Global-Yet-*Other* Spaces of Istanbul

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Being a peripheral country, Turkey is aware of the fact that its evolution is dependent upon global dynamics, its relations with West, and that the city of Istanbul itself takes precendence over the nation in global relations. As globalization replaces modernization with its own new vocabulary which just rephrases the familiar paradoxes of the earlier period, Istanbul gains a privilege position in the political agenda of the nation, "because it is the repository of all the flows that make up globalization".1 Istanbul, then, becomes the laboratory of the nation, which is supposed to elevate the future position of Turkey in the region. Struggles to make the city a global city is in fact the struggles for the future of the country. In that sense, in criticizing the traditional spatial hierarchy Sassen correctly puts that

> "I see a re-scaling: the old spatial hierarchy local-regional-national-international no longer holds. Integration is no longer achieved by going to the next scale in terms of size. The local now transacts directly with the global -the global installs itself in locals, and the global is itself constituted through a multiplicity of locals".2

The problem definition of this paper develops from the current discussions on globalization that suggests increasing interaction between global and local. How the condition of simultaneity and interwoven complexity, inseparability and mutuality of global and local has become constitutive of and constituted by *other* spaces of Istanbul will be the main concern of this paper. Istanbul is filled with *other* spaces; both "real" and "imagined other spaces" are simultaneously juxtaposed into the space of Istanbul. What is meant by "real space" is physical, perceived space, and by "imagined other space" is symbolic space charged with signs and images of social, political. Istanbul's experiences with simultaneously existing alternative models for globalization, namely with "Westernization" and "Islamization" prepare for the generation of the city's global-yet-*other* spaces. Here, global is used to indicate those spaces attaining global characteristics through their historical and political significance constituted in the collective memory of the society. They are those features by which various political struggles and discourses wish to insert their own *otherness* into the space of Istanbul. And, *other* refers to alternative symbolic meanings attached to these historically and politically global spaces of Istanbul. It should be noticed that, the term "other" has acquired highly pejorative connotations, and been considered as synonyms with minor figures whose actions, customs are totally foreign and reprehensible, with so-called "Third World" or with spaces falling into decay at the periphery of the cities and with those living in these areas. This is in fact, very reductionist and negligent attitude. In a contrary manner, political discourses which are global both in form and practice such as "Westernization" and "Islamization", use the very tools of being *other* in order not to be assimilated yet to be differentiated. In this sense, *other* is approached as synonyms with being different and alternative, then becomes essential to the process of

identification. And, Istanbul is their symbolic space; the dream of making Istanbul their global center is pursued by transforming its symbolic spaces. Of course, it is not possible to understand the evolution of urban space in Istanbul only within the framework of the global city concept. Yet, as better stated by Keyder, this is a concept

> "with its promise of glory and material rewards [that] has become a reference point requiring politicians and vision makers to take position for or against it... Even conservative politicians embrace the global-city construct while adopting a defensive and localist position toward cultural change associated with globalization".3

Istanbul has always been the focus of the discussions centered around the tensions between East and West, modernization and tradition, Islam and secularism. In bringing alternative forms of globalization, Westernization and Islamization, this paper aims to go beyond these cliches to explore different possible worlds that inhabit and shape the space and image of city. In addition to these projects, how Istanbul is conceived in Greek thought and imagination in the past and today will be introduced in order to emphasize the global feature of the city.

Having been a long-standing process embedded in political-social-cultural-economic relations, globalization has been activated particularly with the will to new forms of power; and technological improvements only open ways to the breaking of spatial barriers. Despite the elimination of spatial distances meant by globalization, there is a search for a fixed space as it could be observed in the case of global cities. Spatiality can never be separated from its global and local dynamics, and urban space in particular, is the fundamental element of these dynamics. This paper discusses that urban space is both constituent of and constituted by the global-local relations. Urban space is where the dialectic of global-local is physically and socially materialized. Material outcomes of this dialectic become evident in the constitution of urban space, in the ways inhabitants define and experience their environments. Global indicates an interaction, an integration; and local refers to a contextual, place-bound identity. Here, hierarchical global and local dichotomy is rejected; each is taken as mutually constitutive and inclusive dialectical oppositions so that no one is given a priori privilege.4 The effects of the mutuality of global-local are inherently political, and become simultaneously material and symbolic in the urban space so as to include *other* imaginations.

