the apartment building. ‘*In the beginning everyone was too curious. But I wanted to live my own life and now the curiosity has stopped. I am not a very interesting person to follow*.’ She adds: ‘*Sometimes I am scared that my neighbours think it is strange that many people, also men, visit me. But it is my life of course and it is none of their business*.’

Aslı’s neighbour Elisabeth[[15]](#footnote-15), half British, half Palestinian, lived in another neighbourhood before and likes the people in Tophane much better than in the upper-class neighbourhood that she used to live in. In her former neighbourhood she ‘*was not allowed to hang my laundry outside because it would denigrate the neighbourhood. Here in Tophane I can hang my laundry outside and no one is annoyed with the fact that I am a foreigner.’ Here in Tophane the bakkal owners are generally interested in Palestine and I can sometimes speak Arabic with them. There are many people from Siirt and they also speak Arabic*.’ ‘*I was never invited to social activities of the community,’* she continues ‘*but a woman invited me to the Koran lessons in the mosque*.’ She laughs at the fact that they invited her to learn Arabic because that is her mother-tongue.

Although gentrifiers do not seem to be much in contact with the ‘original’ inhabitants who came there as migrants from other parts of Turkey, either having good superficial connections, or having no connections at all, or even having negative feelings about each other, some people seem to function as a link between the two groups. The ErcanFamily’s garage/house, for instance, is an assembly place for many people in the neighbourhood. Almost everyone is invited by them for tea: foreigners, researchers, Tophaneli, women from Kyrgyzstan, people working in the music studios, hidden inside some of the storage buildings close to their house. The Ercan family function as a link between gentrifiers and gentrified as well as different religions and ethnicities, bringing them closer to each other.

From the above-mentioned examples it again becomes clear that there is a Tophane community. But who actually belong to this community, and who are excluded? What are the ‘criteria’ to belong to this community? Do these have a connection with different pasts of people and the neighbourhood and different identities?

Elisabeth explains that as a foreigner it is hard to see who is included in and who is excluded from the Tophane community. She says she was never invited to any of the social activities. Aslı mentions that she knows that the Roma family living in the house right below here did not always greet everyone. Most of the people, however, talk to each other though. ‘*But,*’ she adds, ‘*this is about men on the streets, for families (including women) this might be different, because family ties go above all (above neighbour-relations). So segregation might be more easily detected on a family scale.*’

She continues that for her the neighbourhood ‘*feels safe as well because Tophane people handle things themselves. If there are thieves from the outside they wait for them with sticks. It is true that the police and the municipality shouldn’t do anything there. The Tophane community arranges everything themselves*.’

Although there are Kurds (from different cities), Arabs (from different cities), and Roma; most of the people, regardless of their ethnicity call themselves ‘Tophaneli’. The gentrifying people, however, although living in Tophane, do not consider themselves part of this Tophane community. Neither do the ethnic-religious minorities who stayed after the second half of the 20th century, nor the foreigners from other countries, such as Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, living in Tophane.

***Politics in Tophane***

According to Murat an Islamization of the neighbourhood of Tophane started after the coup d’etat in the 1980’s. Nowadays according to him, ‘*People living in Tophane have very strong connections with the state and the current government. It is now the place of an Islamic community. There was an AKP centre in Tophane and there is a teahouse related to AKP political views*.’ Erkan, who is very critical about Turkey’s current government, also confirms the existence of such kinds of places in Tophane. He claims that Tophane used to have many ties with the AKP ‘*even some kind of AKP office or café existed in Tophane before, but it does not seem to be there anymore*.’

Yavuz states that ‘*These people, especially those related to mafia-circles and drug dealing, are close to the government. I don’t know if the government also likes them or not, but it looks like there is a nice relationship between them*.’

Also with the current protests taking place at Taksim[[16]](#footnote-16) square in Istanbul, it becomes clear that many of the inhabitants of Tophane support Turkey’s current government. News about inhabitants of Tophane attacking protesters walking through the Tophane neighbourhood to move between Taksim and Beşiktaş comes out (source: protesters’ stories and Bram Vermeulen’s report in the Dutch NRC newspaper on 04-06-2013).When going into the neighbourhood of Tophane inhabitants did not mention these specific events although some of them told me to be careful. Some of the inhabitants I spoke with told me that they disagree with the protests going on, some of them (two of which were women) told me that they stay far away from politics, some told me that they do not agree with all aspects of the government (including the plans for the Galata Port Project without involving the inhabitants), but there is not much to do about it, and some people told me that they were actually joining the protests in Taksim. Although the majority of the inhabitants seem to strongly support the current government or to let things happen phlegmatically, the political views of the people I spoke with seem to be more mixed that I expected.

