Worlds Apart and Together: Trial by Space in Istanbul

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The rights of chaos, chaos too has rights.

Rosalind Belben, *Choosing Spectacles*

In his book *Vers la troisième ville?* Olivier Mongin (1995) reflects on what has been called the death of the city. It is in fact, he says, a question of two deaths: first, there has been the death of the urbanity associated with the "classic European city" (the "first age" of the city); and, then, that of twentieth-century urban modernism and its utopia of the Radiant City (the "second age"). Mongin's concern is with the possibilities for the rescue of urbanity, through the institution now of what he calls a "third age" of the city. This is our broad concern, too, and we want to give substance to our discussion by considering the urban question in one particular city, Istanbul. Istanbul's "first age" was different – it was as an Ottoman and Islamic city (Inalcık 1990) – but its "second age" was very much shaped by the modernist paradigm (involving, indeed, the conscious emulation of the European urbanist ideology). The city now is facing a fundamental challenge to its modernizing ethos, one that is associated with a growing polarization and politicization of space. In this context, we can perhaps identify some elements of what a new urbanism would have to be about, as well as what is blocking the institution of a "third age" urbanism.

We have to make a journey. It begins in Mecidiyeköy, a business district in the bustling center of Istanbul, where we take a minibus to Merter, located alongside the highway that goes out to the airport. Then we catch another minibus, and drive through district after working-class district – Şirinevler, Kocasinan, Küçükçekmece, Avcılar, old squatter areas that became peripheral municipalities in the 1960s and 1970s. The minibus travels on and on, constantly stopping to deposit passengers along the hectic highway and to hurriedly pick up new ones, until we have gone way past the airport, as if we were finally leaving the city behind, and then we skirt along the coastline of the Sea of Marmara. And after that we come to yet another expanse of urbanization, this one the consequence of the later migrations and settlements of the 1980s. At last, after one and a half hours on the hot and teeming road, we arrive at the minibus terminus and our final destination in the new municipality of

Esenyurt, 20 kilometres out of Istanbul. And what you see when you finally get to Esenyurt is really quite striking, not at all what you would expect if you weren't attuned to the unexpected developments that Istanbul always seems to throw up. It is a new kind of edge-city phenomenon, and one that in fact perfectly expresses the logic of end-of-century urbanization in this global metropolis. You can see it taking shape beside the massive new highway that now connects Istanbul to the Thracian city of Edirne.

On the left, if you are leaving the city, what occupies your field of vision is a vast expanse of *gecekondu*, or squatter settlements – dense and low-quality housing units, the earliest dating from the early 1980s, most of them in a permanent state of incompletion, with the vacant gaps of still unfinished floors and the antennae of concrete-encased construction metals sprouting from top storeys, in perpetual anticipation of future building activities, when the money comes in. This is the great squatter zone that grew up around, and quickly smothered, the old village of Esenyurt, to become, within a decade, virtually a city in its own right. For most established Istanbulians it is *terra incognita*, a place too far (effectively extraterrestrial). Like all the other squatter areas of Istanbul, it is generally regarded as a place of disorder, always a source of potential threat (as a breeding ground for religious fundamentalism or terrorism). For the most part, its social reality is disavowed, displaced by fearful images and fantasies of otherness. But, notwithstanding this resistance to its actuality, Esenyurt is most certainly part of the urban scene and reality of contemporary Istanbul, a very significant part of the late twentieth-century metropolis and its new kind of late twentieth-century urbanity.

And, if you turn your head towards the right-hand side of the Edirne highway, what you see is what seems, and in fact is, quite another world – a very different kind of urban development. What you confront is new and modern and purpose-built satellite towns (*uydu kentler*), and what you notice is a new world of seemingly luxurious apartment blocks with familiar, pattern-book postmodern design features, and of spacious and comfortable villas with large gardens and swimming pools. There are presently three such developments here. Bahçeşehir (which means Garden City) is the most established, with construction beginning in 1990, and also the largest, at around 13 million square metres; there are presently some 4,000 house-holds living within its private and exclusive confines, and the number is projected to finally rise to 16,000. The other two developments, Esenkent and Boğazköy, encom-passing 1 million and 2 million square metres of land respectively, are still in the early phase of construction, but will eventually contain around 13,000 housing units between them. Together, then, these three housing schemes will constitute a small city of a new kind, with a population rising to something like 120,000 people.

