En Route to Unity: Armenian Travellers and Dwellers in Twenty-First-Century Turkey

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DECLARATION

I, Salim Aykut Öztürk, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis studies regimes and everyday practices of both short- and long-distance mobility that produce physical and cultural distances among Armenians in and en route to Turkey. It is concerned with portraying how people, things, and ideas are re-made as they travel (Tsing 2010: 347) and works towards a collage of mobility in which heterogeneous narratives present ‘a greater picture’ of place-making (Clifford 1997: 12). This is how it triggers discussions on the co-constitution of particular antagonisms of space and affiliation, and invites readers to a new perspective of comprehending ‘dwelling’ with ‘travelling’, ‘insides’ with ‘outsides’, ‘natives’ with ‘foreigners’, and state-imposed definitions of unity with personal accounts of unity (and diversity).

The thesis deals with the physical and imagined components of unity through a metaphor of islands, which guides the reader through the ethnographic material collected during multi-sited research conducted in Turkey, in Armenia, and on the roads that connect these two neighbouring countries. The metaphor does not define distinct and compartmentalized zones of culture, history, and economy; instead, it accounts for ongoing connection and movement despite physical and imagined barriers in/between the two countries. However, the metaphor is not devoid of physical substance; an entire country, a migrant enclave, a city block, and a literal island off Istanbul constitute its more tangible components.

The thesis gives a vivid description of the human geography of dwelling in and travelling to Turkey. Inspired by Green’s work on the Greek-Albanian border (2005), it locates its Armenian protagonists as ‘people who take mobility for granted’ and provides the historical, political, and physical conditions behind this sentiment. In doing so, it portrays the making of a “state-crafted” epistemological regime (see Navaro-Yashin 2012), in which an Armenian minority is invented along with a Turkish majority (al-Rustom 2015: 413). It necessarily tackles the making of contemporary Turks as much as Armenians.
**IMPACT STATEMENT**

I conducted research to understand the dynamics of everyday relationships between the members of the historical community of Armenians in Istanbul and the recent post-socialist Armenian migrants in the city. It is estimated that some 50,000 post-Ottoman and post-genocide Armenians live in Istanbul as Turkish citizens (İçduygu and Kirişçi 2009). It is also estimated that some 10,000 post-socialist Armenians currently reside in the city as undocumented migrants (Ozinian 2009). While the thesis depicts processes of community-making among these groups in Istanbul and elsewhere, it does not suggest any projection on their merger based on these numbers. Instead, it puts ethnographic data first.

The research was conducted after Turkey and Armenia signed protocols of normalization in 2009. The protocols, known as the Zurich Protocols, aimed at setting up a road map for opening the borders and initiating diplomatic relationships between the two neighbouring countries. However, the protocols faced criticism in the two countries from both politicians and citizens with nationalistic agendas and were never ratified in the Turkish or Armenian parliaments. As a result, Armenia annulled them in March 2018. The fate of the protocols in Turkey still has not been decided to date.

When I was conducting research, the prospect of normalization of relationships was still viable; various local and international organizations were channelling funds for large-scope projects of artistic production, professional and academic exchange, research, and conflict resolution. Although the normalization process seems to be suspended at a state level for now, partnerships based on these projects and a large network of academics, artists, intellectuals, and journalists continue contributing to the exchange of ideas and information between the two countries. Such exchange, which I have already been a part of, and which I expect this thesis to be part of in the near future, triggers discussions on the ontology of the ongoing problems between the two countries, investigates the current situation, and, whether directly or indirectly, provides food for thought for eventual resolution.
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NOTES on LANGUAGE

Armenian names, words, and expressions cited in the text follow two different sets of rules on transliteration as the official language of Armenia, Eastern Armenian, and Western Armenian as spoken and written in Istanbul (and in many other diasporic centres in the Middle East and elsewhere) follow different orthographies and consequently are transliterated differently. The translations of Western and Eastern Armenian used within the text are based on the Library of Congress system of transliteration, with exceptions. Armenians in both Istanbul and Armenia have formulated their own ways of transliteration in everyday life. On social media and in text messaging, or in situations where information like road directions, food recipes, or song lyrics is shared with non-Armenians, Armenians in both countries transcribe in a multiplicity of ways that are not recognized by rules of academic writing. In Istanbul, most Armenians are more comfortable writing Armenian in Latin script following Turkish orthography than in Armenian script. In the Republic of Armenia, one is fascinated by how a regular citizen is able to write in Armenian in three different scripts: Armenian, Cyrillic (as an ongoing legacy of the Russian influence), and Latin (from English or French language education).

As for the Turkish names, words, and expressions used within the text, these are presented in their contemporary (i.e., post-Ottoman Latinized) orthography. A guideline to some unique Turkish vowels and consonants should help the readers through the text:

(i) Ç/ç sounds like the “Ch” in Chechnya or the “Cz” in Czech Republic.
(ii) Ş/ş sounds like the “Sh” in Shanghai or the “Ch” in Chicago.
(iii) Ö/ö sounds like Österreich in German or the “eux” in French Montreux.
(iv) Ü/ü sounds like über in German or the vowel in French sur.
(v) I/i and İ/i should not be confused, as the lowercase of the former does not take a dot and the uppercase of the latter is dotted. The latter sounds like the “I” in Israel or India, while the former is pronounced as the sound between consonants in any -tion or -sion ending in English, as in dissertation, inspiration, or dimension.
(vi) Ğ/g is a glottal stop and always appears after a vowel. It can be omitted in pronunciation.
(vii) It should also be noted that the letter “C” is pronounced differently than in any other language that uses the Latin script. It sounds like the “J” in Jamaica.
Figure 1: Places of Significance to the Research.
INTRODUCTION

What Can a Building’s Name Reveal?

I started my research in Istanbul with the aim of understanding the dynamics of everyday relationships between members of the city’s old and established Armenian community and recent migrants from the Republic of Armenia. Almost a year after I completed my fieldwork in late 2014, I took a walk in the borough of Şişli in Istanbul and I noticed an old apartment building that I had not seen before. I was very surprised, as I had walked on that street probably hundreds of times over the course of the two years I spent in that particular area of Istanbul. The building was located only a couple of minutes in walking distance from the Osmanbey metro station on the M2 metro line that connected the northern financial districts to the southern historical and cultural centres of the city. This was a major shopping street connecting the wealthy neighbourhood of Nişantaşı and the relatively less prosperous Kurtuluş, where a great majority of my Istanbullu Armenian friends and informants lived. There were large international brand stores for teenagers next to minuscule old shops that served ageing customers. Many of the display windows that faced the street were full of stickers that read SALE (in
English), İNDİRİM (in Turkish), and تخفيضات (in Arabic). Behind the façade of this major street, side streets were full of wholesale stores that only sold fabrics produced in Turkey, often with textile workshops in their basements. The shop windows were full of other stickers that read оптов (lit. ‘in bulk’ or ‘wholesale’) in Russian.

The building is located a few minutes away from one of Istanbul’s most important and prestigious Armenian institutions, the Mkhitaryan School, which has been in operation since 1866. The building is also not far from where the famous Armenian newspaper Agos was located until 2015, and where its editor-in-chief, Hrant Dink, was murdered by a young Turkish nationalist in 2007. Today a memorial plaque embedded in the pavement commemorates this violent event of recent Turkish history. The site of Dink’s assassination has since become a major site for political protest. As I strive to contextualize here, the building was located centrally in relation to various locations in the city, and recent and historical processes in which politics, society, and economy took shape in Turkey, but I missed it during my research. How could this have happened?

I understand my former misrecognition of the building within wider processes of nation-building and the Turkification of various human and non-human components of post-Ottoman Turkey. As shown in the photograph above, the building is inscribed with two names. An Armenian family name was engraved in stone in capital letters: TAHTABURUNYAN APARTIMAN. Above the Armenian name, a plastic plate provided a different building name in Turkish, again in capital letters: BİRLİK AP. (lit. ‘unity’ or ‘union’). The building numbers were also different, revealing a temporal gap in the installation of the name plates.

Over the course of my research in Istanbul, a crucial part of which combined strolling in the streets, comparing old and new street maps at libraries, and identifying building construction years in the municipal archives, I came to realize that there was a clear relationship between how the post-Ottoman nation-state “imagined” its citizens and how it simultaneously “crafted” the
urban landscape (see Navaro-Yashin 2012). In other words, the particular spatial organization of the city of Istanbul reflected the histories of relationships between the state and its diverse citizens: stigmatization of particular populations as ‘different’ or ‘foreign’ triggered stigmatization of particular places, and vice versa. With this in mind as I walked past the apartment, I sought explanations for why an old building had two names (and two street numbers). Why did the people who named the building for a second time not replace the former nameplate, and what did the newer name mean for the people who had opted for the name change? Another question that occupied my mind was about the passers-by, including myself, and the ways in which the building did or did not acquire visibility for us.

In The Sacred Remains, Richard Parmentier (1987) suggests that the investigation of the coding of historicity should involve a taxonomy of signs that physically manifest culturally (and historically) endowed meaning. For him, signs function in two different yet overlapping ways: as “signs of history” and as “signs in history”. The semantic power of the former lies more in what it represents, while for the latter it is also the material quality of the signifying vehicle (11). He notes that “signs of history” are representational expressions that record and classify particular events as history and deny others as such through their iconic, indexical, and residually symbolic properties (12). An ancient manuscript, an original copy of a historic peace agreement, or a biography of a political figure are amongst the various signs of history that “can originate either in the spatiotemporal contexts of the events to which they refer or, at any later time, as the self-conscious reconstruction of the past” (11).

A “sign in history”, however,

refers to those signs of history which, as objects, linguistic expressions, or patterns of action, themselves become involved in social life as loci of historical intentionality because of their function as representational vehicles. These objects are frequently considered to be concrete embodiments or repositories of the past they record, that is, to be endowed with the essentialized or reified property of historicity (Parmentier 1987: 12) (emphasis original).
There is not a binary opposition between the two types of Parmentier’s concepts of signs; all “signs in history” are first “signs of history”. However, it is the capacity of those “signs in history” to seize (or more specifically to deface or re-inscribe) the “signs of history” that constitutes the difference between the two notions (see also Parmentier 2007). In paraphrasing Parmentier, Marcy Brink-Danan writes in *Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey* (2012) that “the act of defacing a ‘sign of history’ necessarily seizes on the first signifier of the past to create a new meaning about the past that is usable toward present claims” (73).

As I understand the particular instance of name-giving at the Birlik/Tahtaburunyan apartment building, the two nameplates, one on top of the other, are “signs in history” that seize but do not necessarily deface each other. On the contrary, it is their coexistence and simultaneous visibility as a powerful combined image that “create[s] a new meaning about the past” as expressed by Brink-Danan above (2012: 73). Such signs in history that depend on a duality of images, names, and narratives are scattered all around Turkey, and I suggest here and throughout the thesis that these dualities create a particular epistemological regime in which the official and the personal not only oppose but also unexpectedly complete each other in many ways.

In terms of naming, I observed instances of having two (or multiple) names more than once in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey: in place and street names of the city, in the names of my neighbours and informants, and even in the names of particular daily practices, personal and more collective routines and rituals. This has been a common practice especially in the case of non-Muslims in the Republic of Turkey; however, the nation-building process has also left its mark on various Muslim populations such as Kurds or Arabs, and migrants from former Ottoman territories in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. As Amy Mills (2010) notes in her *Streets of Memory*, different conceptualizations of the past among the residents of contemporary Istanbul provide them with different understandings of the city landscape, and vice versa: not only are there differences between older
and more recent inhabitants of the city in terms of generation and migration, but there are also differences that stem from one’s particular relationship to the Turkish nation-state.

Within a post-Ottoman hierarchy of citizenship, ‘distances’ to Turkishness have set the tone of the relationship between citizens and the state. In Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey, Soner Çağaptay (2005) demonstrated that these distances were not only imagined by Turkish citizens alone, but also carefully articulated by the state. Particular definitions of race, culture, and citizenship by the state resulted in three different conceptualizations of Turkishness that simultaneously referred to Turkish (or in some contexts Turkic-language) speakers, Muslims, and people born within the borders of Turkey in general (Ibid.). In this articulation of Turkishness, there were many people who did not fit neatly within this matrix. As mentioned above, there were people born within the boundaries of Turkey whose mother tongue was not Turkish (such as Kurds) or who were not Muslim (such as Armenians). There were also those who were Muslim but did not speak Turkish and were not born in Turkey (such as Bosnians). In this scheme of Turkishness, if one spoke Turkish, had a Muslim family heritage, and was born in the territory of Turkey, she was a Turk. If one had Muslim heritage and was born in the territory of Turkey but did not speak Turkish, then she was expected to be a Turk one day. If one was only born in the territory of Turkey and neither spoke Turkish nor had Muslim heritage, then she was only a Turkish citizen. This is why, as suggested in the scholarship of orientalist Bernard Lewis (1968), “a non-Muslim in Turkey may be called a Turkish citizen, but never a Turk” (15) (also quoted in İçduygu and Soner 2006: 454).

However, what if those who were denied Turkishness at times regarded themselves as Turks?
Who Is (Not) a Turk? (And Why Does It Matter?)

The three definitions of Turkishness imply different relationships and distances between citizens and the nation-state. However, I suggest that we not jump to the conclusion that the distances between the state and its citizens directly index ontological differences among Turkish citizens themselves. As Çağaptay (2005) reveals, state-imposed racial, cultural, and territorial definitions of Turkishness also leave room for more complex understandings of the term among contemporary citizens of Turkey in everyday life (cf. Brink-Danan 2012). As Sam Kaplan suggests in The Pedagogical State (2006), the premises of citizenship and thus state-citizen relationships must be treated as objects of study and not as objective methods to study a particular society (16). This is because neither the two sides of these relationships nor the distances in between are fixed or inform monolithic entities of power, interest, and identity (see Gupta 1995). In the context of Turkey, Kaplan (2006) notes that contemporary Turkish citizens “articulate an ensemble of contingent subject positions as they come to understand and describe citizenship not only in ethnocultural terms, for example, but also in biological, sexual, moral, economic, and linguistic ones – all of which are closely interconnected” (18).

If we look back in history, Lerna Ekmekcioglu, in Recovering Armenia (2016), wrote that in the period of transformation from empire to republic in the 1920s, Armenians who were committed to staying put in their homes had to adopt to the new circumstances quickly by fashioning personal and communal strategies in order to survive the hostile environment without giving up their understandings of the constitutive elements of Armenian identity (8). Some 90 years later, in line with Kaplan’s (2006) suggestion, during my fieldwork I was struck by how the category of ‘Turk’ had different implications, although it had very particular political and historical baggage for a spectrum of people ranging from those who denied to those who were denied Turkishness (as a hegemonic ethnic term and as a citizenship category, respectively). As Ekmekcioglu noted (2016), at the beginning, Kemalism, the official ideology of the new post-Ottoman Turkey – and its Westernization project, which also necessarily included nation-building in
the post-empire state – held out a promise for Armenians, and this was an important reason why at least some of them could have liked the new Turkey (117). She also noted that an “intentional vagueness” in the definition of Turkishness in this early Republican period made it possible for Armenians to find avenues for inclusion although the state in practice differentiated between Turks-by-lineage and Turks-by-citizenship (105). As a Turkish man from Turkey, I was surprised to find that the term ‘Turkish’ was not always understood as discriminatory by citizens who did not ethnically or culturally consider themselves Turks: at times the term informed a mode of affiliation with locality (as in ‘local-ness’ or a place of origin) and “cultural intimacy” (Herzfeld 1997) among people who were positioned in different compartments of Turkishness ( Çağaptay 2005). However, such a situation did not mean that the term’s political and historical baggage did not matter. As I will clarify below, although this is not a study about people who consider themselves ethnic Turks per se, it inevitably situates Turkishness at its centre. Following Kaplan (2006), this is because it is those interconnections between different understandings of Turkishness (and non-Turkishness) that account for the emergence of a particular epistemological regime of dualities in Turkey.

The epistemological regime, as I construe it in this thesis, primarily concerns the production of truths and facts as direct consequences of mutual power relations between the state and its citizens, “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operations of statements” (Foucault 1980: 133). By no means do I attempt here to identify who has power (and who does not) and put them in a hierarchy, as that is well beyond my task in this thesis. Nevertheless, I should comment on how I consider power as a creative field, a source of human organization and sociality in a Foucauldian sense. In this sense, power is not limited to ‘authority’; rather, it refers to a larger field of interaction that produces, tabulates, and imposes, and subsequently manipulates and diverts spaces of action (de Certeau 1984: 30). There should be two interrelated implications of such creativity of power on the production of knowledge (and truths and facts). On the one hand, as Foucault (1977) himself wrote, “there is no power
relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (22). This is how power reaches and inserts itself into individuals’ learning processes in general (Foucault 1980: 30). On the other hand, concerning specifically the anthropological production of knowledge, the power relations between the researcher and the informants (which are widely believed to reflect the wider power relationships between the colonizing and the colonized worlds) also imply constitution of a particular epistemological regime in which knowledge has been produced and circulated. This is the epistemology of anthropology itself, and as Paul Rabinow (1986) argued it is based on a very particular and historically contingent way of looking at the world as a discipline heavily invested in providing certainty of subjects’ representations (241). In this view, we need to reject epistemology in anthropology as we do not need a new epistemology of the other. Instead, “we should be attentive to our historical practice of projecting our cultural practices onto the other” (Ibid.).

The epistemological regime has a very particular implication in the case of Turkey. It specifically refers to a “post-genocide habitus” (Suciyan 2015) in which images, narratives, and discourses conflict, coexist, and constitute each other. As in the case of the apartment building I saw in Istanbul, “signs in history” seize “signs of history” (Parmentier 1987; 2007) in Turkey where both the urban palimpsest and the rural landscape have particular material qualities in which all the repressed components of the past return and make the country an *unhomely* home in a Freudian sense (1913), a situation that I will demonstrate in the core chapters of this thesis. This is because the country is haunted by the people and their things that are purposefully chosen to be both written-off history and ignored in our perception (or forgotten in our memory) (Saybaşılı 2008: 34), a situation that is also epitomized in my own lack of recognition of the Birlik/Tahtaburunyan apartment building during my research. As this thesis reveals, such a situation in contemporary Turkey is related to the century-long history of the Turkification of peoples and things led by the state.
In *Faces of the State*, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) writes that the state endures both as an idea and as reality as a direct result of what she calls “the everyday life of statecraft”, which involves a vast array of bureaucratic practices, routines, and rituals, and cultural and material production in the name of the state (178-179). In the context of Turkey, she notes that the practice of statecraft was historically reserved for the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire (and the subsequent Turkish nation-state) (201), thus implying an inherent link between the people who are considered ‘Turks’ (people who are simultaneously from Turkey, Turkish-speaking, and Muslim) in the eyes of the state and the people who rule. As she writes, “more than any other symbol of identity, the state has been central to the constitution of Turkish identity” (Ibid.). It is in this historical context of statecraft that we should also understand Turkishness as a unit of ‘distance’ between citizens and the state. However, it should be noted that the operation of Turkishness as a marker of identity in the country is not confined to imagining those distances by citizens themselves. Perhaps more than anything else, the practical implementation of Turkishness as a distance marker has a direct consequence on the political and the spatial organization of the state. The peculiarities of the history of nation-building and structural racism in Turkey show that ‘unity’ (in Turkish: *birlik*) for Armenians has been simultaneously constructed inside and imposed from outside. As the core chapters of this thesis suggest, for Armenians the term often emerges as a re-articulation of state-imposed differences, while for the state its wide circulation in media and discourse is purposefully linked to a vital urge to hide and deny the unmistakable diversity of contemporary Turkey. This thesis approaches these issues of Armenian community-making by following an ethnographic lens of travelling and mobility, and a particular metaphor of place-making that I unpack below.

**The Thesis**

This thesis studies the ways in which regimes and everyday practices of short- and long-distance mobility produce physical and cultural distances among
Armenians in and en route to Turkey. It is a description of place-making to demonstrate how people, cultures, and things are re-made as they travel (Tsing 2000: 347). It investigates how people dwell in mobility and its various forms (Urry 2000: 157). However, during my research in a multiplicity of localities, I observed how mobility is constituted through immobility and stasis, and vice versa (Clifford 1997), in the sense that the circulation of particular people and things was made possible at the expense of others who did not and could not move (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013). I also focused on how formalized systems of regulations, sanctions, and laws were constantly attacked, critiqued, and transformed by informal tactics of mobility by those subject to state power (see Morris and Polese 2014 on ‘informality’; de Certeau 1984 on ‘tactics’). The thesis is based on two-and-a-half years of ethnographic research in Turkey and Armenia, specifically in the Istanbul neighbourhoods of Kumkapi, Kınalıada, and Kurtuluş; various urban and rural locations with significant Armenian heritage in predominantly Kurdish south-eastern provinces; the town of Hopa on the Turkish-Georgian border; the Armenian capital of Yerevan and the de-industrializing cities of Gyumri, Hrazdan, and Vanadzor; and the passenger buses that connect the two countries via Georgia. Based on multi-sited research, this thesis is a narrative of Armenian place-making in a terrain formed by the routes, roads, and networks through which people and things move, stay, or have been left behind in a post-genocide context – a terra infirma (Rogoff 2000) that cannot be defined by the current national borders of Turkey and Armenia. Here, I do not directly borrow any particular terminology of place-making. The core chapters of the thesis attempt to explore this issue without a concern for reaching a universal definition of the term. At best, my multiple understandings of the term share a concern to reflect co-constitution of stasis and mobility (in the way suggested by Clifford 1997).

In identifying the human and non-human components of long-distance travel between Armenia and Turkey and short-distance travel in and between neighbourhoods of Istanbul, my thesis challenges notions of Armenian population(s) in Turkey as a ‘community’ (in Turkish: cemaat) and ‘minority’
(in Turkish: aznılık), and of Armenians as ‘foreigners’ (in Turkish: yabancı). Armenians in contemporary Turkey can be best defined as a “multitude” (Negri and Hardt 2000) or “singularities” (Agamben 1993), referring to various smaller groupings of people produced by brutal nation-building processes. My intellectual inquiry aims to unpack various monolithic approaches to identifying Armenians in contemporary Turkey, whether defined from the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’. As Hakem al-Rustom (2015) suggests in relation to the wider discipline of Armenian studies, scholars in the field “have examined the ways in which a ‘majority’ suppresses and confines ‘minority’ groups, but what needs to be accounted for are the ways in which majorities have forged and achieved hegemonic status by inventing minorities” (413). While I recognize the importance of demonstrating how ethnic communities and minorities are “crafted” and “imagined” by the state and its citizens (as defined by Navaro-Yashin 2012), I strive to introduce a novel level of analysis by considering how minorities and communities imagine and help constitute majorities. It is in this sense that my analyses of (im)mobilities discuss how defining communities through a minority-majority comparison reproduces “hegemonic centres” (Wolff 1993), those notions, embodiments, and discourses that we take as given. As Sarah Green (2005) suggests, marginalization is always related to the “heart of things”; hence, marginality is indicative of the power dynamics behind the invention, representation, and materialization of things and people. Such “hegemonic centres” have been reproduced in contemporary social sciences, which, in the case of Turkey, imagine Armenians in particular ways. At one level they are imagined as ‘foreigners’ (Çetin 2002; Çağaptay 2005). At another level, Turks and non-Turks are imagined as ontologically different without paying attention to how the category of ‘Turk’ itself was invented (see Brink-Danan 2012 as a prime example of such categorization of Turks vs. non-Turks) (see also Brubaker 2004: 8 on how such a “scientific approach” comes to define groups as internally homogeneous and externally bounded).

It has been half a century since Barth (1969) called upon social scientists to divert our attention towards the ‘borders’ of ethnic communities instead of the ‘cultural stuff’ enclosed by those borders. However, as Ruth Mandel in
Cosmopolitan Anxieties (2008) aptly asked, why did those borders as formulated by Barth need to be ethnic borders? Over the course of my research, I observed how these borders were constantly in the making. Moreover, as this thesis explores in detail, there are historically constituted structures of social order that do not rely on ethnicity – or culture. It is for this purpose that in the thesis, following Deleuze (2004), I have made use of the metaphor of islands. However, the core constituting elements of these islands are not their distinct cultures and histories as understood by Marshall Sahlins in his Islands of History (1985), but imaginations about them as such entities in isolation. Thus, there are traces of the social-constructivist school in this thesis, although the most penetrating contribution comes from Yael Navaro-Yashin’s attempt (2012) to weave its premises with that of the neo-materialist school, implying dialectics between how these islands are simultaneously “imagined” in thinking and “crafted” into materiality.

I see the post-genocide nation-state of Turkey as a Deleuzian island that has been deserted – not willingly – by people who did not fit the state’s definition of the category of the Turk and repopulated by particular others who have been made into Turks. As Deleuze asserted, human beings could only live on an island if they forgot its history and what it represented as an autonomous physical domain cut off from the direct intervention of the mainland or the nation-state; otherwise, the island would stay deserted (cited in Saybasılı 2011: 178). In this sense, the island is simultaneously a physical landscape of depopulation and repopulation, and a representation of a power domain that comes into existence through its relationship with the state. However, the metaphor of an island also arose frequently during my fieldwork. People in Armenia referred to their country as a landlocked island without any sea access. For them, it was an island surrounded by hard borders and enemies. Some 2000 km away, undocumented Armenian migrants in Istanbul referred to their small enclave of post-socialist peoples in the Kumkapı neighbourhood as an island within the city. They also believed Armenian migrants from the Republic of Armenia constituted an island within an island – that is, within the island of Armenians from Istanbul (see also Muradyan 2015). In the central Istanbul neighbourhood of Kurtuluş (also historically
known as Tatavla, where the name change from Greek to Turkish came as part of the wider Turkification processes in the country, people spoke of islands that referred to blocks of apartment buildings in a grid-like neighbourhood with parallel and perpendicular streets. People constantly talked about those built islands specifically in relation to where they themselves and others lived. For instance, a first question of encounter among strangers in the neighbourhood would be “which island do you live on?” (in Turkish: hangi adada yaşıyorsunuz?). Finally, also in Istanbul, there is the famous Prince Islands Archipelago (also widely referred to as the Princes’ Islands Archipelago), where each island has a different majority population, including the island of Kınalıada, predominantly populated by Armenians in the summer (Belge 1994; Duru 2013; Erdenen 2014; Kaymak 2016).

All these islands index ambiguous, but not necessarily conflictual, relationships between Armenians and non-Armenians in contemporary Turkey. On a spectrum of tangible to intangible, built to natural, and imagined to crafted borders, what is enclosed by the various Armenian islands I encountered during my research is defined through the very possibility of their transgression, and of the passages between them. Nermin Saybaşılı, in her PhD thesis entitled Borders and Ghosts (2008), demonstrates that in a city like Istanbul the border between public and private spheres, the places where people tend to hide and reveal their differences from the nation-state’s imagery of ‘the Turk’, respectively, is a zone rather than a one-dimensional line. This is also why, at a fundamental level, this thesis refrains from reinstating public and private spheres as distinct domains of ‘power’ and ‘resistance’. It borrows and applies the notion of “public life” to stress the participation of both the state and the people in the making of the ‘political’ in everyday life (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 2). Consequently, the thesis construes the border between Armenians and non-Armenians in contemporary Turkey as a very porous one – something that has to be defined not only in relation to the diversity of Armenians, but also the diversity of Turkishness. Hence, with a focus on borders as zones, the thesis aims to account equally for the making of Armenians and non-
Armenians in Turkey. I argue that the aforementioned islands are materializations of the making of Armenians into monolithic categories of community, minority, or foreigners in contemporary Turkey. This is why passages between these islands and their surrounding cultural and social universes are the central loci of this thesis.

In his seminal work *Routes* (1997), James Clifford referred to the circulation of representations of culture in academia and popular media (including literature), and the ways these are negotiated, adapted, co-produced, or rejected as particular contexts of travelling and dwelling – or more specifically, as junctures of travelling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-travelling. In its broadest sense the latter comes to define making a life in constant mobility, epitomized in the ways bus or taxi drivers, shuttle-traders, smugglers, refugees, and flight crews alter the ideas of a fixed home. Meanwhile, the former term, travelling-in-dwelling, challenges the idea of a fixed home rather differently. It elaborates on the contacts between human populations made possible through various forms of migration and diasporization, and the simultaneous constitutions of ‘here’ and ‘there,’ ‘local’ and ‘foreign,’ and ‘native cultures’ and ‘cultures of translation’. As I study the ways in which short- and long-distance mobility (between various physical and imagined islands) produce physical and cultural distances among Armenians (as well as between Armenians and others), thinking about travelling (i.e., travelling-through-stasis) and dwelling (i.e., dwelling-through-mobility) offers us a particular framework to critically engage with the main protagonists of my thesis: Armenians in and en route to Turkey.

Each chapter of this thesis deals with at least one instance of travelling-in-dwelling and/or dwelling-in-travelling, which refers to people on the move and people with various transnational links, respectively. Each chapter is ethnographically centred around an island metaphor – referring to people, landscapes, neighbourhoods – or literal islands in the middle of the sea and passages/border transgressions between them. The first chapter, entitled ‘Bus Travelling in the Age of Global Circulations’, focuses on the 2000-km-long road between Armenia and Turkey that stretches through contested
geographies of post-imperial, post-socialist, and post-genocide “heterotopias” (Foucault 1986). Based on my ethnography of the 40-hour bus journey that connects Istanbul and Yerevan via Georgia, the chapter introduces the narratives of two specific groups of people who maintain a living in dwelling-in-travelling between Armenia and Turkey: shuttle-traders and bus crews. Their particular ‘mode of living’ and the extent of their personal and business networks in both countries demonstrate their expertise in dealing with the multiple tangible and imagined borders between Armenia and Turkey.

The second chapter, entitled ‘Making Centres at the Margins in Turkey’, is based on my research on undocumented migrants in Istanbul, and Armenian homeland tourists in eastern and south-eastern Turkey. With a specific focus on the migrant neighbourhood of Kumkapı in Istanbul, and sites of “difficult heritage” (Macdonald 2009) such as the former Armenian/contemporary Kurdish villages scattered around rural Turkey, the chapter provides a narrative of marginalization manifested through multiple and overlapping histories of migration, population engineering, and exile in the country. At one level, the chapter aims to account for the contemporary histories of these localities through the eyes of their marginalized dwellers and travellers. However, at another level, it also locates the very physical, ideological, and economic centres that simultaneously produce and are produced by these margins.

The third chapter, entitled ‘Expanding Outsides in Armenia’, was initially developed as a section of the previous chapter and is based on my research among ‘travellers’ such as shuttle-traders and people who have been deported from Turkey and now reside in the depopulating post-industrial cities of Hrazdan and Gyumri in Armenia. Similar to Chapter II (and indirectly Chapter I), it provides an ethnography of urban decay and marginalization in relation to earlier and more recent waves of migration and exile. At one level, it accounts for increasing Armenian insularity within the current political map of the post-socialist Caucasus in light of dramatic changes in the material conditions of infrastructure catalysed by an earthquake, war, and closed borders. However, at a more specific level, the chapter locates post-
The fourth chapter, entitled ‘Building Homes of Unity’, is based on my ethnography in the central Istanbul neighbourhood of Kurtuluş, as well as archival research in the housing and property database of the local municipality. This chapter is a history of a neighbourhood where nation-building processes resulted in the Turkification of street names and other public places, as well as of its residents. Although there are no official numbers, it is widely believed by the community members (including priests working in the churches in the area) that Kurtuluş is, and long has been, home to the greatest number of Armenians in the city of Istanbul (see also Kaymak 2016). This chapter demonstrates the links between local and much wider processes of Turkification, and their direct and indirect impacts on resident Armenians. In addition, it analyses some of the particular Armenian responses to these Turkification processes. For this, my research concentrated on apartment names, which are displayed publicly on nameplates at the entrance to each building. These inscriptions demonstrate how Armenians negotiated their difference from the imposed category of ‘Turk’ and reproduced or rejected altogether such impositions. By looking at the (re)construction of apartment buildings in the period after the 1955 Pogroms, I make a taxonomy of building names and identify owners of particular apartments named “Birlik” (lit. unity). At the same time, I propose a taxonomy of the names of the people who live in these apartments, often as extended families. As almost all buildings with such names were built (i.e., financed and designed) by non-Muslims, this chapter investigates both the material and political conditions behind the naming of buildings in Istanbul.

While the first four chapters of the thesis deal with islands as imagined and physical places where Armenians travelled or dwelled, the last two chapters
deal with a geological island in Istanbul, the island of Kınalıada. These two chapters work towards a human geography of the island by looking at the political, social, physical, and temporal aspects that constitute this island as distinct in the eyes of its Armenian residents. The fifth chapter, entitled ‘An Island That Is No More’, primarily deals with the relationships among Armenian and non-Armenian residents on the island. The chapter investigates how and why this island is stigmatized as a ‘foreign country’ (in Turkish: yabancı ülke) in popular Turkish imaginary. At one level, this situation arises from the stigmatization of non-Muslims as ‘foreigners’ in Turkey, as the predominantly non-Muslim islands are usually imagined accordingly. However, at a more crucial level, my ethnographic findings reveal that the island is a place where the distinction between the public and private spheres collapses, where it is no longer possible for Armenians to hide their differences from the imagined and crafted category of the Turk. As opposed to the anonymity provided by mainland Istanbul, it is not possible to hide differences based on particular exclusive definitions of Turkishness from the public gaze on the stigmatized island (cf. Duru 2013; Kaymak 2016).

The sixth chapter, entitled ‘A Failed Community’, picks up where the previous chapter leaves off and studies how, for the Armenians of the island, the island is a materialization of their imagined community. This chapter focuses on Armenian narratives of difference in relation to other islands within the Prince Islands Archipelago and their respective non-Muslim communities, such as Greeks and Jews. In order to locate the border zones of Armenian communities in contemporary Turkey, the chapter specifically attempts to go beyond a ‘majority Turk’ versus ‘minority Armenian’ dichotomy by bringing other non-Muslims into the picture. At one level, the chapter provides a detailed analysis of how the island is compared and contrasted with other islands. For many Kınalıada Armenians, the particular problems of the island (such as unregulated tourism, security issues, and lack of health services) can be blamed directly on its Armenian majority. They believe that Armenians lack what the Greeks and Jews of neighbouring islands possess: unity, solidarity, and cooperation. This is not to suggest that other islands within the archipelago do not face substantial environmental and tourism-related
problems (see many different issues of the *Adalar Postası*, a local newspaper that has constantly pointed out those problems). Nevertheless, for many Armenian residents of Kınalıada, those problems are unique to their island. At another level, the chapter also provides an analysis of how Armenians understand these other non-Muslim communities by comparing their transnational links to the wider world, implying an eloquent everyday understanding of relationships between these communities and their respective diaspora communities, and between Turkey and their imagined nation-state homelands. In this sense, the distances of local Greeks (in Istanbul) vis-à-vis Greece and the Greek diaspora, and local Jews vis-à-vis Israel and the Jewish diaspora, help my informants understand their own relationships to Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, and essentially to Turkey. It is in this context that the image of the Armenian migrant from the Republic of Armenia (with the ways she is imagined to represent Armenia, its history, and its political and economic status) is also understood by Armenians from the island. Hence, in addition to the class-based differences that set apart Armenians from different nation-state settings in Istanbul, the image of the migrant worker as an embodiment of a backward Armenia functions as a basis for comparison with local Greeks and Jews.

The main departure point for my research was to critically engage with the old and emerging orthodoxies within the wider disciplines of migration and diaspora studies. Instead of solely focusing on state-minority and majority-minority relationships, I had a scholarly concern to comprehend the dynamics of Armenian practices of place-making (which could also be thought of as distance-making or border-making) that go well beyond relationships to majority Turks. At one level, limited perspectives run the risk of ignoring the production of the category of the Turk in the last century and the diversities of populations generally referred to under this term. They also run the risk of taking Turks, Armenians, and others around them as ontologically different. At another level, I believe such limited perspectives also reproduce and historicize Armenians as a minority, a monolithic community and a population of ‘foreigners’ in the post-genocide landscape of contemporary Turkey. In many ways a predetermined and uncritical focus on
the social marginality of Armenians (following majority-minority and centre-periphery dichotomies) serves the Turkish nationalist discourses that silence Armenian pasts and presents, gloss over the body of politics that label Armenians as ‘foreigners’, and vehemently deny the 1915 Genocide. The islands of my informants in that sense define the imagined and physical spaces that came into existence as a direct result of the politics of marginalization in Turkey and Armenia. However, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, these islands are also sites where ‘antidotes to master narratives’ (Seremetakis 1991) and ‘tools for destabilizing central authority’ (Tsing 1993) are constantly articulated.

On ‘Getting There’

I started my research with an agenda of studying everyday relationships between Armenian citizens of Turkey and undocumented Armenian migrants in Istanbul. However, as I proceeded, I found a fragmented Armenian social life in the city: the relationships between Armenians from two different nation-state settings were limited, and both Armenian groups in the city were diverse to such an extent that it was impossible to suggest any distinct community (based on a generalized definition of identity or a fixed disposition of locality). Research and analysis at the level of community proved to be of little use; I realized I needed to come up with a second and much more comprehensive level of analysis and a novel approach to framing my informants. However, in the process of writing, I was to understand that there was something inherently problematic about framing informants.

At a very specific and thus far under-analysed level, it seems it is our research design that becomes problematic in understanding the diversity of issues we tackle in ethnographic research. In a book chapter on holism, George Marcus (2010) revisits his earlier call (with Michael Fischer) for ethnographies of ‘whole systems’ (Marcus and Fischer 1986). He argues that back in the mid-1980s the target of critical anthropology was the reductionism and essentialism of textual representation within the field, whereas now we
should pay attention to the “problem of organizing inquiry on moving ground and time according to scales and a temporality appropriate to its objects of study” (Marcus 2010: 33).

Marcus (2010) elaborates the two most important problems anthropologists face: a simultaneous urge to produce “better or more adequate descriptive-analytic accounts of ethnographic subjects in a changing world” and critical engagement with “the media of knowledge production in ethnography, from inception, without obvious or conventional bounds” rather than “providing analytic frames for the messy experiences of contemporary fieldwork” (28). Here, by following this line of thought, it appears that holisms in relation to representation of ethnographic data are inherently in tandem with holisms relating to research design: what was formerly understood as “a burden of ethnographic representation” is now “constitutive of core relations that define critical argument” (33). As a result, a vicious circle of academic production that involves consecutive steps of ‘preliminary thinking-research design-final data’ ends up justifying the validity of its own components. It is also in this sense that the research itself does not bear any transformative qualities for the researcher herself, which would also have important effects on the anthropological data collected during fieldwork.

If our misunderstandings of ethnographic data are a function of the analytical assumptions we bring to them, then it would follow that overcoming our misunderstandings must involve rethinking the assumptions that led to them (Holbraad 2010: 83).

In the above quotation, and similar to Marcus (2010), Martin Holbraad considers one of the most challenging aspects of ethnography: how data potentially end up justifying the research design and reflecting conformity to analytical thinking. It is the pre-research clustering of groups of people into analytical categories that is problematic, and this is why once the research is done, it becomes futile to attempt to re-cluster informants. However, this task of self-criticism and discussion for the purposes of research is a very difficult one. Consequently, I wonder how we could understand anthropology necessarily as a science of critique (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus 2010) by recognizing at the same time our very limited capacities in critically
engaging with holisms (and reductionism) during the pre-research, research, and post-research periods. In other words, how are we going to critically engage with our subject matter and informants not during the post-research write-up but during the research itself? Is such a task possible, and to what extent?

Here I provide some reflections from my own research, although I am well aware of my limited capacity in accomplishing the above-mentioned mission of eliminating reductionism and holisms in research design. I should note here that when I realized this it was already too late to change the primary focus of my research design; that is, I had already departed for research focused on Armenians from two different nation-state settings in Istanbul. However, during fieldwork, I realized I still had the option to reconsider the ways I would approach and contextualize the locations in which I conducted my research, i.e., my fieldwork site and the roads that led to it. This option of not re-framing informants but re-defining the fieldwork site is best explained in James Clifford’s words:

Localization of the anthropologist’s objects of study in terms of a “field” tend to marginalize or erase several blurred boundary areas, historical realities that slip out of the ethnographic frame. […] The means of transport is largely erased – the boat, the land rover, the mission airplane, etc. These technologies suggest systematic prior and ongoing contacts and commerce with exterior places and forces which are not part of the field/object. The discourse of ethnography (“being there”) is too sharply separated from that of travel (“getting there”) (1997: 99-100) (emphasis mine).

Although my first attempts at understanding relationships between Armenians from Turkey and Armenia failed as the scope of everyday encounters was very limited, I articulated another level of ethnographic focus that would become much more comprehensive: my research focus shifted from studying Armenian inter-community relationships in Istanbul to the wider lens of Armenian dwellers and travellers en route to Turkey. I started by locating some diverse Armenian groups and individuals in contemporary Istanbul in relation to their respective, constantly in-the-making, and sometimes overlapping social and physical environments. As I increasingly came to see fieldwork as a ‘travel practice’ of the researcher (Clifford 1997), I
revisited my fieldwork notes and what had previously appeared as ‘offshoots’ in research and/or matters concerning ‘travel literature’ became central tropes in my ethnographic writing. Here is a partial list:

First: travelling on foot. Michel de Certeau writes (1984) that “walking manipulates spatial organizations” and “creates shadows and ambiguities within them” (111). As I construe the strategic vs. tactical relationships of power portrayed in de Certeau’s analysis of space, walking is primarily a relationship of power situated against the state-imposed structurings of the physical landscape. Those shadows and ambiguities mentioned by de Certeau as inherent to spatial organization compose, I believe, a lumpy amalgam of “signs of history” and “signs in history” scattered around a vast diversity of places inhabited or abandoned by the contemporary population of Turkey. This is why, when I first arrived in Istanbul, I started my fieldwork by simply walking and taking notes in different historical Armenian neighbourhoods. In a post-genocide context like that of Turkey, some of these neighbourhoods had been home to local Armenians to different degrees. Similarly, Saybaşılı (2008) notes that it was through walking that her own fieldwork site, the Tarlabası neighbourhood of Istanbul, emerged as a location that spontaneously came into being through flows of interrelated spatial practices and intricate webs of unpredictable connections (131). Hence, walking is both a “medium and outcome” as a spatial practice (Tilley 1994: 29). In other words, it is creative of spaces, although often at the expense of the ‘destruction’ of others. This is why, from the very beginning of my fieldwork, by walking, I expected to explore particular ethnographic data at the expense of not noticing others. The Birlik/Tahtaburunyan apartment building that I failed to notice during the initial years of my research in Istanbul is best understood as a natural shortcoming of walking as a particular mode of place-making.

Second: travelling on buses. In my research among undocumented migrants from Armenia, I always had difficulties in establishing relationships with them for the trust-related reasons to be explained in the following pages. This is how and why I decided to conduct research beyond the borders of Istanbul
in the first place. By travelling on the buses that transported migrants, shuttle-traders, and other travellers between Istanbul and Armenia, I anticipated getting to know possible new informants on these 40-hour bus journeys. I travelled between the two countries a dozen times, not always with a return ticket. With the great majority of my fellow passengers, companionship was temporary. However, I was able to form more lasting relationships with a number of people who became important informants. I followed them between Istanbul and their homes in Armenia and observed the processes of migration and informal transnational trading they were engaged in. It was during these long and sometimes unbearable bus journeys that I started to think about approaches that could reveal the hidden structures specific to displacement and migration (Saybaşılı 2008). As a result, what I formulated as a research practicality not only transformed into an essential fieldwork site but also provided this thesis with a comprehensive thematic framework to combine the multiplicity of narratives on homes and homelands in relation to the physical dimensions of transnational migration.

Third: travelling on boats. I spent much time on the boats that connect mainland Istanbul and the Prince Islands Archipelago, where I conducted research among Armenians with summer homes on Kınalıada. As already mentioned, these islands are usually imagined and portrayed as a ‘foreign country’ in Istanbul (Brink-Danan 2012). While I continued my research on the island, boats opened up as essential sites to observe how Armenians from Istanbul engaged with the diverse islander population around them in a very particular on-the-move public space. There was a particular temporalizing aspect to boat travel as well, which posited itself in the time invested en route to the island: distinctions between ‘natives of the island’ (in Turkish: adanın yerläsi) and the wider category of ‘islanders’ (in Turkish: adalılar) were widely put in place through one’s capacity to travel to the island by (slower and faster) boats, as much as the ‘actual time’ spent on its soil. On this subject, Avner Wishnitzer in his historical account of time in the late Ottoman Empire, Reading Clocks, Alla Turca (2015), writes that starting from the second half of the 19th century, as ferry lines in Istanbul increasingly “wove together hitherto loosely connected localities into well-integrated
systems, growing parts of the city were gradually subjected to a clock-based
temporal order which dramatically rearranged daily and nightly routines”
(124). Although I conducted my research some one-and-a-half-centuries after
the first passenger boat operated to the islands in 1846, boat trips still had a
profound effect on the organization of some 21st-century urbanites’ daily
routines in Istanbul. It is in this context of sea transportation that what
initially appeared to me only as a mode of commuting for some (and a means
to break away from the city for others) was a fundamental practice of
articulating genealogies vis-à-vis the island. I argue that boat schedules,
waiting, unexpected delays, and time spent aboard create a multiplicity of
temporalities through which residents claim particular relationships to the
island.

I have benefitted from travelling, because it provides a wider perspective in
dealing with contemporary issues of movement and mobility. It stresses the
‘common ground’ between my informants and myself. It points at the various
configurations of place where I met or encountered them, but this is not the
only reason for my use of the term both as a methodological and a theoretical
point of entry. In a thesis that is heavily invested against locating Armenians
in Turkey and Armenia within a framework of “imaginary coherence” (Hall
1994: 224) or writing up a history that privileges an ethnoreligious
component in what people from two different nation-state settings share, I
wish to put forward an argument that focuses on the commonality of places
(and the roads between them), which came into existence in the wake of
particular histories of genocide, survival, exile, migration, and community re-
building. As the core chapters of this thesis will reveal in detail, this is where I
find travel as a challenging yet promising concept to map these historically
and physically networked places – and patterns of everyday behaviour.
However, this is also where I expect the undeniable “taintedness of the term”
(Clifford 1992: 100; 1997: 39) to help us grasp the universalizing effect of

Throughout the thesis, I deal with diverse conceptualizations of travelling,
which go beyond defining the “smooth movement” of people and things in
which they “retain an authenticated relation to an original dwelling” (cf. Lury 1997: 78). I do not take the traveller as a tourist; rather, I find the latter as a particular embodiment of the former. I also do not find the experiences of travelling in direct antagonism to those of migration and homecoming (cf. Chambers 1994: 5), and I again search for a possible way to understand what they have in common. My goal is not to look for a new umbrella term that bears the risk of silencing the violence embedded in historical movements of people (as in the slave trade); rather, I aim to think through various subject-positions blended in the ways Armenians move in and en route to Turkey, and to account for the impact of past dispersions on their contemporary movements. By firmly holding on to a “dwelling perspective” (Ingold 2011: 10) while writing about travelling, my inquiry shifts from studying where they arrive to what they make of place.

If my informants from both Turkey and Armenia had visited villages wiped off the map by violence and massacres in various corners of Anatolia, looking for ancestral homes, relentlessly comparing old and new photographs of toppled monasteries, or cursing treasure hunters found digging up long-forgotten burial places, then what was there to pursue in the ‘old homeland’? I expand on this question while writing about my informants from Armenia who had entire neighbourhoods destroyed by the earthquake in Gyumri or Vanadzor, who lived in migrant enclaves in Istanbul, called people in Moscow online, and constantly went back and forth on international buses via Georgia: what was there to call ‘home’ in Armenia? I can expand on my question even more when I think about my informants from Turkey who migrated from rural Anatolia as late as the 1960s, who demolished old Greek houses and re-built middle-class family apartments in Istanbul neighbourhoods, wrote letters to Paris, went to the airport to welcome friends and relatives from Los Angeles, bought or rented summer houses on an ‘Armenian island’, and waited to get on a boat despite delays to commute to work: what was there to be ‘left behind’ in Turkey for? There is no single answer for each of the three questions I raise here, but they should point at different processes of place-making in the wake of various forms of displacement, always because of displacement and sometimes in spite of
displacement. I am seeking an approach that can simultaneously illuminate the intertwined experiences of loss and gaining of place. Modern Armenian history of the past century has been almost exclusively studied from the perspective of the former, whereas I understand that this is an outcome of no random situation but rather of deportation, extermination, and genocide. I also take responsibility in accounting for the making of place even in the aftermath of ‘total loss’ of and rupture from place. This should explain why I prefer ‘travelling’ over ‘displacement’; I believe the former has greater capacity in reflecting the balance between what is lost and what is gained. This is also why, in this thesis, I never make use of ‘travelling’ in full isolation from wider connotations of stasis, dwelling, and various forms of immobility (Clifford 1997; Ingold 2011; Khan 2016). However, I generally do not vocalize a celebratory tone about the ‘positive impact’ of displacement in connecting otherwise distant places and people. Rather, I explore the ways in which my informants take pride in and feel fascination about their own mobility and histories of dispersion (see Rapport and Stade 2007 for a discussion of ‘cosmopolitan turn’ in mobility studies; see Glick-Schiller, Darieva, and Gruner-Domic 2011 for recent discussions on ‘diasporic cosmopolitanism’).

As my research clearly demonstrates, Armenian experiences of survival in the 100 years following the 1915 Genocide have been diverse. I find it impossible to formulate a question of place-making that singles out particular definitions (and subject positions) of mobility over particular others in a context where Armenians en route to Turkey believe that they are coming back to a territory they already knew, and in fact feel like they had never left in the first place. It should be noted that even the concept we take for granted most, ‘the migrant’, is open to speculation here. For instance, Armenian migrants in Istanbul first and foremost are ‘migrants’ in a place they identify with. The imposing tone of ‘the migrant’ replicates itself in the opposite direction in the case of Armenians from Istanbul who take a great deal of pride in having roots in the rich history of the city, while they often silence their links to Genocide survivor grandparents from rural backwaters in Anatolia. In this sense, they are second or third generation ‘migrants’ from places with which
they do not identify. Consequently, this thesis attempts to account for multi-
layered histories in which everyone is and simultaneously is not a migrant.

If contemporary Turkey constitutes a regime of (im)mobility for Armenians, there is a need to unpack the rupture that the 1915 Genocide created between people and their places. In the next section, I introduce a temporal aspect into the everyday practices of place-making. I argue that the Genocide, as a powerful representation of the past, helps Armenians link physically distant places within a framework of ‘shared history’.

En Route to Unity in a Context of “Temporal Pollution”

The islands depicted in this thesis are places in which my informants simultaneously dwell and travel to, as well as metaphors that I utilize to conceptualize unity. Based on my research, I construe islands as both enclosures of place and materializations of unity in a world of dispersion and diversity. However, while there may be a popular fascination with islands representing independence and self-sufficiency, in this thesis my main objective is to complicate the relationships between those enclosures of place to the extent that ‘getting there’ is understood as a part of ‘living there’. This is different than simply attesting that no island or no place is isolated, although it still holds a vital point of departure and critical engagement. As I construe a place-making aspect to unity (and its multifaceted materializations through the notion of ‘islands’), there is not only a spatial but also a temporal aspect in the making of distinctions between ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’, ‘foreigners’ and ‘natives’, ‘travellers’ and ‘dwellers’ – which is based on the presupposed temporal anteriority of one category of people over the other, marking and stressing a moment of arrival of strangers (and contact from ‘outside’). In many ways, if the epistemological regime of dualities in Turkey primarily concerns the production of truths and facts, there is a significant component of it that concerns the production of time. In this section, I wish to discuss how Armenian experiences of travelling and dwelling in contemporary Turkey are situated within a context of “temporal

If “a place on the map is also a place in history” (Rich 1984: 212), I am inclined to speculate on how people travel between places through travelling in history, and vice versa. However, this is not to simply reiterate that places are first and foremost “geohistorical locations” with particular histories (Mignolo 2000: 184); rather, I want to pay attention to the human practices that are simultaneously productive of time and place. As I acknowledge that “movement in the world always involves a loss of place, but the gaining of a fragment of time” (Tilley 1994: 27), I suggest that the Genocide has a double effect of disconnecting Armenians from their personal/family pasts and places while simultaneously providing them a greater narrative to connect to wider times and places within a framework of ‘Armenian history’. If “place is logically presupposed in the category of displacement” (Axel 2001: 14) (emphasis original), I find an opportunity in thinking through what people gain in their loss in order to understand this double effect of the Genocide. I argue that it does not merely mark a moment of ‘rupture’ from times and places, but also a re-making of them. On the orthodox efforts to represent the remains of the Genocide, David Kazanjian (2018) writes:

Armenian nationalist visions that circulate in the diaspora often invent the tradition they seek to have recognized and restored, projecting a normative, contemporary ideal of what was lost into the past and then chasing its return in an impossible and endless game of repairing that which never existed in the first place. Inevitably, the normative ideal is held together by Islamophobia, racism, heteronormativity, and gender conformism. The figures of the invariably murderous Turk, the inevitably righteous Armenian Church, the passively victimized Armenian woman, the tragically heroic Armenian man, and the broken heterosexual family populate diasporan narratives that purport to show how an ancient nation was destroyed and must be restored, just like the famously ruined churches in Ani (224) (emphasis mine).

The argument presented above invites us to think about an idealized past that is a direct outcome of the rupture produced by the Genocide. In Armenia and the diaspora, the Genocide is usually defined in terms that almost ‘idealize’ this catastrophic event to the extent that the diverse narratives of survivors are silenced for historical coherency (Altınay 2014). In Turkey, where public
discussions on the history of genocidal processes targeting Armenians (and other non-Muslims in general) are extremely limited and monitored by the state, the conflict between ‘what was’ and ‘what must have been’ before the Genocide is less dramatic. This situation is related to the fact that for Armenians in Turkey, knowledge about the past is based on experience and transmitted between generations only through personal communication (Suciyan 2015: 18). In this sense they rely on what they hear and see from their own families and friends in learning about their own past, which is not necessarily defined as ‘Armenian history’. If “past” refers to “everything that happened in the past time” and “history” refers to “the representation of the past” (Stewart 2012: 3 paraphrasing White 1981), without formal recognition of and education on the Genocide, in Turkey the past is always positioned somewhere in between Turkish and Armenian official histories. However, as we will see below, in recent years there have been attempts to represent the past in alternative ways, claiming alternative histories in Turkey. In mobilizing alternative accounts of the past, these historical critiques seek a transformation of the conditions of political belonging in the country (Tambar 2013: 121).

“Modern time is characterized by unprecedented doubt about, and conflict in, representations of time” (Bear 2014: 6). The two images below emerged and circulated in Turkish media in the early 2010s, a particular moment in the country’s history in which both mainstream Kemalists and Islamists consolidated their electoral power to the extent that a very rigid polarization emerged between their supporters. In November 2012, the country’s largest group of industrial companies aired a TV commercial to commemorate the death of Atatürk (see Figure 3). The commercial ends on a powerful note: “Olmasaydın... Olmazdık”. (lit. If you had not existed, we would not have existed). Apart from linking the existence of Turkey and Turks to the powerful image of the ‘Father Turk’ (in Turkish: Atatürk), this commemoration message also provided two dates indicating the years of the birth and death of the founder of the country. The horizontally positioned number 8 functions as the infinity symbol and stresses the eternity of Atatürk, as well as his followers and the republic he founded.
While the commercial triggered a public discussion between Kemalists and Islamists in Turkey, Islamist criticism of the advert did not materialize until the next anniversary of Atatürk’s death in November 2013, exactly a year after the circulation of the original commercial. An Islamist businessman placed a full-page advertisement in Akit, probably the country’s most conservative and pro-AKP government newspaper (with notorious xenophobic, misogynist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic coverage), which twisted and openly critiqued the original commercial. It read Olmasaydı da olurduk (lit. If he had not existed, we still would have existed) and re-positioned the number 8 back to its original vertical position so that the stress on the eternity of Atatürk was replaced with a reassertion of the fact that he had indeed died long ago. Since the publication of the Islamist re-make of the original commercial, another image has been in circulation in Turkey (see Figure 4). This image not only continues criticizing the first commercial but also completes the second one in the meaning it creates. With the exact phrasing that was first used for commemorating Atatürk, it refers to the Prophet Mohammad and puts forward a different sort of genealogy in connecting the people of Turkey to history. Just like the first commercial, this image expresses a similar motivation in presenting the year of death of the prophet, this time by horizontally re-positioning the number 2. As I understand this image, for its admirers, it does not matter whether the
horizontal positioning of the number 2 functions as an infinity symbol or not, or any other symbol. The Arabic calligraphy in the upper part of the image simply reads “and he is above everything” (in Arabic: و هو على كل شيء), perhaps showing some sort of purposeful indifference towards discussions on eternity, or at least its reiteration as a fact for the followers of the faith. It should be noted that, to date, both images continue to circulate widely on social media.