Furthermore, the question could be asked whether the ‘reconstruction’ of the *nargileh* (waterpipe) cafes at Tophane’s shore as well as the wooden Ottoman style building of the *muhtar* (elected district official) should be interpreted as a revival of the Ottoman past. As can also be seen in the building of the Muhtar located in Tophane’s park, a new building made of wood, resembling an Ottoman wooden house, which Tophane was full of in the past but of which hardly any remain nowadays. How should these references to the Ottoman past be interpreted? They might come from the urge of present-day authorities in Turkey (the AKP-Justice and Development Party) trying to disassociate themselves and the country from the Kemalist past and therefore associate themselves with the Ottomans, which was mainly abandoned during Ataturk’s government of the republic.

Yavuz, when being asked about these developments and physical appearances in Tophane, states: ‘*I would say there is no Ottoman past surviving or resurrecting in Turkey nowadays. Ottomans were more civilized people. Many nations lived in peace under Ottoman rule. There were laws, there was authority. What we are seeing here (i.e. the Muhtar’s House etc.) is something fictional, unnatural, brought from the outside*.’

In a similar, possibly political light, Murat also mentions that ‘*none of the Ottoman figures, such as the sultans, have been really important to the neighbourhood or to him. All this flattering of the Ottoman past seems to be nonsense*.’

Nowadays more attention is paid to the Ottoman past, due to the fact that the currently ruling party - the AKP - intends to dissociate themselves and the country from this secular past and the Kemalist views, as well as the present-day Kemalist Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP).

***Religion in Tophane***

Related to the cosmopolitan composition of inhabitants is the fact that also different religions existed in Tophane: various varieties of Christian religion, Jewish religion, and Islam. The ethnic-religious variety of the inhabitants of Tophane from Byzantine and Ottoman times until now finds its expression in different religious monuments as well, such as various churches and mosques, of which some remain.

Nowadays still visible are the Crimean Church, which is an Anglican church, in the upper parts of Tophane/Galata. More churches are located down in Tophane in the direction of Karakoy, dating to later periods, such as the Turkish orthodox (Rum church), the Armenian church close to the road (that was widened in the 1950’s), a synagogue in a back street down at Tophane and several mosques, such as the Kılıç Ali Pasa, the Nuzhetiye mosque and the Karabaş Burakağa Cami**.**

Elisabeth tells that one of her female neighbours ‘a covered woman’ once told her that she is reading the Koran. ‘*From the fact that I’m from Palestine she assumes that I am a Muslim too, but I am a Christian*.’

Although the inhabitants of Tophane are identified as ‘extremely religious’ by Yavuz, Aslı states that ‘*being a Muslim for them* (the Tophane community) *is more like an identity than really something they strictly practice*’. Both Aslı and Elisabeth agree that Tophane is not a very religious area. Elisabeth adds:’ *Sometimes people say that Tophane is a really religious area. Of course sometimes you see women with a niqab. But I have this feeling that being a muslim is more of an identity for people who came from the East (Arabs), related to Eastern Turkey, close to Iraq, and that they do not necessarily practice all the rules*.’

Together with Ayşe Ercan I am planning to visit one of the Orthodox churches for Orthodox Eastern. On this occasion a discussion about religion comes up in the Ercan family’s house. According to Burak bey ‘*Christians and Muslims went on complete different roads, they started similar roads and then the roads split up’.* ‘*We go to Christian churches* (I think he means the fact that his wife and I will go there) *and they* (Christians) *are not coming to our mosque*’. Cemil and Ayşe disagree: ‘*In the end it is all the same, everyone prays, has a God, fasting times etcetera*.’ ’*The differences between all the religions* (he probably means Christian religions here) *exist due to the fact that there are many different papa’s* (patriarchs) *who all wrote different pages, books and rules*.’

When visiting the Russian Orthodox Church in Tophane, a place hidden on the upper floor of a building, for the Easter celebrations, Ayşe tells me: ‘*Actually I would like to go and learn and have a look. It doesn’t really matter that I am not orthodox, right? We could just go and visit’*. Both Şükrü and Ibrahim mention the existence of this church, dating to the 20th century, probably after 1917 when many Russians fled to Istanbul. The church is probably hidden because people were scared at that time to openly practice their religion.