One way of making sense of what you see from the highway would be in terms of the contrast between old and new, in terms of a narrative of development from the apparent chaos of the *gecekondu* to the modern order of the new towns. Indeed, the new satellite districts are now being actively promoted as the prefigurative model for future housing and planning strategies in Istanbul – prototypes for the future city. In this particular Turkish context, one way of interpreting what is happening in Esenyurt might be in terms of the further extension and democratization of the long-term and "heroic" republican project for urban modernization (for a good account of the emergence and development of modernism in Turkish urban planning

and architecture, see Bozdoğan 1997). What we will argue, however, is that this (predictable and complacent) narrative of progress in planning completely fails to address the significance of what is actually taking place on this edge of the city. For something extremely important is happening here, in the 1990s, to Istanbul's urban life and culture, but something that cannot be taken account of within the modernist conceptual grid. What we regard as remarkable is not the phenomenon of the satellite towns as such, but, rather, the logic that has conspired to produce this stark contrast between the new "modern" sites and the very different space of the squatter settlements. What is significant is the shocking juxtaposition of these opposed worlds of rich and poor, separated only by the *cordon sanitaire* of the main highway. Faraway, and yet so close.

How are we to make sense of this apparent fragmentation of urban space? In order to try to answer this question, we shall focus on the municipality of Esenyurt, and specifically on the relationship between its *gecekondu* area and its new zones of Esenkent and Boğazköy. We have chosen this particular area of the city because we think that it represents a microcosm of the kinds of change that are taking place more widely in Istanbul. The Esenyurt case demonstrates very well the way in which codes of spatial practice are moving towards an ever greater segregation of the urban scene, along class-based and identity-based lines. And, furthermore, it provides a valuable insight – valuable because it is counter-intuitive – into just how this logic of segregation has actually developed and progressed. Our central argument, grounded in what has happened in Esenyurt, is that the fracturing of the urban space has occurred, in large part, as an (unanticipated) consequence of the unfolding dynamic of the modernist-republican urban vision. We want to consider how it is that the policies and strategies of modern urban development and planning, which have always aspired to establish a coherent and integrated order in the urban environment, have actually and perversely come to be implicated in the process of fragmentation. We are concerned with the vicissitudes of urban modernism in Istanbul.

From a Village to a City

At the beginning of the 1980s, Esenyurt was no more than a village on the outskirts of Istanbul. During that decade, however, as more central locations ceased to be available, new migrants from Anatolia, and particularly, in this case, from the Kars region, increasingly began to settle at this great distance (20 kilometres) from the city. In 1989, the erstwhile village was made into a municipality, with a population of around 25,000 people. At that time there was no plan of any kind for the new urban settlement, and there was no urban infrastructure – no roads, no running water, no sewage system. The settlement was famous for its mud. More than anything else, the image of muddiness stuck to Esenyurt. It is said that when municipal officials went to the city center on business their shoes gave them away immediately, and that, out of embarrassment, they got into the habit of always carrying a spare pair of shoes with them. A promotional video – specially prepared by the Esenyurt municipality for the Habitat II conference, which was held in Istanbul in June 1996 – describes the district in its early days as being like a backward village, with new buildings being constructed one on top of another, according to the whims and desires of the new settlers, and with all the diseases that ensue as a consequence of

such unregulated and unsanitary conditions. Esenyurt developed, then, as a typical *gecekondu* settlement, with all the problems associated with such settlements. And the problems could only escalate as, in the course of just a few years, through constant new waves of migration from the Anatolian countryside, the population of Esenyurt rose dramatically, reaching as much as 250,000 in 1996 (a 340–fold increase over 20 years).