Like the Birlik/Tahtaburunyan apartment building presented in the opening of this thesis, the two images above are “signs in history” that function as representational vehicles in creating meaning about the past (Permentier 1987: 11-12), which are used specifically for present and future claims (Brink-Danan 2012: 73). In articulating political belonging and affiliation through a moment of genesis (which connects the existence of followers to the existence of the founder) and engaging with the future (by pointing at the eternity of the founder), these two images can also be thought of as “chronotopes”, representations that enable the dimension of time to become visible (Bear 2014: 7 in referring to the adaptation of Einstein’s theory by Bakhtin 1981). I argue that Turkey is full of similar expressions of time because the representation of time and the ways it is confronted directly relate “to the reproduction of patterns of collective violence, prejudice, and discrimination” (Göçek 2011: 38). In many ways, in Turkey, time is not only a political tool in challenging opponents and their narratives about political and social exclusion, but also a dangerous weapon that can charge and mobilize violence. Hrant Dink’s murder in 2007 presents an example of this situation in which confronting history with an alternative representation of the past served as a double-edged sword.

Hrant Dink was the editor-in-chief of Agos, the most widely circulated weekly Armenian newspaper in Istanbul. In the period leading up to his assassination, he was prosecuted three times under the infamous Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code against the denigration of Turkishness. As he brought historically sensitive issues to public discussion, he became a target of hate-speech, which culminated when he claimed that Sabiha Gökçen, one
of the eight adopted children of Atatürk, was among the thousands of converted orphans of the Armenian Genocide. By drawing attention to the daughter of the ‘father of all Turks’, Hrant Dink in fact highlighted that denial has been at the centre of the nation-state project (von Bieberstein 2017: 59). While the political setting in Turkey rendered the denial of the Armenian Genocide “ordinary” (Suciyani 2015: 18), Hrant Dink pushed the limits of what was publicly acceptable and ‘speakable’ (von Bieberstein 2017: 59), which came at a high cost, as was often expected of people who would raise similar issues in the country (Neyzi 2002: 147) (also cited in Brink-Danan 2012: 147).

As the following pages will address in detail, Hrant Dink’s murder is widely understood as a turning point in the recent history of Turkey. As his attempts to discuss the Genocide publicly were appropriated as ‘denigration of Turkishness’, for Armenians in the country, his murder revealed the structurally imposed limits on their own political inclusion and equality. It is no wonder that the assassination is almost always described by my informants in terms similar to the 1955 Pogroms and the 1915 Genocide, marking and separating time periods in which ‘the event’ comes as a shock and a brutal reminder of those previously hidden or ignored state policies of discrimination and racism. For the wider Turkish public, perhaps more than anything else, the funeral and the public gatherings to commemorate Hrant Dink in the following years have constituted the most politically charged attempts of recent times to openly challenge official narratives on belonging and history (see Ahiska 2007 and Tataryan 2012 for a more detailed analysis on the impact of Hrant Dink’s murder in contemporary Turkey).

Taken during the Hrant Dink commemorations, the two images below demonstrate one of the few instances in which 1915 acquired public visibility in Turkey (the Genocide commemorations held every April 24th usually go unnoticed by the mainstream Turkish media, unlike Hrant Dink commemorations). With unmistakable similarity to how Atatürk’s and Mohammad’s years of death were altered for the purposes of creating new contemporary meaning (see Figures 3 and 4), in the top photo we see
protestors holding a banner that provides Hrant Dink’s year of death as 1915 (see Figure 5). However, in contrast to the two former “chronotopes” (Bakhtin 1981; Bear 2014) regarding the founders of Turkey and Islam, this visual representation of time below does not intend to stress eternity. The banner suggests that the future of Armenians in Turkey was predetermined by the Genocide, which has been long denied in the country. The bottom image, which was taken during the Hrant Dink commemorations in 2017, shows that the year 1915, this time on a banner placed on the demonstration bus, was covered over by the police (see Figure 6). This act of state censorship only serves to emphasize the ongoing nature of Genocide denial.

Figure 5 (top): Protestors Commemorating Hrant Dink ©Pan Photo
Figure 6 (bottom): The Demonstration Bus Censored by the Police ©NorZartonk

There is much else to be said about the Genocide as a contested subject in contemporary Turkey. In Historiographic Perversion, Marc Nichanian (2009) discusses the history of the multiple names of ‘the event’ that referred to the extermination of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. He writes that in a time period before the word ‘genocide’ had been invented, without a name for the event, the survivors did not need to be persuaded of the fact that
they had been the collective targets of a project of massive extermination (8). However, it is at the centre of Nichanian’s intellectual project that without an emblematic name – perhaps like the Shoah or the Naqba – there will be no possibility of fully expressing what happened to Armenians in 1915. He writes that there can be no question of using the word ‘genocide’ to designate or describe a ‘fact’ that could be qualified as ‘genocide’ in a space where historical authority is already contested (3). This is why Nichanian expects that such an emblematic name will eventually replace the generic name of ‘the Genocide’ or ‘the Armenian Genocide’ (10). In an earlier work that involved an exchange of letters with David Kazanjian, his expectations from the future (in defining the past) are clearly put into words:

Of course it is a past event. But it does not belong to our past. It defines the past of the future. A past event that is still to happen? How is this possible? (Nichanian and Kazanjian 2003: 128) (emphasis original).

And he hints at an answer in the following lines:

This is to say that we are only on the eve of an age when perhaps an understanding of and for the Catastrophe will be possible (Ibid.).

Nichanian expects that an understanding of ‘the event’ will come in an unexpected way, pointing to Derrida and his conceptualization of the future anterior (2009: 10), the à venir or the unpredictable future. Here Nichanian implicitly refers to Of Grammatology (1974), where Derrida makes a distinction between two different types of futures, one constituting “normality” through its predictability and another proclaiming “monstrosity”, coming into full capacity for change and transformation through its unpredictability (5). Taking direction from another work, I want to turn to Force of Law (1992), where Derrida emphasizes that it is the particularity of each event that makes it impossible to have justice at the present time simply by following the rules (24-25). In other words, justice is only possible in a future that does not follow the rules and emerges in an unexpected way. I believe it is with similar yearning for particularity that Nichanian writes against the generic name of the Armenian Genocide, for which justice will never be done without its own emblematic name – without its own particular
history. It is in this sense that it is a past event that is still to happen (Nichanian and Kazanjian 2003: 128). As Nichanian puts it, “it will have come back to us” (2009: 10).

Here remains a final but extremely important point. All throughout the text I refer to Turkey as a ‘post’-genocide context and my application of this term might seem contradictory to the ways in which I have defined the ‘past’ in the above paragraphs. For instance, is there any possibility that I end up in a sort of denial every time I attempt to acknowledge the Genocide by defining Turkey in a ‘post’-genocide political context? What if I miss what the future could possibly bring? I see that the current debates on the politics of the naming of the event are stuck here, because we find ourselves in a situation in which we are made to choose between the representation of the event and its past – and this is a political choice in contemporary Turkey as much a philosophical one. Perhaps this question also concerns how genocides are universalized across time and space, by simply placing a ‘post’ before their generic name. This is why the name that Nichanian so desperately looks forward to arriving in the future has a transformative capacity in the making of the past. For him, it is a unique name that will ‘rescue’ Armenians from striving to prove their own death (Nichanian and Kazanjian 2003: 127).

If, unlike history (a representation), the past is yet to happen (to be fully understood), here the discussion comes full circle back to the beginning of this section: the question of when an event happens is inherently linked to where it happens. This is most evident in the complexity and the diversity of the ways ‘post’ is utilized as a device for historical critique and representation in the recent decades and I am inclined to follow the discussions that point at the similarities and the differences between the ways the term functions in defining ‘what’ comes after colonialism and socialism (Chari and Verdery 2009; Rogers 2010; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012; Koobak and Marling 2014). In this sense, I do not necessarily find that “‘post-’ will always privilege a temporal language and agenda over a spatial one” (cf. Kaplan 1996: 21). We can almost never think about ‘the post-socialist’ beyond the borders of states that once had socialist governments (Rogers 2010:4-6), while we can still
apply ‘post-colonial’ to denote an epistemological periodization in intellectual history (Shohat 1991; Hall 1996). For instance, we can make use of a colonial (and post-colonial) perspective in analysing power relationships around the world, but this would not be possible in the case of socialism (Etkind 2011; Tlostanova 2018). However, in both cases the prefix has profound effects in universalizing different political contexts, whether in thinking about the connections between Kenya and India (Shohat 2006) or between Poland and Uzbekistan (Tlostanova 2018).

This is where the ‘post-’ in ‘post-genocide Turkey’ tends to blur the lines within two particular dimensions. First, it does not locate early 20th century Turkey (which did not exist at that time) in relation to other places and periods where similar genocidal processes took place. Second, it does not specify what comes ‘before’ and what follows ‘after’. In the case of Turkey, the prefix hides the ongoing effects of the Genocide on the present political organization of the country and everyday lives of its Armenian citizens because of its authority in compartmentalizing time (see Suciyan 2015: 21-22 for a scholarly discussion).

Finally, this discussion leaves me obliged to clarify how the terminology is being used in the text. Everywhere I refer to ‘Genocide’ with an uppercase ‘G’, I refer to the Armenian Genocide, which I take to have occurred from April 1915 when the Ottoman Interior Ministry ordered the arrest of Armenian political and community leaders to November 1918 when the Temporary Law of Deportation (of May 1915) was repealed (although the vast majority of Armenians had been deported and perished as early as the first half of 1916) (Kévorkian 2011: 3). However, it should be noted that various genocidal processes against Armenians had already been in place since the late 19th century and continued targeting them until the early 1920s, the evident impunity for each of these violent events paving the way for the next (Dadrian 2005: 11; Hovannisian 2007: 5). Anywhere in this text where I do not intend

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1 It may be interesting to note that I observed the same situation when I applied to an international conference on migration in post-socialist contexts. My application was rejected on the grounds that contemporary Istanbul is not a post-socialist context.
to stress the particularities of the extermination of Ottoman Armenians in early 20th century Anatolia, I refer to the concept of genocide with a lowercase ‘g’ as a more general term. The term also appears frequently in adjective form as in ‘post-genocide’, again with the lowercase ‘g’. Although I refer to ‘the Genocide’ to denote the diversity of the events that eventually led to the annihilation of Ottoman Armenians and their mass exodus from their ancestral places of origin within a specific time period, I refuse to deploy such a term as ‘post-Genocide’ with the uppercase ‘G’. This is not merely grounded in a stylistic or grammatical choice in which I try to differentiate the term in noun and adjective forms. Following the discussions in this section, I see ‘the Genocide’ as a historical event, a representation of the genocidal processes of early 20th century Anatolia. However, in the lexical juxtaposition of genocide with ‘post’, I sense that we need room for ambiguity until the emblematic wording that Nichanian (2009) waits for appears from the future. If ‘post’ works towards periodization in such a way that imposes a clear historical moment of termination of ‘the event’, the lowercase ‘g’ signifies that we still have ‘time’ to fully understand the ‘past’ of our present. I see these reflections as contributing to the ongoing debates on temporality, representation of the past, and the politics of naming in the contemporary scholarship on Turkish and Armenian studies.

Islands of Unity Amid Invisible Seas

Texts produced at different stages of my doctoral work are subsumed into a particular narrative of dwelling and travelling portrayed in this thesis. As Marilyn Strathern noted in Partial Connections (1991), the sense of flow within written discourse is based on a kind of experiential unity inherent to the exercise, although it is at the same time made up of internal discontinuities and jumps over gaps (xxiii). This is what she calls “the well-known paradox of contacts between surfaces” (Ibid.), in which the gaps-in-between are represented as containing nothing by those who focus on distinctions (what things in themselves are), but are not at all empty in the view of those who focus on connections and interrelations (cited in Green
2005: 88). Hence, there are various possible ways of reading between textual landscapes, which should consider the subject position of the reader central to the experiential unity invoked by Strathern (1991). In the case of ethnographic research, where anthropologists are also expected to ‘read’ the cultural stuff enclosed by those surfaces and gaps (as proposed by Barth 1969), there is a decision to make, as Green suggested above: whether to focus on what things in themselves are, or to account for connections and interrelations between them. Following that, I invest spending some scholarly time in highlighting the nuances in the ways we investigate gaps that either denote or similarly deny difference. These are gaps with such authority, or baggage, that they do not allow us to re-locate people and places easily.

Figure 7:
A Collage by Aikaterini Gegisian (2015)
From left to right: Yerevan, Athens, Istanbul

In the above image, Aikaterini Gegisian presents a collage of images that collapses certain cartographic gaps between Greece, Turkey, and Armenia while re-introducing others. The collage intends to introduce a continuous landscape, yet at the same recognizes that there is a ‘deceptive’ aspect to it. In Gegisian’s own words, “communicating and cooperating, images find their perfect match, as if ‘everything is in play and in place’” (gegisian.com). At one
level, I believe, we should seek answers by looking at the histories of these three nation-states, where ‘population exchange’ and genocidal processes were aimed at mass homogenization in language and religion. Consequently, behind the harmony presented in the above collage (and her other collages), there is a historical context in which the differences between these nation-states are firmly established, both cartographically and in terms of culture. It is in this sense that the collage allows its audience to re-think these divisions between Greece, Turkey, and Armenia. At another level, there is something inherent to every textual and visual narrative that makes holes, absences, and contradictions inevitable no matter how elegant or seemingly total they look (see Saybaşılı 2008: 83, footnote 3). In one of our meetings in Istanbul, Gegisian explained that the contours between the selected images were deliberately left uneven, so that “the gaps become autonomous and the images fall into the crack to express new thought” (personal communication on 8 September 2015). Similarly, Clifford, while setting out his methodology in Routes, wrote that

the method of collage asserts a relationship among heterogeneous elements in a meaningful ensemble. It brings its parts together, while sustaining a tension among them. The present ensemble challenges readers to engage with its parts in different ways, while allowing the pieces to interact in larger patterns of interference and complementarity. The strategy is not only formal or aesthetic. A method of marking and crossing borders (here those of scholarly expression) is pursued throughout the book. Discursive domains like cultures are shown to be constituted at their policed and transgressed edges (Clifford 1997: 12).

All through his book, Clifford approaches different mediums of cultural representation such as text, translation, and image through a comprehensive framework of cultural meaning. In this framework, different components of meaning and representation are not treated as being in opposition or negation, though not in a perfect harmonious set of relationships either. As in the quotation above, different elements of the social field form a collage in which a tension between components is maintained. Consequently, collage is the study of this ensemble and its meaning – what the greater picture tells us.

In many ways, the narrative presented in this thesis is necessarily a collage that is descriptive of situations I came across during my fieldwork and the
particular national epistemological regime that I studied in relation to physical dispersion and the semantics of “signs in history” (Parmentier 1987) introduced in the earlier pages. Yet it also recognizes its own limitations, inconsistencies, and gaps within the narrative of dwelling and travelling portrayed in the post-genocide context of Turkey and Armenia. Issues of access (to fieldwork sites and informants) and the subsequent ‘offshoots in research’ (such as the emergence of bus and boat journeys as fieldwork sites) provided this thesis with a narrative of ‘getting there’ (in a way suggested by Clifford 1997). Consequently, the gaps located within textual, visual, and ethnographic landscapes presented in the works of Strathern (1991), Gegisian (2015), and Clifford (1997) respectively point at a ‘direction’ from which to approach different modes of cultural representation. As I construe such effort of re-directing points of entry specifically in relation to my own ethnographic material, this thesis does not aim to define ethnic communities either from inside or outside. Instead, it aims to recognize a ‘negative space’ where a union of diverse human and non-human actors gives shape to the ethnographic research context. Following this sentiment, what I am most interested in here in this thesis is to understand and unpack those ‘negative spaces’ as constitutive of anthropological (and thus political and cultural) subjects, and to identify their places within a larger system of ethnographic representation.

In 2015, Gegisian was one of the participating artists at the Armenian Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, which received the Golden Lion for its exhibition, Armenity. In her series of exhibited collages, also published and entitled A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas, the “metaphor of sea clearly shows that everything is connected by invisible bodies of water” (personal communication on 8 September 2015). This conceptualization of seas is in line with Fernand Braudel’s The Mediterranean (1972), where the sea is understood as bridging people across physical distances instead of separating them, and with this thesis, where the metaphor of islands guides me in defining particular landscapes that are imagined as distinct yet connected by movements of people. The invisible sea emerges as a metaphor for negative space: those gaps that put everything in place, give the islands portrayed in
this thesis their shape, and set the context for communication and movement between them. Consequently, the islands that this thesis refer to are not homogenized within and do not refer to any imagined or physical territory as such. Following the debates on the wider issues of representation in anthropology in the 1980s, Clifford (1984) noted in his introduction to Writing Culture that there was “no longer any place of overview (mountaintop) from which to map human ways of life” (22). An island, which is a mountain in the middle of the sea, should not come to impose a mountaintop view of a bounded cultural world, either (Ibid.). Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) noted that “every view is a view from somewhere” (141), stressing the unavoidability of issues of representation – and, as I will touch upon later, of positionality. Sherry Ortner (1984) similarly observed that anthropologists have long had a tendency to treat societies as if they were islands, with little sense of the larger systems of relations in which these units are embedded (142). Instead, as I construe them in this thesis, islands always refer to making of unity as they enclose discourse and land in light of particular cartographic, cultural, and political regimes of representation. They come into existence very much in relation to the access granted to them from the outside or their respective ‘seas’ (read: negative spaces). The ‘islands’ I refer to in this thesis include the diversity of metaphorical and literal islands that refer to Armenia as enclosed by mountains, political and economic blockade, and closed borders; Armenian migrants enclosed by local Armenians in Istanbul and other migrants from different nation-state contexts; Armenians from Istanbul enclosed by Turks of various types based on particular articulations of race, culture, and citizenship; Kinaliada, a tiny physical island enclosed by the waters of the Sea of Marmara; and lastly Turkey, which is enclosed as a result of the history of people who left it (through genocide, exile, and migration) and the access it did not and could not grant them to come back. As a result, ‘getting there’ and issues of access are not limited to indicating the tone of relationships exclusively between my fieldwork site and myself; they also portray the tone between the islands studied in this thesis and the social and physical contexts that have defined them.
Native Anthropologists and Anthropological Natives

Issues of access to my informants reflected themselves in particular ways. Over the course of the two-and-a-half years that I conducted research, I never had a ‘cock-fight moment’ or a moment that broke the ice in the way Clifford Geertz experienced in Bali (1972). In most cases the ice never melted, and, when it did thaw, the situation was always prone to restoring itself to where we first began. This was directly related to my background from a Turkish-speaking Muslim family. Although I had relatively fewer problems in accessing Armenians from Turkey, I was often perceived as a source of insecurity by migrants, shuttle-traders, and other travellers from the Republic of Armenia. The insecurity, as I understood from my informants, was not only based on our constantly reproduced positions as the imagined victims and perpetrators of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. In the hundred years following the Genocide, Armenians in both Soviet Armenia and Kemalist Turkey were subjected to direct state surveillance, although in different ways and to different degrees. One of the first questions I encountered in both countries, sarcastic yet demanding a solid answer, was whether I was a spy working for the Turkish state. A significant number of times in Armenia, my informants believed that they were being followed by intelligence agents after they met me. Anthropologists are often mistaken for spies, and within the specific contexts of Turkey and Armenia, my personal baggage pushed the limits of my ethnographic research to the extent that it revealed the wider relationships between people and their states. In Turkey, the threat I posed to my informants was based on century-long state practices of violence and the impunity of perpetrators. In Armenia, the threat I posed had less to do with the Turkish state, as many informants feared being blacklisted by the Armenian KGB for being in contact with a Turkish citizen.

Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) wrote that ethnographic observation tends to become a sort of ‘negotiated reality’ between informants and the anthropologist, at least until the anthropologist’s presence becomes less conspicuous (585). However, as hinted above, I was never invisible or fully integrated with my informants. Although I was from Turkey, I never qualified as an ‘insider anthropologist’ during the part of my research conducted in Turkey. As
Narayan (1993) once noted, ‘native anthropologists’ were usually perceived as ‘insiders’ regardless of their complex backgrounds, and the differences between them were usually ignored in the discipline (677). This was why Appadurai (1988) criticized the concept of the ‘native anthropologist’, as he found that it was deeply buried in an ideology of authenticity (cited in Narayan 1993: 676). Similarly, Clifford (2013) (by referring to Sven Haakanson, Jr. 2001: 79) invited us to think about why the ‘native anthropologist’ was always, in effect, required to speak from an ‘emic’ rather than an ‘etic’ position (251).

However, there still remains an important question to ask: was I ever ‘native’ during my research? Similar to what Navaro-Yashin (2002) experienced as a Jewish person of ‘minority’ status in Turkey (14), I was simultaneously native and foreign in my fieldwork (cf. Aras 2014). In Turkey, particular definitions of Turkishness reflect the ways in which ‘natives’ (in Turkish: yerli) and ‘foreigners’ (in Turkish: yabancı) are imagined domestically. As portrayed earlier in this introduction, religion is a central component of the definition of Turkishness (Çağaptay 2005), which has led to a situation in which non-Muslims (such as Greeks, Jews, and Armenians) are often imagined as ‘foreigners’ in their own country (see Chapters V and VI for more on this). It is in this sense that I was a ‘native’ in Turkey – and perhaps a “wholie” in Abu-Lughod’s (1991) understanding of the term. However, my informants also understood differences between us through this constantly reproduced definition of Turkishness in which Armenians were always ‘foreigners’. Consequently, what separated both Navaro-Yashin and me from the people in our respective fieldwork sites was the same particular definition of Turkishness that incorporated differences of religion into the making of ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’ in the country. In other words, both Navaro-Yashin and I, as individuals from Turkey, were outsiders to the people we studied, who were also from Turkey. However, her position as an ‘outsider’ was related to the ways that Jews were perceived as ‘foreigners’ in Turkey, thus making her a “not-too-native anthropologist” (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 14), whereas I was probably a ‘bit-too-native anthropologist’ for my Armenian informants from Turkey. My position as a ‘native’ of Turkey was understood
vis-à-vis historical process in which my informants were denied such an affiliation.

The problem of ‘we’ in contemporary Turkey (and Armenia) also repeats itself in the particular terminology I use to address the people I encountered during my research. As opposed to an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) in harmony, ‘we’ as a contested community of natives and foreigners in Turkey is probably also paralleled in the denial of ‘we’ in the sense of ‘authorship’ to anyone but the researcher in social sciences in general. For me, the issue of authorship is not about the levels and distribution of ownership of data among the people who contribute to research. Instead, it directly points at the separation of ‘the researcher’ from ‘the people’ in the field and the silencing of the relationships between the two. Here I believe the issue is not limited to deciding what terminology to use in addressing ‘the people’ at the centre of the research, but how the researcher and ‘the people’ are widely understood as distinct analytical categories of ethnographic inquiry at a more fundamental level – a distinction similar to the way ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’ are imagined in contemporary Turkey. Consequently, in this thesis I do not necessarily problematize whether to use ‘informant,’ ‘interlocutor,’ ‘respondent’, or ‘participant’ (and so on) but demonstrate greater concern in the distinction between the researcher and the unspecific terminology that defines ‘the people’, simply because such distinction reproduces hierarchies in the ways knowledge is produced and shared. In this regard, I believe application of new terminology does not address the question of power between the researcher and the people in focus.

Following Said (1989), I am concerned with ‘the noise’ of ‘the people’ without necessarily spending energy on how to define them with particular terminology. He wrote: “[T]he kind of scrubbed, disinfected interlocutor is a laboratory creation with suppressed, and therefore falsified, connections to the urgent situation of crisis and conflict that brought him or her to attention in the first place. It was only when subaltern figures like women, Orientals, blacks, and other ‘natives’ made enough noise that they were paid attention
to, and asked in so to speak” (210). Although at that point Spivak (1988) had already noted that it was impossible for the subaltern to speak as the research was always embedded in the colonizing project of studying ‘the other’, I nevertheless depart from Said’s (1989) invitation to introduce ‘noise’ of informants to research (and text) and “convert them into topics of discussion or fields of research” (210).

Said does not directly show us the way, but there are options. Nancy Schep-Hughes in *Death without Weeping* (1992) asks whether it is possible to be both *anthropologa* and *companheira* in research. Following Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), she argues that ethnography is “more dialogic than monologic, and anthropological knowledge may be seen as something produced in human interaction, not merely ‘extracted’ from native informants who are unaware of the hidden agendas coming from the outsider” (Schep-Hughes 1992: 25). On the one hand, her suggestion on ‘companionship’ and argument for ‘dialogue’ between the researcher and the informants are in line with how I envisaged research and how I formulated particular modes of travelling and dwelling, and ways of being ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’ in the later stages of writing this thesis. On the other hand, for Said (1989), the emphasis on the Bakhtinian dialogue between the researcher and the informant is merely “a domesticated result” of a long debate on how and whether to locate interlocutors as ‘outsiders’ (210).

Clearly for Said ‘the noise’ of the interlocutor has more to offer than ‘dialogue’ in the field. In his understanding, dialogue does not necessarily eliminate the ‘white-washing’ of the colonial (and colonizing) relationships between the researcher and the interlocutors, a relationship that primarily rests on the presupposed ‘otherness’ of the latter. For instance, in particular response to Marshall Sahlins’s *Islands of History* (1985) and Eric Wolf’s *Europe and the People Without History* (1982), Said (1989) asserted that the lack of ‘noise’ even in the works of these resourceful anthropologists is directly related to how ‘culture’ is approached from a ‘vantage point’ (212-216) – or a
‘mountaintop’ as suggested by Clifford (1984: 22). This will be an issue to tackle specifically in Chapter II.

This is how in the end I use the term ‘informant’ in most of the thesis, with the exceptions of sections on physical mobility that deal with bus travel and boat travel, respectively (in doing so I also have great hope not to be mistaken for imposing a hierarchy of authority or voice). In the first half of the thesis, I widely refer to ‘the people’ as ‘travellers’ and often simply as ‘travel companions’, and in the second half of the thesis I refer to them as part of a larger group of ‘protagonists’ among particular non-human actors like winds, waves, and boats that shape a particular regime of urban mobility on the sea. In addition, although I do not make a clear-cut distinction and do not necessarily follow a consistent definition, at times I also refer to as ‘friends’ the people I am still in contact with to date.

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2 However, in doing so, as in Orientalism (1978), Said ends up making analytical distinctions between representations of culture and what culture is. In this thesis, I am more interested in the communication and the relationship between the two.
A PRELUDE: Lost in Georgia

In the early spring of 2012, I went to Armenia for a short visit. I had been invited for an NGO meeting between various partners collaborating on a local history project from Turkey, Armenia, and Germany. I travelled to Yerevan on a bus from Istanbul for about 40 hours and decided to go back to Istanbul by airplane. At that time flights between Yerevan and Istanbul with a return were as expensive as 600 US dollars: due to the blockade by Turkey and Turkish Airlines, a monopoly of private companies charged high prices for the two-hour flight. Hence, for most passengers travelling between Armenia and Turkey, the fastest and most reasonably priced option was to travel first to Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. Passengers travelling from Yerevan arrived in Tbilisi in shared taxis and *marshrutkas*, the minibuses that dominate post-socialist landscapes, a five-to-seven-hour overland journey, and then took a flight to Istanbul. Going in the opposite direction, passengers travelling from Istanbul arrived in Tbilisi by airplane, then took shared taxis or marshrutkas to Yerevan.

When I went to book a flight from Tbilisi to Istanbul, all the flights were full on the days I wanted to travel. However, I had two other possible places to fly from: Batumi, on the Georgian side of the Georgia-Turkey border, and Hopa on the Turkish side. I booked a flight from Hopa as it was three times cheaper than taking a flight from Batumi. Hence, my plan was to leave Yerevan for Tbilisi in a shared taxi, then take another shared taxi to the Georgian border town of Batumi, and finally take a private taxi to the Turkish border town of Hopa. However, when I left Armenia and entered Georgia, I realized that flights to the Turkish border town of Hopa were in fact operated from Batumi. The distance between the two cities was only about 30 km and there was no airport in Hopa at all.

This situation brought about various complexities in terms of border crossings between the two countries, especially for passengers who were short of time or money. Passengers travelling from Hopa to Istanbul were required to take a shuttle-bus from the Hopa town centre to the Batumi
airport. They were taken directly to the specific gate of departure without any passport control or customs checks, although they physically crossed the Turkish-Georgian border. Moreover, checked baggage was accepted on aircrafts at the port of departure indicated on the ticket. This was how it was guaranteed that passengers from Hopa, who were travelling on far cheaper tickets on a domestic flight, and passengers from Batumi, who were travelling on more expensive tickets on an international flight, were separated. In this sense, the port of departure for any passenger was not where they physically got on the plane, but where they had their baggage checked in by the authorities. This was a practical solution that prevented goods smuggled from Turkey into Georgia from arriving at or departing from the Batumi airport.

As a result of all this, it would have been impossible for me to catch my flight, but I missed my flight from Hopa for another reason. Earlier that day, I had taken a shared taxi from Yerevan’s Kilikia Bus Station for Tbilisi. Similar to many other shared taxis and marshrutkas I had travelled in between the two countries, the passengers had different mother tongues and citizenships. I occupied a seat in the last row of the vehicle, a large Mercedes that was probably more than 20 years old. Sitting next to me was a Kurdish-speaking teenage boy from Armenia, and next to him a Russian soldier. The row in front of us consisted of an Armenian woman who had migrated to Los Angeles, a Dutch tourist, and a Kurdish man from the predominantly Kurdish province of Van in eastern Turkey. As we were stopped twice by the Armenian police asking for bribes, the strangers inside the shared taxi started a conversation about whether we could make it to Tbilisi on time. A commotion started when the Dutch tourist asked the Armenian woman sitting next to him in English about what had happened. She briefly responded in an American accent that she had no idea as she was not listening to the conversation between the police officer and the driver. Following that, she turned back to the row behind her and repeated the Dutch tourist’s question to the Kurdish boy sitting next to me, this time in Armenian. The same exchange of questions and answers repeated itself several times in English, Armenian, Russian, Kurdish, and eventually Turkish – when Kurdish men from Turkey could not communicate with the Kurdish
boy from Armenia due to differences in dialects and pronunciation, they finally approached me and I translated for them from Armenian to Turkish and from Turkish to Armenian.

The Kurdish men were surprised by my presence as they never imagined running into a Turkish man on the road between Yerevan and Tbilisi. While a huge generalization, I felt that as Kurds from Turkey, they did not have any reason to trust a Turkish man they met on the roads of Armenia. The violent history of nation-building in post-Ottoman Turkey resulted in the making and marking of differences between Muslim Turks and Kurds and popularized those differences in the form of stereotypes about Turks, Kurds, and others. This was probably why I first appeared to them as someone to approach cautiously, until I made them sure about my own political stance vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue and the violent history of Turkey. I was already six months into my fieldwork and, by that time, it had already proven very difficult to persuade informants from/in Turkey, Armenia, and elsewhere that I was not a spy or someone with an affiliation with the Turkish government. However, after several questions about who I was and jokes about politics in Turkey, the three of us became friends two hours into our journey. I learned that they were also on their way to Hopa to catch a bus back to Van, so we agreed to share a taxi together for the rest of the journey.

We arrived in a central square in Tbilisi, where I was arriving for the first time in my life. There were no taxis leaving for Batumi, from where we had planned to take another taxi to Hopa. As most taxi drivers in this particular part of Tbilisi were Armenians working as drivers en route to Armenia, it was possible for me to communicate in Armenian. One taxi driver offered to take us to where most taxis for Batumi departed, but was not interested in taking us to Batumi himself. Meanwhile, my new Kurdish friends were busy buying painkillers from a pharmacy nearby. When they came back, I explained the situation. The three of us agreed to take a shared taxi to Batumi from another part of Tbilisi, and we got into a city taxi to go there.
Ten or fifteen minutes after entering our third mode of transport of the day, I realized that I had forgotten my bag in the shared taxi that had brought us from Yerevan. My laptop, camera, and field notes were inside the bag and I had to find it. I tried to explain the situation to the taxi driver and asked him to bring us back to the public square in central Tbilisi we had arrived at earlier in the day. However, the driver did not understand what I meant, partly because he was not from Tbilisi. It was extremely difficult to communicate with him, as he was not Armenian as the previous two drivers were and I did not know any Russian or Georgian. I heard something like ‘Turk?’ When I responded in the affirmative, he made a sudden U-turn.

When I saw the building that we were approaching, I understood that he was taking us to the main bus station of Tbilisi, Ortachala, and finally brought the taxi to a parking lot nearby full of other taxis. The driver left the car, approached the other taxi drivers, and explained something that made one of the other taxi drivers approach our car and talk to us. It appeared that all taxi drivers in this particular part of the Ortachala bus station were Azeri speakers from Georgia. I understood that the taxi driver brought us there knowing that the Azeri and Turkish languages are very closely related. I explained the situation to the Azeri taxi driver, he explained the issue to his friends, and one of them ‘volunteered’ to help find my bag (and at the end of the day charged me 60 Georgian laris, equal to 25 US dollars). He asked me about where the taxi from Yerevan to Tbilisi had dropped us off, and I responded that I simply did not know. At that point, my Kurdish friends remembered the receipt from the pharmacy where they had purchased their pills. We presented the receipt to the Azeri taxi driver, and it became clear that it was a pharmacy at the nearby Ablavari Metro Station. My Kurdish friends waited at the Ortachala station with our Georgian taxi driver from Batumi, and I set off on another journey with this Azeri taxi driver through the streets of Tbilisi.

The Azeri driver took me back to Ablavari Metro Station. However, our driver from Armenia had already left with new passengers en route to Yerevan. There were other Armenian drivers waiting for passengers; I told them what the car and the driver had looked like. They knew whom I was talking about based simply on my description and called the driver to ask him to leave the
bag somewhere specific on the road so that I could find it. The driver responded that he would leave my bag at the tomato stall of Gregory in the border village of Shulaveri. Following that, the Azeri taxi driver took me to the border village, asked for my bag from tomato stall to tomato stall, found Gregory and my bag with nothing touched or lost, and took me back to my Kurdish friends, who were still waiting for me at the Ortachala bus station in Tbilisi. When I asked the Azeri taxi driver whether we would have followed the Armenian shared-taxi driver all the way to Armenia if he had not dropped my bag off in the border village, he responded that Armenians would have killed him if he had attempted to enter their country – a definitive no!

In the end, after a good four hours of chasing my bag through the streets of Tbilisi and Georgian border villages, I already knew that I was going to miss my flight. We finally arrived in Batumi a couple of hours after midnight and I decided to cross the border to Turkey with my Kurdish friends. By the time we arrived in Hopa in another taxi, the sun was just about to rise. The three of us had some lentil soup in a restaurant frequented by exhausted truck drivers in this border town. Then my Kurdish friends asked me whether I was coming with them to the bus station. I checked flight schedules and prices and decided to take a flight from Trabzon in the afternoon, instead of booking another flight from the Hopa/Batumi airport, so the three of us went to the bus station. I took a two-hour bus journey to catch a flight to Istanbul while my Kurdish friends embarked on a 700-km bus journey to their side of Mount Ararat. With the delays on my part, border crossings, and bribe-seeking Armenian policemen, it took them about 30 hours to reach home, a journey of only 200 km had the overland border between Turkey and Armenia been open. As the first core chapter of the thesis starts to unfold in the following pages, the borders in this part of the world require an expansive look at the (im)mobility regimes that have been in operation since the fall of the Iron Curtain.
CHAPTER I: Bus Travelling in the Age of Global Circulations

...[H]owever different the reasons were, the result was the same: wherever the flexible borderline between East and West shifts, Armenia and/or the Armenians are in some mysterious way right there, as if waiting to become intermediates between the newly distributed East and West. Usually this happens against their will, Armenians are as if doomed to become intermediates... (Levon Abrahamian, Armenian Identity in a Changing World, 2006: 348).

Introduction

The border towns of Hopa in Turkey and Batumi in Georgia enjoy increasing mobility between the two countries. As of December 2011, Turkish and Georgian citizens are able to travel between the two countries with national identity cards – thus without a passport. In 2011, Batumi was amongst the most popular travel destinations for Turkish citizens; approximately 750,000 visited the city for its casinos and nightlife (1 October 2012; BBC Türkçe). Similarly, in 2015, despite the decrease in the total number of foreigners visiting Turkey, the number of Georgians increased and they constituted the second largest group of visitors, after German and before Bulgarian nationals (28 January 2016; Hürriyet). In 2015, Georgia-Turkey and Bulgaria-Turkey land crossings were the third and fourth busiest Turkish borders after Istanbul Atatürk and Antalya International Airports (27 May 2016; TRT Haber). An additional 1.6 million people also visited Turkey as day-trippers (in Turkish: günübirlikçi) from these neighbouring countries to shop and trade in the border towns (28 January 2016; Hürriyet).

One of the major reasons for this increasing mobility between Georgia and Turkey should be understood in relation to the increasing partnership between the two countries. However, this partnership between Turkey and Georgia should also be located within the current political map of the post-socialist Caucasus that is being shaped in the shadow of the unrest between Turkey and Armenia, and similarly between Georgia and Russia. The contemporary Caucasus is a fragmented zone of closed borders, autonomous
regions, de facto independent states, and invaded territories. Both internationally recognized and unrecognized borders within Georgia prevent or constrain travel to Russia at specific locations, such as the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan are disputed over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. I suggest that these “frozen and forgotten conflicts” (Ciobanu 2010; de Waal 2013) create a unique regime of mobility among the various independent and unrecognized states of the South Caucasus. It is these conflicts that have brought about trade opportunities since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Humphrey 2002; Marsden 2017), and subsequently led to the emergence of particular towns and border crossings as nodal points where people from countries at conflict mix and mingle. Hopa is one such nodal point.

The north-eastern border of Turkey (with Georgia, Armenia, and the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan; see map below) was shaped by two treaties in 1921: first with the post-revolutionary Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in March in Moscow and then with representatives of the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republics in October in Kars. Until 1937, the border between Hopa and Batumi was very porous, allowing locals to visit family, shop, and trade on either side (Akyüz 2017: 24-35). However, with the intensification of Stalinism (and as an indirect protest against the Montreux Convention in 1936 that permitted Turkey to remilitarize the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), the border was closed, becoming one of the most rigid borders of the Soviet Union (Pelkmans 2006; Gültekin 2007) until its reopening in 1988 (Akyüz 2017: 24).

The transformation of the Turkish-Georgian border from an impermeable line into a zone of interaction contrasts with the history of the Turkish-

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3 Both treaties annulled former border treaties signed between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, which also implied a ‘new start’ for the parties involved. It would not be misleading to suggest that both treaties were foundational in the making of modern Turkey. They brought recognition to the Turkish Grand National Assembly located in Ankara as the Government of Turkey (as opposed to the Ottoman government in Istanbul occupied by the Allied Powers) two years before the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923.
Armenian border. As opposed to the popular view and public memory on the issue in Turkey and elsewhere (with the exception of Armenia), the border between the two countries has not always been closed. It was open from 1927 to 1993, connecting Armenia’s second largest city, Gyumri, to the Turkish city of Kars; this was the only functioning border crossing between the former Soviet Union and Turkey. It is in this historical context that the politics centred around the Genocide between the two countries did not result in the closing of the border by Turkey. In fact, Turkey was amongst the first states to recognize the independent Republic of Armenia in 1991 (Goshgarian 2005). However, with the intensification of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict regarding the redistribution of territory in the Karabakh region in 1993, Turkey sided with Azerbaijan and closed its border with Armenia in protest and as a way to blockade transportation of goods into the country (see Chapter III for more on the impact of the ongoing dispute on the recent political and economic history of Armenia). However, as the rest of this chapter reveals in detail, despite the closing of the border since 1993, Armenians nevertheless found ways to go to Turkey for trade and travel, and “the generalized image of the Turkish enemy” never stopped them from getting involved in trade expeditions and buying Turkish goods (Abrahamian 2005: 251).

4 The only other border crossing between the Soviet Union and Turkey, the Margara/Alican crossing, was also located in Armenia. However, it was never permanently in operation (Gültekin 2007).
Figure 8: Map of Conflicted Zones in the South Caucasus (with some major roads connecting and detouring them)

The map above demonstrates the fragmented political nature of the South Caucasus very well. In Hopa, during more than a dozen border crossings between Georgia and Turkey, I observed truck drivers from Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia waiting in the same line. Buses en route to Baku, Yerevan, and Tbilisi all arrived here with passengers bearing Russian, Georgian, Armenian, or Azerbaijani passports. Private cars, taxis, and minibuses were mostly involved in short-distance travel between Georgia and Turkey, between towns close to the border. Hopa served as a meeting point for many people who did not have much access to travel elsewhere. It is in this context of political fragmentation that I consider Hopa, at the westernmost tip of the post-socialist Caucasus region, as a place where historical relationships between ordinary people are constantly being reproduced, re-established, and re-invented. In order to explore this north-east corner of Turkey and its relationship to the world beyond, I find Sarah Green’s elaboration of the Balkans to be a good departure point:
The problem of the Balkans, as they are constituted in hegemonic terms, is not too much fragmentation, as many suggest, but too much connection, too much relationship; the Balkans always seem to generate ambiguous and tense connections that ought, in modernist terms, to be clearly resolved separations (Green 2005: 129).

My purpose here is not to suggest that the Balkan case can be directly supplanted onto the case of the Caucasus. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that both regions are post-socialist and post-Ottoman (the Caucasus to a lesser extent than the Balkans). Both regions have resonated with political and ethnic conflict since the late imperial era (Romanov, Ottoman or Habsburg), and this has continued in the nation-state and post-socialist eras. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter IV, it is from both regions that hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees moved into Turkey in various waves of migrations in the 20th century to become Turkish citizens and eventually ‘Turks’ (Bora 1998; Çağaptay 2005). Hence, both regions pose historically significant connections with contemporary Turkey and its nation-building enterprise. The historical diversity of these two regions neighbouring contemporary Turkey and, as Green (2005) puts it, the abundance of relationships among their diverse populations are difficult to grasp in modernist thinking. This chapter aims to illustrate some of these complexities ethnographically, to unpack how these multi-layered and contingent affiliations with people and places are lived by Armenians among these contested national settings.

In the following pages, I approach political fragmentation as part of the relationships among people in order to account for the constitution of “mobility” in relation to “stasis” (Clifford 1997). In Hopa, I observed that the closed border between Turkey and Armenia resulted in particular modes of living and travelling: people were on the move as much as they themselves and others around them were restricted from moving. I suggest, through presenting the account of my travel companions from Armenia en route to Istanbul, that the increasing mobility between Turkey and Georgia is intimately related to the restrictions on residents of these countries from travelling to third-country contexts. This adds to the observation that
Mobility is being realized at the expense of many others who cannot move or are stopped from moving (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013).

In this chapter I contextualize various hegemonic discursive and physical sites that I define as “dominant centres”. This terminology, borrowed from Janet Wolff (1993), challenges two major issues in contemporary anthropology by asking how we define mobility in relation to stasis and how we should make sense of ongoing immobilities vis-à-vis globalist paradigms of increasing free movement. It is for this reason that here and all through the text I define ‘movement’ specifically as the physical transportation of humans and non-humans (goods, animals, and money) between two localities. I use ‘mobility’ and ‘movement’ interchangeably, but only in the ‘singular’ case of the former term. What I understand and conceptualize in this thesis as ‘mobilities’ and subsequently ‘immobilities’ refers to particular juxtapositions of “travelling” and “dwelling” as defined by Clifford (1997). Thus, for instance, my attempt is to move beyond how “anthropology frequently dealt with immobility as a cipher for assemblages of blocked, stuck and transitional movement” (Khan 2016: 93). There is an additional non-physical dimension to (im)mobilities with an emphasis on the transportation of discourse and its constant deconstructions and reconstructions. Both terms refer to a general historical condition of travel, migration, and displacement of people and their ideas, traditions, and know-how. Thus, as opposed to the physical dimension of movement, mobilities and immobilities stress (or are at least based on a search for) a human condition shared universally.5

I undertake the task of unpacking Wolff’s notion of the “dominant centre” (1993) by focusing on three ethnographic settings. I have already revealed the first of these: the land crossings at the national borders between Armenia and

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5 Although very indirectly, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have inspired me to conceptualize mobilities and immobilities in relation to both the short- and long-distance transportation of discourse. As Adrian Parr (2005) notes, their terminology of “territorialization” as a constant process of deconstruction (“deterioralization”) and reconstruction (“reterritorialization”) can be best understood as movement producing physical, mental, or spiritual change and re-assemblage of former fixed relationships (67) (see also Deleuze and Guattari 1994).
Georgia and between Georgia and Turkey. In the following section, I attempt to locate a particular bus station in Istanbul in relation to other neighbourhoods of the city, in addition to networks of transnational post-socialist mobility and formal and informal forms of the global economy. Subsequently, I present ethnographic data from my research on the 40-hour bus journeys between Armenia and Turkey, and I portray the dynamics of contemporary travelling between the two countries. In each of these three settings, the “dominant centre” refers to academic and political discourses that marginalize particular narratives of mobility and create hierarchies between them. A prime example of this tendency is particularly the underrepresentation of women’s accounts within the literature on travel and mobility. By portraying a case that specifically locates femininity as a component of mobility, one of the purposes of this chapter is to contribute to the literature on the gendered nature of international mobility (Morokvasic 1984; Kaplan 1987; Enloe 1989; Wolff 1993; Hoving 2001; Pesar and Mahler 2003; Bloch 2017). In doing so, it does not take gender to observe “how men and women move differently”, but to capture the socially, culturally, and historically constructed relations between the sexes that “inflect the texture of mobility, and vice versa” (Elliot 2016: 76). Although not directly realized in this chapter, the thesis (especially Chapter III) contributes towards understanding women’s sexuality in migration contexts beyond a sexual objectification framework (Cheng 2010: 22).

A Bus Station as a Departure Point

The Emniyet bus station, although located in the very centre of Istanbul, is not widely known amongst the general public. However, it serves as a major hub for travel between the post-socialist world and Istanbul. The adjacent cargo terminal makes the trading of goods possible for relatively well-off traders who can afford the services of freight companies. However, traders who can afford to do so often use other more comfortable forms of transport than buses. Most traders travelling on the buses departing from the Emniyet station are involved in small-scale trade; they are shuttle-traders (in
Armenian from Russian: *chelnoki* and in Turkish: *bavul tüccarı*), and they carry the goods they purchase in Istanbul back to their countries of origin themselves. Since the collapse of the USSR, shuttle-trading has been a common practice among the citizens of former socialist countries (Yenal 2000; Humphrey 2002; Yükseker 2007; Reeves 2014; Bloch 2017).

Not all passengers frequenting this bus station are directly involved in trade. For many of the passengers, trade is not the primary incentive for travel. There are people arriving in Istanbul with a one-way ticket in search of work, as well as people leaving Istanbul – some leaving for good after making some money. Students and tourists also use the bus station. There are in-transit passengers travelling between Turkey’s eastern and western neighbours. Despite their different reasons for making use of the station, almost all passengers leaving Istanbul carry goods purchased in the city, whether as gifts to friends and family or goods to be potentially sold in their city of arrival. Many carry olive oil to be given as gifts, detergent to be sold to shop owners, and textiles intended for gifts and for sale. Others, such as students or tourists, also buy more textiles than they personally need in case these can be sold to traders or shop owners back in Armenia. In this context of travelling between the post-socialist world and Istanbul, a gift is often a potential good to be sold, and vice versa. The articulation of long-distance travelling and contacts in this region only through perspectives of economic interest is a very limited framework (see Helms 1988: 5); trading – at least in the context of the buses between Turkey and Armenia – takes many forms.

This small pocket of the post-socialist world around the Emniyet bus station is situated on the southern shore of what is now called Istanbul’s ‘historical peninsula’ (in Turkish: *tarihi yarımada*),6 acknowledging its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, there is a juxtaposition between this global stage (and the mass tourism that goes with it) and the marginal and

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6 Although I object to the term ‘historical peninsula’ as it de-historicizes other historically significant parts of the city, it demonstrates how the making of marginality and centrality are intertwined spatial arrangements in contemporary Istanbul. Su (forthcoming) playfully introduces the term “Old City Peninsula” to stress the juxtaposition of a geographical term with a capital-driven claim on historicity (see also the next chapter).
almost invisible activities going on in its shadow. As Bloch (2017) calls it, “the Russian district” (32) of Istanbul does not attract the attention of the international tourists who visit the nearby museums and monuments. The Emniyet bus station and its surroundings have come into existence as an outcome of a business other than tourism – textile production and textile trade. There have been textile workshops here since the 1980s and even earlier periods, and over time, most workshops have established storefronts where the purchase of goods on the spot is possible. With the collapse of the USSR these workshops attracted many shuttle-traders from former socialist countries, which has resulted in a boom of low-budget hotels in the area. I conducted research in a triangle that consisted of three neighbourhoods within walking distance of each other: Samatya, where the bus station is situated; Laleli, where most shops and hotels are located; and Kumkapi, where more hotels are scattered and where many post-socialist migrants live. It is important to note here that historically both Samatya and Kumkapi were neighbourhoods with considerable Armenian populations – not only until the Genocide but also up until the 1960s. Both neighbourhoods still have functioning Armenian churches and other Armenian public institutions.

The common characteristic of these three neighbourhoods is that they display a vivid picture of contemporary globalizations and mobilities taking place with different speeds, legal frameworks, and physical settings. The informal economy of textile production in workshops and its trade is based on networks of relationships between producers, shopkeepers, and traders, as well hotels and landlords, bus and cargo companies, and local authorities. Eder and Öz (2010) note that the intensive deregulation of the Turkish economy since the 1990s has created a fertile environment of informalization in manufacturing and subsequently trade (83). It is in this framework that the country became an attractive destination for shuttle-traders, as the liberalization of the economy paralleled the emergence of informal trade as one of the essential sources of GDP in Turkey (Ibid.) (see also Kirişçi 2005). As a result, this particular micro-economy in the city is maintained through an informal transnational network of business. In the case of the transnational trade between Armenia and Turkey, the closed border and the
lack of diplomatic relationships between the two countries add another layer to the informality of business, simultaneously resulting in advantages and obstacles for traders.

Different parts of the city have different micro-economies. For instance, the eastern tip of the city, widely known as the Sultanahmet area, is connected to the rest of the world through visiting tourists and other formal and informal networks created thanks to the services provided primarily to tourists here. The northern financial districts of the city, such as Levent or Maslak, display a different engagement with globalization. This is not to suggest that all these neighbourhoods should be perceived as necessarily distinct compartments of the global economy in Istanbul. Nevertheless, they could be understood as epitomes of “global scaling” at different levels (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2008), scales that require combinations of formal and informal economies (see Keyder 1999), people with different skills and legal entitlements under different citizenship and migration regimes, and various mediums of exchange (whether e-money, banknotes, gifts, or even barter), and services.

The neighbourhoods of Laleli, Samatya, and Kumkapi, whose historical particularities informed the placement of the Emniyet bus station, are engaged with the economies of post-socialist countries and the rest of the city in multiple ways through diverse human actors. However, these neighbourhoods are neither the final nor the initial ‘localities’ where goods, people, money, and information leave or arrive. To the contrary, the movement of goods, money, and information should be understood as circular. It is in this sense that globalization, as Anna Tsing (2000) once noted, should not be understood as a contradiction between ‘global forces’ and ‘the local’, nor as merely an interaction that is reduced to the relationships between the two (338). Tsing’s criticism targets the globalist paradigm at two levels. At one level, it attacks the portrayal of movement of goods and people as taking place only between the developed and developing economies by underestimating the extent of mobilities within the latter. At
another level, it attacks how the ‘local’ as well as the ‘locality’ are reduced to a ‘place’ where global flows are consumed, incorporated, and resisted (463).7

In order to understand global circulations and simultaneously reject globalist frameworks, Tsing (2000) proposes to study globalization from below – which for her comes to mean studying non-Western, local, or transnational understandings of the term. I find the Emniyet bus station in Istanbul as both a physical and a mental departure point to engage with this alternative framework of globalization and circulation. Although not united by language, religion, or experiences of violence, I suggest that Armenians from various parts of Turkey and Armenia share a common element in their understanding of mobility and dispersion, and demonstrate a particular narrative of global circulation. This shared understanding is difficult to define, though it points to how histories of migration, exile, and long-distance trade have led to a normalization of mobility. Similar to what Sarah Green observed more than a decade ago in Greece (2005), I also observed during my research that Armenians in Armenia took movement for granted: although some of them were not even migrants or ‘on the go’, for them family histories of dispersion, exile, and re-location always signified further and future mobilities (see Dink 2000). The quotation by Levon Abrahamian at the beginning of this chapter is intended to account for the centrality of physical movement within the lives of past and present Armenians.

Based on my research, I hypothesize that the post-genocide global dispersion is one of the major cultural tropes that Armenians believe they share with each other. Although the initial formation of the Armenian diaspora precedes the Genocide and should be considered in relation to earlier histories of

7 In this understanding of the terms, ‘locality’ should go beyond defining the physical component of ‘place’. This premise also lays the foundation of how I define ‘locality’ in the following pages – and how in the previous pages I defined ‘mobilities’ between two localities. On the one hand, following Tsing (2000) in the sentence above, ‘locality’ is not merely a physical meeting point for people, goods, or capital. It is where people, goods, and capital change and are re-made. This is how, on the other hand, my particular understanding of the term is in line with the idea of “territory” presented by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a term with unstable qualities, both in physical and discursive substance.
diasporizations and re-diasporizations, many Armenians I met (especially from Turkey) did not know much about the historical Armenian trade networks and diasporas that once stretched from Madras to Amsterdam (Panossian 2006; Aslanian 2011). Nevertheless, almost everyone I encountered through fieldwork articulated dispersion as an important element of being Armenian. Their past, present, and future are shaped in light of what I have so far defined as mobilities. Both in Istanbul and Armenia, people had multiple places of origin and family histories of various waves of displacement. They had family members and friends in a multiplicity of cities. And they had a contingency plan for leaving – just in case. It is in this context that mobility was a fundamental component in providing a sense of what they shared as Armenians, which, I believe, also epitomizes a particular account of globalization from below, a system of mobilities and circulation that has its own internal logic and organizational structures.

Michael Lambek (2007) asks whether we could consider the past and present connections between distant localities as constituting a common ‘region’ or even a ‘system’ (xiv), as opposed to the networks of exchange between interdependent ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ presented by Wallerstein (1974) three decades earlier. As Marcus and Fisher (1986) wrote, in the 1970s Wallerstein “directly challenged the failure of the development theories of the 1950s and 1960s and proposed within the ahistoric and separated disciplines of political science, economics, and sociology to explain what was happening in the third world” (80). Nevertheless, Wallerstein’s accounts of how particular places were historically constituted as ‘peripheries’ were overly limited (Roseberry 1989). Critical scholarship following Wallerstein has primarily focused on closing those gaps between the separated disciplines, employing a more holistic look towards world history. Subsequently it was revealed that what were labelled as ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ in Wallerstein’s theory did not reflect how restructurings in the global economy historically occurred when “players who were formerly peripheral begin to occupy more powerful positions in the system and when geographic zones formerly
marginal to intense interactions become foci and even control centres of such interchanges” (Abu-Lughod 1989: 334) (emphases original).

For anthropologists, increasingly historicized ethnography should be understood as “corrective to its own ahistoric past and a critique of the ways Western scholarship has assimilated the ‘timeless’ cultures of the world” (Marcus and Fisher 1986: 78). Following the same line of thought, I wonder whether contemporary patterns of circulation, travel, and place-making can be recognized as part of historically constituted systems. However, my intention here is to go beyond a political economy framework in accounting for the endurance of these systems (see Ortner 1984) by also recognizing their historical transformations. I wish to take account historical dispersions of languages, religions, traditions, etc. in the making and development of these systems.