Istanbul, with its unique geography including the Straits region, and featuring the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, has always contained the element of global and universal. It is the geography of Istanbul that makes its history, and explains its political, social, economic and cultural characteristics. As the capital cities of such major powers as the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, Istanbul is the historic global city. The power of the city is directly connected with the geo-political importance of its location. In history (and still today) the conquest of Istanbul is not simply the occupying of a city, as it is better stated in Napoleon's words:

"Whoever possesses Istanbul will rule the world".5 To conquer Istanbul meant to conquer the empire and/or the end of the Empire. And, today the reconquest of the city becomes the propaganda of the religious (that is Islamist) political representation used to provocate the believers against those having an idea of making Istanbul the Western-looking European city. The reconquest strategy of Islamist party is to (re)make Istanbul the center of the whole Islamic world through regaining its Islamic identity. This is the indication of the fact that spatial issues are the fundamental concern of the political powers in order to have a social existence in the national-yet-globalizing Turkish society. Those efforts to make Istanbul a Western city and those efforts to emphasize its Islamic character co-exist and/or juxtapose upon each other. The rhetorics of both "West(ernization)" and "Islam(ization)" are global yet organized in local structures and embodied in urban space. These seemingly diverse global locals have a dream of occupying both the space and the image of Istanbul. The symbolic spaces of Istanbul are in fact their global tools used to resist and display their *otherness*.

Departing from this point, spatialization indicates a political process; it is both a cause and a result of power relations. It puts space at the center of power struggles. In so doing, it enriches the social-political imaginations of global and local, yet might open way for global forms of *other*. Drawing each global discourse, Westernization and Islamization, into the figuration of competing political powers, enforces them to form a social imagination that could have an existence and material reality with its own constituted space. The way in which a discourse is spatialized, then becomes a stimulating source for the understanding of possibilities and differences in the realms of representation, material and imagination. At the center of each alternative globalization model are the struggles for globalizing the local that is to make Istanbul a global city, and localizing the global that is to inscribe their discourse into the space of Istanbul. For each political model, all the conceptions of local are re-invented and re-made. It is in this case that the local is new, and resembles both material and symbolic *otherness*. The activities in the realm of imagination, which provide a ground for the emergence of *other* spaces, cannot be considered apart from how space is represented in the discourse, how it is experienced and materialized, and how it becomes the representation. From this point, it can be said that Istanbul is neither simply the additive combinations of global-and-local nor located in between these dynamics. The simultaneity and diversity in terms of social images and metaphors of spatiality prepare for the possibility of *other* identities, and in turn make the question of which Istanbul, whose Istanbul and who will ascribe meaning to the city crucial.

Istanbul is not becoming "a global city" as implied by the model directed to make it a finance center of the region, an important point in the global economy. Yet, Istanbul has been experiencing transformation under the impact of globalization. It becomes globalized in the sense that there is the intensification of global flow of money, signs, images, people, information; there is an emerging service sector in management, marketing, banking, transport, advertising, telecommunication.6 Although Istanbul is not global in terms of the political economy of globalization, it is global in terms of its history and geography. With regard to its geography, the city has always gained centrality in the political-social-spatial history. The political history of the Ottoman Empire is centered around the city of Istanbul, and the history of Europe and Mediterranean region cannot be written without any reference to Istanbul. The city was the center of two religions: the Orthodox Christianity and the Islam. Istanbul was "the City" for Greeks, "der saadet" (the door to happiness) for Muslims and "the emperor's city" for the Balkan people. Today, as to the Orthodox Church and to the majority of the population in Greece, Istanbul is still Constantinopolis, the city of Constantine, the father of their Church; or it is just simply "the City" (with capital C) "...plain and unadorned, since it is so immediately dominant in the Greek imagination that it requires no further identification".7 This is global-yet-*other* Istanbul as imagined by the Greeks. Symbolic meanings of Istanbul in the political and social