Afterwards we visit Lena, a woman from Ukraine, who runs a café in Tophane. When Ayşe introduced Lena to me two weeks ago as a descendant of a Rum family (Ottoman Greek)who left Istanbul in the 1950’s, but returned. Lena appears not to be Rum orthodox but originates from Ukraine. The confusion is also an example of the fact that the Muslim community is not always well-informed about ethnicity and religion of the Christians who are still living in Tophane, as well as the other way around. This also becomes clear by Ayşe’s confusion about Lena being a *Rum* or Ukrainian. She just knew for sure that her religion is orthodox. Lena, in that sense, belongs to ‘the others’, of whom the details are often not known. Like many other inhabitants of Tophane, Ayşe is very curious about ‘the other’, as for instance about the details of the rituals that accompany Easter celebrations and she explains to me about the 40 days of fasting. This fasting is ‘*not like we do it, not 40 days without food or water. They drink water. They just don’t eat animal products, such as meat and cheese*.’ At Lena’s Easter meeting Easter eggs are being eaten and wine is drunk. Also vodka appears, mixed with fruit juice. Most of the Turkish women being present drink wine, except for Lena’s sister-in-law who nods in the direction of her husband, saying softly that he would not like her to drink. In Lena’s cafe different religions come together and bond. Not only the guests being both (Russian) Orthodox and Muslims, but also Lena, as an Orthodox Christian, married to a Turkish husband, who is a Muslim. This is in material respect expressed in the shape of a basket with Eastern eggs put next to an Islamic calendar, with pictures of mosques, and two small Koran texts.

Summarizing, both religion and politics seem to be bonding elements for the Tophane community. Religion is generally not necessarily space-bound; therefore religion is something that migrants could bring from the Anatolian country-side and still feel connected with while they moved to a topographically speaking new area: Tophane. This might be one of the reasons why most of the migrant inhabitants feel connected with Tophane’s religious Ottoman monuments and why they indicate that these physical remains should be preserved. Additionally, shared political views seem to create cohesion within the Tophane community. Directly related to these political views of the AKP are the ‘revival’ of Ottoman times through new ‘Ottoman-style’ buildings and re-introduction of ‘Ottoman’ traditions, such as the *nargileh* cafes, at the same time ignoring cosmopolitan composition of Tophane’s inhabitants during these Ottoman times.

They do not seem to identify themselves much with the specific inhabitants of Tophane during Ottoman times and the physical remains of their existence in the shape of residential buildings. This is probably due to the fact that Tophane’s population during Ottoman times was mainly composed of ethnic-religious minorities, such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews, with whom and their past, the ‘migrant’ inhabitants of Tophane do not identify themselves.

‘Gentrifiers’ living in Tophane, however, emphasize the cosmopolitan past of Tophane. This might well be because they do not identify themselves with the current inhabitants of Tophane, their conservative lifestyles and political views. They identify themselves with cosmopolitan Tophane and its ethnic-religious minorities in the past. Sometimes a link is even made by them between themselves and the Ottoman ethnic-religious minorities. They sometimes say that ‘history repeats itself nowadays’ in the tensions between ‘gentrifiers’ and ‘gentrified’, while feeling excluded from ‘Tophane’s community’.

***Gentrification and change: contesting narratives of the past***

From the 1980’s up to ca. 2004 Tophane is described by most people (both inhabitants and non-inhabitants) as a dangerous region, with ‘mafia’ links and drug dealing.

How did Tophane become such a run-down area after its flourishing military industry, harbour and trade? Things started to go down in the neighbourhood about twenty years after the docks were modernized in the 1950’s. Changes that took place in international shipping had consequences for the Tophane docks and therefore also for the surrounding neighbourhood. Shipping wheeled vehicles (cars, trains) became more widespread. For this way of shipping containers were used, requiring a specific type of cranes for the harbour. Harbours which did not invest in such cranes, lost their importance. Therefore the warehouses and cranes, unsuitable for this type if shipping, at the Tophane docks became out of use and the harbour industry decreased (Odman 2011).

According to Ibrahim ‘*Many Russians who came to Turkey after Russia had become a communist country in 1917 started all kinds of business down at Tophane close to the shore. mainly businesses in leather and clothes and such. After Communism disappeared and Gorbachev came, they often went back to Russia. If not, they had become rich and moved to other neighbourhoods. So together with many Russians, these businesses disappeared from Tophane. And nothing came in its place. Nothing flourished in Tophane anymore. The area became dilapidated, full of drug selling etcetera*.’

According to Asli Odman (2010), a new field of commerce came up for the Tophane docks after the dismantling of the Soviet Union in the 1990’s. Cheap consumption goods were traded between Istanbul and Eastern European countries. Tourist cruise ships also started to enter the Tophane harbour. But overall Tophane did not seem to be flourishing anymore. Hasan describes Tophane as ‘*a neighbourhood that was a mess. Everything was broken. That changed in recent years*.’ Yavuz describes Tophane in a similar way: ‘*These areas were no-mans land before and very dangerous. After the urban renewal which is going on since 5-6 years, these places became liveable*.’

Şükrü[[17]](#footnote-17) described the gentrification as follows: ‘*It used to be a cheap neighbourhood. Weapons were being sold and it was a dangerous area. Especially the area down in the direction of Karaköy, you could not walk there in the past as a woman. Now it is more modern and accessible for everyone, women as well*.’ He adds that it comes from the fact that ‘*not everyone knows each other anymore. This happened because Istanbul became so large and because a lot of foreigners moved into the neighbourhood*.’