Much social science literature consistently defined culture as “the shared, the agreed on, and the orderly” – whether styled as “the functionalist glue making social cohesion possible”, “the abstract code enabling societal communication”, or “the domain of shared, intersubjective meanings that alone make sense of symbolic social action” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 4). Here, my intention is to look for a definition of culture that is less orderly, without denying the “fundamental assumption that people are always trying to make sense of their lives, always weaving fabrics of meaning, however fragile and fragmentary” (Ortner 1997: 9) (also quoted in Hoffman 2009: 421). Following this, in my understanding of the terms, “the shared” and “the agreed on” (as described by Gupta and Ferguson) should not necessarily constitute mutually inclusive components of culture. As Chapters II and III will demonstrate in detail, ‘dispute’ can provide a basis for people to articulate what they share in common. It is in this sense that culture can be understood as ‘a moving territory’ of constant articulation, which is creative and transformative of people, things, and discourses (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).
If we are going to look for a definition somewhere, I suggest that we can understand culture “as a site of travel” (Clifford 1997: 25) that embodies ‘practices of travel’ and ‘zones of contact’ for various insiders and outsiders.\(^8\) However, it should not be limited to those aspects of physical movement in which external relationships are negotiated. On the contrary, it should involve the core constitutive elements within the group itself – perhaps, as indicated earlier, positing a point of ‘dispute’ yet ‘something taken for granted’ (in the sense of Green 2005) by my travel companions on the road between Armenia and Turkey. I suggest that taking mobility for granted reflects a “diasporic moment” (Fortier 2000) (quoted in Ekmekcioglu 2016: 102, footnote 2), which expresses the sharing of particular everyday practices by people located at different nodes within transnational networks of dispersed ‘communities’. These practices circulate within a system of exchange (and travel), yet they may be disconnected and isolated from one another and occur simultaneously in different places in different forms (Fortier 2000: 142). Here, it is essential to note that the “diasporic moment” does not necessarily refer to a moment experienced in a diasporic setting. Therefore, the term does not intend to define what diaspora is. It does not aim at analytically distinguishing between the term and ‘the homeland’, either. Instead, the term emphasizes a shared component in everyday practices of life despite transnational dispersion. In this vein, the term works towards capturing what Armenians possibly share in common without the imposing tone of ‘culture’ and replaces it with an emphasis on “a system of exchange” (Ibid.).

Here I do not intend to replace ‘culture’ with ‘system’ and re-introduce the term as an order, but to reiterate one of the former’s promises in providing a sense of commonality – whether or not disputed – for Armenians dispersed around the globe. Whether considering themselves as ‘diasporic’ or not, I find that diasporization as a historical process is a central trope in the articulation of what Armenians share in common. The dispersion of Armenians and the

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\(^8\) Culture is inherently a site of travel and a zone of contact for anthropologists, too (see Rabinow 1986: 242). See the “Getting There” section of the Introduction for more on a similar discussion on how ‘travelling to the fieldwork site’ should be understood as an essential component of anthropological research.
formation of diasporic centres dates from well before the 1915 Genocide (Panossian 2006; Tölölyan 2010). Based on Boyarin’s conceptualization of the contemporary Jewish diaspora (referred to in Clifford 1997: 248; see also Boyarin and Boyarin 1993), I suggest similarly that the diaspora as we know it today can be thought of as the result of various waves of diasporizations and re-diasporizations, stressing the multiplicity of nodal points in Armenian global networks. In such extended networks, the idea of shared commonality cannot be expected to be determined by relationships between ‘the homeland’ and the host country (cf. Safran 1991), but rather by the independent quality of multiple links between individual nodes within the network (Heller 2004: 202).

Khachig Tölölyan (2000) argues that given the processes of diasporization and the multiplicity of diasporic centres, and the extent to which diasporic centres such as Paris, Los Angeles, and Beirut have increasingly claimed vitality as much as ancestral lands, globally dispersed Armenian communities are being transformed into a ‘transnation’, a term I believe specifically stresses the shifting hierarchies between homelands and diasporic centres. It also informs us about the formation of a system of mobilities among Armenians as depicted earlier. Although Tölölyan specifically focused on the roles of elites and institutions in the making of this transnation, my inquiry is based on analysing how a system of circulation is understood by my travel companions in and en route to Istanbul. This is how I wish to account for the particular ethnographic narrative of globalization from below in the next section.

**Contexts of Mobility: Other Languages, Earlier Histories, Immobilities**

I met Luiza, a woman in her mid-50s from Armenia, in the summer of 2012 on one of the buses that departed from Istanbul in the early morning. She was carrying a dozen blankets and two huge suitcases filled with textiles to be sold in the markets of Yerevan. She would not be selling these items herself; she was bringing those goods to Armenia to sell to shop owners and other
traders in the country. She did not have the financial means to rent a space in one of Yerevan’s large public markets and could not afford to take her business enterprise to another level. Similar to many other shuttle-traders, she did not pay cargo companies to ship the goods she acquired; the things she purchased in Istanbul consisted of whatever she could physically carry herself.

As I started to chat with her, she told me that she was born to a family of Genocide survivors who were from different parts of the Ottoman Empire. I learned that she used to work as a school teacher before the collapse of the Soviet Union. She lived with her husband in Yerevan at the time I met her and her son had been living in the US for over a decade. The way she spoke Armenian made everyone on the bus respect her. Unlike the other passengers, she spoke without a provincial accent, and without ‘foreign influences’ like Russian or Turkish. Her Armenian was makur, or ‘clean’, and she had the authority to tell me that she liked the poetic and ‘old-fashioned’ way I spoke (Western) Armenian. During my numerous bus journeys between Turkey and Armenia via Georgia, I met many women who shared Luiza’s profile – retired women in their 50s who had to find a new way of making a living after the collapse of the USSR (see also Bloch 2017). These women, with their work experience and education levels, composed a particular group of travellers different from the younger generation of passengers who were children when the USSR collapsed.

On our long bus journey from Istanbul to Yerevan, we talked about various issues. I asked her about the language she used to communicate with the owners of textile workshops in Istanbul. I expected to hear Russian, Armenian, or even Turkish as an answer. Much to my surprise, she responded that she communicated only in Polish. She told me that after the collapse of the USSR, she immediately got involved in business in Poland, shuttling goods between Lodz and Warsaw. She told me that Poland was a relatively easier destination for Armenians to do trading back then. She also had some distant family members in Warsaw, which made it possible to base herself in the city for that time period. However, I still did not believe that
shop owners in Istanbul could communicate in Polish. She explained that in the beginning of the 1990s Turkey had attracted shuttle-traders from all over the post-socialist world, including Poland. This was how some of the workshop owners had learned sufficient Polish to conduct business, and thus were able to communicate with Luiza in Polish in Istanbul.

Luiza’s account challenges the ways we often see the contemporary mobility of people and goods. In line with Tsing’s critique (2000) of the globalist paradigms that reduced ‘locality’ to ‘place’, in Luiza’s case there is no singularity of direction of movement. In other words, her present mobility between Armenia and Turkey is made possible by earlier histories of mobility, which for her (on the road to Poland following the collapse of the USSR) and for her former family members (in their forced exodus from ancestral homelands) encompassed different time periods and political contexts. When I met her again at her home in Yerevan, I expressed how amazed I was by her ability to do business in Polish. What seemed to me extraordinary was very normal for her. She simply said that *kyanky indz berets ajstegh* (lit. life brought me here). She was indeed among those who took mobility for granted. As noted, she was born in Soviet Armenia to a family of Genocide survivors. If there had not been the Genocide, she would not have been born in the USSR. As a result, her attempt to make a living through shuttle-trading in the then-collapsing socialist regimes of Eastern Europe also depended on her family’s history of migration and exile from their ancestral lands in Turkey. Counterintuitively, the main reason for her to do business in Turkey also appears to be the closed border. The lack of means of direct travel between the two countries resulted in a market situation in which Turkish goods were in high demand in Armenia.

Contemporary Armenia is not merely landlocked; its eastern and western borders are impermeable due to the military conflict with Azerbaijan and the blockade by Turkey, respectively. It is for this reason that the country is highly dependent on transportation of goods exported and imported via Georgia and Iran. Although the goods exported from Turkey do not constitute the bulk of total Armenian imports (energy supplies from Russia constitute
the majority), the export-import imbalance between the two countries clearly shows that the country is dependent on trade with its western neighbour. For instance, in 2015 the volume of imports from Turkey was 134 million US dollars, while exports to Turkey in this period was only 2.4 million US dollars (Inan and Yayloyan 2018: 8). However, what is missing in these statistics is the main ‘pull’ factor as vocalized in almost all of my interviews with shuttle-traders like Luiza: the quality of goods, especially textiles, produced in Turkey.

Luiza’s mobility within the context of travelling between Armenia and Turkey is made possible at the intersection of various histories of mobility that involve Turkey and the Genocide, Soviet Armenia, Poland and the collapse of socialism, and the more recent history of the closed border between the two countries. Hence, an analysis of her mobility between the two countries should be based on a wider understanding of the ethnographic context presented here. When I asked her why she did not continue doing business in Poland, she responded that with the country’s accession to the EU it became impossible for her to do business there (for a confirmation of this situation in other post-socialist contexts see Bloch 2017: 60; see also Eder and Öz 2010: 90). Hence, it was capitalist globalization processes that limited her mobility and consequently prompted her to seek new destinations for trading. As opposed to the promises of globalist discourses celebrating easier movement of people and goods under capitalism, it was new immobility regimes of globalism that led her to seek alternative routes made possible by other histories and regimes of mobility. Luiza’s narrative continues, and is complemented by that of Anahid, in the next section, with respect to the narratives of the people who make a living on the buses – who hold up a perfect example of “dwelling-in-travelling” (Clifford 1997).

On the Road: Buses

As indicated in the introduction of the thesis, when I first decided to travel on buses between Yerevan and Armenia, it was due to practical concerns: it had
proved difficult for me to meet post-socialist Armenian migrants in Istanbul. Over time, bus journeys became essential sites for ethnographic inquiry. One of the main reasons for this development in my research was that I gradually noticed how issues of ‘alternative routes’ were constantly negotiated by the passengers on these buses. I observed how ‘tactics’ (formulated as the opportunistic and often defensive momentary actions to creatively resist organizational power structures by de Certeau in 1984) were crafted and applied against the always-in-the-making physical and non-physical borders of nation-states.

Many Armenian women trading in Turkey stated that at first they had had serious concerns about coming to Turkey. When I asked Luiza and others I met on the road why they had chosen not to go to Russia, where it is estimated that at least 125,000 Armenians live in Moscow alone (Arutiunian 2006; Galkina 2016) (see also Light 2010 who notes that these numbers are usually exaggerated and expressed in millions), their answers were various. Some stated that there were already too many Armenians in Moscow. Others preferred taking a bus to Istanbul instead of taking a flight or a bus to Moscow in terms of fares and what they could carry back as goods to be sold in Armenia. Some believed that there were many design options for clothing in Turkey, whereas in Russia “all the clothes looked the same”. There were some other emerging destinations like Dubai, but Istanbul proved to be the primary destination for those who opted for bus travel, where it was possible to carry goods without extra transportation charges. Finally, some women said that they came to Turkey for the adventure (see also Bloch 2017: 10).

All viewed Turkey as a relatively desirable place to do business as shuttle-traders and to work as permanent migrants or sojourn occasionally. Based on this observation, here I direct my inquiry to understanding immobilities in the era of globalization at two different levels of analysis. First, as already described through the story of Luiza, I attempt to understand the ‘home’ contexts in which Turkey became a desirable place for my travel companions. Second, I explore everyday tactics and strategies of place-making through an ethnography of the road connecting the two countries. Here, the emphasis
indicates that for shuttle-traders and other frequent travellers, bus journeys are not exceptional situations, but a significant element of everyday life.

One woman who constantly travelled between Armenia and Turkey was Anahid, whom I met on the way from Yerevan to Istanbul in the spring of 2012. Anahid was in her mid-50s and had, at the time of research, been working for more than a decade as an attendant on a bus owned by her husband. Her husband, a Turkish man with (Islamicized) Armenian origins from Turkey, was the driver of the bus. Together the family also owned a small office in Istanbul’s Kumkapı district, in walking distance of the Emniyet bus station, where it was possible to book tickets or send goods, letters, money, and even passports to Armenia. Their small bus company was primarily a family enterprise. They both had dual citizenship, which enabled them to maintain their business between the two countries. Unlike most Armenians from Armenia who lived in Turkey as undocumented migrants, Anahid was a naturalized Turkish citizen. I travelled with her three times – once from Istanbul to Yerevan, and twice in the opposite direction.

When Anahid first saw me on the bus after our departure from Yerevan, she understood that I was a first-timer and told me that I could trust her during the bus journey. With a louder voice she said in Turkish: *Hepimiz insanız sonucța, Türk Ermeni fark etmez* (lit. we are all human beings after all, Turkish or Armenian, it does not matter). While welcoming me, it was clear that by speaking in Turkish she was also letting others around me know that there was a ‘stranger’ on the bus. A few hours after our departure, it was lunch time. I had thought that we would stop somewhere on the road; however, we would not be stopping anywhere until we arrived at the Georgian border. When Anahid noticed that I did not have anything to eat, she told me to wait a moment and with sudden moves she confiscated food and drinks from other passengers, prepared a *lavash* wrap (a form of unleavened flatbread widely consumed in Armenia and neighbouring countries, including Turkey) with cheese and some herbs, and poured some orange juice. Suddenly my tray table was full. She told me to eat and enjoy the rest of the journey.
Anahid was truly a charismatic woman and she was respected by her passengers, the majority of whom already had already travelled with her several times. During my many bus journeys, I observed that many passengers kept travelling with the same bus companies so that they could feel secure in a familiar environment. This situation resonates with what Magnus Marsden (2015) observed regarding Afghan traders conducting business in different parts of the post-socialist world. He wrote that trade relationships are “often long term and durable” and “maintained even while those who play an active role in them embark on highly mobile lives” (1029).

As I would find out later, Anahid was a master of dealing with practical problems on the bus, as well as more bureaucratic problems in border crossings between Armenia and Georgia and between Georgia and Turkey. She could easily calm down passengers complaining or fighting each other, and she was also adept at persuading border officers in Armenia and Georgia that no one was smuggling goods from Turkey. She always gave instructions to first-timers on how to pass through borders and how to pack things so that the border police would not suspect any signs of smuggling. During border crossings, she made announcements to passengers about where to wait for passport queues, which forms to fill in, and what stamps to ask for.

In addition, Anahid was a pivotal figure in the organization of the daily schedule of shuttle-traders once they arrived at their destination. She advised them on where to shop and eat in Istanbul. On one occasion, I noticed that she even provided menus of some restaurants in Istanbul and took the orders for lunch and dinner two days before the bus arrived in the city, so that the shuttle-traders could maximize their time for shopping in the city. For shuttle-traders, who would be coming to Istanbul for only three days a week (as the buses spent two days on each direction), Anahid’s instructions were very useful.

The trust Anahid built around her persona was very much based on her charisma as a powerful but generous woman, and as an authority figure on the bus. If at one level her authority reflected itself through her capabilities in dealing with disputes among passengers or with the border police, at another
level she marked her own and others’ territories on the bus by having the final say on seating arrangements. She would often change the seats of passengers during the journey without consulting them when she found it necessary. For instance, during one of our journeys she changed the seat of a teenage girl who started crying when she found out that her seat did not recline. The person whom Anahid instructed to replace the young woman was an elderly woman who could not go against the conductor’s authority. Similarly, she publicly humiliated men who smoked inside the bus or slept on the bus floor. I never heard any opposition against her.

It was in relation to her penchant for public announcements that when Anahid found out that I was Turkish, she expressed loudly that, for her, every person was first and foremost a human being, not Turkish or Armenian. At first I did not understand why she was talking in such a manner in which everyone could hear what she was saying in Turkish, although without necessarily understanding her. However, she likewise always talked loudly at particular people about issues arising, especially when she wanted to make it clear that everything was under control or there was nothing to worry about, such as thieves on the bus or single men travelling without family. In this way, she warned her passengers about suspects and similarly built trust through her public announcements.

In many ways Anahid’s responsibility went beyond the tasks of an ordinary bus attendant. While providing services to her customers, she also maintained relationships with the ‘outer’ world on their behalf. This necessitated a detailed organization of space and relationships among the passengers in the bus. Travelling on buses between Turkey and Armenia is difficult and complicated, as the Georgian authorities want to make sure that goods brought from Turkey are not sold in their country. This is why, for instance, the Georgian border police tape over the undercarriage of every bus entering the country and check meticulously whether the tape is damaged while leaving the country. They are the only ones authorized to untape the undercarriage. When coming from Turkey the border police in Georgia (and
also in Armenia) often check every single item carried on these buses, causing hours of delay for the passengers on their way back home.

Maintaining a good level of communication with the border police was a delicate issue on bus journeys. This was where Anahid’s and her team’s professional experience about how to deal with authorities was needed. Three times during my journeys from Yerevan to Istanbul, bus companies initially refused to issue me one-way tickets on the grounds that Georgian border authorities did not accept one-way transit passengers going all the way to Turkey, although there was no legal framework for such practice. However, people working at these bus companies came up with practical solutions every time.

Before my first bus trip from Yerevan to Istanbul, I went to Anahid’s company’s ticket office, located in Yerevan’s Hrazdan market. She was not there as she was travelling back to Istanbul, but there was another woman in her mid-50s behind the ticket desk. She was fluent in Turkish and I later learned that she was a very good friend of Anahid from the time they worked together as undocumented migrants in Istanbul. After Anahid married and set up the bus company with her husband, they needed someone they could trust to work for them in Yerevan. As she was the only person in the tiny office, I asked her about the departure dates and prices. When she refused to issue me a one-way ticket to Istanbul, I insisted and she told me that she would think of something, and asked me to come back the following day with my baggage before the bus departed for Istanbul. However, she did not promise me a seat on the bus. When I came back the following day, she told me there were two other men who wanted to travel with one-way tickets. They were not going all the way to Istanbul. The first was travelling to the Black Sea town of Trabzon, and the second to Ankara. Thanks to other passengers who also wished to go one-way, I was permitted to take the bus along with them.

Each time I travelled on one-way tickets, our bus passed through the Armenian side of the Armenian-Georgian border easily but stopped a few
hundreds of meters before the Georgian side. On each occasion, the other
one-way ticket passengers and I were hustled into a taxi in order to enter the
country as if we were travelling individually, before returning to our seats on
the bus a few kilometres after the border crossing. Such measures were never
taken by bus companies when the buses entered Turkey from Georgia, or on
the way back into Armenia.

As Armenian and Turkish nationals do not need a visa to enter Georgia, I
wondered why the Georgian authorities did not let anyone enter from
Armenia on a one-way ticket. I quickly realized that it was specifically buses
en route to Turkey that were perceived as problematic by the Georgian
authorities, as I was never refused one-way tickets when travelling in the
opposite direction from Istanbul to Armenia. During my various attempts to
communicate with Georgian border police to understand why this was the
case, I never obtained a satisfactory answer. They were either unwilling to
talk or the language barrier did not allow us to communicate. Only once, a
busy officer expressed that they, the border guards, had so much
responsibility over those Armenians taking the long detour via Georgia to
enter Turkey that if something went wrong they had to cover the basic
expenses of those passengers, including meals and transport back home. At
that time, I did not fully understand why this was the case. However, during
an interview with a government official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs
based in Tbilisi and in the exchange of emails that followed, it was explained
to me at length.

In February 2012, Turkey changed its entry requirements for foreign
nationals entering the country as tourists (in compliance with the decision of
requirement grants Armenian nationals visas for 30 days on arrival with a
limit of staying in the country for 90 days in total in a 180-day period. In
other words, with the new regulation, Armenian nationals can stay in Turkey
for three months and then need to wait another three months before re-
entering the country. This is in marked contrast to the past, when the
regulation was vague regarding the time period it defined. Armenian
nationals could stay up to 90 days within any time period (instead of 90 days within 180 days), thus making it possible to obtain unlimited numbers of visa renewals by re-entering Turkey.\(^9\)

When I first started my research between June 2011 and February 2012, it was common practice for undocumented Armenian migrants to leave Turkey and re-enter for visa renewal. Hence, the number of Armenians who overstayed their visas was minimal, as the legal system in Turkey allowed them to renew their tourist visas simply by leaving and re-entering the country. The new regulation made it impossible for migrants to renew their visas every time they entered Turkey. However, several months after the regulation had come into effect, there were still many Armenians who did not know about it. This was why many Armenians who had already stayed in Turkey for the maximum amount of time allowed by the new regulation (without even knowing it) could not re-enter Turkey when they attempted to do so. In those cases when Turkey denied them entry, it was the Georgian authorities who had to assist Armenians to return to Armenia. Therefore, one of the measures taken by the Georgian authorities to reduce this burden was to ensure that everyone had a return ticket.

As the buses between Yerevan and Istanbul went through three countries with different migration regimes and two border crossings where different legal practices were in effect, bus crews’ expertise was much needed by the passengers. In many ways, Anahid and her team resemble what Mary Helms (1988) terms “long-distance specialists” – the well-travelled and most experienced people in their societies who lead the way for future travellers.\(^10\) Anahid was among the first wave of Armenians who came to Turkey to find a

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\(^9\) The new regulation did not specifically target Armenian nationals. In fact, before 2000, Armenians were exempt from visas for entering Turkey (Gültekin 2003). In 2000, Turkey was required to de-liberalize its visa policy to prevent irregular migration into the country, as part of a potential EU deal granting visa-free travel for Turkish citizens in the Schengen zone (Tolate 2012; Soylu 2013; Açıkgöz 2015). Therefore, the gradual change in Turkey’s visa regulations has to be understood in relation to the wider scope of Turkish foreign relations (KOŞIÇI 2005; Tolate 2012).

\(^10\) Although Helms applies “long-distance specialists” in the historical contexts of preindustrial societies, I find the term relevant to use in my ethnographic material as it stresses a feeling of pride in going on an expedition.
job right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She therefore had considerable experience in Turkey and was fluent in Turkish. Her husband was an Islamicized Armenian man, providing her not only Turkish citizenship but also critical connections with the police in Istanbul and Hopa, the border town where her husband came from. During my bus journeys with different companies, I met several other younger women who either were married to or had relationships with men from Hopa. Their relationships and marriages helped them build transnational bus networks between Turkey and Armenia via Georgia.

A Woman’s Constant Movement: Dwelling-in-Travelling

For Armenians, the only feasible way of travelling to the rest of the world by land is via Georgia. Frustration about the closed border with Turkey is often expressed in mythical terms. I was told several times by fellow passengers about a bus that had directly entered Turkey despite the closed borders. It was believed that there was a secret bus company run by an unnamed Armenian oligarch, for which a ticket was very expensive and difficult to get. Among the people who travelled between Armenia and Turkey, no one I encountered had met anybody who had booked a seat or knew how and where to get a ticket on this mythical bus. It is because travelling to Turkey is mystified in Armenia that women like Anahid were often recognized by passengers as undertaking a huge responsibility and contributing to the wealth of their society, unmatched by anyone else.

In Anahid’s case, such responsibility and contribution came with a maximization of the amount of time Anahid could possibly devote to her job. Like most other bus conductors, she spent 4 days a week on buses (2 nights and 1 day from Istanbul to Armenia, and 2 days and 1 night from Armenia to Istanbul). She spent two nights a week in a hotel room in Istanbul with her husband, a place where most of her passengers also stayed. She spent another two nights at her house in Yerevan. One day on the bus when I asked her where she lived, she responded with a smile, pointed to the seats around us,
and told me that she lived on the bus and never left home (see Osella and Osella 2007; Marsden 2017 on how people find and make homes on the way to the extent that they express that they never leave home when they travel).

As critical scholarship on mobility has suggested, we must go beyond understanding mobility as identical to freedom, involving a free floating of people between different nation-state settings (Salazar and Smart 2011). To the contrary, mobility is made possible through practices and experiences of immobility (Clifford 1997). At one level, various forms of borders and bordering practices, as well as the legal and political frameworks of power, determine the extent of networks of movement (Navaro-Yashin 2012). This is why Nina Glick-Schiller and Noel Salazar (2013) call our attention to ‘regimes’ of mobility, highlighting the role of individual states and changing international surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility. The closed border between Turkey and Armenia and the subsequent tactics employed by bus companies to navigate this situation exemplify such practices, frameworks, and relationships. At another level, the mobility of some is made possible thanks to others who either do not move or stop moving (Osella and Osella 2007) and often at the expense of others who cannot move (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013). Yet Anahid’s is a nuanced story, because it is the story of a woman who does not stop moving. It is her ability to move constantly as a woman that makes her central to the subject matter of this chapter.

The three emphasized words in the previous sentence (‘move’, ‘constantly’, and ‘woman’) indicate the three significant aspects of a particular form of mobility that are important to unpack here. First: movement. Rouse (1991) argues that although migration has had the potential to challenge established and fixed spatial images, it has commonly been treated as (a) movement from one set of social relationships to another, (b) a shift from one significant environment to another, and (c) a movement between groups identified with distinct ways of life (11). Literature following Rouse has demonstrated that no natural and unbreakable link necessarily exists between identities and places (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), and identities are outcomes of processes
(Bowman 1993; Sökefeld 2006). Places do not determine who we are, yet place-making and the formation of identities are intimately related processes (Tsing 2000). It is in this sense that I am inclined to search for definitions of ‘place’ and ‘place-making’ that necessarily go beyond totalizing the relationships between people and places. ‘Movement’ (i.e., the physical aspect of mobilities) is such a key point of entry.

I am also not inclined to define ‘place’ as a necessarily physical location. Anahid’s account, rather, is informed by a ‘non-place’ (Augé 1995) where not only do particular relationships intersect but these relationships are transmitted through the very mobility of the physical setting. However, her account contradicts Augé’s notion, as the moving bus is the key site of her place-making activities. The movement of the bus is itself positioned within vast networks of mobility, such as roads, bus stations, hotels, and booking offices that operate under the supervision of ‘long-distance specialists’ like Anahid. In a different vein, the bus is a “territory” as in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which connects and transforms discourse. It is not only in-the-moving but also a site where (im)mobilities of past and present Armenians are discussed and put into perspective. The bus is also a site of dwelling, as depicted below.

This brings me to the second aspect of Anahid’s centrality in this chapter. There is a temporal aspect to her movement. She does not merely move; she moves constantly and her place-making should be located in relation to the time she spends on the roads. I suggest that Clifford’s (1997) formulation of “travelling-in-dwelling” and “dwelling-in-travelling” should help us to understand the aspect of time in place-making while travelling. He introduces the former concept in order to refer to the circulation of cultural narratives and representations, and the ways these are negotiated, adapted, co-produced, or rejected by individuals living in a certain locality. In this sense, “travelling-in-dwelling” could be understood as any form of creolization, formulation of transnational affiliations, consumption of imported goods, and so on. The latter term, dwelling-in-travelling, refers to maintaining a life in constant physical movement. As I construe this
particular juxtaposition of stasis and mobility, there is a nuance in what it defines vis-à-vis nomadism. I find the latter term implying specifically the “regular and frequent movement of the home base and the household” (Salzman 2004: 18) (cf. Braidotti 1994: 5) (see also Bauman 1993: 240 for a discussion on what the term implies in relation to other metaphors of travel). However, with dwelling-in-travelling the emphasis shifts from spatial displacement of home to its spatial diffusion. In other words, home is not confined to a place to depart from and return to; its location is not reduced to place (Tsing 2000). Instead, its location emerges as “a series of locations” (Clifford 1989) (quoted in Kaplan 1996: 168) (emphasis original). I believe it is this second formulation of mobility that is epitomized by the ‘long-distance specialists’ of the bus journeys between Armenia and Turkey – although Clifford himself accepted that he did not elaborate upon this second notion well enough.

As described in the previous section, Turkish immigration law changed in effect from February 2012. The introduction of limits on the number of days during which a tourist could visit Turkey made it impossible for migrants and shuttle-traders to renew their expired visas by exiting and re-entering the country. The change brought about different challenges for different groups of Armenian citizens. People who intended to overstay their visas and seek work as undocumented migrants in Istanbul were no longer able to visit their families in Armenia until they decided to return permanently. For those who made a living through constant travel between the two countries, the situation necessitated new tactics. For Anahid and other Armenian women working on the buses, their relationships with Turkish men introduced them to new possibilities of mobility (see Chapter III for more on this). By marrying these men, women like Anahid maintained their mobility and businesses. Most bus companies already had bus drivers with Turkish citizenship, or hired bus drivers interchangeably to avoid visa restrictions. In sum, under the new regime, some people maintained their mobility while others could not.
The bus challenges notions of an ethnographic setting tied to a particular physical place. On the contrary, the bus itself becomes a particular form of relationship that is tangible and physically traceable along the road between Armenia and Turkey, produced and maintained by the people who frequent it. Buses, I suggest, could be understood as physical mediums for transmitting long-distance relationships, as well as settings in which these relationships are created and relocated. In this context, we need a framework that does not define circulations of people, objects, and ideas either as inflows or outflows – terms denoting unidirectionality of movement between fixed localities. It is for this reason that I suggest unpacking ‘travelling’ in relation to studies of mobility.

Travel as a metaphor promises to shed light on our everyday relationships with circulation and mobility, as well as stasis. On the one hand, travel creates boundaries and distinctions (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990: 5), although the travel literature contends that travellers transcend borders and distinctions by acquiring knowledge about the places visited (Helms 1988; Clifford 1997). On the other hand, space and distance are not neutral concepts, but are accorded sociological, political, and especially ideological significance (Helms 1988: 4). This is why Clifford (1997) argued that ‘travel as a literary genre’ (i.e., travel literature) was limited in its elaboration of these two notions. For him, travel is embedded within the history of colonial expeditions and more recent international tourism, with bourgeois, predominantly male, Eurocentric and often heroic connotations. He drew our attention to a distinction between ‘travel literature’ and ‘travel stories’ and suggested unpacking the latter as a comparative method enabling a more comprehensive analysis of mobility (Ibid.). Travel stories are not articulated as a literary genre of the privileged, but as a form of narrative in which we can detect the simultaneous constitutions of ‘here and there’, ‘now and then’, ‘local and foreign’, ‘difference and affinity’, and ‘native cultures and cultures of translation’. This is a promising yet dangerous attempt as travel has historically emphasized a departure from an imagined locality (Wolff 1993: 232).
Moreover, I fear that more than two decades after Rouse’s (1991) criticisms of studies of migration and mobility, movement is still imagined through its penetration into stasis – positing the former as active and the latter as passive. Clifford’s (1997) notions of “travelling-in-dwelling” and “dwelling-in-travelling” help disrupt this binary. In this formulation, travelling is as much a part of dwelling, stasis, or immobility as it is of movement. As Janet Wolff (1993) suggests, such an articulation of travel operates in two ways; it is literal – in the sense that both the researcher and the subject of research are on the move – and epistemological – as it describes knowledge in a different way, as contingent and partial (226). As a result, travel bears the possibility of de-essentializing both the researcher and the subject of research: cultures and communities (Ibid.). In this respect travel stories go beyond being a genre of individual travelling, tourism, or visiting exotic ‘distant’ places. Instead, they shed light on accounts of dispersed populations, as part of wider mobility regimes (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013).

Lastly, there is a gendered aspect of Anahid’s constant movement. She does not merely constantly move; she is a woman in constant movement. As Susan Hanson (2010) notes, there have been two general strands in the geography literature on the relationships between gender and mobility. The first strand takes gender as the cause of mobility, but construes the latter in highly generalized terms and misses the details about movement patterns and reasons for movement (9). The second strand takes mobility as the cause, but simplifies the differences between men and women (11). It is crucial to note that both strands similarly end up demonstrating that men move more than women without much contextualization. Similarly, Janet Wolff’s (1993) feminist critique of travel literature targets construction of travelling as a predominantly male phenomenon (232) (see also Pratt 1992: 171 for a similar discussion). Although there is nothing inherently or essentially masculine about travel, the discourse of travel typically functioned as a ‘technology of gender’ that transmitted, inculcated, and reinforced patriarchal values and ideology (Abbeele 1992: xxv-xxvi) (also cited in Wolff 1993). Consequently, departure from the imagined locality reveals embodied discourses on men and women.
Similar to the historical constitution of travel literature, globalization discourses often tell very selective stories of mobility. This is why, on the one hand, specific histories of travelling such as labour migration, pilgrimage, and tourism need to be articulated along gender lines (Clifford 1997). On the other hand, more specifically, feminist critique of travel also needs to acknowledge two important issues:

First, that what is to be criticized is (to retain the geographic metaphor) the dominant centre; and secondly, that the criticism, the destabilizing tactics, originate too from a place – the margins, the edges, the less visible space. There are other metaphors of space which I find very suggestive, and which may be less problematic, at least in this respect: ‘borderlands’, ‘exile’, ‘margins’ – all of which are premised on the fact of dislocation from a given, and excluding, place (Wolff 1993: 235).

Here, Wolff introduces a dimension into the earlier discussion on the limitations of defining migration as movement between two fixed and inherently different localities. To repeat perhaps once again, in her formulation the physical locality is not much of a problem in the analyses of migration, but the dominant discursive centres that make us comprehend localities only as physical are. She directs our attention to the power structures, epistemological regimes, and historical processes that have ‘created’ similar discourses on place and gender. In this view, the feminist critique should work towards re-defining the male-dominated narratives on travelling. However, in search of new definitions, our task is to avoid not only reproducing the sexism (as well as other imperializing moves such as racism) hidden in academic research and writing (Kaplan 1987: 194), but also setting up a new gender normativity (Braidotti 1994: 31). Although this chapter has focused specifically on the historical and physical conditions that have made the movement of Armenian women en route to Turkey possible, not on gender on a broader level, I take Judith Butler’s (1990: 7-8) question literally: “Where does the construction of gender take place?” If embodiment is a spatial practice and vice versa (Bourdieu 1977: 163; Massey 1984: 52; Creswell 1996: 9), I believe that answering this question would help us to understand the historical and the contemporary arrangements of gender and mobility without privileging or under-analysing one over the other (Hanson 2010).
If mobility reconfigures gender relations in already gendered contexts (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 42), I find that the physical places depicted in this chapter emerge as ‘locations in contradiction’ where different push-and-pull factors make people not only encounter other people but also their norms and their embodiments of those norms (see Brah 1996: 204 on her notion of “locationality in contradiction”, which she defines in relation to Rich 1984). As a result, I take one of the prerequisites of gender seriously, namely its “repetition” (Butler 1990; Creswell 1999; Elliot 2016), and I propose to focus on where it is repeated as much as how many times it is repeated. I find it impossible to define a universal category of gender and mobility based on Anahid’s experiences with men and other women on the buses, at the bus stations, and across borders. However, I find it valuable to examine what kinds of places she travels to – or, in other words, what kinds of places she makes through travelling. As a negotiator of the relationships with the wider world at the border crossings, bus-stations and stops, hotels, stores, and workshops, Anahid is a translator of not only language between Turkish and Armenian in and en route to Istanbul, but also of the roles, norms, and expectations between men and women. However, in doing so, what kind of a world is she bridging to?

As noted above, this would be an already gendered world. I argue that the way we imagine place explains a lot about the relationship between gender and movement. Here, I find Ingold’s (2011) distinction between the world as “surface” and the world as “meshwork” useful. In a world of meshwork, things are instantiated as their paths of movement, whereas a world of surfaces should imply that they are only objects located in space (162-163). It is important to note here that for Ingold people acquire knowledge not through transmission (143) but only through movements that make them “grow into it” (162) (emphasis original) – which could only happen in a world that is understood as a meshwork of relations and intertwined paths (Ibid.) If moving is knowing and gender is repetition, there is a fundamental aspect of Armenian women travellers’ accounts of dwelling-in-travelling in which they are also repeatedly exposed to other people’s understanding of normative gender and subsequently negotiate their own roles in light of the
knowledge they acquire. This is not to imply that there could be true or false, real or distorted acts of gender that would be revealed as a regulatory fiction (Butler 1990: 141) between Armenian women and the Turkish men (and equally women) they would encounter on the streets of Istanbul. Instead, it implies that gender is performed despite its repetitions in everyday life.

In all these places Anahid travels to, I find a “subtle but fundamental correlation between exterior movement and interior transformation” (of the traveller) that “opens up the conceptual possibility of imagining mobility as a form of gender in its own right” (Elliot 2016: 85) (emphasis mine) (see also Elliot 2012). I believe this is a subtle yet remarkable move within the discipline, as it enables us to enrich the link between stasis and mobility, between what have been historically imagined as two separate domains of the female and the male, respectively. Following this line of thought, we should comprehend those dominant discourses that set apart women from men, and similarly movement from stasis, and recognize the diversity of places that become visible vis-à-vis their relationship to power – such as borderlands, exile, and margins, as suggested by Wolff (1993) above. The list can be extended in a way to stress that people who cannot move and people who cannot stop moving are part of a wider regime of (im)mobilities. The following two chapters will continue exploring mobility in relation to gender.

**Conclusion**

The ethnographic material presented throughout this thesis is intended to demonstrate how people, cultures, and things are (re)made as they travel (Tsing 2000: 347). This is why in the first core chapter I started by unpacking the term. Travel, both as an academic and a literary genre, is overladen with notions of freedom of movement and privileges along class and gender lines. To paraphrase Janet Wolff (1993), travel, without a critical approach, is limited to emphasizing a departure from an imagined locality. I have sought a way forward through Clifford’s (1997) twin notions of “dwelling-in-travelling” and “travelling-in-dwelling”, which invalidate the possibility of such a
departure as the difference between mobility and stasis collapse. This is how I attempted to make use of travel to define my own concepts of ‘mobilities’ and ‘immobilities’, both of which accounted for processes of transportation and transformation, and stressed a general historical condition of travel, migration, and displacement of people and their ideas, traditions, and know-how.

Travels of Armenian women in a zone of “frozen and forgotten conflicts” (Ciobanu 2010) point at two issues in the study of migration. First, Armenian populations dispersed around the world provide us a context through which to challenge the globalist paradigm, as their past and present experiences of place-making are situated within a world system of mobilities and circulations. In the cases of Armenian women travelling to Turkey presented here, contemporary mobility is constituted in relation to earlier histories of exile, displacement, and changing borders and political regimes. It is because of those earlier histories that they take ‘mobility for granted’. Second, their accounts as women provide an alternative view of the notion of travel that is otherwise informed by masculine privilege. It is believed in many societies that “being feminine has been defined as sticking close to home and masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel” (Enloe 1989: 21) (quoted in Wolff 1993: 228) (see also Kaplan 1987; Hoving 2001). In contrast to the silence regarding women’s long-distance travel in popular literature (Wolff 1993), the women portrayed in this chapter are well-travelled, challenging articulations of mobility as masculine and selective.

The next chapter will continue exploring the wider sense of travelling among Armenian women; however, the ethnographic focus will shift from bus travellers and shuttle-traders to migrants in Istanbul.
CHAPTER II: Making Centres at the Margins in Turkey

There are two Kumkapı in Constantinople: Inner Kumkapı and Outer Kumkapı. There are two types of news in the Masis [newspaper]: domestic [nerkin, lit. inner] and foreign [ardakin, lit. outer] news. One has to be careful in distinguishing the inner from the outer in the news in the Masis, for sometimes a woman giving birth to triplets in America could be portrayed as ‘domestic’ news. However, in other newspapers, if the donkey of the bread seller brays in the streets, it will be ‘domestic’ news. If the donkey brays inside the Patriarchate [of the Armenian Apostolic Church, located in Kumkapı] it will be community news. There is no such distinction for the people of Kumkapı. The ones ‘inside’ [inner Kumkapı] are never seen ‘outside’ [outer Kumkapı], and the ones ‘outside’ are never seen ‘inside’ (Hagop Baronian, Stroll through the Neighbourhoods of Constantinople, 2014 [1880]: 18) (my own translation from the Turkish edition and the original text in Armenian).

Introduction

In the above excerpt from Stroll through the Neighbourhoods of Constantinople, the famous 19th century Armenian satirical writer Hagop Baronian deliberately confuses his readers with his concepts of inside and outside. One can translate his concepts to our contemporary thinking in at least three ways. First, his concepts refer to a distinction between Armenians and non-Armenians. Second, the concepts refer to the spatial dimension of distinction between the physical centre of the neighbourhood of Kumkapı, where the Armenian Patriarchate is located, and its immediate surrounding area where Armenians live. Third, the concepts are also based on a distinction between the local level (news concerning ordinary Armenians) and the community level (news concerning the clergy).

Rachel Goshgarian (2010), in her literary analysis of Baronian’s work, writes that the author “insists upon the distinctions between Armenians living in various neighbourhoods” of the Ottoman capital and “ultimately paints a picture of Istanbul that is anything but uniform” (2). His account of this diverse city and heterogeneous population of Armenians reflects a specific time period in which “inhabitants of the city experienced a series of changes, conversations and reactions related to the ‘modernizing’ reforms” (1) that
secularized and thus re-positioned the Empire’s non-Muslim communities in relation to their respective clergy classes (Kılıçdağ 2010: 234). It was in this context of political transformation that Baronian was amongst the first group of intellectuals who publicly criticized the religious institutions that were traditionally at the top of power hierarchies within the Ottoman political system (Goshgarian 2010). His concepts of inside and outside should thus be understood in the wake of the historical processes in which Armenians of the Ottoman Empire sought new ways of coming together as a community (see Chapter IV for more on this political system based on faith groups).

This is how, I assume, at the very end of his paragraph Baronian sarcastically moves to assert that no such distinction exists between the inner and outer zones of Kumkapı. The distinction is in his own satirical thinking, which he purposefully puts forward in his critique of the elitism of the clergy. For him, the acknowledgement of the distinction presupposes everyday practices of encounters between the clergy and ordinary Armenians. However, in his account the inside and the outside stand worlds apart – to the extent that their occupants are almost uninformed about, and show no interest in, each other. As there is no contact between the residents of inner and outer Kumkapı, they are simply unaware of each other and of their own positions as insiders and outsiders.

Some 130 years after Baronian published his work, I observed how the contemporary residents of Kumkapı, including members of the Armenian clergy based in historical religious institutions and more recent migrants from post-socialist Armenia, are similarly positioned in various insides and outsides. As Alice Elliot (2012) notes in her PhD thesis on the conceptualizations of ‘outside’ in the context of central Morocco, such concepts can be considered in light of Foucault’s notion of “discursive formations” (1972), which include ideas, norms, and a wider array of reference points with different meanings for different subjects but are still shared at the level of everyday communication (Elliot 2012: 72). In the context of my inquiry into the neighbourhood of Kumkapı, I propose to explore particular spatial concepts, including ‘community’ and ‘homeland’,
and to account for their different meanings. As the chapter demonstrates in detail, the disputed meanings of these concepts do not preclude individuals from conversation with each other or the exchange of ideas.

In this chapter, my ethnographic lens is not confined within the material boundaries of the neighbourhood of Kumkapı. The first half of the chapter sets the context by focusing on the recent emergence of an Armenian migrant enclave in a neighbourhood formerly inhabited by local Armenians. In the second half, the focus moves to particular sites of “difficult heritage” in and beyond Istanbul, where personal discussions about one’s own place in the world and history are triggered (Macdonald 2009). It is in this sense that the two halves of the chapter intend to bring a comprehensive analysis of how ‘travellers’ (in the widest sense of the term as explained in the previous chapter) from Armenia located themselves in relation to past and present Armenians and to dispersed, separated, and hidden corners of ancestral homelands within the boundaries of what is now Turkey. In short, in line with the theme of the previous chapter, this chapter aims to explore the remaking of people (as individuals and communities) as they travel and places (as social constructions of affiliations and shifting ‘borderlands’ between various insides and outsides) once they are travelled to.

A ‘Repopulated Cosmopolis’

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Kumkapı is located on the south of Istanbul’s “Old City Peninsula” (Su: forthcoming). It is within walking distance of various neighbourhoods of different economies of tourism, wholesale trading, and manufacturing. It is also within walking distance of the Emniyet bus station from which buses for Armenia and other post-socialist destinations depart.
Figure 9: A Map of Istanbul’s ‘Old City Peninsula’
(with the Emniyet Bus Station, Kumkapi, and Laleli)

Similar to what Baronian noted in the 1880s, the neighbourhood today still portrays sharp dichotomies. It is famous for its fish restaurants and taverns, scattered around pedestrianized cobbled streets around the suburban train line station. However, behind this façade of well-maintained tiny streets, there is another Kumkapi that is poverty-ridden and home to crumbling or abandoned buildings, closed Armenian schools, and migrants from a variety of post-socialist and post-colonial contexts. Although the neighbourhood is not geographically peripheral or classifiable as a slum, today the greater part of the neighbourhood is highly marginalized within the social topography of Istanbul.

Baronian’s satirical work still resonates with the spatial organization of the contemporary neighbourhood of Kumkapi and its location(s) vis-à-vis other Istanbul neighbourhoods. One of the fundamental issues raised by Baronian’s book is that insides and outsides often have a multiplicity of meanings that occasionally contradict and replace each other. As I observed in Kumkapi

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11 Baronian notes that this was already the case in the 1880s.
during my research, for instance, the Patriarchate is and is not a centre of the neighbourhood. Although it is located physically at the centre of Kumkapi, it does not have that much centrality in the lives of local or migrant Armenians. Similarly, migrants from the Republic of Armenia living in the area are and are not marginal in relation to local Armenians in the city. As many of them also claim ownership to Armenian ancestral homelands, they are involved in place-making in a particular way. The neighbourhood of Kumkapi is no different in this perspective; it is both centrally and marginally located in Istanbul and is implicated in both the ‘domestic’ (in Armenian: *nerkin*, lit. inner) and ‘foreign’ (in Armenian: *ardakin*, lit. outer) affairs of Armenians in the city. It is in this way that the contemporary neighbourhood is not a “marginal margin” (Green 2005). On the contrary, its marginality is very much “related to hearts of things” (Ibid.) in terms of politics and wider historical processes of social and economic change. As this chapter will show, Kumkapi reveals itself as central to urban transformation in Istanbul with a century-long history of nation-building in the country, the still-ongoing Kurdish war in the south-eastern provinces, and the collapse of the USSR.

Kumkapi shares its destiny with the other Istanbul neighbourhoods located around it. Despite having been the city’s social and political centres over much of its Byzantine and Ottoman history, these neighbourhoods lost their political and later their social centrality in the transition from empire to modern nation-state (Çelik 1986; Keyder 2008). This situation is directly related to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the relocation of the new state’s capital city from Istanbul to Ankara in 1923. As the state institutions left the city and the new Turkish governments channelled funds to the construction of the new capital, Istanbul entered a period of decay and neglect that would last well into the early 1980s (Danielson and Keleş 1985; Heper 1987; Keyder 1999). The marginalization of Istanbul in relation to Ankara also brought the marginalization of neighbourhoods dispersed around the old Ottoman institutions located around Kumkapi. However, the decline of Kumkapi is also related to the changing demographics of the city. As non-Muslim populations such as Greeks, Jews, and Armenians left the city – especially after the 1950s due to state-sponsored violence targeting them –
many Istanbul neighbourhoods with considerable non-Muslim populations also entered a period of decay (Mills 2010; Soytemel 2014). However, unlike its neighbouring districts involved in production, Kumkapı has remained a predominantly residential area for migrants (Biehl 2015), again primarily due to its particular engagement with the city as well as the economy. Kurdish immigrants from eastern Turkey increasingly replaced Christian minorities in the neighbourhood from the 1980s onwards. In Kumkapı large houses formerly belonging to the Ottoman Armenian bourgeoisie were split into smaller apartments to house a growing number of Kurdish migrants and sojourners. This was in contrast to the neighbouring districts where former residential buildings were mostly transformed to house textile production and later the boom in the service economy (i.e., tourism, catering, and entertainment). Today migrants from diverse places of origin live in such converted buildings where apartment sharing is the most common practice (Ibid.).

The main reason why Kumkapı emerged as a migrant neighbourhood is related to the changing demographics of Istanbul in general. The contemporary population of the city has been formed by various different waves of migration over the last century, some of which I hinted at above. Until the end of World War I, Istanbul’s population experienced steady growth. As the capital of the Ottoman Empire, the city attracted large numbers of people from the provinces, so much so that population control in the city was on the priority list of its Ottoman rulers (see İnalcık 1954; Zürcher 2005; Şeker 2007; Öktem 2008; Eldem 2009 on the macro- and micro-scale policies of demographic engineering in the Ottoman Empire). As we see in Baronian’s volume on Istanbul neighbourhoods, as well as in his other satirical works, the changing demographics of the city were also reflected in the constitution of social and spatial hierarchies between its residents. Istanbul in the second of half of the 19th century experienced a population boom and tensions between local residents and immigrants from the provinces were translated into rigidities between these aforementioned insides and outsides (Goshgarian 2010: 9).
The population of the city continued to increase during the first two decades of the 20th century and peaked at 1.2 million following the end of World War I. In the same time period, the total number of Armenian population in the city reached 120,000 which included post-genocide refugees from various provinces (Johnson 1922: 18) (cited in Ekmekcioglu 2016: 4, footnote 14). This is how, unlike in the rest of Ottoman Anatolia where the Armenian population was exterminated or forced to leave, the Armenian population of Istanbul increased following the 1915 Genocide.

In the Republican period numerous different but chronologically overlapping waves of migration shaped Istanbul’s demographic composition. To begin with, especially between the early 1940s and the late 1960s, the vast majority of the non-Muslim populations of Istanbul increasingly left for other countries. As we will see in Chapter IV, this exodus primarily developed as a response to the nationalist Turkification policies in the country, which marginalized non-Muslims economically and socially. Among these policies, the 1942 Wealth Tax, the 1955 Pogroms, and the 1964 forced exile of Greeks probably had the most extensive impact on the future of these non-Muslim Istanbul populations (see Güven 2005; Aktar 2006;Suciyan 2015). In addition, a sophisticated patchwork of laws and regulations restricted former Ottoman and Turkish citizens (i.e., survivors of the 1915-16 Armenian Genocide and the non-Muslims who fled the country in the post-1923 Republican era, respectively) in settling back in their former places of residence (Akçam and Kurt 2012; İçduygu and Aksel 2013; Kurt 2016b).

For the Jews, Greeks, and Armenians who remained in Istanbul, the exodus implied movement within the city. As opposed to their former dispersion all around the city, non-Muslims began to concentrate in particular neighbourhoods (see Chapter IV). In addition to the social and economic marginalization imposed by the state vis-à-vis non-Muslim populations in this era, physical marginalization produced by massive construction projects in the ‘Old City Peninsula’ in the 1960s also made non-Muslims leave their historical neighbourhoods behind (Keyder 1999; Akpınar 2016), including the predominantly Armenian Kumkapı. It was following this period of
physical marginalization of these neighbourhoods, and their abandonment by their former residents, that they became a source of cheap accommodation for other marginalized people from the rest of Turkey, especially Kurdish migrants fleeing political and economic instability in eastern and south-eastern Turkey (Biehl 2015) (see also Yükseker 2004 on the impact of Kurdish displacement in the transformation of the neighbouring Laleli district).

I conducted research in a time period in which not only Kurds but also post-socialist migrants sought cheap accommodation in Kumkapi. As we will see later in this chapter, stigmatization of Kurdish migrants from eastern Turkey resulted in the decrease in the demand for accommodation in the neighbourhood. However, historically, this would not have been possible if the local Armenians had not left the neighbourhood for the diaspora or other Istanbul neighbourhoods in the previous decades. As local Armenians left and Kurds settled in the neighbourhood, a small number of women involved in shuttle-trading between Turkey and Armenia in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Iron Curtain found cheap accommodation here. From the late 1990s onwards, the neighbourhood increasingly attracted post-socialist migrants and sojourners looking for economic opportunities. Moreover, since the early 2010s, the neighbourhood has also attracted migrants from more distant places, such as sub-Saharan Africa, adding another layer to the population’s diversity (see Biehl 2015).

In light of these waves of migration, Brink-Danan (2012) notes that the Istanbul of today cannot be considered as a ‘depopulated cosmopolis’ as suggested by Komins (2002). The city certainly lost large percentages of Greek, Armenian, and Jewish populations; however, later in the 20th century it became home to many other newcomers, including post-genocide Armenians from rural Anatolia (Björklund 2003). A more adequate label for contemporary Istanbul, I suggest, would be a ‘repopulated cosmopolis’, where neighbourhoods with non-Muslim architectural heritage are still part of the urban palimpsest and appropriated by newcomers in multiple ways. As the next chapters explore, the city is also still home to Armenians and other
non-Muslims. It remains a city rich in ‘asymmetrical aesthetics’ in which the physical (as in tangible and artistic, and architectural) presence of these populations is not always reflected in their present numbers (Bartu 1999). The next section is centred around a similar concern of reflecting contemporary Kumkapı (and Istanbul) in a context of population movement, a periphery and a centre simultaneously in decline for some and of increasing importance for others.

Peripheral Centres

As hinted earlier, there is a part of Kumkapı that attracts nobody besides the residents. Although some of the most important Armenian churches, in addition to the Patriarchate, are located in the neighbourhood, it is mostly only Armenian migrants residing here or nearby who visit the churches on the most important Armenian religious days such as Easter and Christmas. Very few Armenians from other parts of Istanbul come here for religious days, baptism ceremonies, or weddings. They prefer churches or community spaces for those purposes in their own neighbourhoods, such as Kurtuluş, Yeşilköy, or Kadıköy. As increasingly more Armenians from Istanbul send their children to non-Armenian schools, there is only one Armenian school, the Bezciyan Primary and Secondary School, still in operation in this neighbourhood. Due to the shrinking numbers of the local Armenian population in Istanbul, this is part of a general trend as other schools located in and around the neighbourhood are also closed.

Consequently, once a centre for Armenians from Istanbul, Kumkapı is now not an integral part of their lives. It is in practice located at the margins of their city, even if it remains symbolically important within their heritage narratives. However, for migrants from the Republic of Armenia, Kumkapı is practically the centre of their social, economic, and everyday affairs, even though it does not have a symbolic value for them such as it does for the Armenians from Istanbul. Taşçı (2010) notes that the Armenian Patriarchate in the neighbourhood does not provide migrants “systematic support in
terms of accommodation, rent assistance”, or “any spiritual support particular to the migrants in cases such as marriage, baptisms or funerals” (125). Moreover, at the time of this research, marriage ceremonies of migrant couples were not allowed in the Armenian Apostolic Church, on the grounds that civil marriage is a prerequisite of religious marriage in Turkey (Ibid.). Hence, undocumented migrants, who cannot have a civil marriage in Turkey in the first place, are precluded from marriage in the Church. This situation is directly related to how the Patriarchate was acknowledged as the only official interlocutor for the Armenian community by Turkish governments in the post-Ottoman period (Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı, and Kentel 2009). Similar to Armenian schools and hospitals, the Church also distanced itself from undocumented migrants for the sake of protecting its interests at the state level (Körükmêz 2012: 160).

When asked in a newspaper interview whether migrants sought assistance from the Patriarchate, Patriarch Mesrob II responded that

... up until two to three years ago, they [the migrants from Armenia] used to approach us for financial aid. We would investigate [their situation] and help them by covering their transportation costs, if they were stranded without any money to go back to Armenia. Soon we realized that they were going until Samsun and Trabzon, getting off the bus, and coming back to Istanbul. We decided not to assist them financially anymore (5 August 2006; Hürriyet) (my translation).

Later in the interview the Patriarch was asked about the main motivation for Armenian migrants to settle in Kumkapı. He responded that Kumkapı was one of the cheapest neighbourhoods of Istanbul and the location of the Patriarchate did not play a role (Ibid.).

At the time of my research in 2011-12, Kumkapı was still a relatively cheap neighbourhood to live in, but rental prices were increasing. None of my migrant informants stated that the location of the Armenian Patriarchate played a crucial role in their decision to settle in the neighbourhood. Based on interviews among migrants who had lived in the neighbourhood for relatively longer periods of time (as opposed to ‘newcomers’), I argue that the initial emergence of the neighbourhood as a suitable place to settle was based
on economic reasons. For Armenian migrants from Armenia, the fact that Kumkapı was historically an Armenian neighbourhood (with the Patriarchate at its centre) did not play a role in their decision. The main parameter for their decision to settle in the neighbourhood lies in the constitution of margins elsewhere in Istanbul, Turkey, and the world. The transformation of a nearby neighbourhood into a hub of transnational trade in Istanbul also reflects a similar situation.

As indicated in the previous section, Laleli, a neighbourhood in walking distance of Kumkapı and Samatya, where the Armenian Patriarchate and the Emniyet bus station are located, emerged as the centre of shuttle-trading in Istanbul. The majority of shops visited by shuttle-traders from Armenia and other parts of the post-socialist world in Istanbul are located here. Deniz Yükseker (2004; 2007), in her work on shuttle-trading between Russia and Istanbul, argues that transnational business networks between producers and traders are formed through particular processes of marginalization in their ‘home’ settings: Kurds from eastern Turkey (i.e., the producers) and citizens of post-socialist countries (i.e., the traders) responded to political conflict and the collapse of waged labour markets by seeking economic opportunities elsewhere, including in Istanbul (for a similar account on Gagauz migrants from southern Moldova in Istanbul and Moscow see Bloch 2014) (see also the previous chapter). This is how Laleli, a formerly decaying neighbourhood, became a meeting place for migrants and shuttle-traders in Istanbul.