imaginations have made the city global-yet-*other* city at the political-cultural-social level. Its potential status as a global city is explicitly different from those of contemporary global cities where the global capital is embedded.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 as the material symbol of the Byzantine Empire produced profound emotions to the Christians. One of the laments composed right after the fall explains their psychology: "Whoever is a Christian, Let him weep for Constantinople, This Queen of Cities was a home to all, to Greeks and Latins".8 The Turkish capture of Constantinople is still felt "...as a national trauma, a calamity that annihilated Greek culture, prevented Greek participation in the western Renaissance, and plunged country into cultural and economic poverty".9 After, the establishment of the independence of Greece (in 1830's), one of the influential figures of the Parliament declared two main centers of Hellenism: "...Athens, the capital of the Greek Kingdom, (and) 'The City', the dream and hope of all Greeks".10 With the global project of Hellenistic ideology known as "the Great Idea" during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which called for the recapture of Constantinople and the resumption of the liturgy in the great church of Hagia Sophia, there reappeared a series of scholar texts and folksongs expressing both amazement and hopes of the Greeks of that time for the City. Yet, from the historical event of Asia Minor in 1922 (which meant the end of "the Great Idea") on, Constantinople appeared as "the Lost Center" and "the Promised Land of Greeks" in the literature, and so became history.11 Today, on the date of the fall of the city (29th of May), the Greek church still cries for Constantinopolis, the city of Constantine, for Hagia Sophia and for those that lost their life during the capture of the city by the Turks. This day, on the other hand, is a (national) celebration to the Turks for it symbolizes the conquest of Istanbul. In particular, as to the Islamist thinking the conquest means the victory of Islam to Christianity because Istanbul is "the Promised Land" of Islamic world whose conquest was predicted and wanted by the prophet Mohammed. Thus, the city seems as "the Promised Lands" of different territories and different worlds, and in that sense it goes beyond the limits of spatial boundaries in social thoughts and imaginations.

Istanbul as the last and the only capital of Islamic world has an important place in the Islamist discourse. Having held the local power in Istanbul since 1994, the religious party attempts to revitalize the Ottoman past, and remake Istanbul the Islam city and/or neo-Ottoman city. In their imagination, everything Ottoman becomes the symbol of Islam, and Istanbul that resembles the Ottoman past is the both focus and locus of their operations.12 To do so, they, in fact, search for *otherness* situated in Islamic formation, that would open up the way for the production of *other* spaces of Istanbul being charged with the spatial metaphors of the religious ideology. The proposal for the Islamic Cultural Center at Taksim area and the efforts for reopening Hagia Sophia Museum as a place of worship, as a mosque support this argument. The struggles of Islamist group are not without political considerations, and become hegemonic in the constitution of the Islamic community in Istanbul.13

Hagia Sophia is at the top of the lists of the tourist guide books; it is the place tourists wish to see first when they arrive in Istanbul. It is originally built as a Byzantine Church, converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of the city, and finally converted into a museum by the request of the founder of Turkish Republic, Ataturk, in 1935. Symbolic presence of Hagia Sophia in political-ideological map has always become hegemonic in the construction of global discourses, the constitution of a society and in turn, in the making of history. From the view point of this paper, Hagia Sophia is the global-yet-*other* space of Istanbul. For those secularist Turkish visitors, it is a museum that stands for the symbol of national heritage. For Islamist visitors, it would more be a mosque as the symbol of the victory of the Ottoman-Islamic world to the Byzantine-Christian world. And, for (Greek) Orthodox Christian visitors, it might most likely be a visit to its original state as a church.

Alternative globalization projects of "Westernization" and "Islamization" see Istanbul as an economic enterprise. By the 1980's, there emerged attempts to place Turkish economy within the unitary logic of global capitalism. In parallel to these struggles, there developed a wish to make Istanbul a global city in order to attract foreign capital. In that sense, tourism has appeared as an agent in the service of global capital, which will ease to bring the city to the level of global city. And, Istanbul with its past glories, with its symbolic sites, has become the center of tourism investments in Turkey. Tourism-based strategies are developed by constructing a scenario through utilizing those surviving spatial yet symbolic elements of the past. For the Islamist scenario, with its Ottoman-religious structures, Istanbul is to be so treated as to be the center of religious tourism. The contemporary political Islam cannot be observed without regard for the changing patterns of global relations determined by the process of integration to the world capitalism. Their policies are not only aligned with religious culture but also with the capital-based strategies.14 By the liberation of economy, Islamist groups have started to appear as a competing power in the economic sphere of Turkey. In order to be an alternative to the project of Westernization, they actively engage in reformulating Islamic thought with reference to the dominant global relations. The spatial elements of the Ottoman past are used for the representation of the *other* that is reformulated in religious-traditional culture, and for the legitimization of their operations to make Istanbul the finance center of the Islamic world. Then, the will towards reopening Hagia Sophia as a mosque is a part of the second conquest strategy of the city from those searching for the Western facade for the city.