As Şükrü and Ahmed described, Tophane is gentrifying in recent years. This gentrification process probably came into existence after the foundation of Istanbul’s Modern Art museum, in one of the empty warehouses of the docks in 2004. Art galleries that were already located in other areas of Beyoglu, such as Istiklal Caddesi, Galata and Cihangir, now moved down to Tophane on the road running to the Istanbul Modern located down at the water.

The moving in of the galleries since 2006 also created opportunities for another social class to move in. The image of the neighbourhood was slowly changing, at least for the main streets, and expats as well as another Turkish social class (scholars etc.) started moving into the neighbourhood. Also hostels and hotels started to appear as an extension of the already gentrified neighbourhood of Cihangir. Very recently more fancy, luxurious cafes and pastry shops came up along Bogazkesen. In the last months these also moved towards Karaköy, where now many luxurious hotels are being built. Restaurants and café’s came up in the small streets in between dilapidated and industrial buildings as well as workshops and often in the place of already existing buildings and workshops. Nowadays the main groups to be distinguished as gentrifiers are gallery owners, more luxurious café/bar and restaurant owners, hotel and hostel owners, artists (both Turkish and foreign) academicians (Turkish and foreign) and expats.

With the galleries entering into the neighbourhood, the area became more attractive to live in for artists and people with higher incomes. Expats and Turkish people with higher incomes moved into the neighbourhood. Due to these developments the rent of houses has increased much in recent years and is still increasing. Hasan explains about this: ‘*Tophane was rectified’.* He tells that he moved from Tophane to Hasköy recently because the rent was becoming too high: *‘Most people slowly moved. Rents are in dollars nowadays and start around a 1000 dollars. Many people, non-owners, therefore moved to other neighbourhoods in Istanbul. House-owners ask for high rents*.’

Yavuz also states ‘*Many of the inhabitants in Tophane live in flats with rents like 200 TL per month, and they are very angry with foreigners who rent flats for 1000 TL per month. This is a real problem and they think it is because of the art galleries*.’

Summarizing, ‘Gentrified’ often identify themselves with the Tophane physical neighbourhood and community, mainly referring to the times in which they came to Tophane and at the same time identifying themselves with certain aspects of Tophane’s Ottoman past, while ‘gentrifiers’ often do not identify themselves with Tophane’s physical environment, pointing out these chose Tophane to live in ‘*because it is close to Taksim,’* nor with the present-day community living there. Both groups indicate that Tophane used to be a dangerous neighbourhood until ten years ago. This ‘dangerous’ period is looked back at with nostalgia by the ‘gentrified’, indicating that there used to be a stronger community than exists nowadays, while ‘gentrifiers’ indicate that the gentrification of Tophane made the neighbourhood ‘liveable’.

***Urban renewal: the Galata Port Project***

In the last two years another aspect also played a role in this gentrification project: the speculations on a large urban renewal project in the lower parts of Tophane: the Galata Port project. Plans for the Galata Port Project are due to be carried out, intending the renewal of the harbour area of Tophane and developing the area of Tophane for more touristic purposes, including a multi-functional cruise ship harbour housing a museum, shopping mall, multiple-star hotels, and offices (Geçkalan and Sezgin, 2011). These renewal plans speed up the gentrification of the area. Murat comments: *The Galata Port project will include a shopping mall and a renewal project around it, maybe like Tarlabaşı: pushing people out of Istanbul’s centre*.’Tarlabaşı is one of Istanbul’s neighbourhoods where a large urban renewal project took place recently, leaving inhabitants homeless and displacing many to social mass housing at the borders of the city.

The plans for the Galata Port caused an acceleration of the gentrification process in Tophane. Many new café’s, bars, restaurants, hostels and hotels were opened and are being opened in Tophane, anticipating future urban developments. An example is the construction of a very large 5-star hotel down in Tophane, in the direction of Karaköy.

Where, according to many of the inhabitants I spoke with, furniture and carpenter workshops were located in upper Tophane, galleries and design shops appeared. Also the chicken market and related slaughter houses as well as the Russian market located in the lower parts of Tophane, still there in the 1990’s, have disappeared and made place for art galleries, cafes, ‘underground’ music studios and industry, and large hotels.

Ayşe tells me that she likes the new cafés that appeared in the area around their garage/workshop. She tells me that she likes the style with the plants outside two of the cafes, crowded with fancy young people, ‘*You can eat real pizza’s over there’* She says *’Maybe we can go there one time*.’ At the same time she points out one pastane, which recently closed down because of a lack of customers, after having existed for only one year. A new café will open there soon. On the other side of the street she points out a kebab shop which ‘*had very good kebab, but because of money problems, they had to close down the shop’*.