The exodus of the majority of non-Muslims from Istanbul first resulted in the abandonment of particular neighbourhoods located in Istanbul’s ‘Old City Peninsula’. Neighbourhoods like Kumkapı and Laleli were then occupied by rural migrants, especially those of Kurdish origin, from the 1980s onwards, adding another layer of marginalization of these neighbourhoods in the minds of the urbanized middle class of the city. This is why Laleli’s emergence as a business hub and Kumkapı’s as a residential migrant

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12 We will see in the next chapter that the situation also resulted in the concentration of non-Muslim populations in other particular neighbourhoods.
neighbourhood have to be understood in relation to these waves of marginalization, depopulation, and repopulation.

In Berlin’s migrant enclave of Kreuzberg, Ruth Mandel writes about how the neighbourhood simultaneously emerged as a centre and periphery:

In this new place, by their own actions and decisions, they [migrants from Turkey] are setting new precedents, as they project agency of their own design, reshaping the Kruezbergs of Europe into novel and heterogeneous communities. It is in the recognition of an alternately constructed center that the Turks are able to seek positive identifications. Paradoxically, however, this center is located in a peripheral place vis-à-vis Turkey, the original affective orienting center. Thus, the longer the migrants live in the “peripheral center,” the greater its prominence and the more of a competing threat it poses to the traditionally central role occupied by Turkey (Mandel 1996: 163-164).

Here, Kreuzberg is a “peripheral center”, a process in which the neighbourhood is increasingly positioned as more significant than what was once a centre, Turkey. However, Kreuzberg is still a periphery, given its physical condition and social marginality in relation to the rest of Berlin. The situation of Kreuzberg in Berlin resembles that of Kumkapi in Istanbul in a number of ways. On the one hand, I take the liberty to define Berlin as another ‘repopulated cosmopolis’ to stress how the post-Holocaust city went through various waves of labour migration from Turkey and other countries, as well as accommodating German-speaking populations from former socialist countries (see Rapaport 1997; Mandel 2008).13 It is in this sense that the making of centres and peripheries in the two cities has been historically based on the depletion of particular communities and the arrival of successors in their place. On the other hand, similar to Kreuzberg and probably many other migrant neighbourhoods around the globe, Kumkapi is simultaneously a ‘peripheral centre’ – a direct result of its demographic transformation and the subsequent deterioration of its physical condition in relation to other neighbourhoods in the city – and a ‘central periphery’, for its contemporary migrant residents and the politics and the economy they aggregate.

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13 However, see also Adelson (2000) on how Turks in Germany “are rarely seen as intervening meaningfully in the narrative of postwar German history” (96).
The following ethnographic fragment captures a specific moment in which these centres and peripheries come into existence, and are displayed, through articulations of affiliation with people and particular places.

Meeting Hranoush

The first time I met Hranoush and her friend Hayk was at a café located in the heart of Kumkapı. That evening, the café was busy with customers, all speaking different languages. I heard the waitress approaching most of them in Russian. When she came to our table, she spoke to Hranoush in Turkish and Hayk in Russian. When I asked about her fluency in Russian, she said that her mother was from Turkmenistan and had come to Istanbul after the collapse of the USSR. The waitress’s father was Turkish, her parents having met in Istanbul; she was fluent in Russian, Turkmen, and Turkish. At the café, I observed that most customers were from different parts of the post-socialist world. I heard Russian, Azeri, and Armenian all at our table. Some other customers spoke Kurdish.

Hayk hardly uttered a word during our meeting and did not look like he was in a particularly good mood. Later I learned that he was a famous folk singer in Armenia. He had received the Armenian Music Award for best album in Los Angeles in the early 2000s. Hayk had lived in the US for a while, and, when he came back to Armenia, he looked for jobs but could not find any. He travelled to different parts of Russia for construction work, but at the same time kept performing music as a source of income. He gave concerts in major cities with Armenian migrants in Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia. In the end, he decided to visit his sister, who lived in Istanbul and was best friends with Hranoush. At the time of our meeting, he was still looking for a job in the city.

Unlike Hayk, Hranoush was very talkative. She was in her mid-50s, single, and had lived in Turkey for over a decade. She was fluent in Turkish and so our entire conversation took place in Turkish. We ordered coffee and a slice of cake for the three of us to share, but none of us wanted to be the first to
taste the cake. While the cake sat untouched, Hranoush turned to me and asked why I was interested in meeting her. Without waiting for an answer, she told me she knew why; I wanted to know, she contended, why she had decided to come to Turkey in the first place. Again without waiting for an answer, Hranoush explained that she came to Turkey because it was her *memleket*, a term that simultaneously refers to a specific place of origin (as in a town or a province) and a wider ancestral homeland (as in a country) in Turkish. She added that she *felt very much at home* in Turkey. Her family was from the villages of the Sassoun Province of the Ottoman Empire, now called Batman and today a predominantly Kurdish area of eastern Turkey. She told me that during the Genocide years, half of her family had headed east and ended up in Kars, a city then under Russian control. The family later moved from Kars to Armenia. The other half of Hranoush’s family ended up in Syria and Lebanon. A handful of other relatives were dispersed around Anatolia; some made their way to Istanbul.

Hranoush was born in the Soviet Republic of Armenia. She was an actress in the state theatre in a provincial town in the west of the country, close to the Turkish border. She told me that, while she objected to much under “Russian rule”, “the Soviets nevertheless provided Armenia with culture”, particularly in terms of arts and literacy. She added that Turkey as a country should not compare itself with Russia as a world power; Turkey, in her opinion, lacked ‘the culture’ to realize a parallel global status. Then she talked about how she had decided to come to Turkey a decade ago, and how she decided to stay. She told me that after coming to Istanbul she still wanted to act, even for free, but she could not find a single Armenian theatre willing to give her an opportunity. She asked for help from Armenian artists and private theatres, but they all turned her down on the grounds that her Armenian was not good enough: Hranoush speaks Eastern Armenian, as opposed to the Western Armenian spoken by local Armenians in Istanbul that is hegemonic in the city’s Armenian cultural scene. She was indignant.

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14 The term has several other nuanced meanings that we will see in the following pages.
A sudden move by Hranoush abruptly put a halt to our conversation. She turned around and started to shout in Armenian at the couple who were sitting at the table just behind us. Until that moment, I had not realized that there were others from Armenia in the café. The couple being berated by Hranoush consisted of a woman in her late thirties and a man who looked about a decade younger. Hranoush yelled at the pair, asking them how they dared to talk about sex so explicitly and shamelessly in a public space. The young man replied that they were not in Armenia but in Turkey, and he could not have known whether there were Armenians around or not. He said that it was impossible to check every person every time, and added that Hranoush should mind her own business. Hranoush got even more furious at his response and replied that it did not matter; whether in Armenia or any other place, people should never talk like that. The young man again insisted that he could not have known whether there were Armenians around and pointed his finger at me, asking whether we were all Armenians at our table. Before I had a chance to speak, Hranoush replied that everyone at our table was Armenian.

The fight was over in a few minutes, but it was hard to calm Hranoush. She started speaking to herself in Russian without looking at me or Hayk. This monologue in Russian went on for a few minutes. Then she turned to me and told me how sorry she felt about the situation. She apologized again and again, and told me that I was ‘the guest’ and it was not nice to have fights in front of guests. She explained to me that it was unacceptable for such a young man to talk about such things with a woman, a woman older than him. For her, the couple’s sexualized chatter was evidence not of a love affair but a monetary relationship. The woman, in Hranoush’s eyes, could only have been a prostitute. She told me that she did not understand where these people came from. She believed that they were all ignorant, just like the Turkish and Armenian middle classes in Istanbul, for whom she worked as a cleaner. She continued speaking in a mix of Turkish and Russian:

“They are all bezkulturny (in Russian lit. uncultured) … bezkulturny… bezkulturny… bezkulturny... these people behind me and the young people
for whom I do cleaning. They have money, but they do not have a single shelf of books. I remember my father, we had three walls full of books: one wall for Russian classics, one for Armenian classics, and one for world classics. He was a true Soviet man. But where do all these people come from? Where? These people cannot be Armenians. I am so sorry for this.” Then she turned to Hayk, and started to speak exclusively in Russian. Hayk hardly replied, only nodding. She told me in Turkish that she needed a cigarette. After a couple of minutes of silence, she apologized once again, not about her own actions, but about what those other people had done. She said once again that it was not nice to have these kinds of situations arise in front of guests. Suddenly it occurred to me that I could perhaps improve her mood by fulfilling my responsibilities as a guest; for this reason, I took a bite from the slice of cake that had remained untouched on the table until that moment. She was very pleased.

I want to analyse the above in terms of three separate modes of encounter involving Hranoush. The first is between Hranoush and me, a Turkish man; the second is between Hranoush and a younger generation of migrants from Armenia; the third involves Hranoush and the middle class Armenians from Istanbul for whom she works. All three encounters are informed by two interrelated processes. At one level, these encounters show the everyday articulations of imagined centres and more personal peripheries. They also demonstrate how imagined centres and their margins are appropriated on a daily basis. In the next section, I attempt to account for the particular processes in which these centres are defined at their respective margins.

The two imagined centres I would like to discuss in this thesis can be best described by the totalizing terms of ‘community’ and ‘homeland’.

Fear of the Unknown: “Where do all these people come from?”

There are various differences at play among migrant populations in Kumkapı. Biehl (2015) suggests approaching the neighbourhood as a context of
“superdiversity” – a term that Steven Vertovec (2007) used in order to account for differences of religion, gender, ethnicity, migration history, and legal status within and between migrant populations. The term aims to account for the differences not only between migrant communities but also among their members. Over the course of my research in Kumkapı, I observed how differences in gender and generation among Armenian migrants produced particular outcomes. For instance, in expressing her disappointment with the younger couple behind us, Hranoush asked “Where do all these people come from?” Her question was not only directed at the particular couple that occupied the table behind us; she was also making a point in relation to the younger generation of migrants in general. The differences between the younger and older migrants should be understood in relation to the transformation of moral frameworks in the post-socialist era (Humphrey and Mandel 2002; Wanner 2005; Bloch 2017), which often reflected itself in episodes of “moral panics” in Armenia (Shirinian 2016: 25 citing Cohen 2002 [1972]) (see Chapter III for more on this). While for many older Armenian migrant women the moral frameworks in which they were raised as Soviet citizens were still intact, younger post-socialist women in Istanbul tended to consider their work and life as “an escape from the confining socialist structures and gender ideals of the past” (Bloch 2017: 16). Within this moral framework, Hranoush’s reaction towards the younger couple was informed by how she situated herself as an Armenian in relation to other Armenians around her. As in many ways morality is a guideline for individuals to express bonds and affiliations, migrant superdiversity in Kumkapı challenged Hranoush to articulate what she and others shared in common.

These differences among migrants resulted in particular urban anxieties that limited Armenians of different ages and social backgrounds from socializing with one another. However, these differences also helped them navigate their roles and positions in a diverse social environment. Susan Pattie (1997), in her detailed account of the development of the post-genocide Cypriot Armenian community in Cyprus and later London, notes that “fear of the unknown” was a significant emotional aspect of encounters among
Armenians (70). This is why, she argued, many Armenian newcomers to Cyprus more readily started friendships with Turks, whom they found more familiar, than with resident Armenians or Greeks. This poses a remarkable similarity to the sentiments of my informants in Istanbul, many of whom also expressed that there is a lot of mistrust among Armenians. As reflected in Hranoush’s case, there are significant perceptions of difference between older and younger Armenian residents of Kumkapı. The older generation of migrants are usually those who arrived first, while the younger generations are newcomers to the city. However, older migrants often arrived in Istanbul alone, as opposed to the younger generations, whom I observed mostly came with other family members. Thus, while older generations had to build trust and establish friendships with the wider population of the city, this was less of an immediate imperative for younger generations. Many older migrants informed me that they preferred Turks as friends and business partners over other Armenians. However, this is mostly a rhetorical formulation of the “fear of the unknown” as put by Pattie (1997).

The generational differences among Armenian migrants also helped me comprehend what kind of migrants they were. None of my informants from Armenia in Kumkapı stated that they came to Turkey as a place to permanently settle. However, the ways they saw their future in Istanbul varied (cf. Grigoryan 2018: 15). For the older generation, Turkey was usually – if not always – the first and only place they left for work following the collapse of the USSR. They first decided to come to Turkey for short periods of time, but when the work proved lucrative, they stayed. They all believed that they would eventually go back to Armenia to unite with their families. In cases where their families were dispersed around the world, they felt that Armenia was the place to wait for them. For younger generations, there were more options in life. They considered leaving Istanbul for Armenia, but they also frequently noted that they could eventually go somewhere else. Similar to the older generation of migrants, the younger generations also had friends and family abroad, but the latter’s relative time remaining in life (i.e., younger age) made them think in more flexible terms in naming a final place to settle. In this way, the accounts of the younger generations define a
migratory moment of transit; however, I do not conceive of them necessarily as transit migrants waiting for or in search of their next destination.

Earlier in the thesis, I argued that many Armenians en route to Turkey took mobility for granted as a direct result of the extended networks of dispersion formed by histories of trade expeditions, migration, exile, and genocidal processes. While this holds valid for both older and younger generations of migrants in Istanbul, the latter group has a particular capacity to move further away. In this capacity, there is an important element of “motility” (Leivestad 2016: 133), which puts movement in a temporality perspective and subsequently directs our attention toward understanding mobility as an open-ended process (144). As Salazar (2011) notes, migration is greatly linked to the ability of people and their social networks to imagine other places and lives (577). In the particular case of younger generations of Armenian migrants in Istanbul, those other places and lives are made possible through personal time to invest in mobility that is otherwise taken for granted. However, a recent legal change, described below, has led the younger generation to feel more settled in the city.

Biehl (2015) notes that Kumkapı is a space where migrants are continually reminded of their uncertainties, not only about their future, legal status, or livelihood, but also their roles in relation to other migrants (603). One of the primary sources of concern for migrants from Armenia is their children’s education and future in Turkey (Körükmêz 2012: 158). This is especially the case for younger migrants, many of whom, as opposed to the older generation, brought their children to Turkey. Until 2011, it was not legally possible for migrant children to receive education in Istanbul’s local Armenian schools, as the law\textsuperscript{15} did not allow foreign nationals to receive education in Armenian, Jewish, or Greek schools (6 February 2015; Agos). In 2003, an informal primary school was organized for Armenian migrants in the basement of Gedikpaşa Armenian Protestant Church. The school followed the curriculum of schools in Armenia, although it could not provide any transcripts or diplomas to its students. After the assassination of Hrant Dink

\textsuperscript{15} The 2007 Law No: 5580 (based on a former 1985 regulation).
in 2007, the school was named after him. In September 2011, the Ministry of National Education announced that non-Muslim minority schools were permitted to accept foreign nationals as ‘guest students’ and passed a new regulation in February 2012 to legalize this decision. With the new regulation, ‘guest students’, who, as undocumented migrants, were formerly not entitled to official diplomas or transcripts (12 March 2012; Radikal), were allowed to register formally in non-Muslim schools and, it was hoped, eventually pursue university education in Turkey (21 March 2012; Agos). However, the new regulation did not open up this channel of higher education for ‘guest students’. At the moment, undocumented migrant children are only provided with a certificate (in Turkish: belge) from the schools they attend, in place of official diplomas or transcripts; the certificate has little weight and does not permit entry to university.

This change in law has, nevertheless, had an impact on Armenian migrants in Istanbul, especially for younger generations. As noted earlier in this chapter, Bezciyan Primary and Secondary School is the only functioning Armenian school in the neighbourhood of Kumkapı. In an interview, one of the vice-principals of the school explained to me how the new regulation came into effect at the same time as the new regulation on visas for foreign nationals. As noted in the previous chapter, in February 2012 Turkey changed its entry requirements for foreign nationals entering the country as tourists, granting Armenian nationals visas on arrival for 30 days, with a limit of staying in the country for 90 days in a 180-day period (see also Chapter I). These two legislative changes in 2012 produced unexpected results: as the vice-principal at the Bezciyan School noted, because it was now more difficult to go back and forth between Istanbul and Armenia, newer Armenian migrants increasingly brought their children to the city. The restrictions on their mobility forced many into an undocumented status if they wanted to stay in Istanbul, while the new regulation on education simultaneously gave them an incentive to bring their families with them.

16 See Article 51/d/5 of the Regulation on Private Education Institutions dated 20.02.2012.
In addition to difficulties in terms of employment, undocumented status, and education, uncertainties amongst migrants in Kumkapı are also gendered. Many women from former socialist countries in Turkey believe that they are perceived as potential sex partners by Turkish men and fear being forced into sex or prostitution (Bloch 2011; Biehl 2015). However, there is another side of the story in which it is not unusual for post-socialist women to enter romantic relationships with local (Turkish or Kurdish) men. With almost no prospect of regularizing their status, many post-socialist women “are keenly aware of how very much their intimate relationships with Turkish men define their experience of mobility” (Bloch 2011: 515). This is also because, marriage – whether for love or convenience – has emerged as a popular strategy for residency in Turkey and eventual citizenship (Ibid.) (see also Biehl 2015: 600). Whether or not sexualized relations lead to marriage and citizenship, the neighbourhood of Kumkapı – along with Laleli, the shuttle-trader hub of Istanbul, and touristic areas such as Sultanahmet – is perceived as a space where such relations are realized in an otherwise conservative society (Biehl 2015: 601) (see also Bloch 2017). Hranoush’s outrage towards the couple should be understood within this context of uncertainties in Kumkapı. As noted, morality provides individuals with a guideline to express what they share and do not share with the people in their social environment.

Thinking through a Community of Armenian Migrants

A particular mode of informal economy operates amidst this “fear of the unknown” (Pattie 1997) in this context of uncertainties. Writing on the relationships between Armenian migrants and Armenians from Istanbul, Taşçı argues that:

the presence of a certain relationship, even mutual dependency, between these two groups was certain. After all, Armenian migrants were working – not solely but mostly – in the houses of Armenian families [from Istanbul]. The members of an old enclave, the Istanbul Armenians were currently surrounding those of a new one, the Armenians of Armenia. However, it is not the ethnicity that is the main determinant of this enclosure, but the ethnic community that arises from this shared ethnicity and the positions of its actors in the social hierarchy (Taşçı 2010: 135-136) (emphasis mine).
It is particularly the emphasized sentence in the above quotation that I find problematic. Based on the encounters taking place between Armenian migrants and Armenians from Istanbul, the sentence implies that a new ethnic community is in the process of emerging. While I recognize the attempt to account for the business/work relationships among Armenians from Istanbul and Armenian migrants, there are limitations to this approach. On the one hand, the author aims to study community-making without an ethnic lens. On the other hand, her solution does not critically engage with the ‘complexities of ethnicity’ because the ethnic community she looks for is based on shared ethnicity. In fact, it looks like an impossible task to realize without recognizing ethnicity’s vast array of definitions, which I attempt to tackle below and more in the following chapter. Instead, I argue that rather than a sense of shared community, Armenians from Armenia and Istanbul are acutely aware of (and at pains to demonstrate) the differences between them. Emphasizing what is not shared plays a significant role in reproducing both as distinct communities.

In *Cosmopolitan Anxieties*, Ruth Mandel (2008) pointed to the danger of reducing ontogeny to essentialist ontology. She wrote that “one of the central problems with many ethnicity theories is that an a priori assumption regarding the ontological significance and primacy of ethnicity says little about the particulars of its history or onto[ethno]genesis” (84). Although here I follow the self-ascriptive method, identifying Armenians as individuals who consider themselves Armenians, I nevertheless find it important, following Mandel’s lead, to ask what defining ‘Armenian migrants’ in Istanbul as an ‘Armenian migrant community’ tells us about the particulars of its history and its onto[ethno]genesis. I suggest that it does not tell us much.

I am particularly critical of the term ‘ethnic’ in referring to a community of Armenians – whether ‘local’ or migrant – in contemporary Istanbul. I sense that in Taşçı’s work (2010) a group of migrants from Armenia is necessarily understood as forming an ethnic community because they share language, citizenship, and country of departure. These similarities also continue in
terms of work as many are employed by Armenians from Istanbul. In this view, the community formation is only assumed (and reduced) to take place along ethnic lines (see Mandel 2008: 85). I call for a distinction between the ethnic enclosing of communities (whether by researchers or community members) and the historical processes of ethnic community formation. I argue that the confusion between the two is based on limiting analytical lenses on what people share in terms of origin, instead of looking at the historical narrations of those origins. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, ethnicity is productively understood as a “process of classification” of relating things and people to one another (Comaroff 1992), and “a domain of cognition” in which knowledge about the self, the other, and the difference between the two is constituted (Brubaker 2004). It is in this sense that ethnic community being defined through shared ethnicity runs the risk of totalizing the former, simply because consensus in the latter by the group members should precisely come after emergence of the former (as in the historical formulations of the myth-symbol narratives argued by Smith 1986; 2009) (see also Paksoy 2017: 47 for a similar approach towards ethnicity in the case of Armenian migrants in Istanbul). Perhaps, as the rest of the thesis depicts, even consensus on the matter is not as much needed.

These views are in line with Pattie’s (1997) observations on Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora. Pattie sees Armenians as a long-standing ethnos with shared institutions, people who have invested in creating a modern Armenian nation despite the great deal of disagreement on the relative importance of components of the Smithian myth-symbol complex (29). In this sense, there is a side to ethnicity that should be stressed: in its operation of relating people to one another, hence as a process, it depends on a tension between “what is” and “what should be” shared by group members. The encounter between migrants at the Kumkapı café demonstrates that there is a multiplicity of ways of being Armenian. There is no consensus on what is socially acceptable. However, at the same time, the disagreements about what is and what is not acceptable for Armenians demonstrate that there is a basis for conversation. In fact, the lack of consensus on social norms and values constantly reminds Armenian migrants that they are different from non-
Armenians and local Armenians in Istanbul. A similar observation was made by Fran Markowitz in *A Community in Spite of Itself* more than two decades ago. She wrote that:

Community, like language, emerges from dialogue. Indeed, community is made possible only through conversations among people who assume that they are alike, and with other societies and cultures that are viewed as alien and come to be placed along a continuum of difference (Markowitz 1993: 5).

Markowitz added that the lack of consensus implied some sort of a ‘primordial agreement’ on particular issues:

The postmodern community is a heteroglossic entity derived from talk. Because it is a symbolically constituted, socially constructed arena of debate, argumentation, challenge, enjoyment, and even agreement, it cannot be a place of unitary sameness. It is an entity formed from confrontations with otherness coupled with a historically based idea that some people are more alike than others. Even the groupwide ethnic identity that somehow persists over the centuries does not mandate uniformity, tradition, or unchangingness. Rather it signifies some sort of agreement on origins, hopes, desires, morality, knowledge, sentiment, discussion and doing (Markowitz 1993: 260).

As elucidated by Markowitz, debates on norms and values constantly inform migrants like Hranoush about what they simultaneously share and do not share with other Armenians in the context of Istanbul. It is in this sense that ‘dispute’ can function as a basis for common ground among migrant populations. As observed by other researchers in the field, “it is precisely the heterogeneity of local groups” that gives their shape as Armenian communities (Firsov 2006: 76, quoted in Siekierski 2016: 17). It is the debate about those norms and values that challenges straightforward definitions of what identifies an individual as Armenian. Thus, disputes of this nature appear as both a catalyst of and an obstacle against community formation. As I construe the dynamics of everyday relationships among Armenian migrants, the extent to which disputes emerge as a source or obstacle to community formation depends on whether the issue in dispute is understood as a source of anxiety or not (or fear as Pattie 1997 noted in the context of Cyprus). Biehl (2015) notes that Kumkapi is a context of uncertainties for its migrant residents, as the competition for economic gain and lack of legal status (and subsequently limited access to education, health, justice, and
security services) make ‘trust’ a difficult asset to look for in other people (see also Bloch 2017 for how ‘intimacy’ became a key domain of everyday practices to seek support to eliminate the possible negative effects of those uncertainties). This is why I contend that in this context of uncertainties, the making of a community of Armenian migrants is jeopardized.

I observed that neither Armenians from Turkey nor Armenian migrants constituted distinct communities, which, according to Taşçi’s view, were expected to enclose one another and merge one day. In fact, both the former and the latter group were highly divided among themselves. Especially for the latter group, it is possible to argue that a population of atomized Armenian individuals lives in Istanbul, rather than an emergent community of Armenian migrants. However, before concluding this section, it is important to note that there are possible ways to see ‘the community’ Taşçi (2010) looked for. One way could be to focus on what is obvious – that is, what the migrants in Kumkapı share in common before everything else, a decision to leave their former place of residence. Here, I find Pattie’s approach to community helpful. She provided two conceptualizations of community, both of which stress departure from home as a unifying factor in the context of globally dispersed Armenians. Pattie (1997) wrote that the Armenian word for community, kaghout, can be understood as a state of living as strangers (or ghariboutiume, from Turkish/Arabic garip) (28). In 2004, Pattie wrote that the term is believed to derive from the Semitic word for exile, galut (121, footnote 8). I believe these are useful conceptualizations that help to reflect on what Armenian migrants share in Istanbul as they consider their own travel histories within larger histories of Armenian diasporization and re-diasporization and tend to locate their mobility within a historical perspective of inevitable mobility (see the previous chapter on how I identified my

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17 I need to stress that here in this specific sentence and section I specifically engage with the term ‘community’ in the context of migrant Armenians. In Chapter VI, I provide a similar discussion in relation to Armenians from Istanbul.

18 The term garip, in both Turkish and Arabic, emphasizes ‘moving away from home’ and a process of ‘estrangement’ or exile from one’s community. The term has its roots in garb, which means ‘west’ in Arabic. In this sense, the term is based on the loss of orientation that comes with the setting of the sun and the turning of light into dark (see Sayad 2000: 166-167 for how the term is used in Arabic; see Zırh 2012: 1760 for how the term is used in Turkish) (see also Su: forthcoming).
informants as people who took mobility for granted). However, such diasporic affiliation does not always presuppose departure from a ‘homeland’. As the previous chapter argued, ‘the place to return to’ could be a place of former exile in history. The next section will continue exploring this theme in which migration settings could also be understood as homelands.

Of Homely Homelands and Homes: “Where did all these people go?”

Hranoush stated that she came to Turkey because ‘here’ was her own country or memleket. There were ambiguous aspects to this statement. At the beginning of our conversation, I was curious to find out whether she was talking about contemporary Turkey or Istanbul, Constantinople (that is, Ottoman Istanbul), or Armenian ancestral lands that are part of contemporary Turkey. The word she specifically used was memleket in Turkish, which has four related but different meanings. First, the term historically translates as “country” (Özkan 2012: 22). This is in line with the Arabic root word, which means “kingdom”. However, this translation sounds old-fashioned in contemporary Turkish, as with the language reform of the early Republican era, a Turkic word, ülke, was introduced to replace memleket as “country”. This should not bring us to the conclusion that the word was abandoned; a second primary meaning provided in Turkish dictionaries defines memleket as “a place where someone was born and raised”. Third, in everyday speech in a large-scale immigration context such as Istanbul, it means “the place where the father was born, and most often where he came from”. Finally, the more general sense of the term is “the place where the family came from”. In this last meaning, the emphasis is on the family as a whole instead of the father. It is most often the third or the fourth meaning of the term that is used in contemporary Turkish. Hence, it implies a strong sense of migration that is not an individual experience but a collective one experienced as a family.

As this range of definitions suggests, memleket is much more nuanced than the totalizing notion of homeland, or its Turkish and Armenian translations,
**vatan** and **hairenik**, respectively. Demir (2012) notes in her study of Kurdish migrants from Turkey in London that the term **memleket** is always relational and positional, never referring to a fixed territory. When somebody says “I am off to **memleket**” or “I miss **memleket**” outside the border of Turkey, the term can refer to Turkey; when in Istanbul, it can refer to a specific region in Turkey, or to a particular city; and in that particular city, it can refer to a smaller town or village that one’s family originates from (820). In many ways, for speakers of Turkish, including Kurds and Armenians from Turkey, the term comes to define an imagined place that functions as an “inverse mirror” (Bennani-Chraïbi 1994) “signifying everything seen as lacking” in everyday contexts of migration (quoted in Elliot 2012: 80). However, the term often refers to a much more concrete and tangible place of origin, where the possibility of ‘going back’ is not terminated.

In the Armenian case, the possibility of going back to one’s **memleket** – in the sense of an ancestral village – was terminated by the Genocide. Nevertheless, during our conversations, **memleket** was the only word used by my Armenian informants from Istanbul when referring to a place of origin (see Türker 2015 for how this sentiment resonates with Greeks from Istanbul). I never heard **hairenik** (or its Turkish equivalent) a single time when Armenians from Istanbul referred to the specific places their families left behind in various corners of Turkey. Among the younger generations, the number of people who had visited their ancestral lands was very low and they often seemed uninterested; however, they also expressed that they never felt like they lived far away. In Istanbul, local Armenians were very much within the imagined and physical boundaries of their **memleket**. This does not mean that they were in denial of the fact that their bond with their places of origin was an

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99 This is in line with what Zirh (2017) argued on Alevis in/from Turkey. As opposed to majority Sunni Muslim Turks, for whom some administrative regions such as the Black Sea and the Aegean could function in defining a collective identity, Alevis tend to refer specifically to a town or village in elaborating where they are from (159). Zirh writes that this distinction between Sunnis and Alevis points to the tension between state-imposed cartographies and the public’s imagination of space (Ibid.) (see Chapter IV for more on this tension). In the post-genocide context of Turkey, Armenians also refer to specific towns, villages, and provinces as places of origin but never to entire administrative regions.
interrupted one. They were rather making a very particular claim to other people around them in the social environment.

I will address the politics behind this claim in the following chapters (especially in Chapter VI). For now, I suggest that, in making this claim, by saying that she came to Turkey because it was her *memleket*, Hranoush mirrors the discourse of Armenians from Istanbul and positions herself as *not* an ‘outsider’ in Turkey. Especially in the first two decades after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, nation-building processes in Turkey resulted in the remaking of Muslims as ‘Turks’ and non-Muslims as ‘foreigners’ (in Turkish: *yabancı*) (Çağaptay 2005). This is why, similar to Armenians from Turkey, Hranoush’s elaboration of *memleket* is relational and positional (Demir 2012), not only in terms of the physical distances between places but also regarding the imagined distances between people. For instance, in Hranoush’s account, she and I share the same *memleket*. A *memleketli*, someone from this place of origin, does not need to be Armenian. It is in this sense that the term is different from ‘homeland’ (and its Turkish and Armenian equivalents), as it works towards establishing affinities and similarities between people from different ethnic backgrounds. In short, *memleket* does not imply ethnic exclusivity in the way that *vatan* or *hairenik* does. In Turkish and Armenian, both equivalents of homeland are understood specifically as ‘national(ized) territories’ (see Tölölyan 2010; Özkan 2012).

Demir suggests that the difference between *memleket* and homeland reveals itself in the distinction between ‘home’ and ‘house’ in the English language, as the term is more deeply ingrained in the emotional component of ‘home’ than the material component of ‘house’ (2012). I believe this insight, while important, lacks an adequate explanation of the homely feeling behind *memleket* as a place of origin. *Memleket* indeed accounts for the homely

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20 Although the nation-state ideology and its indoctrination in the early decades of the Republic aimed at defining the category of the ‘Turk’ as an umbrella term to refer to all citizens of Turkey, the outcome was remarkably different for non-Muslim populations for Greeks, Jews, and Armenians. I explore this situation of the making of ‘foreigners’ from Turkish citizens in detail in Chapter IV.
feeling in the house, a familiar landscape with the material and emotional components of a house and a home, respectively. On the other hand, the distinction between memleket and homeland corresponds to the distinction between ‘home’ and ‘house’ as much as the former defines a personal and intimate site of relationships among inhabitants more than the generic ‘house’. Demir’s distinction relies on a particular conceptualization of homeland that necessarily feels like home – which my informants’ narratives contest.

Anna’s case portrays a distinction between homely homelands and homelands that do not feel like home. I met Anna while she was travelling in eastern Turkey along with her other friends from Armenia. She was in her late 20s and had studied linguistics at Yerevan State University. As opposed to her friends, she was very open to talking from the first moment we were introduced. We visited several former Armenian monasteries that were heavily destroyed during the Genocide, as well as villages that were repopulated by Kurds in the decades since. One day we visited a village that was located on the site of a former Armenian monastery. For untrained eyes there was almost nothing left to suggest that Armenians once lived there. However, as we knew what to look for, it did not take us much time to notice the ornamented columns, vaults, and other architectural elements historically used by Armenians in the construction of village houses. Many contemporary dwellings bore crosses carved into stone and Armenian inscriptions.

Unfortunately, the language barrier between us and the villagers did not allow us to learn about their history of relocation to the site. I was a native Turkish speaker and Anna was a native Armenian speaker. I spoke the ‘official language’ of the country and Anna spoke the language that was once spoken in the area; most villagers only spoke Kurdish (excluding some elderly men and younger generations with primary school education). It was a strange experience for both of us. I felt like a tourist from a colonizing country, whereas for Anna there were many things that she could relate to. We decided to distance ourselves from the village centre a bit; we passed the
buildings and the last remainders of the monastery and found ourselves on a muddy road leading to the valley below, with high mountains on the horizon. After a long silent moment Anna turned to me and told me in English, *it did not matter that Kurds now lived in this part of Turkey, she felt very much at home.*

Sharon Macdonald (2009), in her work on the Nuremberg Nazi Rally Grounds, argues that for many visitors, sites of “difficult heritage” “become an occasion for prompting reflection” where “many people use it as a starting point for contemporary critique”, even if such critique was not actively attempted by the site or exhibition (190).21 For many visitors to one of the most famous landmarks of the Nazi past in Germany, this site often triggers very personal reflections about one’s own place in the world and history. It is in this sense that a site of “difficult heritage” challenges, shocks, and often embarrasses its visitors. These sites exert a ‘heritage effect’ upon their visitors, a sensibility grounded in particular visual and embodied practices prompted by certain kinds of spaces and modes of display (3).22 As a result, the rendering of particular sites of heritage as difficult is related to the quality of the self-reflection of the visitors that emerges at particular junctures of heritage display and witnessing.

Anna did not come from a family of Genocide survivors, nor did her family originate from within the borders of contemporary Turkey. She was born in Armenia, her family having immigrated to Armenia in the early 1980s from their hometown in the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic. Her father was Armenian and her mother was Jewish, born to a family of Holocaust survivors from Ukraine. Anna had never been to see her family’s house in Azerbaijan, as the collapse of the USSR also brought a still ongoing war between the two neighbours. Both of her parents had passed away a few years before and she did not have much family in Armenia. She did not know very

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21 Macdonald writes that she adapted this term from what Alpers (1991) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) formerly called ‘the museum effect’ (see also Macdonald 2006).

22 I believe ‘heritage effect’ is applicable to analyses of recognized heritage sites, but also to more contested sites of heritage and even individuals’ very own personal ‘sites of memories’ (as elaborated by Pierre Nora 1989).
much about her mother’s family, aside from a couple of cousins scattered around the former Soviet republics. None of her paternal cousins knew Armenian and she communicated with them solely in Russian.

As we were walking, I asked Anna to elaborate more on what she meant by feeling very much at home in this part of Turkey. She responded that the mountains, the rivers, and the trees looked the same, even faces of the people. It just looked like Armenia, she said, and in the end, this was her homeland. Upon hearing this, I asked her whether she believed Israel was also her homeland. She responded that she did. However, she was also sure that “it would not feel like home there” as it was “a zone characterized by a different climate and different landscape”. Nevertheless, she expressed that she was very keen to visit Israel, just as much as she had wanted to visit Turkey in the past.

In the months and years that followed, Anna and I kept in contact. She moved to Istanbul to pursue a PhD in linguistics. As opposed to the great majority of Armenians (from Armenia) I contacted in Istanbul, she was never to become undocumented during her stay in Turkey. She applied for and received residency in Turkey. She did not experience the anxieties of not having legal status in the country as the migrants did because she was officially enrolled in an academic programme. She was a very fast learner and, in a matter of a few months, she was fluent in Turkish. Over the years she also had Turkish boyfriends; however, she repeatedly broke up with them after a couple of months on the grounds that they were kapalı (lit. closed, narrow-minded). Their fights stemmed from two major issues. First, she did not want to be confined to the traditional gender roles she felt they imposed on her. For instance, her boyfriends asked her not to go out with friends, or at night, and were often very jealous. Second, Anna was open to discussing ‘the issue of the Genocide’ (in Turkish: soykırı̈m meselesi) and was always very curious to hear people’s thoughts on it. However, for her boyfriends there was nothing to discuss; for them, the Genocide did not happen. As she told me once, she probably would not have minded dating a Genocide denialist, but
what she could not accept was that the issue was completely avoided by her boyfriends.

Anna was truly a curious person. Apart from constantly discussing hot political issues in Turkey, she was always eager to know more about the history of Istanbul. Over the months and years that followed her move to Istanbul, I observed that she cultivated an interest in learning about the Jewish heritage of the city. She attempted to make local Jewish friends, but at the end she concluded that theirs was a closed (in Turkish: kapalı) community and her attempts were futile. She also made an attempt to visit Israel. She booked her flights through my personal contacts in Tel-Aviv, but her visa application was denied on the grounds that she did not have any documents to prove that she was Jewish. Nevertheless, we continued our neighbourhood and museum visits simultaneously embracing Jewish and Armenian perspectives.

One day we decided to visit the Jewish Museum of Istanbul (officially the Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews), the only Jewish museum in a predominantly Muslim country. At the time of research, the museum was located at the defunct Zulfaris Synagogue, on a tiny dead-end street in the neighbourhood of Karaköy. For untrained eyes, it was very hard to spot the museum, a fact that caught Anna’s attention. As we attempted to enter through the gate that separated the dead-end street and the synagogue, a security guide asked why we had come, as if he were waiting to hear whether we were lost or actually knew what we were looking for. I responded that we wanted to visit the museum and this time he asked us where we came from. He was a bit surprised that one of us was from Turkey and the other from Armenia, and asked whether he could see our IDs and keep them until the end of our visit. After our bags and clothes were checked, we were finally allowed inside the building.

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23 A second Jewish museum was in the process of opening in Izmir, again in Turkey, at the time of submitting this thesis.
24 The museum was relocated to a much smaller site within the nearby Neve Shalom Synagogue in 2016.
When we were alone amongst the exhibited material, Anna asked me whether there was something extraordinary about the security measures we had been subjected to. Having been to the museum several times before, I responded that there was nothing unusual on the day of our visit. The security measures had been tight for a long time, and I explained that there had twice been terrorist attacks on Istanbul synagogues, in 1986 and 2003. She reasoned that this explained a lot about the Jewish community and why its members seemingly kept a low profile. Marcy Brink-Danan (2012), in her research on Jews in Istanbul, notes that the curator of the museum once explained that “he was compelled to create the museum after the 1986 attacks, when the general population in Turkey (as well as the international press) recorded its shock at the revelation that Jews still lived in Istanbul” (43) (emphasis original). It is in this context that the museum simultaneously serves the local Jewish population as an intimate community space and, as the curator also stressed, “is really intended to ‘present the face of Judaism to the outside’” (43) (both emphases mine).

As we came to the end of our tour of the building, I asked Anna whether she noticed anything particular about the exhibition. She had not, so I pointed out that there was no material exhibited on the Holocaust.25 Anna explained that she was not surprised by this; for her, any mention of the Holocaust (in Turkish: Yahudi Soykırımı, lit. the Jewish Genocide) would necessarily have echoed the Armenian Genocide (in Turkish: Ermeni Soykırımı).26 At this point, Anna expressed that she believed everyone lived in bubbles (in Turkish: balon) in Istanbul, while she was lucky enough to go beyond her Armenian bubble. She was enrolled in a Turkish university, lived in a student dorm on the outskirts of the city, and commuted on buses and trains where

25 Dost-Niyego and Aytürk (2016: 259-260) address this seeming “irrelevance” of the Holocaust in the Turkish context.

26 Although here Anna directly refers to the stigmatization of the concept of ‘genocide’ as a taboo subject in Turkey, her remark could not have been timelier in relation to the recent scholarly turn that has invited us to re-think the impact of Turkish-German political relationships, both on the extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and for Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. A new body of scholarship has not only criticized Turkey’s role and responsibility during the Holocaust (Bali 1999; Gütstadt 2012; Bahar 2015; Dost-Niyego and Aytürk 2016) but also attempted to reveal Turkish-German cooperation, mutual admiration, and ideological exchange (see Ihrig 2014; 2016).
she had plentiful opportunities to see the city’s diversity with her own eyes. She added that the younger generation of students, NGO experts, and volunteers from Armenia in Istanbul still did not realize two important things. First, they mistakenly believed Turkey was really changing. In their professional and social circles, the Genocide was not a taboo topic, and they were surrounded by open-minded (in Turkish: açık fikirli) people. Anna noted that the situation among the majority of Turks would have been demoralizing for Armenians. Second, Armenians did not understand that Turkey was multicultural (in Turkish: çok kültürlü), and did not recognize the diversity of the population who had become Turks over the last century. This particular group of people from Armenia, who were employed by civil society organizations in Turkey, she believed, spent most of their time with people who were not different from themselves socially or politically. At the end of our tour of the Jewish Museum, Anna did not seem impressed. For her, the museum did not really give a sense of the Jewish community of Istanbul. She asked, “Where did all these people go?” When I responded, “Possibly Israel?”, I already knew that she had intended to ask a different kind of question.

Anna had asked me the same question once before, during our visit to the Museum of Innocence, named after Nobel-laureate Orhan Pamuk’s novel of the same title. The museum brings life to the protagonists of the novel, mostly members of two Westernized, secular upper and lower middle class Muslim families from the 1970s, by way of presenting a large body of everyday items such as shaving kits, cigarette butts, dresses, and earrings, as well as black and white photographs of people in Istanbul from the 1970s and earlier decades. Like the novel, the museum is a work of fiction (23 January 2016; The Guardian), and it is hard not to see this tiny museum as largely an act of nostalgic appreciation for an Istanbul that does not exist anymore (29 April 2012; New York Times).

Orhan Pamuk, in an earlier book, Istanbul, himself wrote of the destruction of Istanbul that still haunted its contemporary denizens:

> For those of us who watched the city’s last yalıs, mansions and ramshackle wooden houses burn during the 1950s and 1960s, the pleasure we derived had
its roots in a spiritual ache different from that of the Ottoman Pashas, who thrilled to them as spectacles; ours was the guilt, loss and jealousy felt at the sudden destruction of the last traces of a great culture and a great civilization that we were unfit or unprepared to inherit, in our frenzy to turn Istanbul into a pale, poor, second-class imitation of a western city (Orhan Pamuk, Istanbul, 2006: 191) (emphasis mine).

When Anna walked in the streets of contemporary Istanbul, she did not see life as portrayed in either museum. She observed that Istanbul was diverse; however, as in the Orhan Pamuk quotation above, a feeling of destruction was constantly in narration. For Anna and other Armenians from Istanbul and Armenia alike, this destruction was epitomized by the massive exodus of non-Muslims from the city. As a result, I argue that there is always more than one way to account for and answer Anna’s question. As I construe it, her question, “Where did all these people go?” is a vocalization of the invisibility of the remaining non-Muslims within public life in Turkey. For the non-Muslims who stayed in the city, more and more invisible but tangible barriers were erected between people from different class, religious, and ethnic backgrounds from the 1950s onwards. This situation is reflected in Turkey in two ways: first, through the stigmatization of particular historical issues that went against the official nation-state historiography, and second, through the re-organization of the city (in the aftermath of the exodus of non-Muslims and its repopulation by rural migrants) in the imagination.

For the first point, we can think about particular historical issues as ‘taboos’ in Turkey. Freud (1913) notes that taboos refer to sites, issues, and rituals that are simultaneously sacred, forbidden, and dangerous. However, he notes that the term’s Polynesian antonym, noa, refers to things that are publicly accessible (Ibid.). Similarly for Durkheim (1995 [1912]), taboo “denotes the institution with which certain things are withdrawn from ordinary use” (304), implying a discontinuity between sacred things and profane beings (303). Taboo defines a site of inaccessibility in which both the individual and wider society are protected from the dangers they pose to each other (Steiner 1967: 21). In this sense, taboo is an essential component of social organization and the very basis for the diverse structures of rules, laws, and regulations observed in all human societies (Bataille 1962; Douglas 1966; Levi-Strauss 1969; Steiner 1967).
In the context of Turkey, Leyla Neyzi (2002) argued that taboo issues are mostly violent events of the past “that are not easily visible or voiced”; confronting them often comes “with a high cost for individuals” (142) (also quoted in Brink-Danan 2012: 147). Neyzi’s argument follows Freud (1913) and Steiner (1967), in the sense that such violent histories are not only invisible but bringing visibility to them is often a dangerous enterprise in Turkey. It is in this context that we can understand why Anna, at the Jewish Museum, reasoned that the Holocaust was not mentioned within the permanent exhibition. For her, the term soykırırm as in the translation of the word Holocaust to Turkish (Yahudi Soykırımı, lit. the Jewish Genocide) had direct connotations with Ermeni Soykırımı (lit. the Armenian Genocide). She believed the curators of the museum deliberately refrained from referring to the Holocaust in their exhibition in order to avoid the stigma attached to the wider concept of soykırırm.

The museum clearly “departs from the general theme and museum narratives of Jewish museums elsewhere in the world” (Brink-Danan 2012: 43-44). It is possible to understand Anna’s reasoning in relation to the wider invisibility of violent and discriminatory events of the past in this setting. At the time of our visit to the museum, there was no mention of the following events that took place in Turkey: the 1934 Pogroms (which specifically targeted Jews), the 1941-42 random drafting of non-Muslims into the army (in Turkish: yırımı kura askerlik) and forced labour battalions (in Turkish: amele taburu), the 1942 Struma Disaster (in which 781 Jewish refugees escaping the Holocaust on a boat from Romania en route to the Mandate of Palestine were denied entry to Turkey; the boat was finally torpedoed by a Soviet submarine off the Turkish coast), the 1942 Wealth Tax (which was levied on non-Muslims only), and the 1955 Pogroms (which targeted all non-Muslims).27 Talin Suciyan (2015), in her recent book, argues that denial of these state-sponsored acts of violence and discrimination has been institutionalized through the legal framework that penalized the ‘denigration of Turkishness’ but not Jewishness, Armenianness, or Greekness (83). In other words, when

27 It was only after the relocation of the museum to its new site that these “grey pages along with the pink pages” of Jewish history in Turkey were incorporated in the exhibition (25 February 2016; bianet).
non-Muslims criticized these violent events and discriminatory practices, they were formally charged, not only for going against official historical narratives but also insulting Turks as a whole.\textsuperscript{28} Historical events of violence in general and \textit{soykurum} in particular are taboos in Turkey, not only stigmatized concepts but also stigmatizing for those who publicly attempt to discuss them.

Regarding the second issue of the emergence of invisible but tangible barriers between the denizens of Istanbul, this can best be understood as an ongoing process through which particular neighbourhoods, sites, and institutions (such as schools and places of worship) come to be imagined as more ‘different’ and ‘foreign’ than others, and the subsequent making of those spaces as such (see Chapters V and VI for more on this). The story depicted in this chapter primarily accounts for how these borders are made from the inside out. Anna, for instance, observed a particular aspect of place-making in non-Muslim Istanbul during our entry to the Jewish Museum. The two of us went through a series of security practices that involved ID checks and a bag and body search. These practices represent a basic element of differentiation in Istanbul, “the physical border dividing Jewish space from the public Turkish domain” (Brink-Danan 2012: 87). We also found ourselves in a conversation with the security personnel about ‘where we came from’, a question intended to “locate a new person, however roughly, on an imagined national map – not with a literal absolute location somewhere in Turkey or in a neighbourhood of Istanbul, but, rather, with an imagined geography that situates a person in some way within the nation, in terms of culture, socioeconomic status, political, or even ethnic identity” (Mills 2010: 1-2).

Of ‘Where’ Questions

As noted above, ‘where questions’ in Turkey are intended to locate the self and others within imagined nation-state territories (Mills 2010). At the

\textsuperscript{28} Suciyan (2015) notes that this situation is also reflected in the absence of legal consequences for racist crimes (other than targeting Turks) until this day (see also endnote 268 in Suciyan).
entrance of the Jewish Museum, the guard’s question was intended to locate Anna and myself along a spectrum of trustworthy to dangerous subjects. In contrast to the guard’s question, Anna’s and Hranoush’s questions of “where” accounted for how they made sense of the social environment around them and how they accounted for the demographic transformations Turkey (and the Ottoman Empire) and Armenia (and Soviet Armenia) have gone through in the past hundred years. In Hranoush’s case, the question was formulated in the shadow of encounters with younger Armenians from Armenia and Turkey. Hranoush did not identify members of the younger generation as part of her imagined homeland; to put it more specifically, those people were not from her memleket. Moreover, those people posed obstacles against her own imagination of homeland. They reminded her of the possibility that the Armenia she had left behind did not exist anymore and that the Turkey she had arrived in had not existed for a long time. In this sense, she had a memleket (that interwove different places) that she could affiliate with, but no homeland (in the way she imagined it) to go back to. At least the term enabled Hranoush to establish bridges with non-Armenians (like me and others in Kumkapı or Istanbul) and reject those bridges with Armenians (whenever necessary), as it has never been hijacked by the state in imposing a national homeland. As I understand it, Hranoush’s ‘where question’ – “Where did all these people come from?” – serves to acknowledge this rupture between memleket and homeland, the breaking of their harmony and correspondence in meaning.

Her ‘where question’ is also based on a fear of the unknown that is informed by the context of uncertainties in the migrant setting of Kumkapı (Biehl 2015; see also Bloch 2017). There are notable differences between Hranoush and Anna in terms of generation, legal status (one is extra-legal and the other a legally registered PhD student), place of origin (in Armenia), place of residence (within Istanbul), current job, and employment prospects. Hranoush was an undocumented migrant woman in her mid-50s from a post-industrial town in Armenia. She lived in Istanbul and worked as a cleaner in the houses of Armenians from the city. She did not have any plans to do different work or return to Armenia. If deported, she faced the
possibility of never coming back to Istanbul, as she did not have the finances to pay the penalty (see the next chapter on Armenians deported from Turkey). As such, what she desired from life was predictability.

On the contrary, Anna was a student in her late 20s from the capital city of Yerevan. She lived on scholarship funds, supplemented by doing translations (from Turkish to Russian and Turkish to Armenian) and other freelance jobs. In comparison to Hranoush, Anna’s travel experience went far beyond Turkey and Armenia. She visited first and second cousins in Russia and Ukraine, and had done numerous training programmes and courses in North America and Western Europe. She always kept in touch with friends and acquaintances in case she needed to go back to those places. A ‘yearning for openness’ set Anna apart from Hranoush and her ‘fear of the unknown’. These feelings were in part a product of their personal histories of migration and mobility, elaborated through articulations of distance and proximity to those around them.

Anna’s conceptualization of homeland informs us about her personal history of mobility. When she made a distinction between eastern Turkey as a ‘homeland that felt like home’ and Israel as a ‘homeland’ that she did not ‘expect to feel like home’, the underlying element of distinction was the familiarity she felt with the landscape of the former. Over the course of our friendship, Anna never articulated Istanbul, the city she lived in, as part of her imagined homeland. She was critical of the rigid social compartmentalization along gender, class, and community lines prevalent in the city. As noted, her criticism specifically targeted the erasing of non-Muslims within the cityscape, the silencing of historically sensitive issues, and everyday practices of boundary-making in the city. It is in this sense that, in stark contrast to Hranoush, Anna’s question of “where did all these people go?” demanded the return of the people who have been erased in the history of Turkey. As a half-Armenian and half-Jewish woman, she sought new avenues for establishing relationships with local non-Muslim communities, but she was always disappointed by them. The metaphors of space she used most, open (in Turkish: açık) and closed (in Turkish: kapalı), defined people,
spaces, landscapes, and communities and helped her navigate a socially and materially fragmented environment.

In Hranoush’s case we also see repetitions of specific metaphors of time and space. For Hranoush, these were not confined to her conceptualization of a *memleket*, but were also reflected in her frequent usage of ‘here’ and ‘there’. While ‘here’ implied all the different and dispersed components of her homeland that she was also part of, ‘there’ denoted the places and time periods that were not incorporated into it. Sassoun (the present-day province of Batman in eastern Turkey), Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), and Soviet Armenia were of primary importance in her depiction of *memleket*. In her account, ‘there’ appeared as a context of the present, while ‘here’ – Hranoush’s immediate environment that embodied *memleket* – was elaborated particularly through contexts of the past. It seems that this expansive *memleket* was made possible because of Hranoush’s particular interpretation of temporality, which was reflected in the ways she talked about space. This particular interpretation of temporality was also reflected in how she formulated a ‘where’ question in the present tense, which addressed both ‘newcomers’ from Armenia and younger generations of Armenians from the two countries. In contrast, Anna’s similar question was formulated in the past tense and addressed the people who had lived in or left Turkey in the past, and whose stories became inaccessible to the wider public.

**Conclusion**

Through the narratives of two key informants, this chapter has demonstrated that the cultural, social, and even physical distances between Armenians (and between Armenians and others around them) cannot be explained through the totalizing notion of homeland, or its Turkish and Armenian translations. Even though the great majority of migrants in contemporary Istanbul had ancestors in pre-genocide Ottoman Anatolia, in Istanbul they do not form a community of ‘homecomers’. As the chapter demonstrated, a homeland could involve a diversity of past and present components for different people. It is
similarly in this sense that the notion of ‘belonging’ to particular places of origin presented essentialist orthodoxies within the field of migration and diaspora studies unless located within particular histories – and juxtapositions – of “travelling” and “dwelling” (Clifford 1997). Similar to the previous chapter, my agenda in this chapter was also to examine the relationships between people and places that are made and re-made through travelling (Tsing 2000: 347).

I have not sought to redefine the overladen concept of homeland. Instead, I have attempted to account for the particular processes of marginalization through which the notion was defined by my informants. Hranoush’s ‘fear of the unknown’ and Anna’s ‘yearning for openness’ reflected the different ways Armenian migrants in Istanbul encountered the material and human context of post-genocide Turkey. These contrasting sentiments emerged as my informants positioned themselves in relation to others around them and sought to account for their own personal histories of marginalization in contemporary Turkey. In addition, the examples presented in this chapter portray the mutual constitution of margins and centres (similar to the mutual constitution of mobility and stasis presented in the previous chapter), which were simultaneously contexts of depopulation and repopulation in Turkey. The neighbourhood of Kumkapı, as well as sites of “difficult heritage” (Macdonald 2009) such as a former Armenian monastery/contemporary Kurdish village in eastern Turkey and the Jewish Museum in Istanbul, were sites in which residents, travellers, and visitors were invited to deal with the margins and the “heart of things” (Green 2005) in different ways. In Kumkapı and in the Kurdish village it was possible to observe violent processes of nation-building, demographic change, and social and economic discrimination; in the museum, the exhibited material prompted a discussion on the current invisibility of non-Muslims within “public life” (Navaro-Yashin 2002) in Turkey.

The following chapter continues to analyse the processes of marginalization through which notions of place-making are defined, this time by focusing on the accounts of former migrants who were deported from Turkey and now
reside in the cities of Hrazdan and Gyumri in Armenia. The chapter extends the ethnography of mobility (and post-mobility) in relation to recent histories of urban decay, marginalization, earlier histories of exile, and waves of migration in the context of post-socialist Armenia. Again, similar to Chapter II, an important point of entry in the analysis of ethnographic material in Chapter III will be a very particular debate (and a dispute) on norms and values, which endows Armenians with a general ‘guideline’ in approaching people and making sense of the places around them in their everyday lives.
CHAPTER III: Expanding ‘Outsides’ in Armenia

It does not matter if we accept it or not, we have become distant from our religious faith. Religion is now of secondary importance to us. If speaking Armenian makes someone Armenian, then there are many Muslims who speak Armenian better than I do. Are these people Armenians? [They say] ‘my grandmother was an Armenian...’ And [I respond that] your grandfather was Muslim. Whose blood are you carrying? The Armenian is in unity with his/her religion. If you want to be Armenian, you are supposed to come [to the church] and become a member of the Armenian church, then you can say “I am an Armenian.” Wars happened for that faith, it is for that faith that we sacrificed many people in the beginning of the 20th century (Archbishop Aram Ateşyan, 25 February 2012; Agos, my translation).