The Sultanahmet district where Hagia Sophia, the Sultanahmet Mosque (the Blue mosque) and the Hippodrome of the Byzantine or Atmeydani of the Ottoman periods are, has always been the privilege area for tourism investments. The restorations in the periphery of the historical center which are developed within the framework of Westernization project, are to produce an image housing all oriental-eastern differences and *otherness*. Ironically, the Westernization project uses the very tools of *other* which is associated with being oriental, in order not to assimilate Istanbul with the contemporary global cities of the West. As to their imaginations, this is the representation of the local (culture). In doing so, symbolic meaning of the Sultanahmet district is reconstructed so as to be a global-yet-*other* space of Istanbul by elaborating the so-called "authentic" experiences through playing upon the symbolic and social notions of this particular area.15

Beyoglu (Pera) is another prominent place of Istanbul, which has acquired various symbolic meanings in different discourses. Being founded as a Genoese trading colony in the 13th century, it had a local autonomy from the Byzantine Empire. And, it was where a predominantly non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire lived after the conquest of the city. First examples of the 19th century Westernization as the symbols of modern living, such as banks, hotels, theaters, department stores appeared first in this area. In that sense, it became the financial, entertainment and consumption center of the city and in turn of the Empire. It resembled "Europe in Istanbul", and always was seen as the "symbol of civilization" even during the transition period from the empire to the nation-state.16 As a result of the revitalization plan proposed in the 1980's, the Istiklal street -the main street lined with buildings of the 19th century- was turned into the pedestrian street. The street is remade through the search for "nostalgia"; the railroad is installed so as to resemble the old Beyoglu and to recreate the 19th century spatial-social practices of the area. The 19th century buildings of Beyoglu are the symbolic tools of the discourse having a wish of making Istanbul a global western city. The district has the potential of being an attraction point for tourists. It has been the singular district symbolizing the history of Westernization not only in the city but also in the country.

However, for the Islamist discourse, this Beyoglu is where the contemporary urban problems of Istanbul emerged. Then, there are different narratives, symbols, representations and pasts constructed for Beyoglu: "Beyoglu: a symbol of 'civilization' and 'elegance'; Beyoglu: a 'brothel'; Beyoglu: a 'foreign' heritage".17 In nationalist-traditionalist-Islamist conception, the district has been seen the place of foreign invasion and degeneration, as the gateway of western imperialism. It has nothing to do with Turkishness; the buildings are built by non-Muslim architects in western style. Beyoglu is a "den of disease", "a whore", "an enclave of evil".18 Paradoxically, after the religious party won the local control of the Beyoglu district in the elections of 1994, another scenario-image was constructed. Beyoglu appeared as the symbol of Ottoman (that is Islamic) justice which allowed for the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups in harmony and peace.

For Islamist party too, Beyoglu is a prominent place in terms of tourism. Yet it should gain an Islamic character in order to remind those tourists visiting the district that Istanbul is the Islamic city. The proposal for a mosque and Islamic cultural center at Taksim square in Beyoglu is a politically conscious effort. It is a part and result of the reconquest strategy of Islamists. Symbolic messages conveyed by the location are hegemonic and in turn become the constitutive of the religious thought and imagination. Of the modernization and civilization project of the early Republican era, Taksim was the first locus chosen for Istanbul. It is the first place where the symbol of new Republic (that is the monument of Republic) was erected in Istanbul. Paradoxically, being established as the social space in the form of reaction to the backwardness and as the symbol of Republican identity, Taksim is chosen as the locus of the project of the Islam city. That, in fact, indicates the political and ideological significance of the location. Each discourse provides its own referential context in according to which Taksim is defined and embodied in the imaginations so as to generate *other* Taksims.

In all these examples, the important point is the social transformation of the given physical form with the mutually reinforcing questions of the power of spatial representation and spatial representation of the power. At the basis of *other* spaces is the transformation of the worlds we live in with the right to the difference. That is the "second nature", as called by Lefebvre in his theorization of "the right to the city".19 *Other* space is lived-and-symbolic space embracing all the social-and-political symbols and metaphors that will make up the (discursive) representations. In this sense, it might be an informative space describing *itself* that is the social thought and imagination, through the visual and physical evidences. Istanbul with its symbolic sites, contains the potential of emerging as global-yet-*other* city. Here, *other* does not substitute for local, yet contains the conceptions of local. Despite the fact that Istanbul both encompasses and also is dependent upon global and local dynamics, the city is more than the combinations of the two, and not located in between them. Istanbul is where power acts and where this power is closely constrained with the power of its symbolic sites. The power of symbols attached to these spaces reinforces the imposing and operational role of being *other* in the transformation and control of the given environments. Actually, this is what makes Istanbul beyond the limits of global-local duality.