At the same time I can hear her discussing with other women from the neighbourhood about the masses of tourists all suddenly exploring the lower parts of Tophane on their way from and to the cruise ships, about the rapid changes taking place, the rents that are increasing, the luxurious cafes and the fear that soon they won’t be able to sit in their quiet little street anymore. One of her friends is a middle-aged woman who used to run a lokanta close to the Kılıç Ali Paşa mosque. Ayşe explains that ‘*due to the renovations, the rent increased up to 500 lira’s, which is why she had to close her lokanta*.’

Apart from the increase of rents, an effect of the gentrification is that new lifestyles penetrate the neighbourhood. Global lifestyles appear in a neighbourhood that saw mainly traditional/conservative lifestyles. ‘Gentrified’ considering the neighbourhood and its past, ‘theirs’ slowly being pushed out of the area by ‘gentrifiers’ who have money to spend, but do not feel a real connection with neither the physical aspects of the neighbourhood nor with the Tophane community. This causes various tensions between the two groups.

***Tensions***

The tensions between ‘gentrifiers’ and ‘gentrified’ become clear through different stories. Yavuz, presuming that I want to move to Tophane, explains: ‘*There is a strong community there; everyone knows each other very well. They will never accept you; you will always be the tourist, a money source’.* The way in which he uses the word ‘they’ implies ‘the other’, which is apparently not his group of people. By ‘they’ he probably means the ‘Tophane community’ of which he was not part, despite the fact that he actually lived in the neighbourhood. He also uses the word ‘money source’ which implies that the neighbourhood is a low-income area and that people moving into the neighbourhood do have higher incomes than those who have already lived there.

The tensions between ‘gentrified’ and ‘gentrifiers’ becomes even more clear in his following words: ‘*Remember how they attacked the galleries. The only useful thing of Tophane is; it is very close to Beyoglu and Cihangir, that’s all. Be aware of your neighbours, try to be friendly, never make any disturbance’*. By the attack of the galleries he refers to the art walk through Tophane in 2010, during which young people hanging out and drinking in front of some galleries in Tophane were attacked by a group of inhabitants. Yavuz: ‘*They attacked me also that time, they broke my windows, tried to break the apartment door. I escaped that place with police escort’*.

The media reported much about these fights and many papers were written about the how and why of these fights. Gentrification is mentioned as the main cause of these attacks, which includes a clash of lifestyles; global lifestyles in which alcohol can be consumed on the streets, versus traditional lifestyles. Also the increase of the rent prices in the neighbourhood are caused by gentrification, which is by many inhabitants attributed to the arrival of art galleries, was one of the motives behind the attacks (see further Levent Ozata). The inhabitants felt pressure being put on them to leave the neighbourhood sooner or later. When looking at some small informal farm-like houses, with gardens, in which chickens were running around and vegetables were growing, Aslı says: ‘*When Tophane changes more, they won’t be able to stay of course*.’

About the changes in Tophane’s composition of inhabitants nowadays, Hasan tells: ‘*The neighbourhood used to be quiet and dark after 7 o’clock at night, but that it is now a kind of 24 hour thing. People go out till very late, with noise and music*.’

Summarizing the reaction of inhabitants on the gentrification process taking place in Tophane is two-fold. On the one hand the Tophane of ten years to twenty years ago is described by everyone as a dangerous area while at the same time it is mentioned that during this period the connections between people were stronger and that there was a stronger ‘Tophane community’. On the other hand both by ‘gentrifiers’ and ‘gentrified’ it is indicated that Tophane became safer due to its gentrification, which has again attracted even more ‘newcomers’. The negative aspect of the gentrification mentioned by the ‘gentrified’ are the fact that the rent prices increase, which will make it hard for them to stay in the neighbourhood, as well as the loosening of connections in the neighbourhood and a less strong community than there used to be before.

Within the group of ‘gentrified’ there are many different sub-groups mainly based on religion and ethnicity. Although these differences are pointed out by everyone in the community, all of them seem to call themselves ‘Tophaneli’ (inhabitants of Tophane). ‘Gentrifiers’, however, never call themselves ‘Tophaneli’, which therefore more seems to carry the meaning of ‘being part of the Tophane community’.

A small but important general point to mention is the fact that as a researcher, whether you want it or not, you cannot avoid being somehow part of this gentrification. This became especially clear to me by Ibrahim’s words: ‘*The muhtar* (the elected representative of each urban district) *is visited by many researchers, every day, and every week many of them come to visit. They ask many questions*.’