Esenyurt was in many ways like all the other *gecekondu* zones, but, like them all of course, it has its own distinctive story, and it is this instructive story that we shall now recount. There is a key figure in the story of Esenyurt, and it has been his approach to urban planning that has brought the place into prominence. That figure has been Dr. Gürbüz Çapan, a medical doctor who has been the mayor of Esenyurt since the municipality was established in 1989. Çapan has a past history of involvement with radical leftist youth movements in the sixties and seventies, but now stands as an independent, and rather uncharacteristic, member of the centre-left Social Democratic Republican Party. As a former leftist, he had once actively encouraged the building of *gecekondu*s, adopting what was then conceived as a populist strategy for urban modernization. By the eighties, however, his views had changed significantly, reflecting a new and growing concern about what he perceived to be happening in these impoverished areas. Çapan was concerned about the throwing up of "ugly looking houses," coming to believe that the chaotic proliferation of squatter buildings was a sign that "the city ha[d] surrendered to the villager" (Öztürk 1997). And he was determined that Esenyurt should not fall into the disorderly confusion that was devastating other *gecekondu* areas – such as the notorious Ümraniye and Sultanbeyli "where rubbish tips had exploded, where people had been killed when they fell into potholes, and where mafias controlled the land market." The people were entitled, in his view, to more than just a shanty town – they were also entitled to a city.

Çapan and his team resolved "to bring a civilised way of life to a place with no urban culture" (*Cumhuriyet*, April 1, 1997). Esenyurt was described in one of the municipality's magazines "as a place with no architectural aesthetics, neither a city nor a village, lacking in trees, roads, water, infrastructure and social facilities." So, the bringing of civilization must, first of all, involve the very practical measure of building an adequate infrastructure to service the newly urbanized population, and then the drawing up of a rational development plan to ensure the coherent organization of the municipal space. But more was necessary. In the longer term, the new local authority came to believe, it was necessary to foster and sustain the very norms of a civilized urban culture. "Just imagine a place," Çapan is quoted as saying, "where there are goats, sheep, horses and cows . . . but where there is no respect for others, no culture of getting along together, and where everybody hangs on to their own village culture" (1997). He and his colleagues were putting forward a positive vision of urban life and culture, then, based on the integration and assimilation of the newly arrived populations into a common civic culture. The civilizing process must accordingly involve the imposition of a coherence and order on what was perceived as the unruly space of Esenyurt.

Now, it is important to be aware that this approach did not reflect a strategy that was new or that was particular to Çapan and his team. As we have already hinted, this kind of modernizing zeal already had strong roots in the culture, originating in

the civilizing idealism of the nation-builders of the Turkish Republic. We may say that their approach to the modernization of Turkey, from the 1920s, involved the imposition of what they saw as a new rational order – based on the progressive values of European culture – over the disorderly remains of the Ottoman Empire (what has subsequently varied has only been the style in which the elites have gone about this reforming business – involving a difference between authoritarian and populist approaches). This reordering of the national space had to involve what Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1996: 86) describes as "an onslaught on the existing cultural practices . . . a process of estrangement of the people from some of their own cultural practices." Rationalization had to be achieved in spite of the people – and, more than that, in order to actually create the more civilized people who would then be fit to inhabit the newly civilized state. And this logic of rationalization had to extend to all forms of social management and administration. Thus, in the domain of architecture and urbanism, it became the imperative to create new rational spaces and places to accommodate the new model people. As Sibel Bozdoğan (1994: 46) puts it, "the mission of the new architecture in Turkey was narrating the modernity of the young nation as an idealised construct without conflicts and class antagonisms" (see also, Yavuz 1986). The modern city, like the modern nation, was imagined as a space that should be unitary, coherent, and ordered.

Çapan's approach was firmly grounded, then, in this modern, civilizing idealism. What it in fact represented, in the sphere of urban management, was a populist expression of the will to order, and one that was inspired by his leftist background. The aim was to bring about modernizing social reform by helping the people of Esenyurt to see what was in their best interests. In an interview with us, Çapan invoked the inspiring example of Fidel Castro, living with villagers in Cuba in the 1960s to show them how to improve their social conditions. In the same political mode, Çapan had believed that the only way of making the migrant villagers of Esenyurt understand anything new and modern was to show them how. So, he and his municipal team endeavored to teach the incoming squatters to build according to the new urban plan that had been instituted and, generally, to abide by the rules of city life. In essence, the new inhabitants of Esenyurt were expected to become assimilated into the modern space that they had now supposedly become part of.

To this end, it seemed vital to open up Esenyurt to the outside world and, thereby, to adapt it to the conditions of modern urban culture. A highly symbolic step in this direction was taken with the decision to construct a major new road linking Esenyurt to the main motorway network (when you approach the municipality the way we did, on the minibus through the older *gecekondu* areas, you are struck by the sight of what was an 8-meter-wide village road opening up into a 30-meter-wide, double-lane highway). When we spoke with Gürbüz Çapan, he put the point (using a medical analogy) that "if there was no main artery the city would die." He had anticipated that the highway would carry the lifeblood of commerce, communication, and culture to the community of Esenyurt. So adamant was he in this belief that he overrode any attempt by the locals to stop it, even going so far as to bulldoze through a site set aside by a group of religious activists for building a new mosque.