NOTES

[1]Caglar Keyder (ed.), "Synopsis," Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local (N.Y., Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1999), p:196.

[2]Saskia Sassen, "Juxtaposed temporalities: Producing a new zone," Cynthia Davidson (ed.), Anytime (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), p:119.

[3]Caglar Keyder, "Synopsis," p:189.

[4]This conceptualization of global and local is applied and discussed in the unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: Berin F. Gur, Reconstruction of urban space through the dialectics of global and local: Evolution of urban space in Sultanahmet-Istanbul (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 1999).

[5]Cited in T.Z. Tunaya, "Istanbul World Capital City," Lectures Delivered on the 511th Anniversary of the Conquest of Istanbul (Istanbul: Fen Fakultesi Doner Sermaye Basimevi, 1967), p:70.

[6]For more detailed information on really existing and informal globalization in Istanbul see Caglar Keyder (ed.), "The Setting," Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local (N.Y., Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1999, p:3-28).

[7]David Holden, Greece without Columns: The Making of the Modern Greeks (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p:70.

[8]C. Th. Dimaras, Modern Greek Literature, Trans. by Mary P. Gianos (London: Uni. of London Press, 1972), p:56.

[9]This is generally how Turkish domination of Greece is understood and presented. Gregory Jusdanis, "East is East-West is West: It's a Matter of Greek Literary History," Journal of Modern Greek Studies, V.5, N.1 (May, 1987, The Johns Hopkins Uni. Press), p:1.

[10]The speech was done by Ioannis Kolettis in 1844. Artemis Leontis, "Minor Field, Major Territories: Dilemmas in Modernizing Hellenism," Journal of Modern Greek Studies, V.8, N.1 (May, 1990, The Johns Hopkins Uni. Press), p:43.

[11]Artemis Leontis, "'The Lost Center' and the Promised Land of Greek Criticism," Journal of Modern Greek Studies, V.5, N.2, (October, 1987, The Johns Hopkins Uni. Press), p:175.

[12]Actually, during the period of the foundation of modern Turkish nation (i.e. the early years of the Republic), this Istanbul, pictured as a relic of the Ottoman past, was an image reminding to "modern-civilized"Turks what they had to forget: a closed, backward, Islamic world. Ottoman was "the other" with all its pejorative connotations in the Early Republican imagination. The Ottoman *other* was used in order to promote the vision of the civilized, western looking Turkey.

[13]A more detailed study on the condition of Islam as a global discourse in Turkish context and their operations in Istanbul is presented in the IASTE 2000 Conference titled as 'The End of Tradition?' (Trani-Italy, October 2000), and published by the organization in the Working Paper Series. Berin F. Gur, "Redefining Tradition for Multiple Geographies: Towards juxtaposed traditions and the Case of Islam in Istanbul as a Discursive Act," Traditional Dwellings and Settlements: Working Paper Series, vol.136 (2000): 69-83.

[14]The relations between Islam and capitalism, Islam and globalization are written in various forms in the following papers: Berin F. Gur, "Redefining Tradition for Multiple Geographies: Towards juxtaposed traditions and the Case of Islam in Istanbul as a Discursive Act,"..., and Berin F. Gur, "Global 'other': Islam and its discourse of Istanbul," Domus m 9 (January-March 2001) p:68-70 [In Turkish].

[15]Berin F. Gür, Reconstruction of urban space through the dialectics of global and local: Evolution of urban space in Sultanahmet-Istanbul... p:165-174.

[16]Ayfer Bartu, "Who Owns the Old Quarters? Rewriting Histories in a Global Era," Caglar Keyder (ed.), Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local (N.Y., Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1999), p:33.

[17]Ibid., p:36.

[18]For a detailed discussion of the narrations on Beyoglu see Ayfer Bartu, "Who Owns the Old Quarters? Rewriting Histories in a Global Era,"... p: 31-46. And, for the discussion of the politics of Islamist party developed particularly for Beyoglu in the local elections of 1994 see Tanil Bora, "Istanbul of the Conqueror: The 'Alternative Global City' Dreams of Political Islam," Caglar Keyder (ed.), Istanbul: Between the Global and Local (N.Y., Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1999), p:47-58.

[19]Henri Lefebvre, Writings on Cities, Trans. and ed. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell Pub., 1996).