1. **Preliminary Conclusions**

Istanbul saw sixteen centuries as a capital city of the Roman, the Byzantine and the Ottoman empires; as the forgotten city of the Ottoman past during the first decades of the Turkish Republic and as a globalizing city, competing with cities such as New York, Paris, and London in more recent times. It is not strange that during the present day globalizing developments, urban, political and social changes, these different layers of past are considered and dealt with in different and sometimes contradictory ways by different individuals, groups and authorities. Tophane serves as a case-study in this research as a microcosm to study all these views on the past as well as uses of the past for the creation of an identity; for the legitimization of positions of ethnic, religious and social groups on a relatively small scale. Tophane is one of the most dynamic areas in Istanbul, with many changes in the composition of the inhabitants having taken place over time.

The multi-ethnic, multi-cultural composition consists of; Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Roma and Muslims. During the first decades after the foundation of the republic most of these minorities left or were forced to leave the city and Tophane became mainly inhabited by migrants from Anatolia. But also within these groups many divisions are sharpened, according to the stories of the inhabitants.

Nowadays with the gentrification of Tophane, other groups of inhabitants with ‘globalizing’ lifestyles have moved in. This gentrification process started with the opening of the Istanbul Modern in 2004 together with the opening of art galleries from 2006 onwards. This gentrification, which will rapidly accelerate with the implementation of the Galata Port Project, is seen as a positive development by most of the gentrifiers. ‘Original’ inhabitants mainly mention the positive result of gentrification, namely the fact that the neighbourhood has become less dangerous but the negative effect of the increase of rents is mentioned. The realisation of the possibility that they have to leave soon is resulting in a less strong Tophane community as well as a ‘clash’ of lifestyles. These all cause tensions between ‘original’ inhabitants and gentrifiers.

What are the relations between present day inhabitants and Tophane’s different pasts? Do inhabitants feel connected with a certain past? This paper presents a certain sample of the multi-vocality of the past, the present and the links between them.

How are certain pasts used to create and maintain an identity of the neighbourhood and of certain groups within the neighbourhood? In short which role does Tophane’s heritage play in the relations between inhabitants nowadays, and specifically what role does it play in the gentrification developments? Preliminary concluding answers to these questions will be given below.

From the 2000’s onwards the potential of Istanbul’s heritage in the service of tourism and economy was discovered by the authorities, in order to create an image of Istanbul as a global city and to place Istanbul on the ‘global stage’. Due to the direct link between local and national government from 2002 onwards, municipalities received financial support from the national government for the reconstruction of urban spaces (Arzu Aksoy dilemma of direction). With law 5366 conferring full authorization with regard to urban renewal and the treatment of heritage on municipalities and, in this respect large-scale renewal projects have taken place in city parts designated as renewal areas. The Galata Port project in Tophane will probably soon be one of such projects, although the information about these exact plans to inhabitants and others is very limited. The continuation of this project will probably cause the displacement of inhabitants of Tophane to other areas in the city and possibly to mass housing areas. In this way the more recent past, the tangible and intangible past of the migrants from Anatolia who came to Tophane from the 1960’s onwards, is more or less neglected by authorities.

Certainly as important as authorities, residents of the city are the authors of the city as well (Asu Aksoy 2011 dilemma of direction), which is why I asked inhabitants from different groups, in terms of ethnicity, religion and social background, about their memories of the neighbourhood, their relations with the past and their views on the present day neighbourhood. Most of the inhabitants I spoke with generally speak about thirty or twenty years ago when discussing Tophane’s past; which can be explained by the fact that most of them are migrants from Eastern Turkey and therefore this is the past that they might have experienced themselves. By the possible future displacement of these inhabitants due to gentrification, this piece of Tophane’s past will go with them.

Much attention is paid, however, by authorities to the Ottoman past, in the sense of the recent renovations of the Nuzretiye mosque and the Kiliç Ali Pasa complex, including the hamam and the medrese. The migrant inhabitants of Tophane mainly mention such religious monuments that are still there nowadays when discussing the Ottoman past. The restoration of such monuments is pointed out by them as important, while Ottoman residential buildings do not necessarily need to be renovated according to them. This might both have to do with the fact that they are not religious buildings as well as with the fact that they are associated with the ethnic and religious minorities living there at that time, with which past most of the present day inhabitants do not identify themselves. ‘Gentrifiers’, however, more often claim the importance of such residential houses and other remains of the cosmopolitan Ottoman times of the neighbourhood. They seem to identify themselves more with this cosmopolitan Ottoman neighbourhood than with the present-day neighbourhood, many of them claiming that it is a loss and shameful that the ethnic and religious minorities had to leave. This becomes very clear from Yavuz’s comment that, ‘the September 6-7 pogroms might have done this to Tophane’, which implies his dissociation from the neighbourhood as it has become. In his view the ethnic-religious minorities are the rightful ‘owners’ of Tophane, which becomes clear when he described how migrants from Eastern Turkey re-inhabited the empty houses during the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s: ‘*These flat/land owners are not real owners, most of them stole these flats from Greeks and Armenians’*. The remaining minorities whom I spoke with consider present day Tophane as a fragmented, dangerous area with which they do not feel much connection anymore. This is due to the change in composition of inhabitants and the fact that they do not identify themselves with the ‘Tophane community’ and also due to the physical changes that Tophane underwent from the 1950’s onwards.