The reality of what eventually took place did not conform, however, to the master plan that the municipality was working to institute. The newly constructed road in fact turned out to be an exit route for what came to be an increasingly disillusioned

modernizing vision. The municipality had succeeded in creating a new sewage and water system, and it had overseen the laying of a new communications network – as Çapan quite rightly observed, "no other municipality in Istanbul has done as much as we have." But what was becoming ever more apparent was that the recalcitrant citizens of Esenyurt could not be socially engineered into conformity with the municipality's program of urban rationalization. Çapan's well-laid plans were being thwarted by the very people who were supposed to benefit from them. "You couldn't intervene," he complained. "We came up with a plan in order to do this in an orderly fashion, but no one adheres to the plan." His modernizing aspirations, he acknowledged, "did not coincide with the realities of life." The migrants who came to Esenyurt brought with them their own culture, traditions and ways of living, and it seemed that these were resistant to the ordering zeal of the urban modernists. So, what Çapan then did was to use the new road to transport his vision beyond the intractable realities of Esenyurt.

From a City to a Satellite

Çapan's idealistic aspirations had been frustrated, but they were not diminished. The municipal team decided to tackle the problem of modernizing Esenyurt by means of a rather different strategy. It was proving impossible to introduce the kinds of changes that would turn Esenyurt into a "modern" city space. But perhaps it would be possible to institute the modern vision in an empty space – a space, that is to say, devoid of the established culture that was proving to be so inimical to rational ordering in Esenyurt. So, the road that Çapan had opened in Esenyurt became the means to transpose his urban project to the green field sites of Esenkent and Boğazköy. After three years in office, Gürbüz Çapan embarked on a huge project to build a modern satellite town at the edge of Esenyurt, on the other side of the Edirne highway, and adjacent to the already developing satellite development of Bahçeşehir. What he was now proposing to do was to take the people of Esenyurt away from the squatter conditions that seemed to stand in the way of their modernization, and to relocate them in a new and ordered environment that would, it was envisaged, facilitate their conversion finally to modern urban values. The new satellite towns of Esenkent and Boğazköy were envisaged as places in which it would be possible to create a new urban culture guided by the principles of modern civilization. "Muddled urbanisation is not our fate," declared Çapan (1994), "Low- and middle-class people can lead a civilised life in a city like Istanbul without having to bow to land speculators and without having to build illegal settlements." Esenkent was conceived as "not only a housing scheme, but also an alternative lifestyle." What was not possible in the actual space of the city would be achieved through the planned contrivance of a new synthetic space.

The way in which Gürbüz Çapan set about realizing his new project was really quite remarkable, and even heroic. What he did, in a move that was quite unprecedented, was to seize a vast tract of land (more than a million square metres) which was privately owned by a commercial holding company. "It is the first time," he defiantly claimed, "that private land has been appropriated and distributed to the people" (quoted in Öztürk 1997). One cannot but admire the nerve and audacity with which this Robin-Hood-style action was carried out. Even as acrimonious

battles raged on, in and out of the courts, the Esenyurt municipality had set about transferring the land to housing cooperatives, which immediately began to construct the housing units that would constitute the new satellite colonies. When the legal situation was finally resolved, the land had been appropriated for significantly less than the going price (and the fact that this land was right next to Bahçeşehir, which was having great success in attracting the middle and upper classes of Istanbul, meant that its value continued to soar). What this act of public expropriation testified to was the persistence of the radical populist dimension in Çapan's urban political strategy.