Introduction

In late 2014, I came across the headline “Registered as Muslim, Funeral in the Church” (in Turkish: Nüfusunda İslam Yazıyor, Cenazesı Kiliseden Kalktı) in the Turkish newspaper Sabah (17 December 2014) (see also Radikal and Agos published on the same day). Ferman Gez, aged 84, sparked a controversy upon his death. As the newspapers indicated, his 11 children were conflicted over his faith. While seven of them insisted that he was a devoted Muslim, four of them claimed that he was an Armenian Christian and had converted to Islam only on paper because he was afraid of living as a Christian in his native village in Batman (historical Sassoun). After negotiations between the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (a branch of the Turkish government), the decision was left to the deceased man’s wife. In the end, Ferman Gez was buried in an Armenian cemetery in Istanbul.

For people with no familiarity with the scope of Armenian affairs in Turkey, such news may seem incomprehensible. Similar stories make the headlines at least a couple of times a year, portraying dispute amongst a deceased person’s relatives. In cases where relatives of the deceased did not previously know that their beloved grandparent or parent was Armenian, the information comes as a shock. In cases where they already know, as with Ferman Gez, the
dead person’s Armenian background prompts conflicts among relatives. While some family members are comfortable with their Armenian origins, others are not happy about the sudden exposition of their hidden family background to the wider public. Many people struggle to accept their Armenian heritage. These include (i) Armenian parents or grandparents who converted to Islam during or after the Genocide and lived as Muslims until their death, (ii) Armenian parents or grandparents who converted back to Christianity, (iii) children or grandchildren who continued living as Muslims, and (iv) children or grandchildren who converted back to Christianity.

It looks like an impossible task to account for the heterogeneities of these post-genocide families in contemporary Turkey. Conversion to Islam emerged as a common strategy for various Armenian communities before the Genocide and peaked after it, as a means to avoid annihilation (Dadrian 2005; Akçam 2006). It persisted to avoid discrimination after the emergence of Turkey as a nation-state (Özgül 2014). However, the extent of ambiguity regarding what defines a person as Armenian and the number of Armenians in contemporary Turkey is revealed when we consider Armenian women and children who did not convert to Islam on purpose. Many children, for instance, were forcefully taken by Muslim families during the Genocide and raised as Muslim Turks or Kurds without knowledge of their own Armenian ancestry.

Talin Suciyan (2015) argues that a fundamental aspect of being Armenian in Turkey is based on the exchange and circulation of “autobiographical knowledge” – knowledge that is based on experience and transmitted from one generation to the next only through personal communication (18). In cases where the transmission of autobiographical knowledge to subsequent generations has been interrupted due to the silence or death of older generations, people are not aware of their Armenian ancestry in Turkey. I did not conduct research with Genocide survivors who (forcibly or voluntarily) continued their lives as Islamicized Armenians. Thus, this chapter is not intended to account for this debate, or to suggest an approximate number of people with possible Armenian ancestry in the country. The chapter is based on my research among ‘travellers’ to Turkey in Armenia, including return
migrants, deportees, and shuttle-traders. Similar to what I argued in the previous chapter, in Armenia I observed that understandings of post-genocide Turkey as an ancestral homeland were informed by personal histories of (im)mobility. If the previous chapter located movement within larger systems of mobility, this chapter considers how these (im)mobilities are reflected through articulations of a bond with the ‘remaining Armenians’ in post-genocide Turkey. The ambiguities regarding people’s origins in post-genocide Turkey add another layer of confusion for Armenians from Armenia in imagining cultural and historical proximities between people in Turkey and their own country.

Based on my research in Armenia, this chapter explores how Armenian ‘travellers’ (in the broad sense of the term explained in the first and second chapters) located themselves in relation to people in their ancestral homelands, in what is now Turkey. I provide narratives of women I met in the Armenian cities of Hrazdan and Gyumri. As the chapter unfolds, these women’s terminated or irregular mobilities are presented as significant for understanding their personal approaches towards the post-genocide context of Turkey. In addition, the transformation that Armenia experienced as a post-socialist nation-state in the last three decades – impoverished by closed borders, economic blockade, the 1988 earthquake, and an energy crisis – is introduced as the backdrop to these women’s narratives of place-making in a changing world.

**Moving Ground, Shaking Foundations**

Ozinian (2009) and Körükmez (2012) note that the majority of Armenian migrants in Istanbul are from former Soviet industrial cities in Armenia, not from the capital city of Yerevan. This was a pattern I had started to notice over the course of my bus journeys between Istanbul and Armenia. Apart from a few shuttle-traders from Yerevan, my informants in Istanbul were from smaller former industrial cities and towns, such as Gyumri and Vanadzor. I noticed that while the collapse of the USSR had had profound
effects on their lives, the devastating earthquake of December 1988 was a turning point. The earthquake, which hit the northern parts of the country with a magnitude of 6.8 on the Richter scale, resulted in 25,000 fatalities; another 50,000 were injured and 530,000 were left homeless (Schott and Kalatas 2014: 77-78).

Right after the earthquake, the Soviet government requested relief from the international community (Schott and Kalatas 2014). This came as a shock to many Soviet citizens, as for the first time it was visible in the media that the government could not handle the situation on its own. As a good friend who worked for civil society organizations expressed during our visit to an exhibition on Armenian media in Yerevan, “the earthquake shook the foundations of the Soviet Union.” The earthquake in Gyumri was a marked shift in Soviet policy: “even in the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl, Soviet citizens were never informed about the extent of such catastrophes and the state’s limited ability to handle the situation.” The earthquake is widely understood as a turning point in recent Armenian history as it disturbed the image of linear evolution that was formerly based on Soviet ideas of modernization and progress (Shagoyan 2010).

In 1988 the foundations of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic were shaken not only physically but also politically. In February of the same year, roughly ten months before the earthquake, Armenians in the tiny city of Stepanakert, located in the Nagorny Karabakh autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, started to demonstrate for the self-determination of the region and its subsequent merger with the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. “An island of territory” (de Waal 2003: 10) formally established in 1923 and surrounded by Azerbaijan, the oblast was populated predominantly by Armenians – 75 percent Armenians and 25 percent Azerbaijanis at the time the protests started (12). The demonstrations in the region quickly spread to Armenia and triggered a series of political rallies throughout 1988. The oblast had long constituted a priority within the political agenda of Armenians, and whenever there was a major political thaw
or shift in the USSR, the Armenian government sent letters and petitions to Moscow for its ‘return’ to Armenia (16).

The Karabakh movement, like the Gyumri earthquake, was foundational in the making of independent Armenia (Suny 1993a; Verluise 1995; de Waal 2003; Panossian 2006; Libaridian 2007). It was the first time in the history of the Soviet Union that people attempted politics from below by calling to change internal borders (de Waal 2003: 11). Although the movement did not initially have anti-Soviet sentiments and sought political transformation through the existing system, persistent refusals from the Soviet authorities in Moscow to transfer Karabakh to Armenia infused the country with nationalism and growing anti-Soviet sentiments (Suny 1993b: 128). The earthquake served to entrench this shift in political temperaments.

The Gyumri earthquake and the Karabakh movement had similar transformative impacts on Armenia and complemented each other in catalysing political change (see Bode 1989; Klein 2007; Simpson 2013 on the emergence of new forms of politics in the aftermath of catastrophes). These events triggered discussion and dissent in Armenia and ultimately led to independence. In the years following 1988, Armenia declared independence, went to war with Azerbaijan over Karabakh, and helped seal the dissolution of the USSR (see also Chapter I). The newly independent nation-state found itself amidst a huge political crisis, exacerbated by isolation due to Turkey’s decision to close its borders in support of Azerbaijan’s claims to Karabakh in 1993.

Ishkanian (2002) notes that in the late 1980s, just before the onset of this catastrophic era, Armenia was the third most industrialized Soviet republic. In 1990 the USSR ranked 26th out of 130 countries in the UN Human Development index, making it a “high human development country” (UNDP 1990: 111). Just two years after independence, in 1993, Armenia ranked 93rd in the same index, implying a sharp decrease in terms of living standards (UNDP 1996: 28). In the same year, per capita income in Armenia was only equal to that of its 1960s’ level (3). By 1994, the country was suffering from
2000 percent inflation and a negative annual growth rate of -16 percent (18). Between 1988 and 1994, the country’s gross national product underwent a five- to six-fold decline (Platz 2000: 123). By 1994, only 30 percent of the country’s industry was functioning (Ibid.).

In less than a decade, in which natural and political catastrophes followed one another, the once very industrialized Armenia transformed into a de-industrialized country (Dudwick 1997; Platz 2000; Ishkanian 2002). As many of my informants from Armenia noted, the early 1990s were an extremely difficult period in terms of sustaining a basic standard of living. In addition to the lack of employment opportunities, cuts in electricity and gas and the collapse of telecommunication services drastically changed the course of everyday life (Dudwick 1997; Platz 2000). The era is widely remembered as a historical moment of isolation for Armenians in the newly independent state. Not only were many Armenians deprived of their means to communicate and physically get together with friends and family in the country and abroad, but it was also a moment in which Armenians started to leave the country en masse. It is estimated that in a decade the population shrank by at least 30 percent due to emigration (Ishkanian 2002). The majority of these emigrants went to Russia, while others were dispersed around post-socialist countries, the EU, and the US (Körükmez 2012). Hence, the migrants and petty-traders who chose to come to Turkey constitute only a small percentage of the people who left the country.

**Expanding Outsides, Shrinking Insides**

In Armenia, there is a variety of everyday explanations for the transformation the country experienced in the last three decades. In the first chapter, I explored how tales of a mythical bus that supposedly crossed directly into Turkey registered a desire among Armenians for the reopening of the border between the two countries. In addition, I came across a large variety of myths, conspiracy theories, and popular jokes that were critical of the country’s governing and economic elites, its economic and military
dependency on Russia, and NGO, IMF, and World Bank employees (Barsegian 2000; Platz 2000). Such tropes are not unique to Armenia. Returning to Levi-Strauss (1955: 429), how are we to explain why such narratives resemble one another around the world?

The answer is that these stories or myths widely end up “as specific histories with pointed meanings in current political struggles” (Clifford 1997: 190). At the time of my research in the first half of the 2010s, Armenia had been an independent country for two decades. The disastrous impacts of the late 1980s and early 1990s were still visible in the infrastructure and buildings in various cities and towns, and in the organization of everyday life. As one of my informants put it during a meeting in Gyumri in 2013, independent Armenia found itself as “an island in the middle of one of the world’s most mountainous regions”, surrounded by economic blockade, international conflict, and restrictions on mobility. In the context of this landlocked country, I suggest that the island metaphor operates at two distinct levels. At one level, it demonstrates the isolation of the country in relation to the changed map of the three trans-Caucasian post-socialist independent states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. At another level, the metaphor hints at how this isolation prompted “the reconfiguration of basic categories of space, time and practice” that further “urged the re-articulation of personal and national identities” (Platz 2000: 116). As noted by many of my informants, the new Armenia seemed significantly more distant from the outside world than Soviet Armenia, an irony given that Armenian independence had been driven by a desire for the opposite. Regarding the energy crisis of the 1990s, Stephanie Platz wrote that:

In wintertime, without electricity, it became dark indoors by 5:00 P.M., and families would gather around a single candle or lamp along with a single heat source or sit in total darkness to conserve resources. The length of the day was cut in half, and night time passed unnoticed by recorded time, as activity and sight ebbed with the sun. Whereas a 1986 poll showed that 90 percent of Armenians depended on television for news, now, without television and radio, access to news was limited, particularly because energy shortages also presented obstacles to the regular printing and distribution of newspapers. The absence of these media, which would otherwise connect Armenians to the outside (durs), to international time, and to each other, made distances
greater both within and outside of Armenia and in making the past seem farther away in time. Where outside had once been the term used to refer to every place outside the former Soviet Union, it now came to include all former Soviet territories outside of the Republic of Armenia. Armenians, “inside,” felt cut off from the “outside” world and from each other. With phone lines down and without transportation, relatives on the other side of the city, in the nearest village, or abroad were equally far away and inaccessible. Because a transcendent connectedness had been essential to Armenian identity, changes to the familiar distances binding people, places, and things eroded perceptions and experiences of identities... (Platz 2000: 130).

Almost ten years after Platz published on the shrinking insides of Armenians and 20 years after she conducted the research, I similarly came across various forms of place-making based on re-articulating the configurations of notions of distance and proximity between Armenia and the outside world. As I will contextualize in the following sections, one of the most common themes that appeared during conversations with informants in Armenia was the tendency to point out the Armenian ethnic background of internationally famous personalities. Such personalities included Leonardo da Vinci, Lady Diana, Steve Jobs, and the former Turkish president Abdullah Gül. I sense that these popular remarks account for the “small nation” (in Armenian: poqr azg) situation that developed in the wake of genocide, and massive political and economic transformations in the 20th century (Shirinian 2018: 49). 29

Clifford (2013) invites us to decipher experiences of loss and renewal, shifting past and present attachments and the social, cultural, and political strategies that are active in the re-articulations of the bonds between people who claim anteriority in relation to imagined landscapes (68-69). As this chapter explores, a particular aspect of place-making in Armenia works against a shrinking Armenian universe, a process that well precedes the collapse of the USSR. The Genocide of early 20th century, the period of isolation under Soviet rule, and the energy crisis in the wake of the collapse of the USSR mark different historical periods in which Armenians came to understand

29 It should also be noted that Armenians often themselves reflected upon the frequency of these narratives through jokes; for instance, once in a gathering among anthropologists from Armenia a friend satirically told me that “everyone has Armenian roots, even Barack Obama” (in Armenian: bolory unen Haykakan dzakum, ankam Barack Obama).
that their connections with the world around them were cut – or, as Platz (2000) suggested, “shrunk”. It is in this historical cycle of shrinking (after the Genocide), expanding (during the Soviet era), and re-shrinking (after independence) insides that I find circulating myths as a cultural translation of a desire of openness for a re-expanded inside or an accessible world among the citizens of Armenia. Based on the accounts of mobility of women in two cities in contemporary Armenia, the next two sections attempt to account for a reflection of these popular demands for openness and accessibility to the wider world.

Gyumri

I arrived in Gyumri on one of the coldest days of winter in early 2012. Gyumri, Armenia’s second largest city with an official population of 120,000, felt like a deserted town, with empty squares and streets. In contrast to the modernist Soviet architecture of Yerevan, Gyumri’s layers of building styles reflected the city’s history as an urban centre that well exceeds the capital (Shagoyan 2011). However, again in contrast to present-day Yerevan’s gleaming centre, the centre of Gyumri resembles an impoverished town, with uninhabited and collapsing buildings, dusty roads, and almost no hotels, shops, or cafés. Once an important urban industrial setting, Gyumri was among the cities worst hit by the earthquake of 1988. Located near the Turkish border in north-eastern Armenia, Gyumri’s pre-earthquake prosperity stemmed in part from the fact that, during the Soviet period, it hosted the only functioning border crossing in the South Caucasus.30 There were no border crossings between Turkey and Soviet Georgia, making Gyumri a key node in the transportation of goods and people during the Soviet era. As noted in Chapter I, the border was closed in 1993.

It was in Gyumri where I observed the concurrent impacts of the 1988 earthquake, closed borders, and depopulation, processes that have

30 As noted in Chapter I, the only other border crossing in the South Caucasus was also located in Armenia, but it was never permanently open.
characterized Armenia’s transformation since 1990. When I visited Ani in her miniscule Soviet-style apartment on Tigran Mets Avenue in the city centre, she was busy heating the room where she lived, cooked, and slept with her gas stove. There was no central heating in her building anymore and she had no other way of dealing with the freezing cold. Although only in her mid-60s, Ani looked much older. She had sought work in Istanbul about a decade before we first met. She had lived in Istanbul as an undocumented migrant for five years before being deported back to Armenia in 2009. Before the collapse of the USSR, Ani had worked at a Soviet holiday resort for an Armenian workers’ union. When the business shut down in the early 1990s, she had been lucky to find employment in Gyumri as a local guide for the influx of American bureaucrats and international development professionals. However, this job was not sufficiently lucrative and did not last long. As a result, she left for Istanbul in the early 2000s in order to earn the money required to provide medical care for her then dying husband. Although at the time Ani could have travelled between Turkey and Armenia relatively easily, the cost of his medication meant that she did not return to Gyumri even once during her first five years in Istanbul, in order to avoid spending time and money on renewing her visa.31 When she finally decided to visit her husband after five years in Istanbul, she was deported from Turkey as she had overstayed her visa. She expected deportation; however, what she did not know was that she was never to come back. Following deportation, Ani fully expected that she would be denied re-entry into Turkey for a specific period of time, but she did not expect the fine she would need to pay if she wanted to re-enter. This prohibitive fine prevented Ani from returning to Turkey after what had been planned as a short visit to Gyumri. When her husband eventually died of his terminal disease, she gave up on the idea of going back to Istanbul for good. In the ten years since she had first travelled to Istanbul, Ani was only able to take care of her husband and was not able to save any money; this was the main reason for the serious financial hardships she faced at the time of our meeting.

31 In the time period in which Ani lived in Turkey, the regulation limiting the number of days for visits on tourist visas to Turkey was not in effect (for more information, see the previous chapters).
When I asked her how she decided to go to Istanbul in the first place, Ani responded that it was the cheapest. All she needed to do was to get on a bus that cost less than $100 US dollars at the time of her travel. Ani had a couple of friends who had left for Istanbul, and, after consulting them, she too decided to seek work in the Turkish metropolis. It did not take much time for Ani to find a job in Istanbul. When she moved in with her friends in Kumkapı, she was introduced to a network of employers and employees; in less than a week, she found a job at a restaurant for shopkeepers (in Turkish: *esnaf lokantasi*) in Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar. The restaurant was owned by a Kurdish man who was himself a migrant from south-eastern Turkey. Ani told me that she waited tables, chopped and peeled vegetables, and delivered lunch or dinner to the stall and workshop owners in and around the Bazaar. Ani quickly gained the trust of those she worked with, so much so that shop owners would leave the keys of their businesses with her to open and close the shops or ask her to transport jewellery or money between shopkeepers. Eventually, one of the shop owners asked Ani to work as a full-time housekeeper in his house, a multi-storey building that consisted of apartments that belonged to different members of his family. Ani accepted the job, which also allowed her to save on rent and utilities as she was able to stay in the building with the family.

Ani told me that this marked the beginning of her best time in “Constantinople”. Upon using Istanbul’s former name, Ani looked into my eyes and asked whether I had heard the word Constantinople before. She explained that before the Genocide, the city boasted more Armenians than any other in the world. Turks, Ani went on, changed the metropolis’s name to Istanbul after they had killed the Armenians and sent the Greeks into exile. She added that I should keep in mind the fact that Istanbul was still home to the largest concentration of Armenians in the world; in the streets there were millions of them. Most did not know about their Armenian origins as they were Islamicized after the Genocide, but this did not matter as it was in their blood. This presence was the main reason why Ani always felt comfortable and secure in Istanbul; every time she looked into people’s eyes she could feel an affinity in their faces. For her, these were Armenian faces.
In her new job Anı had very little free time. Nevertheless, she was very satisfied with her employment as a live-in domestic worker. She did not need to think about rent, utilities, or food anymore. Moreover, she had a very good relationship with her employers. Anı felt a sort of affinity with them from the first moment she met them. She identified them as an Armenian family from Rize, in the north-east Black Sea region of contemporary Turkey. As she talked, two things caught my attention. First, it was apparent that none of the members of the family she worked for had Armenian names. The man who hired her was called Yusuf, his brother was Süleyman, and another brother was named Mustafa, all Quranic names. Their father had passed away years ago, their mother’s name was Ayşe, and they all married women with Muslim names from the same region. However, from the beginning Anı made it clear that this was an Armenian family. When I voiced my confusion – why would an Armenian family have Muslim names? – Anı provided more evidence. The mother of the family, she explained, attended Armenian Church on some Sundays, as well as for Easter and Christmas services, but her sons never did. She owned a Bible written in Armenian, while her sons had Bibles in Turkish in their bedside drawers. However, the entire family also practiced salah (in Turkish: namaz via Farsi), one of the five pillars of Islam and an obligatory religious duty for all Muslims, at home and at mosque (especially on Fridays), and fasted during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan. For Anı, the family were devoted Christians only; to me they seemed to have mixed religious practices.

By the time Anı told me that she had attended the Islamic circumcision ceremony of her boss’s son in their village of origin in Rize, I already had an extended list of the family’s blend of diverse religious practices in my notebook. Clearly they practised Islam in public; however, their religious practices did not necessarily follow a private-public divide. The mother of the family went to church, and the entire family kept on practising salah five times a day and fasting in the holy Islamic month of Ramadan even when they were out of other people’s gaze. One possible explanation is that this family was an Islamicized Armenian family that converted after the 1915 Genocide. Another possibility is that they were Hemshins, an Armenian
speaking Muslim population from the Black Sea region of Turkey that has confounded academic and popular attempts to define what it means to ‘be Armenian’, both in Armenia and Turkey (see Benninghause 1992; Simonian 2007; Hovannisian 2009; Kaya 2014). When I asked her whether the family was officially registered as Muslim or Christian (the Turkish state continues to retain the religious affiliation of individuals in its databases), Ani did not know the answer, while at the same time reminding me that they were nevertheless Armenians. Ani never asked the family about how they identified themselves, but she had her own precise point of view. I will analyse her point of view only after I introduce Mariam in the next section, who lived in Hrazdan at the time of research.

**Hrazdan**

The city of Hrazdan was founded at an altitude of 1675 meters in 1959 on the site of the former village of Akhta. Founded on the principles of Soviet urbanism, the city resembled a clustering of villages centred around the Kentron neighbourhood with Soviet-style apartment blocks and administrative units. When I first travelled there on a cold spring day in 2012, it took me roughly an hour from Yerevan on the bus. Many people, especially university students, commuted between the two cities every day, on buses and marshrutkas. The commuter trains that once operated between Sevan and Yerevan with a stop in Hrazdan did not operate anymore, and the train station was in a dilapidated condition. However, unlike most other post-industrial towns I visited in Armenia, Hrazdan still had some industry. Some factories were abandoned, but the skyline was dominated by the smoking chimneys of cement and chemical factories, and the thermal power plant.

I was introduced to Mariam, a young woman in her mid-thirties, through my friend Parandzem, who was also from Hrazdan. Both Mariam and Parandzem lived in the southern districts of the city, a residential zone largely comprising small houses with gardens. Like most people from Hrazdan, their families arrived in Armenia as Genocide survivors. Before 1915, they had lived in a
provincial town on the other side of the Armenian-Turkish border, facing Mount Ararat from the south-west. Parandzem was now a student at Yerevan State University and lived with her parents and sister. Mariam, also single, lived with her parents on the same street as Parandzem and, at the time of research, had recently started shuttle-trading. I had met Parandzem at a meeting of journalists from Armenia and Turkey in Yerevan where she was employed as a translator between Armenian and English, and from time to time she helped me with translations during interviews I conducted for my research.

Mariam wanted to meet me at Parandzem’s house. However, before our first face-to-face encounter, she requested over the phone that I keep the fact that I was about to interview her a secret. She did not want anyone else to know that she had agreed to meet a foreign man at her friend’s house. As I was waiting for Mariam, Parandzem’s mother started to prepare some food, snacks and dried nuts, and poured us some vodka. Like other hosts I met in Armenia, Parandzem’s mother was very hospitable and kind. When she finally took her seat at the table, she told me that she was impressed by the way I spoke Armenian. I thanked her and she responded that she was particularly surprised that I had learned Armenian in Istanbul. Prior to our meeting, she noted, she had not known there were Armenian schools in Istanbul or Turkey. In response, I told her while there were indeed Armenian schools in Istanbul, I had in fact studied Armenian in London. She asked me why I had preferred London to the Armenian schools of Istanbul. I told her I had learned Armenian for my PhD research and added that, as a non-Armenian, I would not have qualified to study at an Armenian school in Istanbul. Upon hearing my answer, she was in shock. Parandzem then joined our conversation from the other side of the table and asked me whether I was really not Armenian. At the time of our meeting at her house, she had known me for more than a year. I thought I had been clear and honest about my Turkish background throughout my research. At least that was my impression. Something was wrong.
At that point Parandzem’s father and sister joined us and we switched from Armenian to English. She told me she thought I had an Armenian grandmother, like almost everyone else in Turkey. When I said that this was not true in my case, she became upset. She remembered a scene in which I had been talking to friends from a circle of university students in Yerevan. She quoted me speaking of the diversities of being Turkish in contemporary Turkey, with me saying that most Turks did not know about their own family histories. I remembered the conversation she was referring to and realized that my efforts to account for the diverse ways of being Turkish had produced confusion about my own family background. Parandzem’s assumption of my Armenian origins was related to how contemporary Turks and Turkishness are perceived in Armenia. In first-time encounters, I often found myself being asked, “Are you really not Armenian?” or “Are you a real Turk?” There was a multiplicity of ways in which the question was formulated, but the most common was whether I was a ‘pure’ Turk (in Armenian: makur Turk es?). People responded variously upon finding out that I was a real or ‘pure’ Turk. In Parandzem’s case, she treated me with her usual care for the rest of the day but turned down all of my future requests to meet; I have not seen her since.

Mariam showed up in Parandzem’s kitchen just in time for our scheduled interview. My first impression was that she was a modest woman in her late twenties with a very simple outfit. She seemed distant and a bit nervous. We made our way into the living room, in the company of Parandzem. We took our seats around a tiny table set with a pot of tea, dried fruits, and nuts. The homemade apricot vodka and a small bowl containing different brands of cigarettes were left behind on the kitchen table, where the rest of the family, including the father, remained seated. As we started to talk, Mariam again wanted to make sure that this interview would be kept secret among the three of us. Very few people around her knew that Mariam was shuttling goods between Istanbul and Armenia. Only a few friends and close family members knew about her transnational trading enterprise, and she clearly wanted to keep it that way. Mariam would tell people that she was visiting her sister in Yerevan for a few days when she was in fact travelling to and from Istanbul.
She explained that in a small city like Hrazdan, most women shuttling goods between the two countries were subject to various forms of suspicion. There were rumours about female shuttle-traders who had suddenly become rich; everyone believed that their fortunes were a product of sexual relationships with Turkish men rather than entrepreneurial skill. This is why Mariam never sold the goods she purchased from Istanbul in Hrazdan. She had contacts with a couple of shop owners in Yerevan and would always consult them about what was needed before departing for Istanbul.

When I asked Mariam whether she felt comfortable in Istanbul, she said that the city filled her with anxiety. Similar to Ani, whom we met above, Mariam believed that many people in Turkey were of Armenian origin, even if they did not know it. However, unlike Ani, Mariam did not see familiar faces in Istanbul. Although she believed that many Turks were unconscious or amnesiac Armenian converts to Islam, this particular account of history did not translate into contemporary affinity. She explained that the primary reason she did not feel comfortable in Istanbul was Turkish men. During her frequent stays in Istanbul, she always found herself fearful of their eye contact and avoided verbal communication on the streets. She was not comfortable communicating with the men who worked in the textile shops she visited, either. She often found physical contact, unintentional or otherwise, with these men difficult to bear. In many ways, Mariam intentionally minimized contact with others, pretending she was talking on the phone, for instance, so that men would not bother her during her visits to Istanbul.

At the time of research, Mariam was relatively new to the business of shuttle-trading and only visited Istanbul once a month, though she believed that she would need to visit more often in the near future. Similar to the other female shuttle-traders I met, she had very limited time in Istanbul and only stayed for two nights each visit. However, even if she had more time, she was quite uninterested in anything besides business. When I asked her whether she had visited Kumkapı, she looked very disturbed. She knew about the neighbourhood as the place where most Armenian migrants lived and had
been advised by other female Armenian shuttle-traders to avoid it (see previous chapter). She believed that the people who lived there were dangerous and prone to taking the “wrong path” (in Armenian: skhal janabar) in life, an expression with a moral connotation that goes beyond the meaning of ‘going off the rails’ in English. Laleli, the shuttle-trading hub that is in walking distance of Kumkapı, was the only place Mariam visited in Istanbul; it was there that she stayed (at hotels with other business women) and visited the shops that mostly operated within networks of business between Turkey and the post-socialist world. Her approach to maintaining a physical and moral distance between herself and Armenian migrants in Istanbul was similar to many other shuttle-traders I met en route to Turkey.

I argue that the main reason Mariam claimed that the migrants were more prone to going astray lies in the differences in terms of mode of travelling to Turkey. Her experience within the urban landscape of Istanbul was rather limited in terms of time and space in comparison to more settled migrants. Like most other shuttle-traders, she only spent a few days at a time in the city, albeit at regular intervals. As portrayed in Chapter I, for all shuttle-traders, these business-oriented journeys required meticulous calculations and management of time. However, Mariam noted that she deliberately avoided both Kumkapı and the migrants who lived there. Such a tendency of avoiding migrant Armenians and their enclave in Istanbul was not unique to Mariam.

I observed that Armenian shuttle-traders positioned themselves as moral beings by constantly comparing themselves with migrants, articulating a sense of difference from them. Their emphasis on their own morality is often a reflection of how they make sense of wider transnational politics, dispersion, and shifts in the world economy (Wanner 2005; Osella and Osella 2009; Marsden 2015; Bloch 2017; Shirinian 2017a). This is how and why their articulations and expressions of morality should be viewed within larger

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32 Mariam’s expression also reminds me of Ingold’s (2011) perspective on the “way of life” that people follow, which is “a prescribed code of conduct, sanctioned by tradition, that individuals are bound to observe in their day-to-day behaviour” (162) (see Tilley 1994: 30 for a similar analogy).
frameworks, by following what Caroline Humphrey and Ruth Mandel (2002) advised on taking into account longer and earlier histories of production and trade (reflected in the sexual division of labour and local entrepreneurial traditions) in studying ‘transition’ from state communism to capitalism (4).

As noted in Chapter I, the collapse of the USSR and emergence of new borders created opportunities for trade (Humphrey 2002; Marsden 2017), which emerged as a source of income especially for women (Dudwick 2002: 239). The departure of men searching for work in urban centres led post-socialist women to look for economic opportunities elsewhere (Heyat 2002: 30). Women’s secondary position in the labour market within the former Soviet Union paradoxically made them more flexible in adapting to petty trading in the new capitalist economic framework (Dudwick 2002: 238).

However, post-socialist women who trade “often articulated a sense of shame about the ways in which their new professions had forced them to make fundamental philosophical changes in their lives” (Bloch 2017: 64). In the context of post-socialist Bulgaria, Kaneff (2002) observed that an individual’s moral stance towards trade was shaped by her employment before the collapse of the Iron Curtain (47). For instance, farmers were more easily inclined to find new ways of making a living through trade than low-ranking bureaucrats, like former teachers. In post-socialist Russia, the acute confrontation between capitalist trade and socialist values has played an important role in defining citizens as moral (Humphrey 2002: 72-73). In post-socialist Moldova, Bloch (2017) noted that traders have had to unlearn, or at least disregard, the rules for being good socialists in the process of becoming ‘good capitalists’ (58). As in the case of Mariam in contemporary Armenia, Bloch’s informants often hid the fact that they regularly left Moldova for business (88).

Each of the aforementioned accounts, from different corners of the former socialist bloc, also trace differences between older and younger generations. In post-socialist Armenia, I observed how the collapse of the USSR resulted in a ‘diversification’ – if not divergence – of moralities between older and younger generations. I argue that these differences should be viewed in relation to ongoing discussions on how to ‘be’ and define an Armenian (see
also the previous chapter on how such discussions extended and were materialized among Armenian migrants in Istanbul). It is in this context that moral frameworks divide Armenians and paradoxically still bear the capacity to bring them together within the framework of a public discussion. While divergence from and compliance to those moral frameworks can take many forms, they reflect wider practices of place-making. For shuttle-traders like Mariam, the shame of getting involved in transnational trade is always mixed with the pride of being hard-working and not abandoning ‘home’ despite the hardships of life (see also Kanef 2002: 41; Bloch 2017: 67). As many shuttle-traders noted, they, unlike migrants, did not leave their families behind.

Through imagining and frequently vocalizing their moral superiorities over migrants, Armenian shuttle-traders express their pride in simultaneously working hard abroad and taking part in the division of labour within their families in Armenia. Due to their extended periods of absence, migrants are not seen by shuttle-traders to contribute as much to the well-being of their families. Migrants are also seen as “investing” far less in the common good of their own nation, which, in contemporary Armenia, is widely understood as an extended family (on the notion of nation as family see Abrahamian 2006: 146-147; Shirinian 2018: 49-50). However, it has to be acknowledged that many Armenians take mobility for granted as a result of earlier histories of dispersion, diasporization, and sojourning (see Chapter I). In other words, in Armenia where both physical mobility and travelling-in-dwelling are a part of everyday life, how do we account for the articulation of moral differences between those who left and those who stayed? On the one hand, in Armenia “post-socialism has created an entirely new postcolonial context in which there are heavy debates regarding who indeed is maintaining sovereignty over whom and in what ways, requiring new versions of national purity in the face of new and multiple threats on national sovereignty” (Shirinian 2017b: 117). Today many Armenians express feelings of crisis in relation to unemployment, fraud, massive emigration, and economic corruption (Shirinian 2017a), which are seen to be reflected in the disintegration of morality, the family, and the nation (Shirinian 2016: 94). On the other hand, I suggest that there has to be a particular element of travelling to Turkey that
triggers discussions of morality among Armenians. Similar to what I presented in the previous chapter, discussions that conjoin ethics and travel should be understood as a form of place-making. The morality associated with the more temporary movement articulated by shuttle-traders is, I suggest, a way to make sense of and express the wider political and economic changes Armenia has gone through since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, as the next section will suggest, women’s travel to Turkey should be located within a “multichronotopic form of analysis” (Shohat 2006: 15), which must be put into perspective within the earlier histories of mobility, especially that of the Genocide.

An Ambiguous Enclosure

Both Ani and Mariam believe that there are millions of (Islamicized) post-genocide Armenians in contemporary Turkey. Their differences of opinion as to whether those they encountered in Istanbul were proximate or distant others index two trends among the wider cohort of my informants: when do imagined historical affinities translate into sources of trust? In Ani’s case, it has to be underlined that she used to live with a family with mixed religious practices in Istanbul. Over the course of the time she spent with this family, she closely observed how the family maintained a delicate balance between public performances of mosque attendance on Fridays, fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and circumcision ceremonies in their village of origin and church visits in secrecy on important Armenian religious days. Based on her experience with this family, Ani’s faith in the invisible bond of shared blood was reinforced. She trusted in the Turks-as-former-Armenians.

Mariam did not feel as comfortable as Ani. In addition to the limited amount of time spent in Istanbul, her anxieties should be viewed from a historical perspective in which the practices of kidnapping, rape, and detainment of Armenian women by Muslim men were essential components of the Genocide and the Islamicization of Armenian women in the subsequent period (Sarafian 2001; Bjørlund 2009; Tashjian 2009; Ekmekcioglu 2013;
Altınay and Çetin 2014; Kurt 2016a). To date, intimate relationships with a Muslim man and specifically with a Turk have been understood as part of the genocidal processes in which forced marriages also took place (Libaridian 2014). I argue that the gendered nature of the Genocide and the particular modes of displacement – as epitomized in the death marches of women and children, and their kidnappings – generated the primary lens through which travelling is conceived by Armenian women en route to Turkey. For people in Armenia, this is not simply an act of migrating or conducting trade in just any country, and this is why my informants expect and accordingly act with a certain stigmatization that comes with travelling to Turkey. In this context, the mobility of women does not always work in a positive, liberating way on gendered power relations (Scott 1986; Braidotti 1994; Gilbert 1998; Hochschild 2000; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Westin and Hassonen 2013; Gaibazzi 2015; Elliot 2016). This is because the public memory of the Genocide plays a crucial role in shaping relationships at two levels: first between Armenian women who travel and who do not travel to Turkey, and second between Turkish men and shuttle-trader women from Armenia. Here, especially concerning relationships among Armenians, the “shame” of genocide and survival, which otherwise bonds them together (Nichanian 2009: 118), catalyses the emergence of a moral rift in the context of travelling to Turkey. In addition, I suggest that such moral confrontation among Armenians is possibly linked to the recent history of transformations that Armenia has gone through and its relocation within the wider world as an independent country.

In Armenia, different definitions and understandings of morality work in parallel ways in relation to making sense of a place that has been physically shaped by the Genocide and the collapse of the USSR. As Shirinian (2016) notes, two different concepts in Armenian, aylandakutyun (moral perversion) and aylaserutyun (sexual perversion), are in tense relationship. As she suggests, tracing this relationship “through multiple sites of anxious expression can help make sense of political-economic transition as it affects nation” (23). As I construe this relationship and its immediate impact on Armenians travelling en route to Turkey, I find that it helps Armenians
navigate their roles, routes, and positions in an imagined cartography that has been materially shaped by the major political as well as natural catastrophes of the long 20th century. In other words, what otherwise looks like a public discussion on what is socially acceptable and what is not tends to guide Armenians in a changing world. This is how different understandings of moral decay in contemporary Armenia – whether specifically pointing at the corrupt behaviour of bureaucrats or sexual perversion of ordinary people – “circle back on one another” (52). In many ways they are inseparable.

In referring to the relationships between Armenian women and Turkish men, moral disapproval emerges as a ‘strategy’ to cope with the stigmatization that is deeply connected to travelling to Turkey. In constantly positioning themselves as morally superior to other Armenian and post-socialist women, I understand that this ‘strategy of distinction’ works on rhetorical and practical levels. On the more rhetorical first level, it justifies their movement between the two countries by reinstating normative gender frameworks. On the more practical second level, it guides them in “a context of uncertainty” (Biehl 2015) by helping them position their roles as strangers, friends, and business partners in an imaginative roadmap of making a living (see also Yükseler 2004 and Bloch 2017 and their conceptualization of “strategic intimacy” between post-socialist women and Turkish men). For instance, for Anahid (Chapter I), there was a component of practicality in her moment of indirectly but publicly announcing that there was a Turkish man on the bus. She warned her female passengers from Armenia so that they could act accordingly if and when they needed to. However, for Hranoush (Chapter II), her outrageous moment of “moral panic” (Shirinian 2016: 25 citing Cohen 2002 [1972]) rather developed as a result of fundamental differences she imagined between younger and older generations of Armenians in both Turkey and Armenia. In formulating those differences not only in terms of morality but also culture, she made sense of her movement between the two countries within a historical framework of Armenian displacement and travelling. Finally, for Mariam, presented in this chapter, it appears that her ‘strategy of distinction’ was based on a combination of ‘place-making-
through-moral-justification’ and a genuine concern about encountering men en route to Turkey.

Many of the young and unmarried Armenian women I met en route to Turkey similarly expressed concerns about meeting Turkish men in Istanbul. Within the post-socialist informal economic hub of Istanbul, most migrants and shuttle-traders from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe feel that they are widely perceived as hypersexualized by Turkish men (Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2000; Bloch 2017). Armenian women en route to Turkey are no exception to this and many of them note similar concerns in conducting business in Turkey. However, conducting business with men is not the only factor marking these post-socialist women as “transgressive” in their places of origin (Parla 2009; Bloch 2017). For Armenian women, crossing the border between the two countries introduces another layer in the ways these women fear that they will be perceived as ‘transgressive’. However, in Armenia, which has been shaped by different waves of displacement, migration, and diasporization in the past century, it should be noted that women’s travelling cannot be enough to explain the ways they are believed to be sexually transgressive. Instead, I argue that it should be based on a dynamic production of a “normative geography” (Creswell 1996) that is revealed through physical transgression into Turkey. This is because “the moment of transgression marks the shift from the unspoken unquestioned power of place over taken-for-granted behaviour to an official orthodoxy concerning what is proper as opposed to what is not proper – that which is in place to that which is out of place” (10) (emphasis mine). For instance, Armenian migrant women who leave their families behind find themselves being accused of not only travelling to ‘enemy territory’ but also actively participating in the moral and economic disintegration of their country in the post-socialist period (Shirinian 2016). In this sense, both the sexual and physical connotations of transgression, which are directly linked to historical production of societal norms that are imagined to regulate relationships with other people and places, define places as ‘gendered’ and genders as ‘placed’.
On the one hand, it is the duality of the gendered aspect of travelling to Turkey, in which ‘the transgressive’ is defined from both outside (by Turkish men) and inside (by Armenian women themselves), that sets the tone of relationships between Armenian women travellers and the wider Turkish public. On the other hand, in the particular ethnographic context of travelling presented in this thesis, borders of Armenia emerge as one of the most powerful metaphors of not only place but also – equally – gender. In stark contrast to the cycles of increasing and decreasing imagined distances to Russia, diasporic centres, and the rest of the world, the border with Turkey is imagined in rather rigid terms. This is because the “borderness” of the Turkish-Armenian border, or its border-like qualities in altering the realities it marks (Green 2012: 581), is primarily informed by the Genocide and specifically in relation to its female victims. However, as this chapter demonstrated, the rigidity of the border between the two countries does not prevent Armenians from imagining life on the other side.

The way my informants understand the post-genocide population of Turkey should reflect how they were critical of the emergence of the nation-state of Turkey (as a country of Turks), but does it necessarily reflect whether different ethnic, cultural, and religious components are incorporated in their own imagery of Armenians? It seems that the answer lies within what gender could potentially provide as a critical lens to engage with these different simultaneous components of being Armenian. Ayşe Gül Altınyay (2014) noted that the general tendency among Armenian elites, intellectuals, and institutions in Turkey, Armenia, and the diaspora has been to follow a very narrow definition of what makes a person ‘Armenian’. Language and religion have been imagined as central in this definition, although diasporic centres in the Middle East and the West prioritized them differently in relation to political and social contexts of their host societies (Panossian 2006: 299-300). In this way, what was once a polyglot community was re-shaped into a monolingual community (Ibid.) and converts to Islam (and possibly to other schools of Christianity) were denied becoming Armenians. Altınyay (2014) writes that narrow imaginations about the Armenian nation were based on views that took conversion to Islam and adoption of Armenian women by
Muslim families as forming part of the Genocide (202). She notes that converted survivors began to disappear from historical narratives specifically in the second half of the 20th century (i.e., following the Holocaust), when Armenian national history came to be framed around the concept of the Genocide (201). Consequently, it has been a distinctively gendered historiography that has identified different components of being Armenian and selectively incorporated them within a post-genocide narrative of survival.

However, what I observed in Armenia among returned migrants, deportees, and shuttle-traders was not always in line with the official historical narratives that defined a person as ‘Armenian’. It seems there is at least an element of ambiguity that depicts a process of “ethno-ethnicization” (Mandel 2008), a construction of a native theory in Armenia in relation to the post-genocide Muslim population of Turkey. As a process of marking off relations in opposition to one another (Comaroff 1992: 51), detecting the historical transformations in the definitions of ethnicity consequently promises to account for the everyday practices of place-making in contemporary Armenia. Following this, I argue that identifying Turks-as-former-Armenians emerges as a way of locating contemporary Armenia in historically (and perhaps future-oriented) wider worlds (including an imagined greater Armenia), with a wider inside as opposed to an enlarging outside and increasing insularity (as depicted by Dudwick 1997 and Platz 2000). In contemporary Armenia “ethno-ethnicization” reflects an ‘inside-out situation’ in which the direction of what ‘ethnic enclosing’ hints at seems to be misleading: it does not work towards an exclusive nation of Armenians and it does not work towards an inclusive community, either. Instead, it works towards even more ambiguous boundaries – a situation that in turn

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33 As noted in the previous chapter, I find ethnicity similar to what John Comaroff (1992) defined as a “process of classification” (and relating things and people to one another in a way resembling totemism) (54). In this sense the term does not presume any primordial substance or impose any necessity of consensus on group definition by members (see previous chapter). To the contrary, its constant reformulation should shed light onto the ways one makes sense of her place in relation to the wider world.
brings about expansion of ‘insides’ in the politically and economically isolated and landlocked Armenia. In this case, ‘the inside’ does not refer to the inside of the ethnic community or the nation; it defines zones of accessibility, intimacy, and connectedness among Armenians in distant places (as defined by Platz 2000).

Conclusion

Following the Genocide, Armenians (in what would later be Armenia) found themselves squeezed into a very tiny backwater of what had once constituted homelands (see Pattie 1997; 2004). However, in the following century there were historical moments in which the relationships between Armenia, diaspora, and the wider world were transformed and re-configured (Dudwick 1997; Platz 2000; Pattie 2004). As this chapter demonstrated, as members of a massive political entity like the USSR, Armenians simultaneously gained access to other Soviet republics and were denied access to the rest of the world and the diaspora. This is why, for instance, Armenians to date make a distinction between internal and external diasporas, the latter only referring to the dispersed communities outside the borders of the former Soviet Union (Pattie 2004: 111). As this distinction is very much internalized and normalized in contemporary Armenia, the chapter focused on locating the country in the making of new borders (as in new mobility regimes and zones of accessibility) following the collapse of the USSR. One of the ways to account for this transformation was to focus on a particular instance of “ethno-ethnicization” (Mandel 2008) that took contemporary Turks as former Armenians. I argue that popular views on the contemporary citizens of Turkey can be understood as one of the many reflections of re-establishing relationships in a constantly changing world – or going beyond borders in a context of political isolation. Of course, as presented in the cases of Armenian women travelling to Turkey, there have been different moral and emotional expressions of this particular articulation of affinity. For many traders like Mariam, being Armenian requires more than a primordial understanding of shared ethnicity. Instead it “necessitates doing good” by committing “to work
to assure the nation's survival” (Shirinian 2018: 51) (emphasis original). In this sense, the “small nation” (49) blends particular understandings of morality with those of ethnicity; only Armenians can become Armenians.

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to the “borderness” of the Turkey-Armenia border as one of the frameworks to understand the double-markedness of Armenian women en route to Turkey as “transgressive” in terms of sexual intimacy and as victims of the Genocide. However, there is another side to border(s) that should be understood “as tidemarks that are traces of movement, which can be repetitive or suddenly change, may generate long-term effects or disappear the next day, but nevertheless continue to mark, or make, a difference that makes a difference” (Green 2012: 585) (see also Green 2011). From the perspective of people in Armenia, the border with Turkey (and elsewhere) seems to be unsettled for various reasons. This is also why, in closing this chapter, I suggest utilizing the term “diasporic native”. As construed by Clifford (2013), the term attempts to account for the constantly shifting poles of autochthony (which echoes in we are here and have been here forever) and diaspora (which echoes in we yearn for a homeland), which cannot be always mutually exclusive (76).34 In swinging between the two poles, the metaphor of the island (and practices of mythical thinking, and desires for openness and access to the wider world) reflects a political context in which diasporization has been a historical condition of place-making in Armenia. This is not to acknowledge or suggest that a politically defined territory is home to a diaspora with a monolithic experience of diaspora formation. This is not to impose hierarchies of knowledge, either. To the contrary, the approach presented here attempts to show how at times nativism or claiming anteriority is heavily laden with earlier processes of displacement and subsequent settlement of others in ancestral lands.

34 Although Clifford’s observations on the diasporization of natives are specifically based on Native American, First Nations, and aboriginal experiences in the settler states of the US, Canada, and Australia, respectively, a fundamental element is shared between Turkey and these countries in relation to genocidal processes, population engineering, brutal policies of resettlement, and legalization of discrimination.
Based on the circulation and frequency of views that take Turks as former Armenians, this chapter explored the conditions of diasporic feelings of people in a nation-state of their own. As portrayed here, genocidal processes of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century have been the major reason for the emergence of such feelings, and specific material conditions have paved the way for an increasing Armenian insularity in the changing political map of the post-socialist Caucasus. As noted, during the energy crisis in post-socialist Armenia, the transformation of the material dimensions of landscape and communication brought about new articulations of distance and proximity in the city of Yerevan and the Armenian countryside, and prompted an articulation of a landlocked and isolated independent Armenia as an ‘inside’ vis-à-vis the transforming political maps of the early 1990s (Platz 2000).

The next chapter takes this premise of materiality as a starting point in a way that is co-constitutive of the dwelling and travelling of people in political geographies. It focuses on exploring the ways in which Armenians from Turkey relate to Istanbul and make it their home. My focus on building homes in an Istanbul neighbourhood suggests that their responses to these contested urban landscapes become pertinent to the making of a national space in Turkey.
CHAPTER IV: Building Homes of Unity

The secret of Istanbul is that it is unclassified and unorganized. Knowledge about it has not been presented yet, nor comprehended by the people who live in it. Lifestyle here is the crowds’ sensing of the historical richness of the city, its multi-layered civilizations without owning them as foreigners do. One of the phrases that I have heard most frequently since I was a child is “vallahı foreigners know about us better than we do”. In this phrase concerning the visiting tourist with a guidebook, there is more than regret. There is a sarcasm, doubt and disdain about the person who tries to inform, classify, understand chaos and puts it in order (Orhan Pamuk, Pieces from the View: Life, Streets, Literature 2010: 146) (in Turkish: Manzaranın Payılar: Hayat, Sokaklar Edebiyat) (my own translation) (emphases mine).

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Kurtuluş is so busy that it is a miracle not to crash into somebody on the street. On these busy streets every kind of person is an island: There are as many headscarved women as those women who do not cover their heads. But no one gives hostile looks to each other, in fact they all stroll on the streets together. You can come across a Korean street vendor who sells Chinese-made counterfeit stuff, or Africans who mostly live and shop around Dolapdere. Groups of idle teenagers, people who live from work to home, old ladies who cannot do without paying a visit to the hairdresser’s, and the rural-looking pious old man are all parts of this mosaic (Mehveş Emin, “Is Kurtuluş the Harlem of Istanbul?”, 31 March 2008; Akşam) (my own translation) (emphasis mine).

Introduction

On New Year’s Day of 2013, I woke up very early. I had been invited to a small party to welcome the New Year at a friend’s house in the neighbourhood of Kurtuluş. In the morning, my host asked if I was interested in going for breakfast at a local muhallebici (lit. pudding shop). I said “yes”, and we were on our way in a matter of a few minutes. When we reached the main shopping street, he told me that it was impossible to believe it was a public holiday. All the shops were open and the streets were full of people. He told me no one in Turkey liked to stay home, because nobody married the ones they loved and instead were all forced into arranged marriages by their families. He reasoned: “If husbands and wives cannot stand each other, they all prefer to work and shop even on a holiday.”
At the end of his short monologue, he switched to English very briefly on the busy pavement and said: “This looks like Lonely Planet. Foreigners love this vibrancy, but for me sometimes there is too much diversity.” And he smiled.

Burak, my host at that New Year’s party, was a half-Turkish and half-Armenian man in his mid-30s. He was an ambitious civil engineer and was working for a widely known international construction company. He had lived and worked in New York for a few years and came back to Istanbul a few months prior to our meeting in the summer of 2012. Apart from the few years he spent in the US, he lived in Kurtuluş (and in the same house) all of his life. His father was a Muslim man from one of the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans, and his family migrated to Istanbul when he was a small child in the 1940s. They first settled in a remote village on the Bosphorus; as they did very well in their seaside restaurant business, the family moved to the prosperous neighbourhood of Nişantaşı in less than ten years.

Burak’s mother was an Armenian woman, born in Istanbul in the same years that his father’s family migrated to Istanbul. His maternal grandparents were both Genocide survivors from different parts of Turkey, saved by missionaries and raised in orphanages in Istanbul. They lived their early adult lives as young but hardworking tailors in Kumkapı; however, as they became older and gained experience, they opened their own shop near the Mkhitaryan Armenian School in Osmanbey and moved to nearby Kurtuluş, which was an affordable neighbourhood in which to buy a house at the time. All of his grandfather’s family was killed during the Genocide; however, his grandmother managed to reunite with one of her sisters in Istanbul in the early 1920s, who first moved first to France and later to Argentina in the 1960s.

Burak’s father and mother were raised in neighbourhoods within walking distance of each other; one has been known as a wealthy upper class neighbourhood and the other as modest and diverse. When his mother and father met and decided to get married in 1971, it came as a great shock to her Armenian family. Considering the time period, they probably constituted one
of the very rare examples of Turkish-Armenian mixed marriages. When we once went through the black and white wedding photos among his personal archives at his home, it was impossible not to notice the very small number of people who had attended the ceremony. The first big family gathering took place when his sister was born in 1972, and the ice between the families finally melted when he was born in the early 1980s.

When I met him, Burak’s grandparents and parents had long since passed away. His sister also lived in Kurtuluş, with her husband, a Turkish man. He was not in contact with his paternal first cousins, who lived in different neighbourhoods of Istanbul. The rest of his extended family was dispersed around the globe. On his father’s side, he had second and third cousins in the Balkan states of former Yugoslavia. On his mother’s side, he had an uncle and first cousins in different cities in Europe, and second and third cousins in South America. Except for his maternal uncle, who was born and raised in Istanbul and who was a native speaker of Turkish (and Armenian), he communicated with his first, second, and third cousins all in English on the rare occasions that he met them in person, as he knew neither Bosnian nor Armenian. He was a native speaker of Turkish and was fluent in English.

Burak’s family story perfectly portrays Istanbul in a context of migration, both in terms of depopulation and repopulation. His father’s family was among the many Muslims who migrated to Turkey from former Ottoman territories in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Levant. As we will see in this chapter, they were expected to leave their cultural differences behind and become ‘Turks’ – reflecting the centrality of Islam (more than language) in the making of this category. On his maternal side, the family’s story of (almost total) extinction (in Anatolia), reunification (in Istanbul), and dispersion (around the globe) portrays different histories of the Turkification of peoples and places in the country. In the transformation from empire to secular nation-state, they were expected to leave their differences behind, but the state would remind them of those differences ‘when necessary’, especially in times when non-Muslims were perceived as a threat to national security.
Burak’s family history hints at what follows in this chapter, which primarily intends to account for Turkification processes at three different levels. First, it looks at the making of the category of the Turk in its widest sense. It is at this level that the chapter triggers a discussion on the diversity of Muslims who were blended in under the category of the Turk. Second, the chapter looks at how non-Muslims found themselves amidst this nation-building process in the country and often swayed between understanding Turkishness as a cultural category and a definition of citizenship. It is at this level that the chapter invites readers to think about popular perceptions of non-Muslims as ‘foreigners’ in the context of Turkey. Third, the chapter looks at the issue of Turkification through the lens of urban transformation in Istanbul. Through a comparison of the street names (named by the state) and building names (named by the residents), I attempt to account for the more silent and invisible responses against the Turkification processes. For this reason, I explore the direct impacts of Turkification processes led by the state on the spatial organization of people and buildings.

The information collected for the purposes of this chapter was mostly based on my lengthy walks in the streets of Istanbul. The chapter takes walking within the wider notion of travelling, which crosscuts the diverse subject matters of this thesis as a simultaneously theoretical and ethnographic concept.

**Walking in the Neighbourhood**

The neighbourhood in which I welcomed New Year’s Day, Kurtuluş, is still diverse, as Burak suggested. However, its urban history reveals how such diversity of people came into being through the uprooting of non-Muslims from the neighbourhood and elsewhere. Armenians, who had started to move into the neighbourhood around the 1940s, became the visible non-Muslim
minority after the expulsion of Greeks from Istanbul en masse in 1964.\textsuperscript{35,36} As I went through my fieldwork notes in tandem with the critical accounts of social and political history of early post-Ottoman Istanbul, it appeared that non-Muslims (including Armenians) sought new homes in Kurtuluş in the wake of political and urban developments at two levels. At one level, state-sponsored violence and policies specifically targeting non-Muslims such as random drafting into the army (and annihilation of manpower in forced labour camps) in 1941, the Wealth Tax in 1942, and the Pogroms of 1955 resulted in the transfer of capital and properties from non-Muslims to Muslims and the subsequent economic marginalization of non-Muslims (Aktar 2002; Güven 2005; Suciyan 2015). At another level, the massive urban transformation projects (in the form of the demolishing of old neighbourhoods for construction of big road networks) in the second half of the 1950s resulted in the physical marginalization of historical non-Muslim neighbourhoods in Istanbul’s ‘historical peninsula’ (Keyder 1999; Akpınar 2016). These developments at both the urban and the national level pushed the remaining non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul to seek affordable and available housing in different parts of the city. The neighbourhood at the core of this chapter was in a process of transformation at this historical juncture.