A certain imitation/revival of Ottoman buildings is seen at certain places, such as the *muhtar*’s building in the Tophane Park. Another physical reference to Ottoman times is the *nargileh* cafes down at Tophane, although according to Ibrahim they do not resemble the *nargileh* cafes in Ottoman times very much. Such ‘hypothetical’ reconstructions of Ottoman buildings seem to be used by authorities to dissociate themselves from the Kemalists, referring to the Ottoman period. Striking, of course, is the fact that in these references to Ottoman times, no mention or physical sign is made or seen about the ethnic-religious minorities that lived in Tophane during these times. References to the Ottoman past specifically focus on the Muslim Ottoman past and is more used for dissociation from the Republican times and present-day Kemalist ideas. Whether inhabitants of Tophane identify themselves with the Ottoman ‘imitations’ mainly seems to depend on their political views. Although the Christian and Jewish minorities of Tophane already started to leave the neighbourhood from the 1950’s onwards, according to some of the ‘newcomers’ the ‘Islamisation’ of Tophane started from the 1980’s onwards. A large part of the Tophane inhabitants are religious and vote for the AKP. The neighbourhood even has tea houses closely connected with these political views. Also during today’s protests going on in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey against the policies of Turkey’s current government, Tophane is mentioned in the Dutch media as a conservative neighbourhood in which the inhabitants disagree with the protests. While going into the neighbourhood myself talking with people about the events, some of them disagreed with the events whilst some of them claimed not to be involved in politics. Some of them disagreed with certain policies of the current government (including the implementation of the Galata Port Project in Tophane), but said that they were not to be able to do anything about it. Others joined the protests in Taksim. In that sense Tophane politics, although often indicated as AKP voters only, seems to be slightly more mixed than expected.

Nowadays divisions are made by the inhabitants themselves between different ethnicities living in Tophane. Both Yavuz and Murat argue that the composition of inhabitants of Tophane is very homogeneous nowadays. Yavuz states that Tophane is mainly inhabited by Kurds from Bitlis, while Murat argues that the majority of the inhabitants are Arabs. Ayşe points out that many differences can even be distinguished between different groups of Kurds living in Tophane. By telling her own life story she shows that often ethnicity is not something straightforward; her family comes from Malatya, she lived in Adana, she has an Arab accent, but is not Arab, nor Kurdish. A Roman community lives in Tophane nowadays, part of which might have lived there from Ottoman times onwards, but as Serkan states ‘*There were more Roma people living in Tophane back then’* (by which he means around twenty years ago and longer). While Ayşe emphasizes the equality of all people, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, simultaneously she indicates the difference between groups of Kurdish people from different cities. Şükrü focuses even more on the differences between the inhabiting ethnicities; he strongly distinguishes between the ‘we’ (by which he means the Karadenizler, Istanbulli) and the ‘they’ (by which he means the Kurds and Arabs). Striking however, is the fact that many of the above described people indicate the differences between different ethnicities in Tophane, almost all of them call themselves ‘Tophaneli’ and speak of a strong Tophane community. Many people I spoke with told me that ‘Tophaneli’ take care of things themselves; they have their own ‘internal system’ that governs the neighbourhood. Other ethnic minorities, such as Turkmens, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Russians, lived and are living in Tophane. They, however, seem to be considered by other inhabitants of Tophane as ‘foreigners’, like myself, and they often do not feel a deep connection with Tophane as a neighbourhood, nor with a Tophane community. A similar thing can be said about the ‘newcomers’ who often say they do not feel connected to the physical neighbourhood, having chosen it as a residential area because it is located centrally, nor to the Tophane community from which they say they are excluded. Bonding elements for the Tophane community seem to be social events (such as soccer matches), religion, politics, and sometimes ethnicity and mother town. Many of these inhabitants regard the Tophane neighbourhood as ‘theirs’, considering Tophane’s past of thirty, twenty or ten years ago (depending on when they came to the neighbourhood as migrants) as the most important and nostalgic past and at the same time pointing out Ottoman times as important, mainly from a shared religious (Islamic) perspective.

Where the nostalgia of ‘gentrifiers with global lifestyles’ mainly focuses on the cosmopolitan past, almost all of the inhabitants who have been living there for longer mainly express nostalgia for Tophane during the years that they arrived from other parts of Turkey. They do have strong nostalgic feelings for the Tophane of thirty, twenty and even ten years ago. Although they indicate that the neighbourhood used to be dangerous twenty to ten years ago, they also mention a stronger Tophane community in the past; which most probably results from the present-day gentrification process taking place, due to which they slowly start to lose their ‘sense of belonging’ in Tophane. This indicates the importance of different pasts to different groups of people in the gentrification process. Although these groups somehow use these pasts for the creation of their identity and for their ‘sense of belonging’ to the neighbourhood, none of these groups of inhabitants; except for the families who have lived there since Ottoman times and the remaining ethnic-religious minorities, however, seem to share the more distant past of the Tophane neighbourhood. Most of them came to the neighbourhood relatively recently, but still consider different pasts of Tophane as important and identify themselves with different times and former inhabitants.