But this populism was, for the most part, a gesture to the past, and now only constituted a residual element in Çapan's approach to the urban question. How the great land seizure was justified and its legality defended reveals what had come to prevail in his approach. Çapan and his lawyers made inventive use of an old law (Law 775) – passed in 1966 with the intention of halting the spread of *gecekondu* settlements and establishing so-called "prevention areas" – which had made it possible for state land that was deemed to be under threat from prospective squatters to pass into municipal ownership, along with funds to permit the rehabilitation of the land through new housing schemes for poor families. Their great and unprecedented coup was to draw on this law to legitimate the annexation of private property. What they argued was that this act of expropriation was entirely in conformity with the spirit of the law, in so far as it was intended to inhibit the development of illegal *gecekondu* settlements on the property and to provide shelter for the poor and deprived citizens of Esenyurt. Esenkent was intended, in Çapan's words, to be "a shanty town prevention district" (quoted in Öztürk 1997). It would demonstrate how a modern city for the people could be brought into existence, on land that had been returned to the people.

But, as we have said, Çapan was distancing himself from his former populism – he even suggested that the new housing projects of Esenkent and Boğazköy should be regarded as "an apology from the Turkish left to the people of Turkey" (Öztürk 1997). Esenkent came into existence out of a desire to create a contemporary urban space – a space like Bahçeşehir – for the less privileged inhabitants of Esenyurt. The slogan that drove the project forward was "contemporary living is everybody's right." Today's visitors to Esenkent are greeted by road signs that declare this to be "the route to contemporary life." Esenkent was to be both a modern and a model city, with green areas and parks, shopping centers, schools, and a hospital, and cultural and sporting facilities. The architecture of the new settlements was resolutely modern, though very dense, and intended to symbolize and sustain the lifestyles of contemporary urban culture. Shopping centers and social services were located in such a way as to provide easy access. Especially in the case of Boğazköy, the planners and architects sought to engineer every small aspect and detail of the urban environment so as to promote "the advancement of social relations" (this meant such features as public squares, cycling routes, pedestrian zones, pavements suitable for push chairs, facilities for the disabled, meeting places for women, and so on). What these satellite developments were seeking to create was spaces that could be characterized as "warm," "secure," and "human." The overriding ideal was that of order.

The objective was to bring into existence a newly ordered urban culture. If it was the case, in Esenyurt, that people had grouped according to their particular village

identities, thereby contributing to fragmentation and insularity in urban culture, Çapan was resolved that, in Esenkent and Boğazköy, he would promote social interaction and integration. Culture was considered to be central to this project of creating a new and more convivial urbanity. Thus, an important and symbolic project was the construction of an open-air theatre: with a seating capacity of 4,000, it was the second largest in Istanbul, and was regarded as being a major cultural contribution from the periphery to the center of the city (it was said that Esenkent had "crowned Istanbul" with a major cultural institution). But, more than just a cultural project, Çapan's might also be regarded as a civilizational one, concerned to demonstrate how a new kind of urban living could be brought into existence in empty space. He has described it as a "social peace project" (see Ekinci 1996). The new development would constitute a melting pot and would promote social and cultural integration. No matter where they came from, the people who lived in this new urban space should learn to share and enjoy a common urban culture.

Two Kinds of People

The satellite project was in the heroic tradition, and driven by a great modernizing idealism. In its aspiration to reorder the city, or rather to constitute an alternative order beyond the imagined disorder of the old city, it constituted a utopian plan for the future of a part, at least, of Istanbul. The municipality's avowed intention was "to transform the migrant populations, who had become marginalised as a result of the damage they had inflicted on the city, into citizens who would take care of the trees, the roads and the green areas, and who would put pressure on the authorities with their democratic demands" (Esenyurt Municipality 1996). But again the project to institute a new urban order and model citizenship did not evolve as the municipal authority had anticipated (as with all such utopian projects it ran up against the human resistance to rationalization). In this instance, what happened was simply that the people of Esenyurt – the people in whose name the project had been undertaken – did not choose to come and live in the new districts.

Even though the cooperatives of Esenkent and Boğazköy would allow them to pay for new apartments in installments, it still seemed as if the costs of moving were beyond their means. But, far more crucially, it became apparent that they actually preferred to stay in Esenyurt and to hold on to their properties there. For these properties actually offered them far greater flexibility in managing their lives, with possibilities always to adapt or extend the structures that they had built, according to new circumstances. They were concerned, too, with making future provision, not just for themselves, but for extended families and dependents. For them, a house was not just a machine for living in, but the focus for a complex network of social relations, responsibilities, and obligations. Quite simply, in the environment of Esenyurt, which they themselves had built, and where they felt a sense of involvement, they could feel more in control of their destinies. There was simply too much to lose by moving to Esenkent and investing in Çapan's vision of the modern city and citizenship.