In order to account for these aforementioned transformations in demographics, urban landscape, and economic power, I need to describe where I first started. My very first fieldwork notes in the neighbourhood consisted of my new address in a new home, where I started my walks and my first observations. At the very beginning of my fieldwork, I moved into a house in Kurtuluş in central Istanbul with an Armenian friend from Istanbul. For the duration of my fieldwork – with exceptions of the summers on the

\textsuperscript{35} Murat Belge (1994) notes that until 1964 Greeks were the majority in Kurtuluş and Armenians were a minority. However, the existence of Surp Vartanants Armenian Church, first built in 1861, and the adjacent Armenian primary school that opened in 1912 clearly indicates that the number of Armenians was large enough to form a congregation or a neighbourhood community.

\textsuperscript{36} Greek community resources indicate that there are about 500 Greeks residing in the neighbourhood (tatavla.org), while it is estimated that about 20,000 Armenians live in the greater borough of Şişli, where Kurtuluş is located (Buchwalter 2002: 23) (cited in Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı, and Kentel 2009: 350).
island of Kınalıada and shorter intervals of research visits to Armenia – I lived at the address below:

Bozkurt Mahallesi
Ergenekon Caddesi
Türkbeyi Sokak
XXXXX Apartmanı #XX
Kurtuluş
Şişli
İSTANBUL

In everyday Turkey, unlike in the UK, addresses inform strangers about a long and very detailed route in the manner that a location is described to people to find their ways as if walking or driving in the city. This is why addresses are based on a hierarchy of neighbourhoods, avenues and boulevards, streets and alleys, and apartment names and numbers. The lack of postcodes or district numbers clearly indicates the ways buildings, neighbourhoods, streets, and people are located in relation to each other. Building numbers are also often neglected in the addresses as the great majority of residential buildings have names in Turkey. Also, there could be many streets with the same name in the same city, which is why one should know how to correlate the different components of an address in order to be able to fully describe it. Most people do not know their own postcodes in Istanbul but would have a clear idea of where a street would be in this city of 15 million people, although not cartographically, either. The addresses in Istanbul mostly follow the hierarchy below:

Neighbourhood Name – Bozkurt Mahallesi
Avenue Name – Ergenekon Caddesi
Street Name – Türkbeysi Sokak
Building Name and Number – XXXXX Apartmanı #XX
District Name – Kurtuluş
Borough Name – Şişli
City/Province Name – Istanbul

At first sight, one may notice sophisticated distinctions between different dimensions in dwelling and city planning in Turkey. The nuances between avenues and streets or districts, boroughs, and neighbourhoods may sound extremely confusing for a native English speaker, but for people living in Istanbul, it is these nuances that enable them to find their way in the city. As
mentioned, some streets, avenues, or neighbourhoods share the same name in the city and sometimes all around the country. Sometimes a street name in one borough could be a neighbourhood name in another borough, and a district name in another. Contemporary denizens of Istanbul would never look at a map while walking through an unfamiliar district or street, not because they never get lost, but because their way of attaining knowledge of the city would not be reflected in a map (as also suggested in the Orhan Pamuk quote in the opening of this chapter). As suggested before, they would instead navigate within the city by following a particular imagined order of streets (of different scales and sizes). The most recent advances in communication technologies seem not to having changed this situation. During my research, I found many times that my informants did not consult Google Maps or WhatsApp locations to find their way around.

Tim Ingold (2000) argues that a denizen of any city may be unable to specify her location in space, in terms of any independent system of coordinates, and yet will still insist that she knows where she is (219). This is because, he argues, places have histories (Ibid.). When we look at the combinations of street and other place names in Turkey and their distribution across the country, we see the history of nation-building. A closer look at my home address in Istanbul adds another dimension in understanding the extent of such practices in Turkey:

**Neighbourhood Name – Bozkurt:** Mythical grey wolf that is believed to show the way in times of turmoil. Widely considered as a national symbol in Turkey. Several far-right-wing political associations are named after it. Place-name of many localities all around Turkey.

**Avenue Name – Ergenekon:** Originally a Mongolian creation myth, later adapted by Turkish nationalists as the Turkish creation myth. Along with the mythical Bozkurt, widely promoted by state authorities since the early Republican days. Also a name recently given to an alleged clandestine ultra-nationalist terrorist organization.

**Street Name – Türkbeyi:** Literally means “the Turkish Chieftain”. (Irrelevant.)

**Building Name and Number:**

**District Name – Kurtuluş:** Literally means “getting rid of things” and “salvation” in Turkish. The period of war between 1918 and 1922 following World War I
is also coined under this name. This is why it is widely understood in Turkish and translated into English as “independence” and “liberation” as well. Numerous localities are named after this notion in Turkey. Borough Name – Şişli: (Irrelevant; however, the borough is widely understood as a historically non-Muslim, and middle- and upper-class place of residence.) Province Name – Istanbul: Although not directly related to the foundation myths of the Turkish Republic – which are further based on Central Asian legends, tales, heroes, etc. – the name of the city is part of the Turkification process of Turkey. Up until 1930, the city did not have an official name and was generally named differently in the different languages of its residents. In the Ottoman language (i.e., Ottoman Turkish), different names were used, but primarily Konstantiniyye – derived from Constantinople. Although the name Istanbul also derives from a Greek root, eis tin poli, εις την πόλι (which means inside the city/city walls), Turkish authorities managed to erase the emphasis on Constantine (i.e., Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor between 306 and 337 AD, who accepted Christianity as the official religion) and replace it with the less Greek, less Christian, and less ‘foreign’ sounding Istanbul (see the following pages for the production of foreignness in Turkey). Many people in Turkey have produced a folk-etymology, believing that the name derives from what could have been Islambol in Turkish (which literally means “plenty of Islam”, not Constantinople), demonstrating the extent of Turkification of place names – and its internalization by Turkish citizens – in the country.

In the early days of my fieldwork, I walked in the streets of the neighbourhood, and over the course of my research I was struck by some of the street names that clearly indicated that name change was a pattern for most parts of the neighbourhood. In a series of maps entitled Plan Cadastral d’Assurances produced in the 1920s by Jacques Pervitch, we see that the name of the street I lived on – Türkbeyi, or the Turkish Chieftain – used to be Rousso (i.e., Rousseau):
Similarly, on this map and others that are a part of the series produced by Pervititch, we see that street names that had non-Muslim connotations were all changed. Such street names included Constantine, Ayazma (from Greek ἀγία σωμα; sacred fountain), Ermeni Kilise (in Turkish: Armenian Church), Rum Kilise (in Turkish: Greek Church), Gürcü Kilise (in Turkish: Georgian Church), and Tatavla (from Greek στάβλος; horse stable) – after which the neighbourhood was also named.

Jongerden (2009) argues that such name changes have always been essential components of the nation-building process in Turkey and governments have been deliberately involved in this process by direct intervention. Öktem
(2008) calls these interventions to space as “toponymic engineering”, which he finds one of the essential components of nation-building along with “demographic engineering”. In a newspaper article Ayşe Hür notes that from the earliest days of the Republic until the late 1970s, some 28,000 place names were changed in Turkey (31 March 2009; Radikal). In Istanbul, however, this process started and was finalized during the first decade of the Turkish Republic. All street names without Turkish origins or roots in Istanbul were changed by 1927 (Ibid.). In Kurtuluş, where the street names had already been changed, this process of Turkification of place names was finalized with the name change of the neighbourhood itself in 1929. Therefore, the name “Kurtuluş” is also a new one, and similar to the street names, the name change of the neighbourhood was in direct relation to Turkification processes in Istanbul and the country. Various Turkish dictionaries indicate that Kurtuluş means ‘salvation’, ‘release’, and ‘emancipation’ as well as ‘liberation’. This is why the term is heavily laden with the idea of ‘national independence’ in Turkey. For instance, the Turkish terminology for the Turkish War of Independence – as it is widely referred to in English – would be more accurately translated as the Turkish War of Liberation.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 11:** Akşam Newspaper (24 March 1929)
The above image is a copy of a newspaper article from 1929, which informs its readers about the name change of the neighbourhood. A translation of the article clearly shows why it is no wonder that many Armenians from the neighbourhood found that the name change resonated with not only the Turkish War of Independence but also “getting rid of non-Muslim” minorities:

**The Municipality Decided to Change the Name Tatavla**
From now on, Tatavla High Street will be named as Kurtuluş High Street

After the recent fire of Tatavla, Greek newspaper publications referred to Tatavla as the symbol of the Byzantine Empire in Istanbul. Such newspaper publications generated very bad effects on Turkish public opinion. Moreover, the name Tatavla resonates with thieves and murderers. In this respect, Tatavla also reflect bad connotations. As we are informed, the city municipality has taken these views into consideration and decided to change the name of Tatavla Street into Kurtuluş Street, and also informed the city governorship about it. Once the governorship finalizes the formalities, the name of Tatavla will be “Kurtuluş”.

Tatavla, which was once upon a time a place where murderers and evildoers like Hristos sought refuge, is now a clean place where many Turkish families live. In this respect, it is a success to replace the old ugly name with Kurtuluş.

Similar to Jongerden (2009), Öktem (2008) suggests that Turkification in Turkey has been realized at two different levels: first, through undermining the old status quo of the Empire and replacing names of old and historical places, and second, through a creation of a national system of taxonomy by introducing new place names in Turkish. Of course, this would not have been possible without the extermination and forced migration of non-Muslim citizens of the country. This is how and why changes in place names have always been in tandem with state-sponsored violence against these groups in Turkey. It is in this context that I find one of the very last sentences of the newspaper article from 1929 especially worth noting: *Tatavla ... is now a clean* (in Turkish: *temiz*) *place* where many Turkish families live.

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37 The newspaper specifically uses the word Yunan, not Rum, thus referring to Greek newspapers published in Greece, not in Istanbul.
I suggest that the name change subsequent to the Great Fire of Tatavla (1929) has been instrumental in the demographic Turkification of the neighbourhood. Although the main cause of the fire has never been fully identified, it transformed the physical and social components of the neighbourhood. Similar to several historical and more contemporary examples of city fires and urban regeneration/gentrification projects, such direct interventions into the material spaces of dwelling necessarily bring about often fundamental changes in the social ordering of these spaces in return (see Amygdalou 2014 for a comparative analysis of Izmir and Thessaloniki fires). During my walks in the streets and participant observation in people's homes in the buildings, and research into the municipality's master plan, I noticed two essential components of such post-fire transformation of physical space in the neighbourhood. First, the material qualities of buildings changed. As the former wooden buildings in the neighbourhood burned down, they were re-constructed in concrete, further enabling larger houses with multiple storeys to be built. Thus, the post-fire reconstruction of the neighbourhood resulted in surplus housing, which provided the physical setting for the increase of the non-Muslim population in the following three decades. Second, during my research, I observed that contemporary Kurtuluş had very ambiguous borders that did not necessarily correspond to the borders of historical Tatavla. In recent memoirs and other publications on Tatavla (Türker 1998; Marmara 2001; Irmak 2003), it appears that the historical neighbourhood refers to a particular zone within contemporary Kurtuluş that centred around the Aya Tanaş (Agios Athanasios), Aya Dimitri (Agios Dimitrios), and Aya Lefter (Agios Eleftherios) Greek churches and the Greek cemetery.
It appears that contemporary Kurtuluş was formed through a merger of three former Istanbul neighbourhoods that were home to different ethnolinguistic populations. In the above aerial photo from 1970, we can see that the neighbourhood is separated from other neighbourhoods by two valleys located to the west and the east. It resembles a peninsula on land. Kurtuluş Street roughly runs about a kilometre between the Latin Catholic Cemetery located in the north and the Aya Dimitri Greek church located in the south and cuts the neighbourhood into two. To the west of Kurtuluş Street is located historical Feriköy, which historically emerged as an Armenian neighbourhood with its Surp Vartanants Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenian primary school. To the east of Kurtuluş Street is located historical Pangaltı, named after the Italian Pancaldi family, where the Catholic Cemetery was once located before its relocation to the northern tip of Kurtuluş Street. This neighbourhood was once home to Italian immigrants and Catholic Levantines (Marmara 2001). In the aerial photo we can see the differences between urban compositions of streets. As opposed to the grid-
like structure of streets that are parallel and perpendicular to Kurtuluş Street, the area in the southernmost part of the contemporary neighbourhood is a maze of narrow streets. Tatavla, the lower class Greek neighbourhood of Constantinople, was located here, at the southern end of today’s Kurtuluş Street.

As I went through the previously mentioned (pre-fire) 1925 maps of Istanbul by Pervititch, I noticed that large pieces of land between these three neighbourhoods located to the west, east, and south of Kurtuluş Street were not inhabited at that time. While the fire transformed wooden houses into larger concrete buildings in historical Tatavla, it must have been in the following decades that the gaps between these three neighbourhoods were narrowed and vanished through construction of buildings in increasing numbers. However, for the contemporary residents of the neighbourhood, Tatavla is Kurtuluş and Kurtuluş is Tatavla. For instance, two images from the northern part of today’s Kurtuluş Street show how places that were not formerly part of historical Tatavla are constantly being imagined as such. The photograph on the left was taken in 2015, during a public commemoration of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered by Turkish nationalists in 2007. The commemorators emplaced ‘alternative’ street signs to replace the current ones, and in the picture on the left we see how Ergenekon Street was thus changed to Hrant Dink Street by the people. The second image, on the right, clearly shows what it stands for, as the name Kurtuluş is spray-painted over and changed to Tatavla.

**Figure 13 (left):** A Pirate Street Sign Commemorating Hrant Dink

**Figure 14 (right):** Spraying the Street Signs in Kurtuluş
Similar forms of urban critiques against the name-changing policies of the early Kemalist nation-state were commonplace in the streets of Kurtuluş. Many building walls were spray-painted in Turkish and Armenian by anonymous people who brought protests into the level of everyday life. There are many such wall paintings/writings that question the death of Sevag Balıkçı, who was murdered in 2011 by fellow soldiers during his compulsory military service on April 24th, the day that marked the beginning of the Armenian Genocide with the order of the Ottoman government to arrest Armenian intellectuals, artists, and politicians in 1915. As demonstrated in the two images below, on the centenary of the Genocide, two particular buildings (within 50 meters from my house in Kurtuluş) were spray-painted “Krikor Zohrab Buradaydı” (in Turkish: Krikor Zohrab was here) and “Zabel Yesayan Buradaydı” (in Turkish: Zabel Yesayan was here), commemorating two of the most important Ottoman Armenian authors from Istanbul.38

![Figure 15 (left): Commemorating Krikor Zohrab in Kurtuluş © civil.net](image)

**Figure 15 (left):** Commemorating Krikor Zohrab in Kurtuluş © civil.net

![Figure 16 (right): Commemorating Zabel Yesayan in Kurtuluş](image)

**Figure 16 (right):** Commemorating Zabel Yesayan in Kurtuluş

While such forms of protest/critique were in practice in the neighbourhood, during my walks, a particular building struck my attention. It was a recently constructed building with a large name plate, displaying TATAVLA APARTMENTS in capital letters, visible from the street. I managed to contact and meet the contractor in a few days through friends in the neighbourhood. At the time of research, he was a Turkish migrant in Germany, who after

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38 Krikor Zohrab died during the Genocide in 1915 in eastern Turkey. Zabel Yesayan managed to flee the Genocide, but allegedly could not escape prosecution under Stalin in the Soviet era.
saving a considerable amount of money decided to invest in construction in Istanbul. He owned several other buildings in the area. He explained to me that there was an older building on the site of Tatavla Apartments, which did not have a name, as opposed to most buildings in the area. I asked him why he named the new building after deciding to demolish the old one. He explained that after living in Germany for so many years, he had cultivated a ‘new eye’ for looking at things in Turkey. He considered himself a leftist. After learning about the history of the neighbourhood from his local friends based in Kurtuluş, he came up with the idea of honouring the memory (in Turkish: anısını yaşatmak) of the place where he got involved in the construction business.

I also asked him about the other buildings he demolished and re-constructed. Sometimes he kept the previous names of buildings, and when the old buildings did not have names, he did not name them all. However, there was another particular building for which he changed the name. The old name of the building was Eleftherios, clearly a Greek name, and after he demolished it, he named the new building Babylon. He told me that he wanted to honour the memories of all the different languages that were widely spoken in Constantinople, which reminded him of the Tower of Babylon, where the legend says that all languages originated from.

In many ways, the contractor’s involvement in recent urban transformation (through demolishing old buildings and constructing new ones) reveals two different sides of contemporary politics of naming in Kurtuluş. In an era in which memory is increasingly equated with recognition of ‘historical’ facts and social justice, ‘workers of memory’ such as artists, activists, and protesters define alternative sites of memory (Hoelscher 2008: 26). In the context of Turkey, denial and impunity of crimes against non-Muslims “have remained taboo subjects for decades, only to be recently thematised, but not yet acknowledged and condemned as racist state policies or considered a cause for reparations” (Suciyan 2015: 83). This is why even during a short walk in the streets of Kurtuluş one may come across ‘pirate’ street signs or writings on buildings walls that commemorate Armenian intellectuals who
are regarded as the victims of Genocide, or journalist Hrant Dink and soldier Sevag Balıkçı, who were murdered by Turkish nationalists in 2007 and 2011, respectively.

However, it seems that ‘memory work’ bears the possibility of silencing other memories. While the contractor changed the name of his building from Eleftherios to Babylon, he erased a distinctively Greek component of the urban landscape and rendered it more generic and ‘acceptable’ – although he did not change the name directly into Turkish, either. As Ruth Mandel wrote in relation to post-Holocaust Berlin, “these forms of manipulation of the visible landscape point to an ambivalent desire to expunge, transform, or to neutralize uncomfortable elements of the past” (2008: 116). As portrayed in the Introduction, such interventions necessarily “create a new meaning about the past that is usable toward present claims” (Brink-Danan 2012: 73). Similarly, in the transformation of Tatavla into Kurtuluş and back to Tatavla (in the form of critique/protest against Turkification of the neighbourhood), the imagined boundaries of the historical Greek neighbourhood are enlarged to the extent of masking other histories of Turkification in the Armenian Feriköy and the Catholic/Levantine Pangaltı. Contemporary Kurtuluş covers the area of all three neighbourhoods, but historical Tatavla does not.

Amy Mills (2010) in her analysis of the similarly multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Kuzguncuk in Istanbul argues that the exodus of non-Muslim minorities left behind a contested urban landscape. As she notes, the mental maps of contemporary residents in such neighbourhoods simultaneously acknowledge the historical diversity of the place and deny responsibility for confiscated and redistributed non-Muslim properties. In the context of Kuzguncuk, one particular example provided by Mills was a confiscated public garden that the state wanted to demolish for the construction of buildings, whereas activists and protesters wanted to keep it as a green space for the neighbourhood community and an elderly Greek woman who claimed ownership demanded the return of the piece of land to her family. The striking aspect of this combination of actors is that the activists/protesters claiming the land for the community were amongst the people who were
critical of the Turkification of the neighbourhood and the exodus of non-Muslims following the 1955 Pogroms. In this context, it seems, there is a limit to which violent histories of confiscation and looting of non-Muslims properties are being unsilenced in Turkey.

In addition to properties that were confiscated, the massive amount of abandoned non-Muslim properties such as houses, lands, and a variety of institutions such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages entailed a new set of legal regulations and practices by the state that are often complex and contradictory. This is why in similar neighbourhoods there are properties whose ownership is claimed by a variety of actors, which could include a Turkish individual in Istanbul, second or third generation non-Muslim family members abroad, ministries, and several other state institutions. Over the course of my fieldwork such properties with contested ownership status were constantly making the headlines in the Turkish media. These included properties on massive scales such as Çankaya Presidential Residence complex in Ankara, Diyarbakır Airport, and Zeytinburnu Stadium in Istanbul, which have been claimed by Armenian families abroad or Armenian foundations in Turkey.

Mills (2010) argues that such contested property ownership is related to Turkification processes in various forms and indicative of one’s relationships to the Turkish nation-state, which are based on the hierarchies between Turkish citizens. While people with Sunni Muslim Turkish backgrounds are at the top, the rest – Muslim immigrants from former Ottoman territories (who did not speak Turkish at the time of their arrival to Turkey), Kurds and Arabs, Alevi and non-Muslims – are situated at different levels of this hierarchy. For this reason, in the following section, I will portray how these hierarchies were formulated through the imposition of Turkishness as the officially acceptable ethnic category and the base definition of citizenship in the first decades of the nation-state.
Concentric Zones of Turkishness

Soner Çağaptay (2005) argues that the institutions and ideology of modern Turkey were firmly established in the 1930s, during a decade of authoritarian nationalism. It was in this era that a specific understanding of what still constitutes Turkishness was defined, incorporated into the constitution as a principle of the Turkish state, and became legally enforced and publicly accepted (2-3). In order to understand the different levels and scales of the distances between non-Muslim citizens and the state in Turkey, it is essential to understand the official definitions and operations of Turkishness, which Çağaptay argues are composed of three concentric zones defined by the state: an outer civic zone for non-Muslims (based on shared territory), a middle religious one reserved for non-Turkish Muslims (based on a particular definition of shared culture), and an inner ethno-linguistic one reserved for Turks (based on a particular definition of shared race) (160). Hence, these three zones of Turkishness depended on three different articulations of the term under the nation-state ideology. This is why the category of ‘Turk’ should be understood in context-specific terms, and not always in ontological opposition to non-Muslims (such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews) in the country. Moreover, it should imply that for non-Muslim minorities there are obvious limits to their inclusion in the Turkish polity (Bora 1998; Neyzi 2002; İçduygu and Soner 2006; Keyman and Kancı 2011; Ekmekcioglu 2016).

The zonal constitution of Turkishness in the nation-state era should be understood in relation to the mindset inherited from the citizenship practices of the Ottoman state and a particular approach to community-state politics that is still based on these for benefits and security (Barkey and Gavriliis 2016: 34). The former Ottoman system divided its diverse population into strict compartments of communities based on faith, called millets. Although the term, borrowed from Arabic, translates as ‘nation’ in contemporary Turkish, it had a very different connotation before the emergence of Turkey as a nation-state. The system was pragmatic in its elaboration of the different millets of the empire (Belge 1995; Barkey 2008). According to this system that categorized the Ottoman population, there were initially Muslim, Jewish,
Armenian (Apostolic), Greek (Orthodox), and later on Catholic and Protestant millets with the supremacy of the Muslim millet, which consisted of Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and various Balkan and Caucasian Muslims as well as Greek- or Armenian-speaking Muslims. This is also why Turkish-speaking Armenian Christians were considered as part of the Armenian millet and Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox were considered as part of the Greek millet. The religious communities under the millet system were not homogeneous in terms of language; however, for centuries, the system merged various diverse ethnic populations into religious ones, making the religious identity dominant among many Ottoman subjects (Çağaptay 2005).

In an attempt to centralize its power over its vast array of diverse populations, the late Ottoman state introduced equal citizenship for Muslims and non-Muslims alike through secularization – hence holding individuals accountable directly to the state, not to their faith communities (Ahmad 1991; Zürcher 2004). However, this centralization through secularization resulted in an ironic consequence in which millets achieved a degree of formal institutionalization they never had in the classical Ottoman period that catalysed secessionist movements led by their lay elites (Zürcher 2010: 62). This is how the system that emerged as a matter of Islamic law and the bureaucratic pragmatics of the Ottoman state, centred around faith in the first place, subsequently laid the basis of articulations of collective/communal identities in the late-Ottoman period.

Feroz Ahmad (1991) stresses that the terms millet (lit. nation) and millî (lit. national) evolved in the 100-year-long period between the mid-19th century and mid-20th century and so the terms should be understood from a historical perspective (6) (also cited in Zürcher 2010: 226). He argues that both terms had more Islamic connotations than the Turkish term even in the 1919-1922 period, in which the ‘national struggle’ was seen as a religious struggle, a jihad against Western powers by the Muslim millet for its very survival, thus millî mücadele (lit. national struggle) (Ahmad 1991: 6). It is in the aftermath of the emergence of the nation-state of Turkey that the term increasingly became devoid of a Muslim connotation and acquired a Turkish
connotation, as the founders of the state modelled Turkey through continuation of secularization processes launched by the Ottomans (Zürcher 2010: 149).

However, in the decade roughly between the start of World War I in 1914 and the emergence of the nation-state of Turkey in 1923, the Muslims transformed into a nation of Turks while non-Muslim millets transformed into minorities. As Rodrigue (2013) notes, the new terminology adopted in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 – the foundation treaty of Turkey – not only recognized Greeks, Armenians, and Jews officially as minorities but also emphasized their fundamental difference from Turks and implied that they were never to become true Turks (40-44) (also cited in Barkey and Gavrilis 2015: 34). On the other hand, the prioritization of Turkishness as the major determinant of the new country’s official identity posited a fundamental problem where 30 percent of the population did not have Turkish as their mother tongue (Zürcher 2010: 149). Çağaptay argues (2005) that this situation was closely related to the constant migration of diverse Muslim masses to Turkey from former Ottoman territories.

Leyla Neyzi (2002) wrote that the term ‘Turk’ “disguises the diversity of the linguistic, ethnic and religious origins of Turkey’s ‘majority’ population” (141) (emphasis original). As I construe this particular history of nation-building, it appears that an ‘outside’ should have been articulated first, as there was no homogenized ‘inside’ within the concentric zones of Turkishness. As Çağaptay (2005) notes, first of all, in the 1924 constitution, all people living within the borders of Turkey were recognized simultaneously as Turks and Turkish citizens, including Jews, Armenians, and Greeks, making shared territory the least important criterion in the articulation of Turkishness. Second, through the 1930s, the definition of Turkishness in state documents recognized culture (in Turkish: hars) with an emphasis primarily on shared religion (and shared history to a much lesser extent), bringing Muslims closer to the centre of Turkishness than non-Muslims. Bernard Lewis (1968) once wrote that “one may speak of Christian Arabs – but a Christian Turk is an absurdity and a contradiction in terms... a non-Muslim in Turkey may be
called a Turkish citizen, but never a Turk” (15) (also quoted in İçduyuğ and Soner 2006: 454). Third, as evident in the 1934 laws on resettlement of migrants from different countries, the definition of Turkishness this time took into consideration bloodline (in Turkish documents: soy), which “did not necessarily denote immutable biological characteristics, passed down genetically” and instead meant ‘ethnicity-through-language’ (Çağaptay 2005). Non-Muslim Turkish speakers were prevented from moving towards the centre of Turkishness (Kirişçi 2000). By the same logic, Muslims were able to be considered Turks in the case that they learned Turkish and abandoned their ancestral languages, and could move towards the centre of Turkishness (Çağaptay 2005) (see also Bora 1998).

In the following section, I attempt to understand how these differentiated zones of Turkishness are reflected and re-made in the urban material landscape of Kurtuluş, where direct state intervention pushed non-Muslim minorities to leave and introduced a new Turkish landscape by changing the names of streets and the neighbourhood. However, this should be only one aspect of these Turkification processes that were reflected in the ways urban landscapes transformed in the neighbourhood. Another aspect of these processes should take into consideration the remaining people’s responses to these nation-building processes. Here, my inquiry is based on understanding whether these people adapted to these processes, silenced or internalized them, or, to the contrary, employed critiques and tactics against them. A third option is that they possibly came up with their own hybrid formulas instead of either rejecting or accepting them.

A State of Unity and a Taxonomy of Apartment Names in Kurtuluş

I suggest that the making of three zones of Turkishness has materially translated into the spatial organization of buildings in contemporary Kurtuluş. This is why an ethnographic focus to test the links between wider state policies of nation-building and the ways ordinary people named their homes and their children is needed. As Bodenhorn and vom Bruck (2006)
noted, names “serve as a means of structuring social relations as well as a powerful medium in which to talk about those relations” (26). During my lengthy walks around the 24 city blocks (in Turkish: konut adası, lit. island of dwelling), I noticed patterns in building names, which I could roughly group into seven categories. The first group of buildings comprises buildings without any names. These buildings have only building numbers. The total number of these buildings is very small and there are no more than two or three such buildings on each street. The second group includes buildings that were named after the street they were located on; for instance, there are two Türkbey(i) apartments on Türkbeyi Street and again two Bilezikçi apartments on Bilezikçi Street. The third group includes flower names such as Gül (lit. rose), Nilüfer (lit. lily), Leylak (lit. lilac), or Sümbül (lit. hyacinth). The fourth group comprises different place names from Turkey and neighbouring post-Ottoman countries with building names such as Midilli (Lesvos), Teselya (Thessaly), or Şumnu (Shumen) in contemporary Greece and Bulgaria and Irak (Iraq), Erbil (Erbil), or Halep (Aleppo) in contemporary Iraq and Syria, all clearly indicating immigration to Istanbul from different corners of the post-Ottoman world.

There is a further pattern among names from Turkey as well. On the one hand, there are building names from towns around Bithynia and Thrace, the nearby coastal areas around the Sea of Marmara and Istanbul, such as Bilecik, Bursa, Iznik, or Tekirdağ. On the other hand, there are building names from eastern and south-eastern Anatolia, such as Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, and Harput – cities with considerable Armenian populations before the Genocide and the subsequent Turkification processes. In many ways, such names demonstrate immigration to Istanbul from the city’s hinterland as well as the empire’s more distant Armenian-populated provinces. It is interesting that hardly any place is mentioned in between these eastern Anatolian towns and the smaller towns around Istanbul. One exception to this situation is Ankara – the capital of the new Republic – and Çankaya – the neighbourhood of Ankara where the presidential palace is located and named after.
A fifth group of building names corresponds to people's names: some Turkish, some specifically Armenian (such as Sevan and Ani, which are also place names), and some others clearly non-Muslim but not necessarily Armenian (such as Viktorya, Kristin, and Elizabet). The buildings with non-Muslim names make up the smallest group – the number of such buildings is less than twenty in total among the hundreds of buildings I listed in Kurtuluş. The buildings of the sixth group are named after their contractor’s family or company names, such as Öger and Yenilmez apartments scattered around the neighbourhood. The seventh and last group of buildings has names based on abstract concepts, such as Huzur (lit. peace or peace of mind), Işık (lit. light), Arzu (lit. desire, also a female name in Turkish), or Rüya (lit. dream, also a female name in Turkish). There is another particular building name that belongs to this last group, Birlik (lit. unity, state of union or oneness), which is the most frequent name among the last group of buildings.

For a person raised in Turkey, birlik resonates with the unity of the nation. For instance, on the website of the Atatürk Research Centre of the Atatürk Culture, Language, and History Institute under the direct authority of the Turkish Prime Minister, national unity (in Turkish: birlik) and togetherness (in Turkish: beraberlik, but birlik also translates as union) are elaborated by bullet points as follows:

‘National unity and togetherness’ is one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish Revolution [referring to the Six Principles of Kemalism]. It is closely related to nationalism, national sovereignty, and national independence.

Atatürk's unifying and integrating, fusing idea of nationalism is expressed through national unity and togetherness.

National unity and togetherness implies unity as a nation, co-existence, and completeness. National unity and togetherness firmly ties the individuals of the nation who live together. Unity as a nation means unity in the components of the nation, union, and completeness.

[...]

National unity and union is also the means for the realization of the nation state. National unity and union mean unity and union primarily among the components of the nation (atam.gov.tr).
In many ways, in contemporary Turkey, *birlik* is very laden with Turkification processes and their violent history. Over the almost 100 years of the Turkish Republic, politicians, state officials, mayors, and other bureaucrats constantly repeated that Turkey needed “national unity and togetherness”. Although there was no direct reference to the principle of national unity in the 1924 constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1937 amendments introduced the Six Principles of Kemalism – republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and reformism – and enshrined these as the basic qualities of the state (as referred to on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey). Hence, national unity within the framework of what would later be coined in the 1982 constitution as ‘Atatürk’s nationalism’ (in Turkish: *Atatürk milliyetçiliği*) sought unity among the concentric zones of Turkishness.

In the Preamble of the 1961 Constitution, it was clearly stated that...

... the Turkish nation, prompted and inspired by the spirit of Turkish nationalism, which unites all individuals, be it in fate, pride or distress, in common bond as an indivisible whole around national consciousness and aspirations, and which has its aim always to exalt our nation in a spirit of national unity as a respected member of the community of the world of nations enjoying equal rights and privileges... enacts and proclaims this constitution... (translation of Balkan, Uysal, and Karpat 1961).

Article 3 of the 1961 Constitution also stated that...

The Turkish State is an indivisible whole comprising its territory and people (Ibid.).

Some twenty years later the notions of national unity and indivisibility of the country (with its people and territory) were repeated in the Preamble of the 1982 Constitution:

(As amended on July 23, 1995) Affirming the eternal existence of the Turkish Motherland and Nation and the indivisible unity of the Sublime Turkish State, this Constitution, in line with the concept of nationalism introduced by the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk, the immortal leader and the unrivalled hero, and his reforms and principles [...] (As amended on October 3, 2001) has been entrusted by the TURKISH NATION to the democracy-loving Turkish sons’ and daughters’ love for the motherland and nation (global.tbmm.gov.tr).
Several constitutional articles (including article 3 on the duties and responsibilities of the state, article 26 on the freedom of expression and dissemination of thought, and article 58 on the protection of the youth) repeated that the state aims to “safeguard the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation”. It becomes apparent in these official texts that national unity and indivisible integrity of the state are fundamental issues in the legal constitution of the relationships between the state and its citizens. I consider these repetitive notions of national unity (milli birlik) – along with national togetherness (milli beraberlik) and national integrity (milli bütünlük) – in these aforementioned official texts as indicators of the state’s unceasing and abiding anxieties about the fate of nation-building processes in the country. As suggested earlier in this chapter, ideologists of Turkishness specifically for this reason articulated three zones of Turkishness through their own defined frameworks of territory, culture, and race and enclosed all the diverse populations of the country under the category of the Turk. Hence, unity – or national unity – in Turkey should imply unity under the category of the Turk, which has been formulated in terms of citizenship (i.e., Turkishness-through-territory), religion (i.e., Turkishness-through-culture), and bloodline (Turkishness-through-race).

As argued in the previous section, articulations of distance and proximity vis-à-vis the concentric zones of Turkishness have been constantly kept in place by the state and the people who lived within its borders. It was in this context of the production of the category of the Turk and the Turkification processes that I noticed and recognized the pattern of Birlik apartments within Istanbul’s urban landscape:

39 “Indivisible” is repeated 16 times, “indisibility” 5 times, and “indivisible integrity” 8 times in the 1982 Turkish constitution.
In the archives of the construction master plan of the municipality of Şişli, where Kurtuluş is located, I found that apartments with the name Birlik mushroomed in the neighbourhood after the 1955 Pogroms. During my walks around the 24 city blocks in the neighbourhood (or the ‘island of dwelling’ as understood in Turkish), I identified 11 buildings with this name, and in the municipality archives I found that nine of these buildings were built after the 1955 Pogroms in the neighbourhood, one was built in 1955, and the last one was built before that, in the early 1950s. My research in the archives also revealed that the small number of buildings with non-Muslim names were all constructed before 1955. Hence, the Pogroms mark a moment in the history of the neighbourhood, cutting across two time periods with different patterns of building naming.

Figure 17: A Collage of Birlik Apartments in and around Kurtuluş

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Welcome to Birlik Apartmanı

I was supposed to meet Hakan in his family’s home in an apartment building named Birlik in Kurtuluş. He lived on the third floor of this multi-storey building with his family up until his marriage a few years ago. Recently he moved to another apartment nearby, less than 5 minutes walking distance. I was previously told that the elders of his extended family, mostly his uncles and their wives, lived on other floors. While the unmarried children of the family kept living with their parents in this building, those who got married, similar to Hakan, all lived a short walking distance from the family building.

When Hakan called me, I thought he would direct me to the Birlik apartment where he had once lived with his parents as a single man. Instead, he instructed me to find my way to another building with a different name, Manolya, where his brother lived. I rang the doorbell at the entrance of the building and through the intercom Hakan told me to come to the top floor. As he let me in, I came to understand that he had a very large family. That evening there were a dozen family members scattered around a dinner table with lots of food in a very small room. He introduced me to his aunts, siblings, and nephews and nieces. The room was so small that some of the family members were sitting on the floor cross-legged or standing up while eating at the same time. I similarly attempted to sit on the floor, which caused a temporary family crisis among siblings (on whether or not to let the guest sit on the floor). When I finally took my seat on a chair (confiscated from one of the children) next to Hakan’s sister, she told me I was welcome to the Birlik Apartment (in Turkish: Birlik apartmanına hoşgeldiniz!). They were obviously very well informed about my research topic. As if I did not get her, I responded that the building had a different name. She laughed aloud, pointed at the crowd of people, and told me that it was the crowd that was the birlik (in Turkish: Birlik budur!).

It was Hakan’s sister who lived here with her husband and their new-born baby. They explained to me that they met at a family member’s house and had dinner together every weekend. That night in the room, there was a complete mix of people from different and distant parts of Turkey, from
predominantly Kurdish- and Turkish-speaking families. In recent years, the family had expanded through new members, who were Armenian, Kurdish, or Turkish. Hakan himself had married a woman from Turkey’s tiny Azeri community from a town located on the Armenian border. This was one of the reasons why there were family members with names in Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, and Kurdish/Turkish (i.e., names that exist in both languages but not in Armenian).

Hakan’s Turkish name did not give outsiders any clue that he was Armenian. Before I met him, I thought he came from a family of Armenian converts to Islam, but this was not the case. His family was from the present-day prefecture of Batman (Sassoun in the Ottoman period), which had a large Armenian and still to date Kurdish population. Unlike other Armenians who survived the Genocide from their village of origin, they did not immigrate for another six decades and lived among the Kurdish Muslims who replaced the victims. I was told that they always identified themselves as Armenians, albeit not publicly.

In the specific context of Turkey, naming practices of people are historically interwoven with the wider political context of nation-building (Spencer 1961; Bulliet 1978; Mardin 2002). This is how the migration history of Hakan’s family was reflected in the ways they named their children and grandchildren. The first post-genocide generation of men and women who were born and raised in the village had Kurdish/Turkish/Muslim names. It was only after their immigration to Istanbul that they gave some of their daughters Armenian names. However, the sons, who were in contact with the outside world more often than the women through business, continued to be given Kurdish/Turkish/Muslim names. Finally, for the third generation, born in the late 1990s and 2000s, some boys – but not the majority – were also given Armenian names. The girls all had Armenian names. However, in opposition to earlier generations, none of the third generation boys had names with Islamic or Turkic connotations. In cases when they did not have an Armenian name, they had secular Turkish or Kurdish names that did not originate from the Quran, Islamic terminology, or Arabic. For instance, there
were men in the older generations with names such as Ahmet or Sadullah, but the third generations had names such as Kıvanç or Erman from Turkish, and Sidar or Reyas in Kurdish.

It was Hakan’s oldest uncle who initiated the immigration of the family to Istanbul in 1981, right after the coup that escalated the violence in the predominantly Kurdish south-eastern Turkey. However, in the first decade after their immigration they continued visiting their village of origin in the summers. In the first half of the 1990s they finally abandoned their summer visits to their village, when a commander in the Turkish army summoned everyone to the village square and ‘warned’ them against enemies inside and outside. The villagers were advised not to cooperate with PKK supporters or Armenians in the village, or else they would face the consequences. The fight between the Kurdish guerrillas and the Turkish army finally revealed the family’s Armenian background to their fellow villagers.

After some tea, Hakan asked me whether I was ready to go to the Birlik apartment that I had been interested in visiting since the first time I met him. We left the family and in less than two minutes arrived in front of a building that I was sure I had never noticed before. At first, I thought I had probably missed the building during my walks in the neighbourhood, as I had walked that street many times. However, I could not see any label or nameplate on the building indicating its name. When I asked about this, Hakan responded that the name plate had recently broken and they would probably replace it soon. Therefore, this particular building constituted the last and the 12th Birlik apartment on my list.

It was Hakan’s paternal family who lived in the building, where his father and his five siblings had their own apartments located on six floors. Nazife was Hakan’s oldest uncle’s wife. She was the eldest in the family, and this was why Hakan believed that I should talk to her. She told me that she was born in Batman, but unlike her husband’s family, she moved to Istanbul at the age of 6 when her father took the entire family. When she was a teenager, her father decided to arrange a marriage for her with an Armenian boy, who was
Hakan’s uncle, from his ancestral village in Batman. Hakan’s uncle married and took Nazife back to Batman and they lived there until their immigration to Istanbul in 1981. When they arrived in Istanbul, they bought an old apartment building that belonged to a Greek family who had left Istanbul for Greece in 1964, on the same site where the current Birlik apartment is now located. They lived on different floors of the old building for sixteen years. In 1997 they demolished the building and re-built it with more floors and space that would be enough for the expanding family.

When I asked Nazife about the origins of the building’s name, she told me that she, her husband’s brothers, and their wives decided on the name together once they demolished the old building and re-built it. She said, “We brought the foundation of our entire family here, in this building where it stands, and this is why we named it ‘unity’” (in Turkish: Ailemizin bütün temelini buraya, bu binanın olduğu yere getirmişiz, İşte bu yüzden de adına ‘Birlik’ demişiz). She repeated what Hakan told me previously, that they lived together in this building up until now, and those who left due to marriage all moved into apartments centring around it (in Turkish: yeni evlenenler de hep bu binayı merkez alarak etrafında yaşarlar). She explained to me that all of the family members lived in walking distance. While speaking, she rotated her hand in a specific way that stressed that the building was the centre for everyone in the family.

Towards the end of our conversation, one of her sons – thus, one of Hakan’s first cousins – entered the house. He was a single man who lived with Nazife and he looked tired as he had just come back from work. As he saw that Hakan was in the living room, he approached him and asked how life was in the ‘other’ apartment (in Turkish: öteki apartmanda hayat nasıl?), which was also on the same street. Hakan replied that everything was fine and his sister was very happy to live there. He added that his brother rented the shop at the entrance of the same apartment building. When Nazife’s son asked whether they considered buying more apartments in the building, Hakan responded that it was certainly on their agenda. One of his younger brothers was about to marry. While Hakan and his cousin were talking, Nazife turned
to me at that specific moment, smiled, and told me that it was probably the right time to build a (second) new “Birlik” apartment (in Turkish: şimdi belki de yeni bir Birlik apartmanı yapmanın tam vaktidir).

There is a very particular aspect of what I presented in the previous chapter that resonates with what I came to observe during my research in Istanbul. Similar to how ‘the expanding outside’ (as opposed to ‘the shrinking inside’) accounted for the material readjustments following political and economic change in post-socialist Armenia (Platz 2000), I suggest that we can understand birlik as a re-articulation of social distances in 20th century Turkey. For both the state and individuals in Kurtuluş, the term defines zones of accessibility, intimacy, and connectedness, although in different ways. For the state, the term translates as the unity of the indivisible Turkish nation. For citizens, it sets a goal that is almost never possible to accomplish, as it sets distances between those who are fit and unfit for becoming Turks. I suspect that the “intentional vagueness” in defining Turkishness by the state (Ekmekcioğlu 2016: 105) has been fundamental in persuading citizens to struggle for such an impossible task.

I argue that birlik has been articulated by what it does not literally stand for, an emphasis on immutable differences between what the state recognized as Turks and only Turkish citizens. The term appears not only as a state-imposed category of national unity but also a popular imaginary unit of distance measuring the differences between cores and margins of Turkishness with direct implications on the material space of apartment buildings in Istanbul. At one level, the frequency and the construction dates of Birlik apartments suggest that their non-Muslim owners responded to Turkification processes in an accommodating way. However, at another level, in the accounts of Nazife, Hakan, and other members of their family, the notion of unity and the apartment name of Birlik do not resonate with the national unity defined by the ideologists of early Kemalism. On the contrary, their notion is based on a deliberate counter-articulation of the term that is critical of the form of unity imposed by the state. This poses a direct answer to what Kabir Tambar (2013) asked: “In what ways are hegemonic formations
of national citizenship confirmed, troubled, or remade in acts of historical critique?" (121). For Nazife and Hakan, unity is understood as the unity of their dispersed and enlarging family across different towns, languages, and countries.

![Figure 18: Spray Painting on a Kurtuluş Wall](image)

**Conclusion**

The polysemy of “Birlik” matches the polysemy of Tatavla in contemporary Kurtuluş in many ways. In December 2015, I delivered a public speech in Istanbul entitled *Turkification in Kurtuluş: Urban Transformation and Dwelling Biographies*. Upon listening to my speech, someone from the audience raised her hand and expressed her confusion over the historical location of Tatavla. She was a documentary filmmaker in the process of finalizing video shootings in the area, which she identified as historical Tatavla. However, she was very surprised to hear that contemporary Kurtuluş had come into being through the merger of three historical neighbourhoods. She concluded by asking whether she had shot her documentary in the ‘wrong’ location. Many other people in the audience also wanted to know about the ‘exact location’ of Tatavla. I responded that there was probably no one to decide on that. Tatavla could have been a historical neighbourhood with more or less publicly acknowledged borders before the 1929 fire and its merger with two other Istanbul neighbourhoods. However, as I explained to the audience, what the name Tatavla has come to represent for the residents
of contemporary Kurtuluş should be understood in less rigid terms. I added that, as an anthropologist, my duty was to shed light onto historical processes through which people understood certain things in certain ways at present. Therefore, I said that there was no such thing as a ‘wrong location’. However, I felt that the people in the audience expected me to make a decision on how to refer to the neighbourhood: was I personally supposed to name it Tatavla or Kurtuluş?

Historically, Tatavla was a much smaller neighbourhood, but politically its name has acquired new ‘meanings’ in addition to its physical expansion over the past five decades. Just before my speech, I had received an email from another documentary filmmaker working on the neighbourhood. She had read about my upcoming speech in a newspaper and was interested in learning about how and why I came to conduct research on the neighbourhood. She wrote that her family lived in the neighbourhood for three generations. She attached a photo from the neighbourhood (see Figure 18). However, she did not write anything about it. It stood on its own at the end of the email, the camera focused on words spray painted on a wall that read “What is Kurtuluş, for God’s sake? Here is all/always Tatavla” (in Turkish: Kurtuluş ne allasen? Buralar hep Tatavla). The director wanted to figure out my personal relationship to the neighbourhood, by asking whether I was from there. She also wanted to check my stance in relation to the politics of naming operating in the neighbourhood through the image she sent.

Similar to what Marcy Brink-Danan (2012) observed on Jewish naming politics in contemporary Istanbul, the wide range of naming processes in Kurtuluş explore present-day ontologies as historically informed and context-dependent (28). These ontologies, as Brink-Danan suggests, can be best understood as “ideas about what things exist or can be said to exist, and how such things should be grouped according to similarities and differences” (Ibid.). This has been precisely why this chapter explored the ways in which the production of the category of Turk was translated into place-making in an Istanbul neighbourhood. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman
Empire, distances to Turkishness defined the differences and the similarities between people, languages, and religions. It is for this reason that in this chapter I first demonstrated how ‘places’ (i.e., cities, districts, streets) were the first targets of Turkification-through-naming. Second, I identified building names as another essential component of place-making, which was reflected in ordinary people’s responses to the particular ways space has been imagined and crafted by the state in Turkey. I introduced a taxonomy of building names in Kurtuluş and argued that birlik had a very specific connotation of the ‘unity of nation’ in contemporary Turkey. This is why, later, the chapter briefly focused on the articulations of birlik in Turkish constitutions from 1960 and 1982. Lastly, as presented in the accounts of Nazife and Hakan, I portrayed how my informants have articulated a counter-definition of unity/union that was informed by the dispersion of their family by the violence of the Turkish state.

The next chapter deals with another aspect of articulations of distance against the concentric zones of Turkishness, this time through studying everyday articulations of difference and similarity between Armenians and Muslims in the context of an island off Istanbul.
CHAPTER V: An Island That Is No More

Also, that an island is deserted must appear *philosophically* normal to us. Humans cannot live, nor live in security, unless they assume that the active struggle between earth and water is over, or at least contained. People like to call these two elements mother and father, assigning them gender roles according to the whim of their fancy. They must somehow persuade themselves that a struggle of this kind does not exist, or that it has somehow ended. In one way or another, the very existence of islands is the negation of this point of view, of this effort, this conviction. That England is populated will always come as a surprise; humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents. Islands are either from before or for after humankind (Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 2004:9) (emphasis original).

**Introduction**

Based on research in a historically predominantly non-Muslim neighbourhood with a significant Armenian population in Istanbul, in the previous chapter I suggested that Armenians from Turkey adapted to the Turkification processes in the country implemented at different levels in thinking (imagination) and materiality (crafting) by different actors (Navaro-Yashin 2012). With a focus on building names in the neighbourhood, I demonstrated that construction of all buildings with the name Birlik (lit. unity/union) succeeded the 1955 Pogroms that targeted non-Muslim minorities. As the chapter displayed, the name Birlik resonated with the unity of the nation, thus emphasizing the Turkification processes that demonized all non-Muslim minorities in the country. It was also portrayed that at least one Armenian family from south-eastern Turkey articulated their own definition of unity, which for them meant the unity of their dispersed family. The names of the people in this family indicated how names have changed according to transformations of the political context in the country. Name changes were also visible through the migration history of the family. There were notable differences between those who were born in the countryside and those born in Istanbul. Moreover, the youngest generations had a mix of Armenian or secular Kurdish names, suggesting an emergent distance from the innermost centres of Turkishness.
It is often expected that the category of the Turk, imagined as a monolithic category, should have led to similar monolithic (and totalizing) processes of Turkification. However, the category of Turk has never been a monolithic category; it is instead based on different state definitions and practices of nation-building. Furthermore, it is based on the ways people appropriated this term by articulating proximity and distance to what constituted different zones of the construct of Turkishness. Hence, the previous chapter was broadly formulated to stress the ways in which my informants interpreted state-defined terminology of nation-building in their own terms. Although birlik was primarily defined by the state in order to impose homogeneity among the different zones of Turkishness, for Armenians it described another zone where they negotiated their proximity to each other instead of proximity to the innermost zones of Turkishness. In this context, the terminology of Turkish nationalism was reproduced by some Armenians to critique such a situation.

This chapter takes the issue of articulating distance and proximity to the innermost centres of Turkishness to a new level, through a different ethnographic and theoretical framework. In addition to my indirect observations provided in the following pages, two fragments of research enable me to sketch out processes in which ethnic difference is articulated in contemporary Turkey. Here I focus on the everyday articulations of difference on an “Armenian island” off Istanbul (Kaymak 2016), where most of my Armenian friends and informants had inherited summer houses from their families. They were not necessarily wealthy, but all had university degrees and worked for large companies or ran their own businesses in which they employed other people. Having a house on the island, they considered themselves different from the several other thousands of Armenians in Istanbul who did not. They were first and foremost adalı (lit. islander) vis-à-vis other Armenians; however, they considered themselves as Istanbullu among Istanbulites, implying a difference from people who were from Istanbul and who only lived in Istanbul, respectively. The terms should not be understood as direct translations of each other, as Istanbullu defines not only a place of origin but also a very particular urbanized and mostly – if not
entirely – middle and upper class group of people in a city of 15 million (see also Chapter VI). It is in this sense that the distinctions between Istanbulllu and Istanbululite point at the transformation of the city into a ‘repopulated cosmopolis’ (see Chapter II). As for Armenians in Istanbul, there is great diversity regarding family histories in the city. In this context of depopulation and repopulation, owning a house on the island provided my informants with a social and physical base to claim longer histories in Istanbul both in relation to the massive migrant population of the city, which included Muslim Turks, and other Armenians.

The island also came with stigmas that took their source in the Turkish nation-building project. The non-Muslim majority population of the islands off Istanbul, a situation in contrast to the rest of the country, resulted in wider popular imaginings about the island as a “foreign country” (in Turkish: yabancı ülke) (Brink-Danan 2012), where non-Muslims are denied becoming ‘natives’ (in Turkish: yerli) of Turkey. The following pages primarily aim to understand how such ‘differences’ are articulated by my informants in their own terms (and how these are imposed in the wake of ongoing nation-building processes) within the “public life” (Navaro-Yashin 2002) of the island(s).

An Island without Strangers

Marcy Brink-Danan in *Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey* asks:

...how does public discourse, the patterned and crafted statements that display regularity and consensus (Foucault 1972: 38), intersect with the smaller, more intimate conversations, silences, and secrets that are the sites of everyday contestations about the way things are, were, and should be? (Brink-Danan 2012: 27).

In the summer of 2013, I closely observed how wider discourses that separated strangers from insiders were reflected at an everyday level when a Turkish family moved to the predominantly Armenian island of Kınalı (henceforth Kınalıada, lit. the island of Kınalı), off Istanbul’s main coast.
Most of my friends had summer houses there and I spent the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013 with them. As this and the following two chapters will gradually unpack, the island is widely understood as a ‘meeting point’ for Armenians in Istanbul or abroad – or as a “centre of gravity”, in Sari Hanafi’s term (2003).

The Turkish family who moved to the island consisted of a mother and a father – both high-income, white-collar professionals – and their two-year-old daughter. Although there were always some other middle class Turkish families who had summer houses on the island, the arrival of this family came as a surprise to my Armenian informants. For them, the decision of a new Turkish family to spend the summer on Kınalıada, without any former friends or connections on the island, did not make any sense. They believed that all other Turkish families bought houses on the island through former personal connections with the Armenian residents. As we were having a late Sunday brunch around a big table in a friend’s garden in 2013, we started to talk about the new arrivals. One of my friends, Nora, asked “Why on earth would someone who does not know anyone on the island move here?” She continued by saying “They don’t seem to have any adahl (lit. islander) friends here. They could have easily rented a house on the other [neighbouring] islands where Turks also live.” Following her, Alen, Nora’s husband, added that there must have been another motivation for them to move to the island: “No one comes to this island unless you have friends here; it is not like the other islands.” Another friend at the table nodded in agreement and added: “It is bizarre to come to this island to make friends.” Alen replied that the island was often thought of as a sıçrama tahtası (lit. a springboard) by many emergent middle class Turkish families. He believed that for most middle class Turks, having non-Muslim minority friends was a good investment in the social capital that they usually lacked.

As the summer proceeded, the confusion and accompanying suspicion doubled for my informants when the mother of the Turkish family started to bring her child to the Sunday liturgy at the Armenian church of the island. While unconcerned by the initial visit, the habitual nature of these Sunday
visits to the church bothered many: this was no longer a touristic visit by a culture-curious Turkish mother. For my Armenian friends, there had to be something else – some other motivation – behind this untypical situation. Despite growing curiosity, they never approached this family to talk to them. In many ways they had ‘fears of the unknown’ on a tiny island where everyone is supposed to know about everyone else (see previous chapters) (see also Pattie 1997).

Instead of talking to this new family, my friends came up with answers themselves. First, they believed that these people might have been individuals with Armenian grandparents; at least one of their ancestors could have been Armenian. However, my friends reasoned that they would not have visited the church every Sunday if they really wanted to commemorate a dead grandparent; once or twice would have been enough. Second, they believed that the Turkish couple could have been descendants of Armenian converts to Islam, crypto-Armenians or the dönme (a pejorative word that translates as one who converted/returned/transformed), as my informants put it. From the perspective of my informants, the underlying difference between the first and the second possibility also implied the level of assimilation to ‘Turkishness’ and whether it took place on a ‘voluntary’ basis. Often, a person with an Armenian grandparent is understood as a descendent of the Genocide, a victim whether identifying herself as Turkish (and Muslim) or not. The nuance here is that Armenians in contemporary Istanbul perceive a difference between Armenians who were forced to convert to Islam (often as individual orphans) and the families who ‘deliberately’ converted in order to survive (see also the beginning of Chapter III). This is not to suggest that the latter group was not subjected to the violence of the Genocide, but rather to reflect how Armenians in contemporary Istanbul sense that the crypto-Armenians survived through self-initiated assimilation.

The new Turkish family on the island did not fit into these two categories. As one of my friends explained, their appearance, class, level of education, and the way they spoke Turkish were not similar to Islamicized Armenians, who most often came from provincial towns in Anatolia. In any case, my
informants believed that people without Armenian origin would not have come to the island. Alen believed that, if an Armenian family history was really at play, the main motivation for these people to move to the island was a matter of *vicedan azabi*, guilt felt strongly in one’s conscience. For him, they were the descendants of people who once rejected their own origins in order to have an easier life in the post-genocide context of Turkey and now it was time for them to confront the decision of their parents or grandparents.

In the end, nothing was revealed about this family who remained complete strangers to us. None of my Armenian friends from the island initiated conversations or even attempted to exchange greetings with them. At the end of the summer, the couple left the island and never came back. The purpose of this chapter is not to identify who the Turkish couple was. Instead, the discussion about this family reveals wider and deeper everyday discussions on ethnic or cultural distance and proximity at three levels. First, it displays the mental as well as the physical location of the island vis-à-vis other Armenians and stranger Turks (i.e., those not known by Armenians from Istanbul in person) in their immediate environment. Second, following the previous chapter, the discussion points to my informants’ articulations of distance to various zones of Turkishness, which is, I argue, always further informative of how they perceive other Armenians and others around them. Following that, third, the discussion among my informants depicts a hierarchy of different ways of being Armenian. This depends on mixing with Turks or Muslims and conversion to Islam, based on a similar zonal imagination of ethnic identity, this time not directly by the state but by the individuals who are located in the outermost zone of Turkishness.