Further research should involve more in-depth information and interviews with inhabitants, as well as more quantitative data about the composition of inhabitants in religious, political and social respects, in order to make the oral history interviews more representative for the whole neighbourhood. Linking specific places with specific stories, further research intends to come up with more profound conclusions regarding the relations between past and present in the historically, socially, politically complex Tophane neighbourhood.

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1. Cristoforo Buondelmoti Liber Insularum Archipelagi (Venice, Marc. Lat XIV) first half/beginning of the 15th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Burak and Zeybeyde Ercan are both in their 60’s. They came to Istanbul forty years ago and lived in Aksaray. They came from Adana. They have been living in Tophane for seven years now, running a garage for motorbikes as well as a laundry service for nearby hotels. Burak is also running a tailor shop in Tophane. One of their sons, Burak, studied graphic design and is now working for a design company. Necat and his family (wife and 9 children) came from Diyarbakır to Tophane twenty years ago. They want to open a new lokanta close to their house, but until that time almost the whole family is jobless. They live in an old ‘squatted’ building. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibrahim is a Turkish 64 year old man. He was born in Istanbul and migrated to Germany with his family when he was six years old. He moved back to Turkey in the beginning of his twenties. He worked on a ship and travelled the world. Now he works as a representative for energy companies in Turkey and has an office in Tophane, where he spends most of his time and where he knows everyone and everyone knows him. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Yavuz is a Turkish artist in his thirties. He lived in Tophane for some years and had to move out during the Art Walk fights in the neighbourhood and is now living out of Istanbul. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cemil, a man in his fifties, came from Kahram to Istanbul 25 years ago. He lives in Kasımpaşa but spends much time in Tophane with the Ercan family. He lived in Tophane for a year when he first came to Istanbul. At that time his only family member and acquaintance in the city was his sister. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Aslı is a Turkish woman at the age of 31. She has been living in Tophane since 2011 in a relatively new apartment building (which was built a few years ago). She did her PD in history and lived abroad for some time. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Murat is a 24 year old man, half Syrian, half Norwegian, who was born and grew up in Istanbul. He has been living in Tophane for around 5 years. He is studying graphic design. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Serkan, in the beginning of his thirties, was born in Istanbul. He is the son of a Roma family that came from Zonguldak 36 years ago. He calls himself ‘Tophaneli’ (part of the Tophane community). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lena is a woman in her thirties from the Ukraine. She is married to a Turkish man and she is running a café in Tophane. She has been living in Istanbul for ten years. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Süleyman, in his forties, came from Turkmenistan to Istanbul together with his son two years ago in order to find a job. He is now working with the Ercan family in their motorbike repair shop. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Hasan is a Turkish man of 48 years old. He came from Diyarbakır to Tophane forty years ago with his family by train. Most of his family is still living in Diyarbakır. He is the owner of a small tea and coffee café in Tophane. Although he is not an inhabitant op Tophane anymore (due to the high rents he moved to another neighbourhood) , he still spends most of his time in Tophane. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Erkan is a Turkish man of 31 years old. He studied business administration. From the age of 11 he lived in Istanbul, separately from his parents who lived elsewhere in Turkey, going to the prestigious Galatasaray high school. Nowadays he works in IT at a sports shop. He lives in Tophane. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Elisabeth is in her twenty’s, Palestinian growing up in the UK, doing a PhD in Turkey now. She has been living in Tophane for around a year now. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Since May 26th, 2013 [protests have been taking place](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Gezi_Park_protests_in_Turkey) in Taksim in opposition to the rebuilding of [Military Barracks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taksim_Military_Barracks) and a shopping center in Gezi Park. In the early morning of May 31, police moved in on the demonstrators and people sleeping in tents, and attacked them with [tear gas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tear_gas), [pepperspray](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepperspray) and [water cannons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_cannon). Since then the protests grew bigger and are not solely about the demolition of the Gezi park anymore but in the protests mainly the AKP ([Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adalet_ve_Kalk%C4%B1nma_Partisi)) government is criticized. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Şükrü came from Kastamonu in the Black Sea region to Istanbul with his family 25 years ago in order to look for jobs. He lives in Levent, but works in a metal workshop in Tophane. Every year in summer he goes back to Kastamonu. His grandfather, for instance, who is a wrestler, works there. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)