Brink-Danan (2012) argues that members of the Jewish community in Istanbul (which, unlike Armenians in Istanbul, she comfortably calls a community) have developed a knowledge of their difference (from Turks) by “comparing their lives to the ways Jews outside of Turkey live and to the ways Jews have lived in the past, yet they perform and disavow this difference at different times and on different stages” (1). I can speculate here that it should be the zonal constitution of Turkishness that pushed “Turkish Jews [to]
perform a doubled identity in light of demands for Turkish integration and out of fear of being marked as non-Turks, that is ‘different’ or ‘foreign’” (86). It should be noted that Brink-Danan’s account of Jews is primarily based on understanding their relationships to the wider category of Turks. All throughout this thesis, I tackle ways of being Armenian in Istanbul vis-à-vis others around them, investigating an ethnic zone surrounded not only by their significant others, the Turks, but also other Armenians, as well as Greeks, Jews, and Kurds. For instance, Alen’s comments about the dönme (i.e., Islamicized Armenians) also suggested that there were a variety of ways of being Armenian for Armenians, although only accepted within a hierarchy. This is not to say that he necessarily placed himself at the top of this hierarchy of being Armenian, by comparing himself to present and past Armenians. On several occasions he ‘confessed’ (he used itiraf etmek in Turkish, which translates as ‘to confess’) that the primary reason for his present wealth was the Armenians who died during the Genocide. He believed that Turkey’s tiny remaining Armenian population shared a fortune that was disproportionately large for its numbers. 40

At the time I met Alen, he was in his early 40s. He ran his own export-import company, which he had founded several years ago with capital he inherited from his parents, who came to Istanbul in the late 1960s from Malatya in eastern Turkey. His family, along with a couple of other Armenian families, lived in the city – in his words – as “Armenians who did not convert to Islam”. Although having never studied in an Armenian school, he was proud of his level of competence in the language. From time to time, he put people around him up to Armenian vocabulary contests, in which I scored better than most of his Istanbullu friends. Often his Armenian friends on the island made fun of him for being “a little too Armenian”, as his family was among the relatively latest Armenian migrants to Istanbul. In many ways, he was

40 I find a noteworthy similarity between how Alen made sense of his wealth in relation to the Genocide and what Örs (2018) observed vis-à-vis post-exodus Greeks in Istanbul. One of her informants, a community leader, noted that there was “a lot of space to conduct business” for Greeks in Istanbul. Her particular encounter suggests a connection between migration and accumulation of capital by the remaining people. However, as she wrote, this sentiment was also “another way of looking at the grim emptiness of urban space” left behind by Greeks in Istanbul (209).
proud to be not from Istanbul as his friends were, and he often organized charities for poor Armenian families in the city or the current (Muslim) residents of his village of origin in Malatya. The reason for him to be taken as “a little too Armenian” was not limited to the fact that he cared for lower class Armenians or maintained relationships with his family’s place of origin. Alen also loved to talk and ‘advise’ openly about polarizing issues in the context of Turkey, including what stance to take on Genocide recognition and commemoration in the country, how to understand the ongoing Kurdish political movement, how to vote in general and municipal elections, and whether to take Armenian return converts to Christianity as a ‘conspiracy’. Concerning the last item on this list, he firmly believed that these people had made a pragmatic decision to survive whereas his family did not, and they could have easily been part of a hidden Islamicization project of the state.

Alen’s feelings of guilt are perhaps experienced by many other survivors in post-genocide contexts (see Miller and Miller 1993 for a collection of oral history interviews with the survivors of the Armenian Genocide). This feeling is usually (if not always) discussed in terms of survival as opposed to death, not in terms of wealth accumulated in the aftermath of genocide. My intention is not to analyse these feelings extensively here, as I believe this should be the subject matter of an individual thesis on this particular issue. What I am interested in is to understand how these feelings of guilt further inform us about the various distinctions among Armenians themselves as well as between Armenians and Turks. In her book on Jews in Germany after the Holocaust, Lynn Rapaport (1997) writes that the metaphor of the Holocaust is the lens through which Jews perceive and interpret everyday life in Germany, the tool they use to construct Jewish ethnic identity, and the idiom that affects the tone of Jewish-German relationships (12). Here, such a metaphor could exactly serve the task of understanding the distances between Armenians in Istanbul and elsewhere. In Margins of Philosophy, Derrida (1982) argues that metaphor reflects the ways we engage with the differences between things, instead of the similarities between those things. It exerts a power, the power of relating one thing with another and thus the power of establishing and projecting differences and forcing meaning to
change social positions (cited in Saybaşılı 2011: 15). As a result, the metaphor of the Genocide for informants such as Alen cannot be expected to have one rigid meaning, reduced to the history of this catastrophic event and its subsequent traumatic influence on its survivors and following generations. Drawing on Rapaport (1997), the metaphor should rather be understood as a tool and an idiom that indicates the tone of Armenian relationships to many others around them at an everyday level.

Unlike in the case of Jews in Germany, the Genocide is still a disputed issue among Armenians from Turkey (though this is not to suggest that there are no Holocaust deniers in Germany). As opposed to the public consensus in Armenia and the diaspora, I observed a panoply of approaches and definitions regarding what happened in 1915. This is not to suggest that my informants from Turkey denied the extent of the violence and extermination that their families experienced. Nevertheless, there was no univocality among them in naming what it was. A similar observation was made by Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin (2014), who, in their book, Grandchildren, wrote that survivors of the Genocide and following generations had a multiplicity of concepts to define it: “convoy, relocation, expulsion, migration, exile, slaughter, massacre, genocide or just ‘those days’” (xiii).

Such diversity in everyday terminology of past violence can be expected in a political setting where ‘the Armenian issue’ has been publicly and individually silenced for a century. As noted in Chapter III, a fundamental aspect of being Armenian in Turkey comes to the surface regarding the lack of public spaces for the exchange and circulation of narratives on the century-long history of violence that targeted non-Muslims in the country. This is why, for Armenians from Turkey, knowledge of the Genocide is highly personalized in that it is transmitted from one generation to the next through personal communication (Suciyan 2015: 18).

In her comparative study of the Jews and Armenians in post-war France, Maud Mandel (2003) argues that there has been a link between how the Jewish population remained remarkably visible in the decades following
World War II and how this visibility transformed the community’s public face to reflect a growing ethnic consciousness among them (161). Here I want to question whether the impossibility of such public visibility for Armenians in Turkey, which is based on the denial of the Genocide and the very particular construction of Turkishness, further determines the extent of differences between Armenians and the people around them. Following Mandel, in the next section I explore how public visibility has been an important element in the articulations of such difference.

Where Turks Talk and Armenians Listen

In the context of the island, lines of difference were constantly made, unmade, and re-made between Armenians and Muslims (i.e., Turks), between Armenians and other non-Muslims, and among Armenians and Muslims. For my informants from the island, ethnic demarcation has been a fundamental source of information for public behaviour. In other words, they knew how to read and make use of signs that were not necessarily based on a rigid definition of ethnicity, which for them referred to an ongoing process of classification as suggested by John Comaroff (1992). In other words, my informants were informed by the diversity of others surrounding them. As argued above, they were also informed by their own diversities as Armenian people and people with Armenian origins. The zonal constitution of Turkishness has been fundamental in defining both Armenians and Muslims as diverse. The following paragraphs depict a context in which difference is articulated by Armenians and reflected through particular forms of public behaviour. By focusing on discourses in the public sphere (and the public visibility of politically sensitive matters), I aim to understand how the Genocide and other forms of state-sponsored violence targeting non-Muslims in its aftermath can be viewed as metaphors in marking Armenian difference in contemporary Turkey.

After the two-week-long public occupation of Gezi Park and country-wide protests against the ruling government in the early summer of 2013,
environmentalist politics took a new form in Turkey. All through that summer, in most parks of major cities, ‘park forums’ mushroomed, where protesters, environmentalists, activists, and people who were merely curious met weekly or fortnightly. As the park forums scattered all around Istanbul, people on each of the Prince Islands started to organize their own forums, as well. On Kinaliada, where the majority of summer residents were Armenians from Turkey, a forum was organized in a similar way. First, posters appeared on trees and walls, and the Facebook page of Adalar Postası, literally the Islands’ Mail, announced that people willing to participate were welcome to join the discussion in Hrant Dink Park, the first public space named after the famous Turkish Armenian journalist who was murdered by ultranationalists in 2007. The Facebook page named after the forum, Kinaliada Forumu, where people from the island discuss issues related to life on the island, is still in use.

The first Kinaliada Forumu gathered at the end of June 2013 and attracted some 20 people. In the first forum only the rules of discussion were decided on, about listening, talking, and moderating, and a schedule for further meetings was made. Thus, in the first forum there was hardly any political discussion. It was decided that the forum would meet on Sunday evenings every fortnight. The second forum attracted a larger crowd of 40 to 50 people. Most seemed to be individual participants without any prior knowledge of each other. It seemed, even on the tiny island, that there were people who did not know each other. Over the course of conversation, it was revealed that almost all had summer houses on the island and spent the summer there. However, I noticed that there was limited participation from the people who lived on the island throughout the year. Lastly, I noticed participation by other people, such as activists from the mainland, who had no connection to the island but whom I knew from other park forums in mainland Istanbul.

People gathered around in a circle on the grass and the discussion started. The forum was being “observed” by other people, too. Some 20 undercover policemen from mainland Istanbul (i.e., not the local police of the island)
remained standing around the sitting crowd. The policemen did not bother to hide their identities. Their walkie-talkies and the constant sound of beeps clearly showed us who they were. As the discussion went on, they walked around the circle of participants, took photos of people (including me), and constantly talked to their supervisors on their cell phones. None of the participants seemed disturbed, or at least for a while we pretended that was the case. When someone from the group asked the police whether it was enough, the hidden tension and anxiety revealed itself. Others started shouting loudly and expressed their anger. Although the police and anxiety remained, the discussion continued and covered political topics, centring on two issues: the social and environmental problems of the island, and how to engage with the mass demonstrations that were going on in the rest of Turkey.

In this second forum, one instance made me realize that it was only Muslim Turks who did the talking. On this “Armenian island” (Kaymak 2016), where Armenians believed they constituted the majority (in the absence of official population numbers), their participation was overshadowed by politically engaged Muslim Turks. Near the end of the debate, one young Turkish woman raised her hand for permission from the moderator to talk and asked everyone about how to show solidarity with the political protests going on in the rest of Turkey. She suggested that the people of the island should get involved in these protests around the country, like the people in mainland Istanbul. Many people nodded, and several other speakers expressed that they shared the same feelings of solidarity with the rest of Turkey. After the last speaker finished his sentence, the moderator asked whether it was time to end this second forum. A moment of silence was broken when the moderator saw a woman in her mid-fifties, silent but raising one hand in the air, murmuring something that the rest could not hear. The moderator announced that the floor was hers and told her to speak up.

I understood that she was Armenian from her accent and the content of her speech. She was holding her neck delicately with her one hand, while still having one hand raised in the air, making slow moves to accompany her
explanations. She told the crowd that it was not possible for her to take part in the suggested solidarity protests in any form; she simply could not do it. Her family’s yer (meaning not only place but also home, location, ground, and even earth in Turkish) was known by the adahlar, the islanders. She was afraid that her house could easily become a target of mob-driven violence if she participated in protests. At that point, other Armenian women of similar age joined her, nodding their heads. One of the women said that while coming to the forum she walked through the kahvehane, the traditional coffee shop, passing through the gaze of adanın yerlisi (lit. natives of the island). Yerimizi biliyorlar she whispered, meaning they knew the location of her house. Another woman uttered biz 6-7 Eylül’ü yaşadık, meaning that she had lived through the Pogroms of September 1955. This group of Armenian women, having now physically gotten closer to each other and standing up behind the circle of people seated on the ground, started murmuring again and telling everyone around them that they knew what happened when you attracted the attention of a mob in Turkey.

The forum ended with clear opposition between Armenians and Muslim Turks, with different histories and memories, political and social engagements, and agendas. The Turkish majority at the forum respected these anxieties and kept silent while I saw in their faces that they did know how to respond. At that point it seemed to me that they did not deny what happened in 1955. It became evident that the forum of Kınalıada could show no signs of solidarity with the rest of the park forums and protests that went on for the rest of the summer. Nevertheless, the forum kept meeting every fortnight, focusing on the issues that mattered to the island, which were local and concerned only the locals.

Biz 6-7 Eylül’ü yaşadık was the phrase I heard most during my research in Istanbul. It was an answer several times in response to my questioning of why my informants had moved from one Istanbul neighbourhood to another neighbourhood in the decades before I conducted my research. It was a warning by my Armenian neighbour upstairs in my Kurtuluş apartment when he learned that I did not lock the building door every evening after 9 pm. It
was an explanation when a young Armenian woman from Istanbul told me about her reasons for moving to Paris in 2005 (50 years after the Pogroms). And in the forum described above, it was a call to show respect and recognize the extent of the violence experienced by Armenians (and other non-Muslims).

Over the course of my fieldwork, I observed that for most Armenians from Turkey, the Pogroms of September 1955 were a more significant trope than the 1915 Genocide. Conversation between Armenians and Turks often revealed that most people from the latter group did not understand why it was necessary to keep a low profile in Turkey. The second meeting of the forum of Kınalıada developed in such an environment, where Turks attempted to persuade Armenians to take action and join in solidarity with those who were protesting. Eventually, over the course of the summer, the islanders – both Armenians and Muslim Turks alike – organized several days to clean the streets of the island, found volunteers to clean the seabed, and protested against the increasing number of irresponsible cyclists, never making explicit criticisms against the ruling central government. In stark contrast to other forums held in other Istanbul neighbourhoods, where the prime minister and his cabinet were severely criticized and held responsible for the brutal police violence meted out against protesters, on Kınalıada only environmental issues of the island were on the agenda. The hot political discussions of other park forums of Istanbul (with predominantly Turkish audiences) did not make their way to the island’s forum.

Here, I argue that the rationale put forth by the middle-aged Armenian women about keeping a low profile in light of a long history of violence is indicative of different conditions of public visibility. Before checking the validity of this argument, we need to go over the terminologies of difference and distance used by the Armenian women during the island forum. As noted, yer in Turkish can refer to different but interrelated concepts: it can denote place, ground, home, or location. It is related to where one physically is, although it can refer to a distant place such as where someone is from. I suggest that yer is an articulation of a bond between where one lived and
lives, a powerful metaphor in Turkish to denote belonging and place-making. The woman’s comment, yerimizi biliyorlar (with a triple meaning of “they know our place”, “they know where we are”, or “they know where our houses are located”), demonstrates a self-articulation of difference at various levels. Moreover, the most important aspect of the word echoes in the term yerli, simultaneously meaning ‘the local’ and ‘the native’ with -li being a suffix denoting ownership and place of origin in Turkish (Delaney 1991: 204; Mills 2010: 1; Brink-Danan 2012: 8). The suffix is crucial for understanding the link between belonging and ownership in Turkish.

The meaning of adah (with ada meaning island and -li again the suffix denoting ownership and belonging), a person from the island, changed according to context. It was often a hot discussion topic among Armenians with houses on the island to decide who was gerçek adah (lit. real islander), yeni adah (lit. new islander), eski adah (lit. old islander), and adanın yerlisi (lit. native of the island). For Armenians with summer houses on the island, gerçek adah exclusively referred to Armenians who had owned houses on the island for at least three generations. Yeni adah and eski adah could refer to both Armenians and non-Armenians, including the small number of Greeks and Muslim Turks with summer houses on the island. The latter term does not, however, refer to Assyrians who moved to the island and Istanbul increasingly after the 1980s (see the next chapter for how other non-Muslim populations like Assyrians and Greeks are understood as lesser or more proper islanders, respectively, by Armenians). Adanın yerlisi had a more nuanced meaning, referring to the people who lived on the island all year long, which also denoted that they could not afford to have a second house in Istanbul. These people were Muslim Turks and Kurds who owned shops or ran other businesses in the service sector, implying a deep class difference from the middle and upper class Armenians who came to the island only during summer. However, the term does not refer to the teachers, firemen, or police who live on the island all year long. Nor does it refer to the increasing population of Assyrians or the handful of Greeks. It specifically refers to the working class of the island.
Although the minority status of Armenians on the mainland was reversed on the island, the terms yer, yerli, and adanın yerlisi, with references to social roles as natives and locals on the island, drew on several overlapping articulations of Armenian difference. Articulating who was local or native to the island also indicated who was a yabancı, at least according to my Armenian informants. The term, with its double meaning as ‘stranger to somewhere’ and ‘a person who comes from another country’, has emerged as a burdensome stigma for non-Muslims in Turkey. Their distances to the purposefully imagined and crafted centres of Turkishness denied them becoming yerli in Turkey, their place of origin. This is why the islands have often been imagined as a “foreign country” (in Turkish: yabancı ülke) by the Turkish Muslim majority of the country, due to the fact that they have considerable Greek, Armenian, and Jewish populations (Brink-Danan 2012). The previous chapter demonstrated that these populations have long been imagined as foreigners in Turkey, as they were pushed to the outermost zone of Turkishness. It is in this sense that I find similarities between the local category of yerli on the island and the state-imposed category of the Turk, as both projected and managed distances between the diverse populations of the island and the country, respectively.

It Is Always “Outside” on the Inhabited Island

Rapaport (1997) argues that Jews in post-Holocaust Germany live in invisible ghettos, which prevent free access for other Germans unless Jews permit them. She writes that “it is invisible because there are no physical barriers such as ghetto gates or walls to effectively block their contact with the city or to impede them from developing social relationships with Germans” (4). As the ghetto does not refer to the physical dimensions of a neighbourhood in an urban setting, it refers to networks of communication, daily practices of life, and a shared memory of past violence that sets Jews apart from non-Jews. As a result, the invisible ghetto appears more of a voluntary zone of intimacy that Jews build from inside.
There are a number of ways to think about the island context in Istanbul as forming an invisible ghetto. Unlike the invisible ghetto, the island’s isolation has a material dimension. It is physically surrounded by the sea and generally inaccessible to the wider public besides the limited number of people allowed by the passenger capacity of boats per day. However, there are also similarities between the island and the invisible ghetto. For my informants, the island itself is a nodal point within a network of communication that goes beyond its natural borders, daily practices of life, and metaphors of difference that set apart Armenians from other Armenians, and Armenians from Turks.

Raised in different Istanbul neighbourhoods with considerable Armenian populations such as Yeşilköy, Kadıköy, or Kurtuluş, for my informants the island became a space where they came to know other Armenians from other parts of the city. As one of my informants put, the island was a “meeting point” (in Turkish: buluşma noktası). A group of friends in their mid-30s epitomized this situation. They were all from different parts of the city, with different levels of language competence in Armenian. Most were children of mixed marriages (involving members of the Armenian Gregorian and Armenian Catholic or Greek Orthodox Church, but rarely Muslims), who studied in different schools and pursued different careers but had spent the summers together since childhood. Apart from sharing personal histories of going to the island (in Turkish: adaya çıkmak) every year, they were all upper middle class. They inherited houses from their families not only on the island but also in Istanbul proper. They all had university degrees and either worked for large international companies or ran their own businesses with capital they received from their families. Most did not speak Armenian as fluent as a foreign language like English or French, which they learned in Istanbul’s prestigious private schools if they did not study at an Armenian high school. They were all well-travelled, especially in Europe, but not in Turkey, with the few exceptions of holiday hubs in the Mediterranean, and they took certain pride in having Greek or Jewish friends they came to know from the other islands within the Prince Islands Archipelago and Muslim Turkish friends from school and professional life. One of the most recurrent themes in our conversations was that they all wanted to raise their children
as dünyada vatandaş (lit. world citizen) as opposed to their own families or other Armenians in Istanbul (see the next chapter for more on these ideas of ‘island cosmopolitanism’).

This group maintained their friendship by spending intensive time together every summer. Furthermore, all of them stated that the island was the first place where they had met other Armenians, both from Istanbul and around the world. For them, the 1990s (when they were teenagers) marked a period of time when “the island was like the diaspora”, as many Armenian families who had left Istanbul for other countries in earlier decades started to bring their children to the island. Their sentiment did not refer to a diasporization of Istanbul vis-à-vis an imagined homeland, but emphasized how the island became a transnational space where many languages including English, French, and Spanish were spoken and heard, and many Armenians from the island had an opportunity to not only meet distant family but also get acquainted with international friends. The 1990s marked a historical moment for Istanbul in which the island became a “centre of gravity” (Hanafi 2003) in which the networks of the diaspora stretched to Istanbul and repositioned the city as a nodal point within the transnational networks of globally dispersed Armenians.41

When I interviewed recently married couples from this circle of friends about their children’s future education in Turkey, it emerged that they all primarily relied on their connection to the island as a vital source of Armenian language education for their children. Despite important differences in their thinking on whether to send children to Armenian schools, mixed schools, colleges, or abroad, they were all united in making their children spend summers on the island. This was why the island was seen as a guarantee among these couples in providing a link between Armenian individuals and their imagined community of Armenians (see also Kaymak 2016: 377). One

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41 This historical moment of emergence of the island as a nodal point in the 1990s corresponds to a time period in which Turkey decided to open up to the world through a series of liberalization projects initiated by the late prime minister and president Turgut Özal. As many informants noted, Turkey became accessible once again to Armenians from all around the world with the end of the politically oppressive previous decade shaped by the military coup of 1980.
couple I interviewed in Kurtuluş comprised a mother and father who studied in a mixed Turkish school and an Armenian school, respectively. Both were fluent in Armenian and they wanted their children to learn the language as well. The mother wanted their children to be open to the world and learn English or German properly at school, while the father believed that the children should learn Armenian first. It was in this context that the father explained to me that “Armenians from Istanbul did not have the historical neighbourhoods such as Samatya, Kumkapı, or Kurtuluş anymore; they only had the island.” That was precisely why the family had a summer house there, no matter what they finally decided regarding their children’s education. In the end, the couple decided to send their children to an Armenian primary school and a mixed high school so that they could learn how to read and write in Armenian (in addition to speaking the language) while in the later stages of their education they could get to know the wider social universe in Turkey and be prepared for becoming “world citizens” through learning a foreign language.

While being a meeting place for Armenians from Istanbul and abroad, the island also informed islanders about their differences from other Armenians and Turks who did not have houses there. In fact, most Armenian families from Istanbul do not have houses on the island. Several lower class Armenian families instead rented summer houses in apartment blocks in Çınarcık, on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara. Wealthier families abandoned their houses on the island for villas in Bodrum and Çeşme, Turkey’s major holiday hubs (see also Kaymak 2016: 318). This is how having a house on the island implies class differences among Armenians. The contemporary residents of the island are (upper) middle class with high levels of education and can afford to send their children to private schools and universities and go for holidays in Europe or North America once a year, but nevertheless cannot buy houses on the Mediterranean coast as wealthier Armenians did. As noted earlier in this chapter, most of them inherited their island houses from their families and in some cases their family homes were demolished to construct apartments to provide flats for each member of the family. In many
cases, those families also acquired an extra one or two flats to rent to other Armenians (or Assyrians) on an annual basis.

Apart from the class differences that are at play between Armenians who have summer houses on the island and those who have summer houses elsewhere or who do not have summer houses at all, the stigmatization of the island as a ‘foreign country’ and non-Muslims in general as ‘foreigners’ in Turkey demarcates the lines along which my informants knew to emphasize or hide their relationships to the island. For instance, Brink-Danan (2012) writes that Turkish Jews know not only about different ways of being, but also the contexts in which one should perform difference (25). I observed similar situations in which my Armenian informants kept the fact that they owned houses on the island a secret from strangers in various encounters in Istanbul proper and on some occasions from me during our first meetings – indicating that having a house on the island implied a blurred family genealogy vis-à-vis Turkishness. In one case, I would not find out that a woman I met at an Armenian friend’s birthday party in central Istanbul had a family house on the island for three generations until we ran across each other randomly on the streets of the island. She was going home with grocery bags on a weekend morning and when I greeted her and said that I did not know that she spent the summers on the island, she responded that I probably did not remember clearly. When I insisted about what I remembered, she told me that she did not feel comfortable letting strangers in Istanbul know that she was a non-Muslim.

Her revelation would not have happened had our paths not crossed on the island. It seems that the cartographic lines separating the island and the mainland correspond to many other imagined, constructed, and crafted divisions between Armenians and Turks. As the opening quote revealed, Deleuze, in Desert Islands (2004), writes that human beings can only live on an island if they can forget what it represents; otherwise, the island would stay deserted (cited in Saybaşı 2011: 178). In this view, the island is a materialization of a criticism against the unity of the state and its absolutist impositions of belonging (179). I cannot discuss here whether this holds valid
as an anthropological argument for all islands. Nevertheless, it is still relevant to note that in the political context of Turkey, where non-Muslims are imagined as ‘foreigners’, Kınalıada and the other nearby islands of the archipelago are often imagined in a way that validates Deleuze’s suggestion. As indicated, with their disproportionately high numbers of non-Muslim inhabitants in comparison to the rest of Turkey, the islands are imagined as a zone beyond the unity represented by the nation-state, thus as a ‘foreign land’.

For the Muslim audience in the country, direct links with the island expose the relative distance of non-Muslims to the zones of Turkishness. It is in this sense that the island is also ‘a stigmatizing island’ and widely understood as an ‘outside’ for my informants. This is not to refute that the island constitutes an ‘inside’ where Armenians from different parts of the city (and the world) know that they will meet other Armenians. However, in a political context where distances between inner and outer zones of Turkishness mark Armenians (and other non-Muslims) as outsiders (as lesser Turks and foreigners), exposing one’s connection to the island turns this inside permanently out. This is how, on the island, the distinctions between public and private spheres, where differences would be hidden and exposed, respectively, collapse. The island is where everyone’s ‘place’ (in Turkish: yer) is known to everyone else.

I believe the collapse of privacy on the island is precisely related to the fact that Kınalıada is a space that is stigmatized and marked as different (in the sense that it is imagined as a foreign territory). In places with different histories in relation to the making of ‘Turks’ and ‘foreigners’ in Turkey, we could expect different outcomes depending on their dynamics. For instance, Saybaşılı (2008) notes that Esra Ersen, a Turkish video artist, in Brothers and Sisters (2003) brings our attention to the places where African migrants feel comfortable within the urban fabric of Istanbul. She notes that these migrants only feel at ease in places that could be found in any city, like night clubs, shopping malls, parks, hotels, and McDonald’s (Saybaşılı 2008: 158). It appears that it is in these places of anonymity that migrants feel racially
unmarked and safe – which might be further indicative of their articulations of an inside that we cannot test here. Saybaşılı observes the same situation in her own research in a Kurdish migrant neighbourhood in central Istanbul, which provides a basis for further discussion in relation to my Armenian informants from Istanbul:

The narrow and maze-like streets of Tarlabası, which do not lead to any common square but fall back upon themselves, can be considered as ‘non-places’ and indefinite spaces. These streets can only impose isolation rather than any form of communication, interaction or participation. They prevent the chance encounter between diverse population and the city dweller. The public space of the inhabitants of Tarlabasi, if there is any, is where they chat in front of their doors that open onto the corridor-like streets. A young Kurd, sitting on the stairs in front of his house, complained that the police always asked for his ID whenever he went to sell mussels on İstiklal Street, only one boulevard away. In the 1990s, while the political geography of sovereignty focused on border wars against Kurds, the urban geography focused on a visual purity that produced continuity between being Kurdish and being a PKK-terrorist. This Kurdish man is reminded that he does not belong there (Saybaşılı 1998: 173-174).

Spatial practices are key factors in the constitution of citizenship (İşin 2002: 35) and the making of foreigners (as opposed to citizens) (Nyers 2003: 1089). The above quotation depicts a particular moment in the history of Istanbul where the public spaces of the city are no longer accessible to the politically marked bodies of Kurds, unless they can hide their differences or leave them behind. The only places where they can hide their difference are the various other spaces within the city where the number of circulating people brings anonymity. Kınlıada is no such place for my informants. In the case of the island, the number of circulating people does not lead to a situation where Armenians can unperform their difference from the Muslim adamın yerlisi (lit. native of the island).

If the physical organization of urban space is an expression of citizenship regimes (İşin 2002: 35) (also cited in Nyers 2003: 1079-80), what spatial arrangements and configurations materialize the spatial expressions of the foreigner (1080)? One may think that the island is a natural formation enclosed by the sea, yet the island is also a political landscape that is ‘imagined’ and ‘crafted’ (see Navaro-Yashin 2012) as different. This is why, over the course of my research and the process of writing this chapter, I
approached various articulations of insides and outsides as everyday articulations of these differences that imagined Turks as natives/locals (in Turkish: yerli) and non-Muslims as foreigners (in Turkish: yabancı).

I believe, at least in the case of my Armenian informants from the island, that it is in the centrality of the notion of one’s own place (yer) and through its various articulations and manifestations that non-Muslim difference is played out in the constitution of insides and outsides, and vice versa. As this chapter reveals, one’s own place relates not only to places of origin or dwelling but is also defined in relation to one’s distances to the innermost zone of Turkishness. In this context, yerli should be understood not as where one has yer – a place or a point of origin – but as where others think that one is yerli. As a result, articulations of yerli cut through various insides and outsides without necessarily following articulations of bonds with, belonging to, or historical anteriority on the island: yer can be either an inside or an outside, and sometimes both. However, the island is a context where Armenians can never be yerli.

**Conclusion**

Armenians on the island do not feel as insiders in a place that they imagine as a meeting point for Armenians in Turkey and abroad. This is because, despite being a zone of accessibility, intimacy, and connectedness between Armenians, the island has a panopticon-like quality in such a way that my informants cannot hide or leave behind their differences (in relation to the category of the Turk) from the gaze of the adann yerlisi (lit. native of the island) and the state. As shown in the latter part of this chapter, Armenians on the island are keenly aware of their exteriority vis-à-vis zones of Turkishness, as well as the Turkish public imagination of the islands as a foreign country. This situation is reflected in the constant reproduction of the dichotomy between yerli (lit. local or native) and yabancı (lit. foreigner) in Turkish.
It is in this context that the island is not an island anymore. Although it is still off the coast as an independent physical entity surrounded by a body of water, it is not somewhere where the inhabitants could easily forget what it represents. As much as it is surrounded by water, it is enclosed by the discourse and practices of nation-building in contemporary Turkey. Its proximity to the practices of state power makes it impossible to think about it as an autonomous entity. As Deleuze (2004) imagined, the island should be an island as long as it is deserted, cut off from any links to the mainland (and the state).

The next chapter starts where this one leaves off and continues dealing with issues related to the articulation of difference by Armenians on the island. It displays how for Armenians each island within the Prince Islands Archipelago is understood as a materialization of different non-Muslim (Armenian, Greek, and Jewish) communities. It examines how everyday problems in basic municipal services such as electricity, healthcare, security, and transportation and dealing with environmental issues such as sea pollution and the adverse effects of mass tourism give shape to Kınalıada as “an Armenian island”.
CHAPTER VI: A Failed Community, A Re-Made Community

I am not sure whether it was that night, or another night, whether we were coming back from a concert or play, but a snatcher stole Garo’s bag while we were walking in one of the streets as a group of people. Thank God there was nothing inside the bag besides cigarettes and matches; there was nothing to worry about...Garo became very upset, but I laughed a lot. Garo became upset because he went through a huge disappointment. He is one of those who had positive prejudices about Armenia. Probably a young boy, just because of the way we behaved, thought we were stupid tourists just waiting to be robbed. Just like in Istanbul...

[...]

As soon as I realized the situation, I said “Thank heavens. I thought I was in Istanbul, for a moment; now my homesickness is over.” But Garo was so upset... No waaaaay an Armenian happens to be a thiefffff... Ah ah, it happens so simply... Anyone can be [a thief]. Especially when there is so much poverty... (Bercuhi Berberyan, Someone from Turkey in Armenia 2009: 157) (in Turkish: Ermenistan’da Bir Türkiyeli) (my own translation).

Introduction

There is no popular Armenian literature from Istanbul about encounters with Armenians from the Republic of Armenia. The excerpt above is from a book about a journalist’s first visit to Armenia, a columnist for Turkey’s major Armenian newspaper, Agos. The book is full of depictions of moments when the author is shocked, surprised, and homesick for Istanbul upon encountering Armenians from Armenia. She writes that she does not belong in Armenia, although this sense of non-belonging is often expressed through racist and snobbish comparisons between Armenians from Turkey and Armenia. She compares the language, food, taste, public mood, and even the bodies of Armenians from Armenia to people from Turkey (in other words, not only Armenians from Istanbul, but Turks as she widely refers to them). As seen in the introductory quote, in the moment when her friend’s wallet is stolen, her friend’s humiliation satirically paves the way for her to finally
accept that there was something she found similar between her homeland (she uses the word *vatan* in Turkish), i.e., Turkey, and Armenia.42

Her comparison of Armenians from Turkey and Armenians from the Republic is similarly visible in the terminology she uses to refer to each group. In cases where she only refers to the former group or both groups, she uses the word *Ermeni* (lit. Armenian). However, in cases where she refers exclusively to the latter group she uses the word *Ermenistanlı* (lit. someone from Armenia). In everyday speech among Armenians from Istanbul, the word would be changed with *Hayastanlı*, an Armenian and Turkish composite word (*Hayastan* meaning Armenia in Armenian and -*lı* the Turkish suffix denoting place of origin). This is partially because both the Turkish and Armenian languages use terms to distinguish between one’s communal affiliation, place of origin, citizenship, and even language

42 It is important to note that the terminology of homeland she uses has a more nuanced definition than *memleket*, which is a personal or familial place of origin (see Chapter II for more on this). *Memleket* emphasizes direct links between a person and a particular village, town, or province in Turkey or ex-Ottoman territories. However, *vatan* refers to a homeland for all, thus stressing the imagined unity of people who live within its boundaries.
spoken. It should be noted that these distinctions and the diversity of terms and notions are not simply a matter of linguistics. In the diaspora, “the lexical proliferation is one mark of the diachronically layered complexity of thought and feeling concerning coerced and voluntary migrancy” (Töloşyan 2000: 119-120). As this chapter demonstrates, in Istanbul, the diversity of terms expressing place-specific and community-based identifications works towards reiterating the long-gone centrality of a post-genocide society within the globally dispersed Armenian world.

The previous chapter described how social anxieties about being marked as a foreigner in Turkey were reflected in my informants’ daily usage of terms such as yer, with its multiple meanings of home, place, ground, and even earth, and yerli, with its dual meanings of ‘the local’ and ‘the native’. This situation was primarily based on the zonal constitution of Turkishness, with each zone indicating a different form of affinity and relationship between the state and its citizens. While this situation had considerable impact on how my Armenian informants read their own difference in relation to others, in this

43 For instance, if we take the example of the word ‘Italian’ in the English language, we understand whether it is used as an adjective (denoting a place of origin) or a noun (denoting a language) from the context of the sentence: ‘Italian’ could refer to an Italian person, Italian food, or Italian language. In Turkish, however İtalyan refers to an Italian person and İtalyanca to Italian language, but İtalyahtı (again with the -h suffix) could refer both to a place of origin and a status of citizenship. As the language allows such distinction, it also provides a way for expressing diversity. However, most Muslim Turks would not refer to themselves as Türkiyeli, but only as Türk, as they rarely feel contested about how to express their place of origin in everyday speech. As the following pages of this chapter will show, in the case of non-Muslim Turkish citizens, the situation would be different – but without following any rigid definition or agreeing on a consensus about the meaning of the two terms. Armenians from Turkey simultaneously and interchangeably refer to themselves as Türk and Türkiyeli. This is because the former – despite its ethnicized baggage – allows an expression of local-ness through shared citizenship. Such interchangeability of terms, however, is permanently reversed in order to distinguish Armenians from Turkey and Armenia. Although Ermeni (lit. Armenian) refers to all Armenians in Turkish, the word is almost never used to refer to Armenians from Armenia. Instead, Ermenistanlı (lit. someone from Armenia or someone with Armenian citizenship) substitutes for the former, necessarily buttressing the place-specific component of identification. Finally, both Western and Eastern Armenian languages similarly allow for such nuanced articulations of people and their local and communal affiliations: Hay and Hayastantsi in Armenian refer to the same distinction between Ermeni and Ermenistanlı in Turkish, although Armenians from Istanbul would more often refer to the latter as Hayastanlı, by collaging the Armenian word with the Turkish suffix.
chapter, I explore more Armenian perspectives on the issue. The island is still a vital point of analysis, as dwelling on and travelling to the island are social and physical contexts in which differences are re-articulated and reproduced. In the following pages, this chapter delves into a new aspect of managing and re-producing difference, this time by studying the frequently circulating ‘metaphors of failure’ in relation to the making of an Armenian community of Kınalıada. As noted in the previous chapter, these metaphors establish the links between things through an emphasis on difference instead of similarities (Derrida 1982) (see also Saybaşılı 2008) and set the tone between people and those they understand as outsiders in relation to their imagined community (Rapaport 1997). In a world where communities are built not despite but ‘thanks to lack of consensus’ and heated discussion on defining borders and membership (Markowitz 1993; Pattie 1997), these metaphors of failure expectedly contribute to the formation of a community of Armenians in the context of Kınalıada in Istanbul. In analysing community-making through the circulation of these complex narratives and ideas about failure, the chapter identifies three performative sites in which Armenians of Kınalıada constantly draw boundaries between their imagined community and those of others. First, the chapter displays the general views on what sets Armenians apart from the two other major non-Muslim communities in Istanbul, Greeks and Jews. Second, it focuses on the ways Kınalıada is found peculiar in relation to other inhabited islands within the Prince Islands Archipelago, especially vis-à-vis neighbouring Burgazada with an imagined Jewish majority. Each island is understood as a materialization of a distinct non-Muslim or unorthodox Muslim space (see also Kaymak 2016: 362). In other words, the everyday articulations of the difference of Kınalıada from the other islands in the archipelago are fundamentally embedded in the articulations of Armenian difference from Greeks and Jews. Third, the chapter invests in portraying how these imagined differences between these non-Muslim communities involve comparing their relationships to the wider world. It is at this last level of everyday comparison that relationships to Armenian migrants enter the picture as a component in drawing the line between what constitutes ‘us’ and ‘them’.
It Takes One to Know One on the Island

I never took the boat alone during my first research visits to the island. There was always an Armenian friend accompanying me, and during the 50-minute journey to the island from Istanbul’s Kabataş pier, there were always a wide range of issues to discuss. One of our favoured discussion topics was whether my Armenian friends could identify other Armenians in a mixed and crowded environment like the boat. Every time I took the boat with them, my informants always seemed assured in identifying who was who. First, they would distinguish who they knew from the island. They would often explain how they came to know the person in question, or how that person was related to another friend or acquaintance from the island. Second, they would distinguish those they knew from boat journeys, meaning familiar faces from the other islands of the Prince Islands Archipelago. On the islands, almost everyone, but especially those who commuted from their summer houses to their jobs in Istanbul, always took the boat at the same time every day. This is
how many people from the islands came to know people from other islands. Asked how they knew each other, a common response to hear would be “This is a friend from the 8:25 boat.” Third, there were many others that my informants did not know from either the islands or from boat journeys. They would nevertheless start identifying who amongst these strangers was Armenian, Jewish, Greek, and Turkish, seemingly easily. Each time, I asked them how they could know about other people’s ethnic background, because everyone looked the same to my untrained eyes. They did not know how they did it, but often explained that it had to be something related to the island (in Turkish: adayla ilgili bir şey). Could it be because the island consisted of an outside for everyone, including Armenians and Muslims, where no one could escape the gaze of each other?

As a start to answering this question, it was clear that Armenians from the island possessed an intimate knowledge on how to read difference – and how to re-produce it. They were equipped with a series of reference points to make sense of in a mixed environment such as the boat. Whether or not they were correct in their identifications of other people, they had a collective knowledge of difference and meaning that enabled them to read others as coming from distinct communities. In this chapter I examine the role of such knowledge in the ways my Armenian informants accounted for their own difference (from Muslims and other non-Muslims) and their own diversity (as a group of people). In other words, I examine the relationships between everyday practices of difference of others as a tool to take position over the course of “public life” (Navaro-Yashin 2002) in Istanbul and difference of the self as an input in community-making.

In his article “It Takes One to Know One”, Michael Herzfeld (1995) writes that without understanding the significance of the ways in which people knew about each other at home, we would be at a loss to decipher the kinds of sense they make of others (125). Based on his ethnography of the town of Rethimnos in Crete, he asks: “What is it that Greeks ‘know’ about each other, and that they equally know foreigners not to possess? How do they acquire this form of knowledge?” (Ibid.). Moreover, in a country where Armenians
were made into ‘foreigners’, their distances to other non-Muslim minorities and the Muslim majority (i.e., Turks and Kurds) expose a complex map of difference and affinity. The previous chapter showed how metaphors and memories of past violence set the tones of relationships between Armenians and Muslims in the context of the island and Turkey in general. In this chapter, I continue pursuing a similar agenda, this time introducing three new levels of analysis that I identified as setting the tones of relationships between Armenians and other non-Muslims in Turkey (including migrants from Armenia). Apart from the busy boats, on the island itself I observed several other contexts where Armenians encountered other non-Muslims and Muslim Turks and compared, located, and critiqued those others around them vis-à-vis their survival as a community. However, the following passage and pages demonstrate how community-making is infused with a sense of lack of solidarity – and even hostility and competition – among its members. By referring back to the discussion in Chapter II, this approach to community takes it as an unsettled ground of constant discussion without any prospect of reaching a consensus or conclusion on defining the terms of membership (Markowitz 1993; Pattie 1997).

Rethemniots who feel humiliated by some bureaucratic embarrassment are always willing to accuse generic neighbours of having betrayed them to the authorities; as with evil eye accusations, which are never person-specific, such devices allow one to seek a face-saving explanation in the generalized evil said to lurk in the community without having to risk social rupture by charging some specific individual with the offence. In the same way, the generic charge that Rethemniots are incapable of working together is often cited in Rethemnos as the reason for the collapse of the many attempts to create local industrial co-operatives. [...] [These] provide the basis for a sense of cultural solidarity that excludes outsiders precisely because it must deny the latter any access to such potentially damaging insight. Thus, the very set of concepts that appears to pit Greek against Greek, and Rethemniot against Rethemniot, is at the same time the affective disposition that binds them together (Herzfeld 1995: 130) (emphasis mine).

Similar to the Rethemniots referred to in Herzfeld’s work, my Armenian informants from Istanbul have particular views on their own community, which, despite the vast differences and various forms of dissent among its members, binds them together. I suggest it is through a metaphor of a ‘failed
community’ (in relation to the ways they imagined Greek and Jewish communities both in Turkey and abroad), which functions as a binding power upon them. Failure here should not be understood as a strictly defined term that is necessarily the opposite of success. Instead, it should be taken as a lens through which Armenians from Istanbul defined the obstacles they faced in their efforts to attain a better life. This is how failure involves a temporal aspect. It informs people about earlier histories and uncompleted processes; however, it is a productive ‘way of looking at things’ because it motivates social actors to continue their quest for ‘perfection’ and ‘try once again’ (Carroll, Jeevendrampilai, and Parkhurst 2017) (see also Hüsken 2007). There is a performative side to failure, in which participants of public routines and rituals share involvement and thus a sense of commonality (Schieffelin 1996; 2006).

It is important to stress here that my informants did not necessarily feel responsible for this imagined failure at an individual level; their constant critique of other Armenians reflected what they believed to share with other Armenians. It is in this sense that self-criticism and humiliation are fundamental elements in the formulation of affinity among Armenians in Istanbul, a situation that I find similar to what Michael Herzfeld observed in the context in Greece. “Cultural intimacy”, as coined by Herzfeld (1997), refers to “the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” (3). In Nostalgia for the Modern, Esra Özyürek writes about how such intimacy operates within the context of contemporary Turkey:

Intimacy of this kind needs to be expressed apart from the foreign gaze if it is to facilitate a sense of exclusive connection. At the same time, however, cultural intimacy is shaped by the knowledge that outsiders might be watching; hence it constantly reminds its performers and spectators of the possibility of embarrassment should intimate things become visible beyond contexts of national containment (Özyürek 2006: 78).

Likewise, I identified a specific performative site in which such intimacy was constituted. Constant comparison by Armenians to others around them both
distinguished between who was Armenian and who was not, and buttressed a sense of exclusive connection as described by Özyürek above. There are at least three levels of comparison that my Armenian informants from Istanbul are engaged with. First, I found my informants constantly comparing the Armenian community of Istanbul to the Greek and Jewish communities of the city. At this level, comparison is not based on understanding differences between Armenian individuals and others, but thinking about Armenian and other communities as distinct units of their own. Jews are usually praised for their ability to help each other, maintain solidarity as a closed community, and keep the welfare of the community members at an optimum level. This stereotype explains why, when faced with difficulties and a lack of help from friends and acquaintances, I often heard my Armenian informants say in Turkish “Yahudiler olsaydı böyle yapmazdı” (“Jews would not have behaved in this way”). Jews are also believed to be pragmatic, opportunistic, and efficient workers, skilled at solving community-related problems immediately. Contrary to this, Greeks are admired for other reasons; they are usually praised for their insistence on speaking their own language and preserving their culture, and their openness to the wider world, despite their dramatically diminishing population. They are believed to be less business-oriented than Jews and adept at enjoying life no matter what. Every time I had food or drinks with Armenian informants at a restaurant run by Greeks from Istanbul, they suggested that the Greek recipes were better than the Armenian and Turkish recipes. Similarly, every time they went on holidays, they brought olive oil, snacks, or alcohol from Greece as gifts to friends and I heard them saying “Rumlar bu işten anlıyor” (lit. “Greeks know how to do it”).

Jews and Greeks are admired for different reasons that seem roughly mutually exclusive. To begin with, I can only speculate that these attributions about Jews (for being a closed community and ambitious) and Greeks (for being an open community and enjoying life) are deeply buried in the contemporary histories of anti-Semitism in the country and Hellenophilia (a
term suggested by one of my informants) among Armenians from Istanbul.44 It is important to comprehend here that these attributions show two opposite
reference points – and hence two possible alternatives – for Armenians in
Istanbul to locate their own community. On many different occasions, I heard
people criticizing the members of their imagined Armenian community for
the lack of attributes they admired in these non-Muslim others. I made a
partial list of what my informants uttered:

“Just like the Turks, Armenians are so lazy. They cannot do anything
without the help of others” (in Turkish: Ermeniler de Türkler gibi çok
tembel. Başkalarının yardımı olmadan bir şey yapamazlar).

As opposed to this, they also constantly suggested that:

“Just like the Turks, Armenians are always overworking. They do not
know how to enjoy life and arts” (in Turkish: Ermeniler de Türkler gibi fazla
çalışıyor. Hayattan ve sanattan zevk almayı bilmiyorlar).

A less frequent theme was:

“Just like the Turks, Armenians are so selfish. They do not help each
other” (in Turkish: Ermeniler de Türkler gibi bencil. Birbirlerine yardım
etmezler).

The opposite of the above suggestion also underlined the similarity between
Armenians and the Turks:

“Just like the Turks, Armenians have not succeeded in becoming
individuals. It is impossible to do something alone” (in Turkish: Ermeniler de
aynı Türkler gibi birey olamamış. Tek başına bir şey yapmak imkansız).

44 Most of my informants genuinely believed in conspiracy theories centred around
the impact of Jews, Israel, and Jewish lobbies in international politics and the global
economy. The reluctance of Israeli governments to recognize the Armenian
Genocide is also widely perceived with suspicion. However, over the course of my
research, I observed growing levels of interest in Greek music, food, and arts among
my informants. The term Hellenophilia was coined by one of my informants in a
sarcastic way while he was criticizing the level of Armenian affection towards Greeks
in a context where he believed Armenians deliberately ignored their own Armenian
culture and language and invested in becoming İstanbullu through a particular form
of cultural appropriation.
It appears that the qualities my informants admired in Jews or Greeks were the same attributes they criticized in Armenians. What they criticized about other Armenians and admired in other non-Muslim communities brought them closer to Turks, lessening their distinction from the majority population of the country. Here, what needs to be stressed is that in most of the cases, references to Turks do not necessarily refer to an ethnic Turk or a Muslim person. For most of my informants the term has been equalized to refer to the ordinary, common Turkish citizen, a person they see in the streets or on the boat. In this context of the island, Turkishness has a significant class dimension as well, with specific semantic baggage about migratory and urban histories, ignorance, bad taste, imitation, and lack of openness (through conservatism). It is necessary to note that each particular way of admiring Jews and Greeks signified distinction of these communities from Armenians; equally, every criticism targeted at the Armenians created a possibility of resemblance to the majority Turks, the common people. The metaphors of failure, performed through critique and comparison and embodied through the feelings of embarrassment and humiliation, operate for the purposes of both the making and the survival of the community. While establishing bonds among Armenians as a community, failure stressed the distance and proximity of the community from the others surrounding them. In the next section, my inquiry is based on how these imagined distances translated into locating Kınalıada as different from the other islands of the Prince Islands archipelago, and vice versa.

A Failed Island

So far, I have identified the first level of comparison employed by my Armenian informants, most of whom became good friends over the half decade I spent on the island. As noted in the previous chapter, they did not come from wealthy families, who had already left the island for Turkey’s major Mediterranean and Aegean tourism hubs. They mostly either inherited their island homes from their families or their parents helped them financially to buy homes. For them, having a house on the island provided
them with a link and a material space for their imagined community of Armenians (Kaymak 2016: 377). This is why they prioritized owning houses on the island rather than in Istanbul. At the second level of comparison, their imaginations about a community of Armenians is formulated and replicated by locating Kınalıada with other islands within the Prince Islands Archipelago that have more considerable Greek and Jewish populations. The majority of my informants believed that their island was the ugliest, most underdeveloped, and worst maintained part of the archipelago. Within the archipelago, Kınalıada was believed to be ‘different’ in a negative way (in Turkish: farklı), devoid of green forests, hidden splendid corners of nature and history, and large Ottoman mansions with beautiful gardens. Kınalıada was also beset by frequent electricity cuts in the midst of summer, inadequate garbage collection, and insufficient medical services. Moreover, the island is not perceived to be as peaceful (in Turkish: huzurlu) as the other islands. As the island closest to mainland Istanbul, with accessible beaches from its pier (as opposed to the other islands), on the weekends it is packed with day-trippers (in Turkish: günübirlikçi) who almost always have migrant backgrounds, who could not afford to go on summer holidays. On such weekends, the shore of the island would be congested with thousands of people, some of whom sneak into residents’ gardens in search of shade or rest, often leaving the streets of the island in garbage. The lack of public toilets on the island added another layer in creating unrest among Armenians who had houses closest to the island’s shore. As the distance between homes and the beach decreased, the possibility of encountering ‘intruders’ increased. On a couple of occasions, I observed how the day-trippers approached us in the garden of a friend who had a house next to the beach and asked whether it was possible to use the toilet. When my friend turned down the requests in anger, I finally asked her whether this was the case every weekend. She responded that almost every weekend people asked for toilets and once someone showed up with a portable coffee-machine and asked whether it was possible to plug it in to a power source located in the garden. She was not alone in encountering the day-trippers in this way, as almost everyone living on the seafront had similar experiences. On another occasion, I went for a swim in the less busy southern part of the island with a friend. On our way
back, I was invited for a drink in my friend’s garden, which I happily accepted. Upon our return from the less busy beach, we found a family picnicking in his private garden, which was located next to the entrance of the apartment building his family had sold to other Armenians from Istanbul and the diaspora one by one over the years. In the garden, there was a large blanket rolled over the grass, with food and soft drinks scattered in various containers. A family of six was enjoying the little bit of green space and open air, which is usually very difficult to find in the concrete jungle of Istanbul. It seemed to me that they did not need to do much to jump over the low concrete wall that separated the garden from the pedestrianized street. When my friend saw this family enjoying his own garden, he decided to move on to a café nearby without stopping at his home and having drinks there. When I asked him why he did not tell the family to move their picnic elsewhere, he responded that all he wanted from the weekend was to relax and rest, not get involved in a fight he believed he would not win. He did not say a word to the family and we walked past his home as if we were strangers.

On weekends similar to that I depict above, boats always operate at overcapacity, transporting thousands of people to the island. On those days, it is not uncommon for my informants to decide to stay indoors and sometimes to forego necessary trips to Istanbul proper to avoid crowds. A couple of private beach clubs located in different parts of the island serve the Armenian and other upper middle class residents in calmer environments with fewer people, providing a sense of exclusivity with bars and restaurants. This is simultaneously a source of major resentment among the summer residents of the island, as they find themselves paying for the sea, which is otherwise free for all day-trippers coming from the mainland. However, their sentiment does not entirely stem from financial concern. As one of my informants explained to me, he could not go into the sea from the spot located in front of his house where he used to swim when he was a child. As he put it, the place was taken away from him for good (in Turkish: _sonsuz kadar elimden alındı_) and he hated the fact that he now needed to pay for the sea as he formerly never did so in his life (in Turkish: _hayatım boyunca para ödemediğim deniz için şimdi para ödemek zorundayım_). On a different
occasion, I heard comments on the same issue that expressed feelings of discrimination by the state, which is widespread among Armenians from Turkey. I joined seven other people from the island on a Friday evening on one of the hottest days of the summer to celebrate a couple’s wedding anniversary. Apart from me and another friend, the rest were married couples in their mid-30s. They all arrived on boats from work in Istanbul proper around 7:30 pm and we were at the dinner table by 9 pm in one of the oldest restaurants of the island. Dinner was followed by drinks at a bar in one of the beach clubs of the island, where we stayed until sunrise. As we were walking back home on the main promenade of the island, one of us, an architect, suddenly suggested that we all dive into the sea. The primary beach of the island, a narrow strip of pebbles, was empty except for piled up plastic deck-chairs, seagulls, and us. At this time of day, before the first boat from Istanbul arrived, the beach seemed a vast open space without the thousands of people expected from the mainland some couple of hours later. Another friend from our small group, a teacher, was the first one to take the suggestion. She took off her shoes, necklace, and watch, carefully placing her bag on the pebble beach, and jumped into the sea with her clothes. She was followed by the rest of the group one by one and at the end all of us were in the sea being sobered up by its cold waters. One stated that he had not swam at that spot for many years, although, just like the rest of the people in our group, he spent the entire summer on the island. Everyone else agreed with him as they shared this experience of having refrained from swimming at this primary beach of the island for some consecutive years. As we left the sea, now shivering and trying to dry ourselves with the island breeze, the one who suggesting diving into the sea in the first place said that he was very happy to enjoy the island like in the good old days (in Turkish: eskisi gibi adadan keyif aldım) and added that it was a good decision to swim before the arrival of the ‘invaders’ (in Turkish: ışgaleliler gelmeden önce denize girmek iyi bir karardı). When I asked what he meant by ‘invaders’, he responded that those were the day-trippers the state favoured over the islanders (in Turkish: devletin biz adalılara karşı kayırdığı günübirlıkçiler). As he further explained, “the state provided means for its Muslim citizens to rest by the
beautiful seaside of the island, but discriminated against its Armenian citizens by uprooting them from their own places (yer).”

The previous chapter invested in the articulations of ‘local-ness’ in the context of the island and argued that having yer in Turkey did not directly qualify one as yerli. At a fundamental level, the nuanced disposition of the latter term in the context of the island vis-à-vis its dictionary definition is both related to the particular construct of Turkishness-through-religion that excluded non-Muslims and the panopticon-like quality of the island where differences based on this construct are impossible to hide. The previous paragraphs display another layer in the divergence of yer from yerli. As a result of thousands of people arriving to an island without sufficient facilities, direct effects of unregulated tourism are visibly clear in prompting the feelings of being uprooted (in Turkish: yerinden edilmek) among Armenians who have been summertime residents for generations. This situation is best exemplified in the everyday practices of contrasting other islands of the archipelago, especially Burgazada, to Kınalıada.

Among Armenians, each island within the Prince Islands Archipelago is imagined and marked as different from each other in terms of physical setting through the presence of a different non-Muslim community (Kaymak 2016: 362). I sense that by the Armenian residents of Kınalıada, non-Muslim populations of other islands are widely understood as yerli. This is how comparisons to other islands function as comparisons to other communities and their histories of survival in Turkey. The Turkish word attributed to the other islands, huzurlu, helps us explore the issue of comparison and the ways the metaphors of the failed community operated. This is a derivative word with the suffix -lu (denoting possession) at the end of the root word, huzur (meaning peace of mind, comfort, serenity, or tranquillity). The derivative word has deeper meanings than the root word. While huzurlu primarily means ‘serene’, ‘calm’, and ‘restful’, it also has meanings in relation to the orderliness of things, safety at home or outside, and the predictability of the future. Hence, huzurlu is a state of mind that is dependent on the physical organization of material space and the protection of the body from outside
dangers. *Huzursuz*, with the same root word *huzur* but with the -*suz* suffix that translates as ‘without’, defines the opposite of *huzurlu*. A dictionary meaning for *huzursuz* would be restless, anxious, and worried. It has a deeper meaning than the root word as well, referring to a lack of orderliness of things, safety, and predictability. It is in these deeper meanings of the term that the repetitive sentences (always in first plural pronoun) used by my informants such as *huzurumuz kalmadı*, *huzurumuz kaçtı*, and *huzursuz oluyoruz* are all indicative of collective moods that denote a lack of orderliness, safety, and predictability, which are further based on the physical conditions of the immediate environment. Consequently, it appears that tranquillity of the physical environment and serenity of mind are dependent on each other. As a result, the *huzur* of the other islands is based on their better physical environments. Moreover, *huzur* emphasizes their orderliness, safety, and predictability in comparison to Kınalıada. Furthermore, it is reflective of the mood of the person speaking about it.

Over the course of my fieldwork, there were always rumours about a shop owner, restaurant owner/staff, or other person who supposedly talked badly about Armenians, insulted them, or used/attempted to use violence against them. However, their veracity was questioned by my informants who believed that no business-oriented Muslim Turk would do such a thing on a predominantly Armenian island. Despite doubts over their truth, I observed that shops where Armenians were allegedly insulted were nevertheless abandoned by my informants in what appeared to be a silent boycott. However, the allegations were never discussed publicly.

The repetition of unproven rumours – without any first-hand eyewitness reports – showed that there was constant anxiety towards the Muslim working class residents of the island. Much later I finalized the first drafts of this chapter, the island was shaken with the news on the Turkish media that three underage Muslim girls were sexually molested by three older men over an extended period of time (17 May 2017; *Cumhuriyet*) (see also *Hürriyet* published on the same day; *Sözcü* the following day). For most Armenians on the island, the most disturbing part of the news was that the
three violators lived on the island side by side to the victims and their families. Almost every islander could identify perpetrators by their profession (two bicycle repairmen and another shop owner) and the locations of their businesses or homes even when their names were not revealed to the larger public. The panopticon-like quality of the island this time revealed the yer of Muslim working class of the island – and simultaneously re-produced and gave substance to Armenian anxiety towards them. Upon hearing the news, an Armenian mother with two teenage girls explained to me that the physical distance between where the perpetrators and the victims lived was “utterly disturbing”. She feared that her own daughters could have been targets of such sexual violence because “everyone lived within the other on this tiny island” (in Turkish: bu küçük adada hepimiz iç içe yaşyoruz). Her fear was shared and vocalized by many other Armenians. What was even more difficult to digest for Armenians that yerli of the island did not take any collective action against the issue; there was no protest, no public discussion or an act of solidarity. Many friends also feared that the number of perpetrators were in fact larger and the victims’ families were concealing the truth from the wider public. I believe that there was an element of reiterating community boundaries in these sentiments. For instance, while speaking of the silence among islanders following the media coverage of the issue, another informant with two children asked “why would they care about Armenians, if they did not care about their own people?”

As I try to describe here, huzursuzluk, the state of being restless, worried, and anxious was a perpetual feature of the social landscape on the island. If security concerns made huzur impossible to attain, boats (and politics of transportation) worked in a similar fashion. I was invited for dinner on an early Sunday evening at a friend’s house on the island. Earlier that day, the island was again packed with day-trippers from Istanbul and a couple of people at the table had felt unable to go to mainland Istanbul; the boats were full. Someone from the table told us that she called the municipality in order to report her complaints, but, just like in previous summers, it was of no use. The boat schedules were always a favoured topic among my informants, especially for the ones who commuted to Istanbul every weekday. For them,
there was a need for more frequent boats. Moreover, the boat journeys were not comfortable, as the ships were full of tourists, often making it impossible to get a seat (in Turkish: yer). Another friend responded that it was never the case with Burgazada – the neighbouring island with a significant Jewish population, a kosher restaurant, a Jewish social club, and a still operating synagogue. She believed that on such weekends, the islanders of Burgazada simply did not let the boats approach and moor at their piers. They did not want tourists strolling along their streets, making noise, and littering. Unlike Kınalıada, “they could do it” (in Turkish: yapabiliyorlar). While everybody else at our table was nodding and affirming what she had just said, I asked what set Kınalıada apart from Burgazada. As if there was already a consensus among them, a couple of people responded that it was the Jews. Armenians did not know how to get together, make their voices heard, and protest. They did not know how to defend their interests. They did not know about their interests at all, as there was no unity (in Turkish: birlik) among them. But Jews were different. They were united.

For the people around the dinner table, the neighbouring island was a place of tranquillity (in Turkish: huzur). The islanders of Burgazada acted as a single unit (in Turkish: tek bir insanmışcasına davranıyorlar), and they loved their island. This is why, I was told, the people who had houses on Burgazada lived there all year long, in stark contrast to Kınalıada. They were not there only for the summer. The houses of Burgazada were well maintained, similar to its streets. It was much more beautiful than Kınalıada in every sense; it was green and had far better restaurants. At the end of their praising of the island, I asked them why they did not consider moving there. Everybody laughed in response to this suggestion. One of them responded sarcastically: “We shall spend the summers on Kınalıada and the winters on Burgazada then.” Everybody laughed again. My proposition was not even an option. No one was interested in leaving Kınalıada for Burgazada. The case was closed.

The discourse that circulated around the dinner table that night should be understood as operating in three ways. Initially, it depicts how the two
islands are idealized as the embodiments of the two communities. While the success of Burgazada is attributed to the success of its Jewish population, the failure of Kınaliada is attributed to the failure of the Armenians living there. Such failure is understood not in terms of the financial situation of Armenians, but lack of solidarity and cooperation. Moreover, the expression of failure shows how the temporal experiences of the respective residents of each island affected the ways they established bonds with their island, and how each community was believed to have distinct ways of collective action and mobility. The lack of unity among Armenians was partly reflected in the fact that they only lived on Kınaliada during the summer and abandoned it in the winter, thus not giving it the value it might have actually been worth. The lack of unity among Armenians was believed to reflect the lack of unity between people and their places, in this case their land, yer.

Why was the case closed at the dinner table? My informants all seemed to be very fond of Burgazada, its physical setting, lack of tourists, and the level of privacy it offered its residents. The island was seen as a place that allowed an anonymity impossible on Kınaliada. As they noted several times, in direct and indirect ways, their own island was restless, disorderly, and unsafe. Life was unpredictable. However, as they made it clear, they rejected any idea of moving to another island. Despite its shortcomings, Kınaliada continued to attract Armenians from Istanbul. This is primarily because comparison based on the difference of the island (from other islands) defines a community, although through re-producing feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. Apart from holding a physical space for a place- and time-specific Armenian community in Istanbul, the island provides my informants with a performative site of social intimacy to re-define their community borders. The next section continues to analyse the dynamics of Armenian community-making vis-à-vis imagined differences from other non-Muslim communities, this time based on comparisons of relationships to the wider world that go beyond the borders of contemporary Turkey.
Thinking Transnationally

So far I have identified two ways in which Armenians compared themselves as a community unit to others around them. As suggested, such constant comparison constituted a performative site in which a sense or image of ‘the Armenian community’ is developed. Although my informants recognized the diversities of Armenians in contemporary Turkey, comparison paves the way for articulation of personal networks within the framework of an ethnic community by catalysing feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. This is how on a first level my informants compared Armenians to Jews and Istanbulu Greeks, and, on a second level, they compared Knahıada to other islands within the Prince Islands Archipelago, each island representing a different community of non-Muslims. Finally, on a third level, I suggest that comparison to other non-Muslim communities is accompanied by comparison of their links to the wider world, implying an eloquent analysis of relationships between these communities and their respective diaspora communities, and between Turkey and their imagined nation-state homelands. In other words, the distances of Istanbulu Greeks vis-à-vis Greece and the Greek diaspora, and Jews vis-à-vis Israel and the Jewish diaspora, helped my informants understand their own relationships to Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, and to Turkey. In other words, Armenian imaginations about Greek and Jewish communities in Istanbul are reflected in the ways they understand their transnational links with the wider world.

These transnational relationships are understood at the level of personal relationships with the wider world, in the sense of how Jewish and Greek individuals relate to other Jews and Greeks dispersed around the world. As opposed to the many differences that set Armenians apart from each other, Jewish and Greek communities in Istanbul are imagined in universalized, homogenizing terms. Members of these two other communities are imagined as being more mobile than Armenians; Greeks are believed to have easier access to Schengen visas allowing travel to Europe due to their links to Greece, while Jews are imagined as being holders of multiple citizenships including Israel, Germany, the US, and increasingly Spain and Portugal.
Germany is widely believed to grant citizenship because of the Holocaust, as a way of seeking forgiveness for the catastrophe, whereas Spain and Portugal are believed to grant citizenship for a similar purpose because of the expulsion of Iberian Sephardic Jews in 1492. The relationship to the US is widely imagined in more conspiratorial ways, deeply rooted in the anti-Semitism that is widespread among Armenians from Istanbul. While a strong Jewish lobby in the US is imagined as vital in providing citizenship, it should be noted that the organizational skills of Jews as a community in the US are considered to be reflective of the organizational skills of Jews in Turkey, and vice versa.

At a practical level, imagined Greek and Jewish relationships to the wider world are based on each Greek or Jewish individual’s comfort in travelling to other countries. Travelling to other countries for vacation, visa applications, or leaving Turkey for good were frequent topics of small talk during my research. Over the course of my fieldwork, I met many Armenians from Turkey who were much more mobile than the ordinary Turkish citizen, with more means, reasons, and opportunities to travel abroad. In fact, similar to the ways they imagined Greeks and Jews, some had multiple citizenships as well. There were those who were married to Armenians from other countries, mostly from the US, and who were naturalized Americans or other third-country citizens. Others did not have citizenship of any country other than Turkey but had intentionally given birth to their children in other countries, in order to provide them with opportunities for acquiring citizenship. However, I met only one Armenian family from Istanbul who had applied for Armenian citizenship. For them, the citizenship of Armenia was more like a souvenir than a necessary document that granted easier access to the wider world or indicated any prospective plans for settling in the country.

In the previous paragraphs I suggested that Armenians from Istanbul understood transnational links in relation to extended personal networks of mobility. There is another level, at which these transnational links are understood in relation to politics at the nation-state level (that is, politics between different nation-states). My informants imagined Greeks and Jews
from Istanbul in relation to the nation-states of Greece and Israel, respectively. In addition to constant comparisons to Greek and Jewish communities, islands, diasporas, and transnational mobilities, comparing the state politics of Turkey to that of Greece and Israel buttressed the feelings of a ‘failed community’ by my Armenian informants. As a point implied earlier that needs to be unpacked in detail, there is a paradox of community-making as it depends on a perceived threat of destruction. In this sense, the community is a performative site that comes into existence precisely through the exchange of ideas about it. There should be no community taken for granted, and, as I construe it, once a community is established it is always a community in-the-making. While Armenians in Istanbul are aware that there is a very long history of a superbly organized community in their city (Tölöyan 2000: 120), their discussion of what they lack and what they do not have vis-à-vis other non-Muslim communities portrays a context in which the boundaries of their imagined community are re-drawn. As there is no permanent settlement of these boundaries, failure, or at least the anxiety of failing (to organize, to be united, to speak up), is a generative input in the making of community. When it came to those boundaries that are imagined to set them apart from Greeks or Jews, my informants also found the relationships between Turkey and Greece, and similarly between Turkey and Israel, as crucial reference points in comparing these communities to their own, despite the frequent phases of political turmoil between these countries. Relationships between Turkey and Greece have never been easy. The same can be said for Turkey and Israel. Nevertheless, my informants believed that these were places where Greeks and Jews could always turn to when they needed, despite international tensions between the states. Both countries were widely understood as a place of refuge in the event of a new wave of violence targeting non-Muslims in Turkey. In contrast, Armenia provided no such potential sanctuary.

There is a pragmatic side to the ignoring and trivializing of transnational links with Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, and the politics they represented. *Biz farklıyz* (in Turkish: we are different) was a common response that I heard from my informants when they explained their cultural
and political distances to Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. It has to be noted that such a response was usually far from reflecting what they practised in reality. To begin with, my informants had links with people from other Armenian populations outside Turkey (overwhelmingly in the diaspora), whether friends, close or distant relatives, or people they met in virtual space (on Facebook, Armenian discussion forums, or even dating sites). For instance, as noted in the previous chapter, the island functioned as a “centre of gravity” (Hanafi 2003) in terms of establishing and maintaining relationships with wider dispersed Armenian communities. However, I suggest that they distinguished between their own personal networks of atomized units of Armenians and the politically laden concepts of diaspora and the nation-state of Armenia.

I never heard the term diaspora (in Turkish) or spyurk (in Armenian) in everyday speech in relation to Armenian diaspora communities, but instead bizimkiler (lit. ours, our people) (in Turkish) or bizim haylar (lit. our Armenians, in mixed Turkish and Armenian). These two expressions referred to Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere (with a major exception of Armenians from Armenia; see below). I suggest that through the emphasis on the first person plural possessive pronoun, my informants managed to articulate their personal links that went well beyond the borders of Turkey without implying any connection to ‘foreign’ political entities (i.e., the Armenian nation-state or the wider Armenian diaspora). As a result, indicating that their connections were personal, my informants simultaneously secured their positions as Turkish citizens and justified their links with Armenians living in other countries. Over the course of consecutive summers on the island, and especially during meetings with Armenians visiting overwhelmingly from France and the US, I was told that bizimkiler were everywhere, repeating a similar but more nuanced understanding of the famous Armenian saying amen deghy Hay ga (lit. in every place there is an

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45 As opposed to this situation, every time my informants and I encountered Armenian migrants on the streets, they sarcastically said to me “here are seninkiler” (lit. yours, your people), referring to a distinction that they believed set Armenians from different nation-state settings apart.
Armenian) – also the name of an extensively circulated short story (and a book) by the famous Armenian diaspora writer Vahram Mavian (1992). The nuance in the context of Istanbul is that “bizimkiler are everywhere” came with a stress on the centrality of my informants’ community of Armenians in the world, instead of merely accounting for dispersion of Armenians in general. It is in this context of place-making that, for my informants, ‘the diaspora’ referred to the body of transnational or third-country Armenian organizations, but not necessarily to the people living as a diaspora. This situation resembles how they defined their own community. They used the Turkish word cemaat (lit. community) only to refer to the body of historical Armenian organizations (like the Church, schools, orphanages, hospitals, etc.), but not to the people who lived as a community or any other sort of grassroots social and political initiatives led/dominated by Armenians from Turkey. In rare cases they used the term’s Armenian counterpart, hamaynk, the understanding of community endowed with its human component, referring to a society of Armenians. In some cases, this human component of community would be expressed through the notion of Ermeni toplumu (lit. Armenian society). In a majority of cases, the terms bizimkiler or bizim haylar would substitute for all these other terms while referring to the people living as part of an imagined community. I suggest that these distinctions between the people and their political/social organizations offered my informants an opportunity to either deny or acknowledge their links to other Armenians as necessary. In addition, this pattern of rhetoric allowed them to deal with their own diversity, while conceptualizing Jews and Greeks as monolithic communities. It is in this framework of making sense of self-diversity that the next section finally invests in shedding light onto how Armenian migrant women enter the equation of community- and place-making in contemporary Istanbul.

**A Bridge that Separated**

As cited in Chapter I, Khachig Tölolyan (2000) argues that we can now think of the globally dispersed Armenian communities as a transnation, with
personal and impersonal links, encounters, access, and circulation extending and deepening in an unprecedented fashion. The case of Armenians from Istanbul appears exceptional within the emergence of a global Armenian transnation. One of Tölölyan’s underlying assumptions is that there is a long historical legacy of institutions that managed and maintained the dispersed Armenian communities around the world. While the collaboration between these institutions has increasingly tightened, the emergence of the independent nation-state of Armenia is expected to introduce a new dimension in the global circulation of Armenian people, narratives, and finances by closing the gap between the diaspora and its homeland (Ibid.). This is how the emergence of the nation-state of Armenia has posed a ‘threat’ to Armenians from Turkey, by challenging their status as people from the homeland and reducing the centrality of their imagined community into a periphery for other Armenians around the world.

Armenians from Turkey constantly compared differences from Armenians in Armenia under three general topics that are not mutually exclusive: kültür (in Turkish lit. culture, which corresponded to linguistic differences and tradition in general), tarz (in Turkish lit. style, corresponding to differences in public mood, embodiment, and taste), and tarih (in Turkish lit. history, which emphasized how Armenians from Armenia related to the Genocide and located their personal or family pasts within a larger framework of Armenian history). To begin with the last item on the list, Turkish foreign policy from the early 20th century and onwards demanded that non-Muslim citizens stress their loyalty to the state by denying any possible links with post-Ottoman nation-states and diasporic politics. When the citizens of the new Turkish Republic failed to do so, as evident in the expulsion of Greeks in 1964 or the denial of Turkish citizenship to former Ottoman citizens, the state interfered. As portrayed in the previous chapters of this thesis, the zonal constitution of Turkishness in the Republican era resulted in a similar situation for Armenians: already in the outermost zone of Turkishness, they were expected to express their loyalty to the state by denying their transnational links with Armenian institutions, organizations, and political bodies beyond the borders of Turkey. It is in this context that Genocide denial
is the main political tool that sets the tone of relationship between Turkey, Armenia, and the diaspora. As Talin Suciyan (2015) suggested, Genocide denial is not confined to the sphere of international politics in Turkey. The denial has led to the formation of a particular ‘habitus’ in which citizens are expected to read history in line with the official accounts of the state. In a country where non-Muslim citizens have been widely acknowledged as ‘foreigners’ as they are restricted from becoming Turks-through-shared-citizenship as this was preconditioned by becoming Turks-through-shared-religion, Armenians subsequently find themselves in a dilemma as they cannot be equal citizens in their ancestral lands and connect with their history in the way Armenians around the world do.

As this chapter and the previous chapter invest in demonstrating, one of the most direct reflections of this situation was experienced in the denial of the local-ness from Armenians in contemporary Turkey, which further leads them to stress their differences from Armenians in Armenia. For instance, one of the questions that my informants from Turkey were most puzzled about was that often Muslim Turks asked them whether they were originally from Armenia or had relatives in Armenia. All of my informants in Istanbul noted that they were asked these questions at least once in their lives, whether during passport controls at the airport, family gatherings at their children’s school, job applications, military service, paying for a bill with their credit cards, cargo deliveries – basically in almost every possible instance where their non-Muslim or non-Turkic sounding first or family names were revealed to the wider public. In the eyes of my informants, such a question directly qualified the questioner as an ignorant Turk, as opposed to a kafasi açık (lit. open-minded) person. It should be noted that despite their frustrations, my informants never left the question unanswered. They usually started by saying “we are from here, we did not come from anywhere” (in Turkish: burahlyız, bir yerden gelmedik). In many occasions, I also heard Istanbuluyum as a sharp and solid answer, not to be confused with the less-place-of-origin-specific term in English, Istanbulite, which is not fit as a direct translation of Istanbulu (cf. Öncü 1999). Often they immediately asked the same question back in a slightly more authoritative tone (in
Turkish: *esas siz nerelisiniz?*) to stress that the overwhelming majority of Muslim Turks in the city of Istanbul were themselves migrants. The challenging aspect of this exchange of questions and answers is that almost all of my informants came from families of post-genocide migrants from different corners of contemporary Turkey. In cases where the questioner insisted on his question, often in shock to hear that there are indeed *Istanbullu* individuals in Istanbul, my informants found themselves having to reveal the complex map of their family origins by going back three or four generations in history. While such moments of disclosure made my informants something of 'less a foreigner' in the eyes of the Muslim Turkish person questioning them, it reminded them of their connection to a rural past. In their imagination it also set them apart from the 'more *Istanbullu*' Greeks and Jews and brought them closer to Muslim Turks, a great majority of whom also have migrant backgrounds in Istanbul.

As noted above, it is through constant comparison of 'culture', 'style', and 'history' that my informants articulated intimacy among the members of their imagined community of Turkish Armenians, although some of these parameters of identifying differences were sources of division among them. The articulations of difference from Armenian migrants in terms of 'culture' and 'style' are deeply rooted in the long history of migration to Istanbul from provinces both in the pre- and post-genocide periods (see Björklund 2003; Özdoğan, Üstel, Karakaşlı, and Kentel 2009: 338-342; Kaymak 2016: 469). This is why there is a similarity in the operation of distance-making vis-à-vis Muslim Turks and Armenians from Armenia. In other words, emphasizing an *Istanbullu* affiliation in encounters with the former and vocalizing cultural or historical difference from the latter should be viewed in light of the processes of modernization, upward mobility, and urbanization in Istanbul during the Ottoman and Republican periods. In an unmistakable way, for Armenians from Istanbul, the migrant backgrounds of the two groups add another layer in complicating their imagined distances. In the case that there are similarities, these need to be erased, silenced, and denied, or carefully managed. As Julia Kristeva (1991) famously once noted, “the foreigner’ within us, all those elements that have the power to suddenly make us
different from others, comes up with the constant problematization of ‘we”’ (1).

The everyday relationships between Armenian migrant women and their Istanbullu Armenian employers summarize this situation very clearly. One of the most frequent discussion topics among the latter during various tea-parties, weekend brunches, or boat rides was whether to change their live-in domestic worker for a new one. Most of these employers from the island had formerly decided to seek help from informal business agencies that provided contact with Armenian (and other post-socialist) migrant women who wished to be employed as live-in domestic workers. All of the employers had someone work for them as a live-in worker right after they gave birth, and the general tendency was to terminate the employment once their children reached school age. However, they would continue employing women from Turkey to do the ‘hard work’, such as cleaning the windows or the bathroom, once a week or every other week. This implementation of a division of labour is not unique to the households of my informants from the island, as many other middle and upper class women in Turkey preferred employing post-socialist migrant women precisely because there were not enough Muslim Turkish (or Kurdish) women to work as live-in domestic workers within the labour market (Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger-Tılıç 2001; Bora 2005; Akalin 2007). This lack of live-in domestic workers came as a direct result of the fact that many lower class families with migrant backgrounds in Istanbul did not permit their wives or daughters to work as live-in domestic workers (Özyeğin 2000: 3) (also cited in Akalin 2007: 213). Their lack of education and rural background led many Armenian (and similarly many other middle class Muslim Turkish) employers to seek other options. This is why most women from Turkey worked as cleaners who did the ‘hard work’. In contrast, post-socialist migrant women, usually holding degrees in higher education, provided the quality and trust that middle class employers sought from their employees. Their level of education became a key factor in their capacity to become role models for children in the absence of their parents during the work day.
Despite the increasing demand, vocalization of a sort of disappointment with these live-in workers was prevalent among Armenian women from the island. Some of them constantly fired and hired workers. Their disappointment did not entirely stem from the work performed by the migrant workers. Instead, it depended on the migrant’s capacity to become like “one of the family members” (Akalin 2007: 223). This capacity did not necessarily involve establishing family-like relationships with the employers, but, as already noted, becoming a role model for the children. In their capacity to become like one of the family, a topic of concern for Armenian migrant women was language. This is because many middle class Armenian families from Istanbul firmly believed that their own accent in speaking Turkish also set the tone of their relationships with the wider Turkish society. Increasingly after the 1930s, a decade that witnessed the popular but state-supported Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş! (lit. Citizen, Speak Turkish!) campaign, their (great-) grandparents suffered the most because they did not speak Turkish well enough on the streets. Many of my informants, who were third generation post-genocide Armenians, did not have an accent in Turkish as their families invested time and money in ensuring their ‘fluency’. Nevertheless, Armenians from Turkey remained concerned about the way their own children spoke: what if they had accents similar to their parents or grandparents?

This concern should be understood and located against a controversial backdrop. While for most Turkish middle class employers basic competency in Turkish is a requirement for a live-in domestic worker (Akalin 2007), the Armenian language is widely understood as a bridge between migrants and their employers within the context of division of labour. Despite the differences in dialects between the two countries, the Armenian language enabled migrants and their employers to communicate, even before the former learned Turkish. However, it is difficult to conclude that employers behaved in a generalizable way. I observed two general tendencies in which ‘the bridge of language’ also became the border that separated Armenians from two different nation-state settings. Amongst the first group of employers, those who were concerned about their children’s accent in Turkish, Armenian became the language spoken only between employers and
employees. In many cases, families waited to teach Armenian to their children until they learned Turkish well (i.e., until they reached school age). This is why in many cases the live-in migrant worker was expected to keep communication with children to a minimum. In some extreme cases I observed that live-in migrants were not permitted to talk to the children at all, neither in Armenian nor in Turkish. These families were the ones that refrained from sending their children to Armenian schools. Instead they chose ‘mixed’ (i.e., Turkish; in Turkish: *karma*) schools where they believed their children could learn about ‘the others’ that surrounded Armenians in Turkey. Education in Turkish schools was widely understood as preparation for the next stages of life in a diverse yet predominantly ‘Turkified’ society. A second but much smaller group of employers wanted to teach their children Armenian at earlier ages but were still concerned about accents. I observed that these employers insisted that the migrant speak the Western dialect of Armenian (as opposed to the Eastern dialect spoken in Armenia) at home. Nevertheless, in many cases the families were happy when the migrant sang lullabies in various dialects and accents or turned on some Armenian opera or classical music from records or radio stations broadcast from Armenia. They were happy about this basic level of introduction to heritage and tradition, and they were comfortable sending their children to Armenian primary schools or high schools, although they personally made efforts to teach ‘proper Turkish’ (in Turkish: *düzgün Türkçe*) by making them listen to the news on TV, reading them books, and correcting them publicly when necessary. Another facet of this concern became visible when I heard mothers criticizing teachers of Turkish language in Armenian schools for having bad accents. To sum up, both groups were concerned about accents, though they dealt with it in different ways.

As Castro (1989) noted, “what is bought and sold in the domestic service is not simply the labour power of the employee or her productive work and energy; it is her identity as a person” (122) (quoted in Akalin 2007: 210). All through my research I observed similar situations in which the migrant live-in worker’s personal background was appraised in relation to its future effects on children’s education. One informant’s pragmatic approach clearly
summarizes this situation: Nvart was a full-time translator at a notable Turkish company with investments worldwide. She was in her early 40s and gave birth at a relatively late age in comparison to her other Armenian friends from the island. When I met her, her daughter was six years old and the family was very satisfied with their live-in worker, Olga, who had worked for the family since the baby was born. Olga was in her mid-60s and had previously lived in Armenia for more than three decades. She was born in Belarus to ethnic Russian parents and married an Armenian man at the end of the 1980s, when she moved to Yerevan to live with her husband. When the couple divorced in 2005, Olga did not go back to Minsk but stayed in Armenia with her children and friends. After a couple of years of financial instability, she finally decided to come to Istanbul and search for jobs. Nvart was the first employer to hire her.

Nvart strictly believed that ‘learning Turkish came first’ in her daughter’s education. She reasoned that Armenian education at an institutional level was unnecessary, as she believed it was a dead language. She wanted her children not to be limited by the boundaries of the Armenian community or the diaspora (note that she did not even mention the Republic), but to be open (in Turkish: açık) to the wider Turkish society and the wider world. She noted many times that she was raised in a diverse environment at a Turkish school, because Turkey was diverse. The arrangement she made with Olga reflected this tendency: Olga was free to speak Russian with her daughter, but she was allowed to speak in Armenian only with the parents for matters that concerned housework. As Nvart told me once, she was happy because her daughter was learning a little bit of Russian, a language that she believed would be of great use as her daughter grew older. She added that if Olga unintentionally spoke Armenian with her daughter, it would not pose a big ‘threat’ as it was not Olga’s mother-tongue anyway. In opposition to the context of employment relationships between Istanbul Armenians and migrant Armenians, Olga’s presence in Nvart’s household did not result in the problematization of ‘we’ as Kristeva once suggested (1991: 1), even if the Belarusian woman spoke Eastern Armenian to her employer’s child. In less unusual instances, however, the parents follow their live-in workers closely so
that they can manage what is transmitted to their children in terms of ‘culture’, ‘style’, and historical knowledge.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed how Armenians with summer houses on Kınalıada articulated a sense of difference in relation to three groups (Jews, Greeks, and Armenian migrants) at three levels of comparison (imagined communities, physical islands, and transnational links). These comparisons prompted feelings of embarrassment and humiliation, generated a sense of exclusivity, and resulted in personal and public discussions on where to define their community borders. In discussing what they themselves lacked and what they did not have vis-à-vis other non-Muslim communities, they constantly re-drew the boundaries of their imagined community of Armenians from Istanbul in general and Armenian islanders in particular. In the eyes of my informants, what they admired in Istanbullu Greeks and Jews made them distinct (and homogeneous) communities. Similarly, what they did not approve about themselves also precluded them becoming distinct within the diverse population of Turkey, because all those aspects of self-criticism worked towards stressing the similarities between Armenians and Muslim Turks. In discussing what Armenian migrants lacked and what they shared in terms of ‘culture’, ‘style’, and ‘history’ vis-à-vis Armenians from Istanbul themselves, my informants followed a more pragmatic approach. This was because the extent to which they related to the migrants depended on the extent to which they themselves were understood as ‘foreigners’ in Turkey. As a result, everyday encounters with the migrants, although limited to employment relationships within households, became a performative site where Armenians from Turkey found themselves in a task with multiple orientations. They chose and stressed accordingly whether they were (i) Armenians without roots, friends, or relatives in Armenia or the diaspora; (ii) yerli individuals without personal or family histories of migration; (iii) migrants without places of origin in rural or urban Anatolia; (iv) islanders without the title of yerli; (v) Istanbullu with very long family histories in the
city; (vi) non-Muslims without ‘foreign’ affiliations; or (vii) Turks without Islam as a faith. The list can be extended and twisted over the course of everyday life in Istanbul and on the island, as none of these notions have proven to be mutually exclusive in a rigid way.

As this chapter hinted, there is no permanent settlement of these boundaries. In this context, failure, or at least the anxiety of failing (to organize, to be united, to speak up) is a generative input in the making of community. There is both a temporal and a moral aspect to failure, as it informs us of what “ought to have happened, what should be the case, has not come to pass” (Carroll, Jeevendrampilai, and Parkhurst 2017). Failure as such necessarily distinguishes between communities in terms of their perceived capacities to become what they desire to be. As this chapter demonstrated, there is a paradox of community-making as it depends on a perceived threat of destruction. In this sense of the generative power of failure, there is no community that fails to be. Although in different ways, ‘the failed community’ deserves to be both the title of what is widely referred to as the Armenian community of Istanbul and the place-specific community of Armenian islanders. As argued by Suciyan (2015), “the denialist habitus” in the country restricted Armenians from Turkey from connecting with the history of their ancestral homelands and subsequently with other Armenians dispersed around the world. This is also why, I suggest, that in this post-genocide context, Armenians from Istanbul in general can best be defined as a network of smaller groups of people and atomized persons. However, the entire chapter invested in portraying that communal thinking has prevailed among post-genocide Armenians in Istanbul. The frequent expressions of failure involve moments of re-defining community borders in a changing world.

In this context of atomization, there is something notable about the summertime Armenian population of Kınalıada as the island gives its shape to a community of islanders. Although frequently circulating narratives on lack of unity, solidarity, and organization imply interruption of community-making at first sight, these sentiments provide a common ground for discussion (and subsequently community-making) among Armenians in the
context of the island. The failure of the island in receiving municipal services, providing a sense of security for its inhabitants, dealing with environmental issues, and minimizing the adverse effects of tourism is a component in giving a physical context to the processes of community-making.
CONCLUSION

Anthropological fieldwork has been represented as both a scientific “laboratory” and a personal “rite of passage.” The two metaphors capture nicely the discipline’s impossible attempt to fuse objective and subjective practices. Until recently the impossibility was masked by marginalizing the intersubjective foundations of fieldwork, by excluding them from serious ethnographic texts, relegating them to preferences, memoirs, anecdotes, confessions, and so forth. Lately this set of disciplinary rules is giving way. The new tendency to name and quote informants more fully and to introduce personal elements into the text is altering ethnography’s discursive strategy and mode of authority. Much of our knowledge about other cultures must now be seen as contingent, the problematic outcome of intersubjective dialogue, translation, and projection. This poses fundamental problems for any science that moves predominantly from the particular to the general, that can make use of personal truths only as examples of typical phenomena or exceptions to collective patterns (James Clifford, ‘On Ethnographic Allegory’, 1986: 109) (emphasis mine).

An Epistemological Regime

In the opening quote of this conclusion above, James Clifford hints at two possible claims to the representative quality of ethnographic data: as personal truths that are “examples of typical phenomena” or “exceptions to collective patterns” (109). In a thesis about Armenians, which was based on research defined by critical issues of access to a fieldwork site, expectedly there have to be limitations in the capacity of personal truths (of myself, the researcher) to represent or even to identify particular narratives as ‘Armenian’. However, similar to what an identification like ‘Armenian’ implies, various other notions analysed in the different chapters of this thesis at best could account for their own everyday lives in circulation – instead of claiming one-to-one representations of either ‘typical phenomena’ or ‘exceptions to collective patterns’ as put by Clifford (1986). As a result, the epistemological regime portrayed in this thesis is of a kind that draws a line in identifying what is Armenian and what is not from two specific vantage points: my informants and myself. As the previous pages of the thesis noted, the former encompasses a very diverse group of people, without consensus on what it takes to be an Armenian. However, the discussion based on this lack
of consensus provides them with a common ground for identifying themselves as part of an ancient and globally dispersed community of Armenians. The latter, an anthropologist concerned with the ways everyday epistemologies are studied, deconstructed, and reconstructed by our discipline, is a person identified with one of the groups defined by nation-building processes in Turkey. This is not to imply that I have conceived a conflict or an opposition between the two vantage points. Instead, I have construed it as a generative force in the various steps of conducting and writing down this research.

As noted in the Introduction, the epistemological regime, as I construe it, primarily concerns production of truths and facts as direct consequences of power relations (Foucault 1980). As much as this thesis invested in exploring the constitution of such a regime of knowledge in the contexts of ‘travelling’ and ‘dwelling’ in Turkey, it was also concerned with the anthropological production of knowledge. This is the epistemology of anthropology, which is based on a historically informed way of engaging with research and representation (Rabinow 1986). As Clifford (1986) wrote himself, for the greater part of its history, anthropology tended to marginalize the intersubjective foundations of fieldwork and relocated/redistributed them to other writing genres or forms of textual representation (109). It is for this ongoing trend in anthropology that Strathern (1985) called to create a relation with informants and “search for a medium of expression which will offer mutual interpretation, perhaps visualised as a common text” (17) (also quoted in Rabinow 1986: 255). However, the ways we, as researchers, (attempt to) establish relationships with prospective informants are defined by the political context(s) of the research site. As in the case of my research, the compartmentalization of the researcher and the people in focus into different categorical identities has been epistemologically constituted and sustained. In such ethnographic contexts, how would it be possible to produce a common text by the researcher and the informant?

This question brings our attention to the creative field of representation that should find ways to go beyond the divergences and disagreements between
researchers and informants. Following a research shaped and oriented by issues of access, I come to the conclusion that the epistemology of anthropology is inevitably embedded with the epistemologies of the research context. Although this observation is not a novelty in the field of anthropology, it is still ignored in the context of Turkey. If the danger of anthropological endeavour is to reproduce hierarchies, divisions, and exploitations (among humans, animals, and things), its power is also to account for their emergence and circulation. Looking back to the very first days of my research, one instance clearly sheds light onto this situation.

In the first month of my research in Istanbul, I attempted to contact various Armenian journalists, academics, and researchers for help. Not many people were interested. I received only one response. In the only email I received, from one of the editors of Agos, one of the three Armenian newspapers published in Istanbul, I was kindly reminded that my research topic on Armenians was based on social constructions that did not exist. In other words, for the person I contacted for help, I was pursuing a goal that was proven to be futile:

As an Armenian who has made it into his mid-20s, I can assure you there is no such thing as ‘Armenianness’ [in Turkish: Ermenilik, which would be understood by a Turkish speaker as ‘the state of being Armenian’] in this world. Similarly, there is no such thing as Yugoslavness [Yugoslavlık], Italianness [Italyanlık], or Uruguayanness [Uruguayılılık]...

The editor continued his email with the following words, where he reminded me also that there was a particular political context – and a historical baggage – in how this term (and others) resonated in Turkey:

Don’t be concerned by this [Armenianness], as such a thing only exists in our country with Article 301 [of the Turkish Penal Code against the denigration of Turkishness], which protects the concept of ‘Turkishness’ [Türklük]. All these concepts look strange to me and I do not believe that they will be approved of or accepted on an international platform.

Receiving this e-mail, I observed the critical stance of its author against the fixation on relationships between people and identities. However, his critical engagement went beyond a simple social-constructivist concern. As he noted
in his email, the infamous Article 301 of the ‘Turkish Penal Code against the denigration of Turkishness’ reflected the protectionist (in Turkish: korumaci) policy of a state-imposed definition of ethnicity. Moreover, one of the most famous victims of the article was Hrant Dink, who himself was the former editor-in-chief of Agos. He was murdered in 2007 by a young Turkish nationalist after having been prosecuted three times under this particular article. Dink had been made a target of hate-speech in the media for publicly speculating on the ethnic origins of Sabiha Gökçen, one of the eight adopted children of Atatürk and the world’s first female fighter pilot (thus a proud member of the Turkish Army), whom he claimed could have been one of the converted orphans of the Armenian Genocide. When the news first broke in the Turkish media, the General Staff of the Turkish Army released a public statement which included the following lines:

As a nation, the Turkish media is expected to be more sensitive about [...] the foundational principles and values of the Republic of Turkey, the unity [in Turkish: birlik] and the togetherness [in Turkish: beraberlik] of the Turkish nation, and to reconsider its publication policies in light of these views (23 February 2004; bianet) (my own translation).

As it appears, speculation on the ethnic origins of Atatürk’s adopted daughter and a former prominent member of the Turkish Army was widely understood as a threat to the ‘unity’ (in Turkish: birlik) of the nation. It is in this context that, I believe, it should not come as a surprise that hundreds of thousands of people (the majority of whom were Muslim Turks) chanted “We are all Armenians” in Turkish (Hepimiz Ermeniyiz) and Armenian (Polors Hay Enk) at Dink’s funeral. It was a historical moment of protest in which the funeral attenders wanted to criticize how a public discussion on Sabiha Gökçen’s origins could have been perceived as a ‘denigration of Turkishness’, ultimately leading to Dink’s murder.

There is a core element left to explore in the editor’s email, where he also argued that there was no such thing as Ermenilik (lit. ‘the state of being Armenian’). As this thesis has focused on understanding the multiple possible ways of unpacking Turkishness (in Turkish: Türklük) vis-à-vis the wider popular views or particular state ideology that identify Armenians and
other non-Muslims as ‘foreigners’ in Turkey, we cannot expect Ermenilik to stand as only a hegemonic term that is primarily informed by its ontological difference from Turkishness or what it widely implies in terms of a commonality of identity, belonging, or memory among Armenians. This is why, where I recognized the editor’s remark that called our attention to how Türklük was a hegemonic category of affiliation protected by the state, I approached his social-constructivist sentiment on Ermenilik with caution, as I believe his comment should be replied to with another question: what does the non-existence of Ermenilik in reality imply for people who identify themselves as Armenians?

The ways this thesis has addressed this question should be understood in light of its author’s deliberate attempt to critique particular representations of Armenians and Turks – as well as Ermenilik and Türklük – in mutually exclusive and homogeneous terms. As I construe them, both terms inform each other, and in a very similar way the thesis invested in understanding how ‘native’ (in Turkish: yerli) and ‘foreigner’ (in Turkish: yabancı) and ‘dwelling’ and ‘travelling’ or ‘stasis’ and ‘mobility’ were co-constituted. If we think about the popular definitions of ‘native’ as a dweller of her place of origin, as opposed to a ‘foreigner’ travelling over distances (see Kristeva 1991), the narratives of Armenians presented in each chapter of this thesis go beyond such binary oppositions in multiple ways. Every chapter portrayed particular ethnographic contexts in which people, places, and time were juxtaposed in ways such that the antagonisms between these established notions of mobility and stasis collapsed, were inverted, or met halfway. For instance, the first three chapters explored various experiences of human movement between Armenia and Turkey, the fourth chapter focused on the state-imposed definitions of the Turk, and the last three chapters specifically explored everyday conceptualizations of ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’, building on the material presented in earlier chapters. The next section will highlight some of the key themes and ethnographic settings.
A Final Look at the Thesis

This PhD thesis has studied the various ways in which regimes and everyday practices of both short- and long-distance mobility produced physical and cultural distances among Armenians in and en route to Turkey. In the Introduction, I argued that the coexistence and simultaneous visibility – to be more precise, the duality – of images, names, and narratives concerning non-Muslims in “a habitus of denial” like Turkey (Suciyan 2015) created an epistemological regime in which the official and the personal not only opposed but also unexpectedly completed each other in many ways. This was why different chapters of the thesis focused on triggering discussions on how to think about the co-constitution of dwelling with travelling, stasis with mobility, fears of the unknown with yearning for openness, homelands with homes, insides with outsides, natives with foreigners, state-imposed definitions of unity with personal accounts of unity (and diversity), and Turks with non-Turks. It is in this context that the thesis also focused on defining ‘citizens’ in relation to their state-crafted differences from various forms and numbers of smaller groupings of people or atomized persons who are ‘left-overs’ of brutal nation-building processes. In short, all these processes of co-constitution referred to physical, social, or political processes that enclosed particular (literal or metaphorical) islands in a way defined earlier in this thesis. Although based on research among Armenians, the thesis necessarily and fundamentally tackled the making of contemporary Turks within a backdrop of histories of Turkification in the country.

This thesis invested in portraying how people and things were re-made as they travelled (Tsing 2000: 347). The first three chapters dealt exclusively with unpacking particular physical and imaginary notions of ‘dwelling’ and ‘travelling’: a mobile home in Anahid’s case, a temporally multi-layered homeland for Hranoush, homely and unhomely homelands for Anna, and articulations of insides and outsides through articulations of shifted ethnicity and cultural proximity in the accounts of Ani and Mariam. In this sense, the fourth chapter, entitled ‘Building Homes of Unity’, is intentionally presented as the middle chapter of the thesis as it provides a conceptual bridge between the notions of dwelling and travelling presented in earlier chapters and the
articulations of ‘native’ (in Turkish: yerli) and ‘foreigner’ (in Turkish: yabancı) presented in later chapters. Departing from a taxonomy of building names in the neighbourhood of Kurtuluş in Istanbul, the chapter explored the specific connotations of ‘unity’ (in Turkish: birlik) in relation to state-imposed ideas of unity, which were also evident in the aforementioned public statement published by the General Staff of the Turkish Army as a response to public discussion triggered by Hrant Dink on the possible Armenian origins of Atatürk’s adopted daughter.

The following two chapters attempted to comprehend the articulations of yerli in relation to the state-led construction and everyday operations of Turkishness presented in Chapter IV. With a focus on travelling and dwelling in the context of Kınalıada, the first of these chapters, Chapter V, demonstrated that Armenian residents of the island only identified Muslim residents as ‘natives’. Later, in Chapter VI, it was portrayed that Armenians from the island also articulated differences from other non-Muslim minorities, whereby a line was drawn between each imagined community’s capacity to be united (in Turkish: birlik olmak).

A Final Discussion to Look Ahead

The commonalities between Chapters II and VI have to be put forward in order to provide a departure point for future research. In both chapters on community-making, I portrayed accounts of individuals who either discussed ways of being Armenian or who drew lines between what separated Armenians from others around them. In Kumkapı, the “context of anxieties” (Biehl 2015) and “fear of the unknown” (Pattie 1997) emerge as the underlying factors in shaping the ways Armenian migrants approached other migrants: Kurds from Turkey, women from all different corners of the post-socialist world including Armenians, and most recently people from sub-Saharan Africa. On Kınalıada, the lines were drawn in the wake of the Turkish nation-building process and necessarily the Genocide. In Istanbul, what I first found was atomized groupings of people who were cognizant of
their extent of diversity as Armenians. Dispersion around a massive urban ocean like Istanbul, differences in mother tongue and religion (in addition to divergences from religious practices), and perhaps most important of all family histories of migration and urbanization (as in becoming Istanbullı) posed latent challenges in the formation of a monolithic community of Armenians. However, for a particular group within these groups, the islanders, their imagined community of Armenians (and the ways they imagined other communities of Greeks, Jews, and Muslims) has a physical basis. The island itself became an enclosure of territory that corresponded to an enclosure of a community of Armenians.

As I have construed in this thesis, communities do not come into formation through consensus on the defining terms of membership. There are also political and personal agendas that make people look ahead, which buttress feelings of affiliation to a larger imagined group. Although I have not explicitly vocalized those agendas in the thesis, I would like to share some of my observations for setting the ground for future research. These ideas may be found provocative or lacking a firm base. Nevertheless, I expect them to be taken as suggestions by other researchers in the field. Over the course of my fieldwork in the two countries, and during transitory moments on buses or in Georgia, I observed that Armenians from Armenia sought ‘recognition’ (i) of the fact that they were the first Christian ‘nation’ in the world, (ii) that they actively participated in and contributed to the making of a ‘human civilization’ through their own dispersion to the urban diasporic centres where such ‘civilization’ was historically cultivated, and (iii) of the Genocide. With each and every Armenian I met en route to Turkey, there was a moment in which I was ‘reminded’ of these facts. There should be more than one way to interpret the frequency of these themes; however, I specifically urge us to think about them from the perspective of place-making, a way of establishing relationships with an Armenian world that is incomparably larger than Armenia now. In this sense, the transformation of Armenia into a post-socialist nation-state with impermeable borders sets the physical context in which these narratives are based – if not originated.
In Turkey, the agenda is less clearly defined for Armenians as they find themselves trying to make sense of their post-genocide atomization and simultaneously to define a community through citizenship. In this sense, their endeavour promises to provide us with a critical perspective to comprehend contemporary Turkishness in all its diversity. In so doing, I hope that they will increase the country’s prospects of becoming a truly participatory democracy, in which all citizens are equal and free.
EPILOGUE: Crossing Back to Georgia in a Changing World

There are many possible ways to bring an end to a written narrative. The Conclusion aimed to highlight the central themes of place-making that have been portrayed in the pages of this thesis. However, it should be noted that over the course of the five years I spent writing this thesis, the world did not stand still; both in Armenia and Turkey there have been important political changes. While Turkey became increasingly more authoritarian under the rule of Prime Minister and later President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, especially following the Gezi protests, which I touched upon in Chapter V, and the coup attempt of 2016, in Armenia nobody was expecting political change. However, following more than 10 days of popular protests in April 2018, Serzh Sargsyan, who similar to Erdoğan served both as president and prime minister, was finally forced to step down after a decade in power. In this respect, there have been moments in which my friends and wider cohort of informants in Turkey and Armenia experienced transformation of their relationships to their fellow citizens, and friends and relatives dispersed around different countries. In this sense, imagined and physical distances within their personal networks of mobilities were in a process of transformation.

As noted in Chapter I, ‘place-making’ is informed by particular juxtapositions of physical movement and long-distance communication. While the chapter looked at the issue in relation to earlier histories of dispersion (such as migration, exile, exodus, or business expeditions), Chapter III similarly noted that relationships with the wider world informed zones of accessibility, which I came to define as an ‘inside’. In this period and still to date in Istanbul, “dünyadan kopuyoruz” (in Turkish: we are breaking off from the world) and “dünyadan gitgide uzaklaşyoruz” (in Turkish: we are moving away from the world) were the two most common expressions I heard from the people around me in general and the people whom I researched in particular. For instance, many Armenians on Kınalıada firmly believed that the island was increasingly being abandoned by Armenians from other countries. They expressed that the last time they experienced such a historical moment of
abandonment was following the 1999 Marmara earthquake that hit Istanbul and its surroundings, when many Armenians from abroad left the city immediately after and did not come back for some years.

For Armenians in Istanbul a vast array of state policies resulted in this situation: suppression of the opposition and the Kurdish political movement; arrest of many politicians, academics, journalists, and intellectuals; rumours of fraud during elections; restrictions on the consumption of alcohol; limitations on formerly liberal abortion rights; bans on internet; decrease in foreign investments; and rapid devaluation of the Turkish lira against world currencies, which created significant increases in the cost of travelling abroad. The world that Turkey found itself distancing from was thus defined both through the physical distances one was capable of travelling herself and as a set of liberal and democratic values in which citizens were recognized as free and equal. In other words, over the course of these past five years, it became even more difficult for Armenians to live in this “new Turkey” (as Erdoğan, in his political rallies, mostly refers to the re-shaping and re-structuring of the country over the past 15 years), where they simultaneously wanted to connect with friends and families abroad and to be equal and free citizens of Turkey. However, as noted in Chapter IV, they found themselves in a situation where they could not be simultaneously Armenian and Turkish-through-citizenship. Moreover, as portrayed in different parts of the thesis, Armenians were not very vocal in expressing dissent in public loudly; one needed to know when, where, and how to talk in Istanbul. This situation was in stark contrast to what I observed in Armenia, where not only my informants and friends but also everyone I met including the cashier at a supermarket, the marshrutka driver, or the ticket officer at a museum were publicly very critical of the government and Prime Minister/President Sargsyan. In many ways what was unexpected in Armenia perhaps came as a direct outcome of years of circulation and accumulation of sentiments about such dissatisfaction with politics.

During the ‘Armenian velvet revolution’, as it is widely referred to, I was in Yerevan as a Hrant Dink Foundation Fellow at the Institute of Archaeology
and Ethnography of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences. As part of my fellowship, I was asked to organize two public seminars and a conference based on my research that is now spread across the pages of this thesis. In order to re-connect with my past research in Armenia, I decided to re-visit some of the former sites of fieldwork, land-crossings between Armenia and Georgia where once I observed cross-border mobility. As a start, I planned a day trip to some of the border villages on the Armenian side of the border, just to have a look and remember. I decided to go by a private taxi, but there was a split between my friends in Yerevan as to which smart phone application to use to call a taxi. I had two options: the Russian owned Yandex Taxi and the Armenian owned GG. The discussion between my friends followed an expected trajectory (at least on my part), as the GG supporters claimed that it was important for an Armenian company to make money (instead of the Russians) and it was wise to keep in mind that it was perhaps better not to let Russians learn about my global imprint and history of travelling. For them, Russians were “watching everything closely”. The Yandex Taxi camp, which was much smaller in comparison to the first camp, claimed that Russians were better businesspeople and more professional. They trained their taxi drivers better and they had many more cars. At the end I took into consideration only the price asked, and because of the momentary surplus of taxi drivers, Yandex slightly offered me a better deal – and this is how I met Tiko.

For the three-and-a-half months I stayed in Yerevan in 2018, Tiko would become not only my main provider of transport but also a dear friend. He was almost ten years younger than me, about 25, and married with a newly born daughter. As a teenager, he wanted to be a pilot, but once he realized that he could not pass the tests for that, he decided to be a taxi driver instead. He was of the post-socialist generation of Armenia, but nevertheless firmly believed that those were better times in terms of making a living. He was from a provincial town in the south of the country, but had no prospects of going back. When I visited his place of origin and his family home, and met his relatives, he told me that almost all of his friends had left for Russia. For him, moving to Russia was certainly on the agenda, but he had decided to wait
until his daughter reached school age. He found Moscow too dirty and polluted to raise a toddler.

Tiko drove crazily in the city, but he followed all the rules in the countryside. He had an extensive knowledge about speed cameras all around Armenia. Similar to many other drivers I met over the course of my research, he was always very vocal about expressing criticisms against the government. Over the course of his driving career, he closely observed corruption in person. Every time the police asked for bribes, it was yet another opportunity to talk about the inefficiency of Armenian democracy. When Sargsyan announced on April 23rd, just a day before the Genocide Memorial Day, that he was leaving office, Tiko was as happy as the rest of the celebrating crowd in the streets of Yerevan. By the time I met him, just couple of days following the resignation, his telephone was full of photographs taken in Republic Square, the centre of demonstrations in Yerevan, celebrating the moment of political change with flags and family. On that day we met at the end of April, we were off to Javakheti, an Armenian-dominated province in southern Georgia, on the immediate other side of the border. It was impossible not to notice the huge Armenian flag that covered the entire bonnet of the car. He told me that he decorated to celebrate and to check how the Georgian authorities would react to it.

I saw no reason for the flag to draw any attention as we were off to a region with 95 percent Armenian population. However, at the Bavra border crossing that connected Gyumri to the villages of Javakheti, the Georgian police forced Tiko to remove the flag. When he asked whether it was necessary, the policeman responded that it was for our safety as in Georgia nobody could guarantee what would happen to us and a car with a huge Armenian flag. Tiko was perfectly aware that the policeman was being rather arbitrary, but he nevertheless removed the flag with a smile. When I asked him why he was smiling, he responded that he had expected this attitude from the Georgian police. He added in English that these were “the kinds of things that should also change in Armenia”. For him, this was a “small country situation”, referring to an inferiority complex that came as a direct result of the changing
place (of Georgia) in world politics.

All through our journeys in Georgia, where we visited not only Javakheti but also Batumi and Tbilisi, Tiko repeatedly made attempts to talk to the Georgian police in Russian. He had a certain joy in stopping the car, asking for directions that we already knew, seeing whether the police would respond back in Russian, and reporting back to me the entire conversation. At the end, he came to the conclusion that younger generation of Georgians did not know as much Russian as the older generation. As he expressed many times, it was “such a pity to distance from a leading world power”.

After our return to Armenia from Javakheti, people were still in the streets. They were anxious to see whether a pro-Sargsyan candidate would be elected as the new Prime Minister of Armenia. However, on May 8th, the parliament elected Nikol Pashinyan, the opposition MP who was leading the popular protest since its inception in mid-April. With his camouflage pants, cap, and backpack, Pashinyan looked very much different than Sargsyan in his tailored suit, bodyguards, and escort cars. No wonder, in the following days there were photos of new ministers taking the metro, walking or cycling to the parliament circulating in the social media. It is in this political context in which the new government looked more down-to-earth than its predecessor that Tiko – in addition to many other friends in Armenia – expressed that he was observing ‘change’ everywhere. He noted that even the attitude of the police was changing; they were not seeking bribes anymore and they were willing to help drivers as much as they could. He believed that in a small country like Armenia, if one single person changed, the entire society changed.

I would see him for a last time – at least for now – on the day I packed my suitcases and left Yerevan for Istanbul in mid-May 2018. He came to pick me up from my apartment in central Yerevan relatively sooner than I expected, so that we could chat little more before I departed. On the way to Yerevan’s Zvartnots Airport, Tiko was telling me that he expected “many things to be given back to Armenian people”. I asked him what he meant, and he
responded that it was time the moguls – widely referred to as the oligarkhs in Armenia – learned how to share their wealth with ordinary people. He added that nationalization of the formerly privatized state institutions should follow. As I was opening the trunk of the car to get my suitcases, he kept talking: “The airport you see now belongs to a European businessman. When you come back to Armenia in the future, you will see that this will also change. The state will take the airport back. We will travel for cheaper and Armenia will be a bigger country than it is now.”

In writing the very last paragraph of this thesis, I find it important to bridge Tiko’s sentiments about Georgia, which he found to have been reduced to a small country, and post-revolution Armenia, where he believed there was a prospect of becoming a bigger country. In line with the narratives of ‘travelling’ and ‘dwelling’ presented in this thesis, distances between people and places were in a constant process of reconfiguration in Tiko’s world. There were historical moments of shrinking and expanding ‘insides’. However, for him, what made Georgia a small country did not merely lie in its transformation from a member state of the Soviet Union to a post-socialist state in tension with Russia. In his view, what mattered most was the attitude of younger generations in turning away from what was once the lingua franca of the region, Russian, to the extent that they could not communicate with their neighbours anymore. Similarly, what could possibly make Armenia a bigger country in the future lay in its transformation to a country with better connections to the rest of the world. While in the case of Georgia language increasingly became a barrier in reaching out to a wider world, in the case of Armenia the barriers were more of physical substance. Tiko believed that improvement of means of travelling would immediately open up his country, which he found as key in becoming a ‘bigger country’. I hope his wish will come true sooner than he expects.
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