What then happened in Esenkent and Boğazköy was very significant, and also very much against the grain of the municipality's ideals and idealism. For the social vacuum was quickly filled by another population, and one that did find something

very appealing about the new settlements. As advertisements and newspaper articles started to appear, praising Esenkent for its modern identity, its urban qualities, and its convenient facilities, so it began to attract the attention of a wider constituency, composed of mainly middle-class people from Istanbul. These new kinds of in-comers to the periphery were in search of precisely what Esenkent did have to offer. For them, in spite of their density, the apartment blocks represented the possibility of acquiring an "ideal home." This ideal, as Ayşe Öncü points out, was all about enjoying the pleasures of a modern lifestyle – the apartment is, for the middle classes, a symbol of status and respectability, a place in which they can realize and express their newly acquired consumer identities – defined in absolute contrast to the chaos that they felt the rural migrants had brought into the city with them. Their modern space was a clean and orderly space, quiet and traffic-free, and with the clean air and unpolluted surroundings that an almost rural environment (located 20 kilometres from the center of the city) could promise. Such a space could accommodate a purified modern lifestyle, in retreat from everything that Istanbul had become as a consequence of its actual modernization.

What was bringing these respectable, modern migrants to satellite living was the cultural order that was associated with modern living in the marketing campaigns for Esenkent and Boğazköy. It was a question, not just of a safe physical environment, but also of a comfortable cultural environment. "What captured the imagination of Istanbul's middle classes, and became the focus of their desires, observes Ayşe Öncü (1997: 61), "was the homogeneity of a lifestyle cleansed of urban clutter – of poverty, of immigrants, of elbowing crowds . . . – a world of safe and antiseptic social spaces." They were drawn by the image of "a homogeneous, safe, orderly environment, distant both spatially and socially from the heterogeneous populations of Istanbul," a space in which they could sustain and enjoy together the "cherished purity of their own 'Westernised' way of life" (1997: 68–9). The appeal of the new satellite spaces would seem to lie in the clarity and homogeneity of their social order – which is, of course, utterly antithetical to any real ideal of urbanity. Esenkent and Boğazköy came to afford the middle classes the opportunity to shape their own social space, in seclusion.

Most discussions of contemporary urbanization in Istanbul conclude that its problems, maybe even its crisis, are a consequence of migration and the proliferation of unplanned and unruly *gecekondu* settlements. Now we must, indeed, accept that there is some truth in this judgment – and we should try to be lucid in analyzing what kind of truth it really is. But what we have been concerned to address in this discussion is the more counter-intuitive proposition that the modernizing agenda has also been implicated – and is perhaps now more than ever implicated – in what is wrong with Istanbul. We must recognize – as in the case of the Esenyurt municipality – that the program for urban modernization has been driven forward on the basis of altruism and social amelioration. And we should take note of the importance attached by the modernized or modernizing citizens of the city to a clean and safe quality of urban life. But we think it is absolutely necessary, nonetheless, to then go on to challenge the apparent self-evidence of the modernist vision and sensibility. We must be prepared to consider the awkward possibility that what presents itself in terms of being a solution to the contemporary urban question may, in fact, turn out to be making a significant contribution to the problems of the city now.

This – unintended and unacknowledged – contribution has largely been a consequence of the universalizing aspirations of the modernist project. The project has been all about imposing a comprehensive order on the perceived disorder of the urban space. Urban planners have assumed, and commonly insisted, that their own vision of the city is one that should be shared by all inhabitants of the city. Because they think of it as an enlightened vision, and seemingly cannot think of it in any other way, they make the assumption that acceptance of its premises is natural and, ultimately at least, ineluctable. And because they consider their own particular vision to be both rational and benign, they are likely to conclude that those who dissent from it are irrational and subversive. The dilemma is that the rationality of the plan is always fated to be at odds with the disorderly reality of actual urban conditions. This, as we saw, has been the perpetual bane of those who were seeking to impose their rational blueprint on the irregular lifeworld of Esenyurt. In Esenyurt, in the end, it became clear that the modernizing vision just could not accommodate the awkward disposition of migrant culture.

It is the growing recognition of this incapacity that is now bringing into prominence a second, and potentially more disturbing, problem with the modernizing agenda. The failure to recruit the others to their civilizing mission has begun to lead many who enjoy a modern lifestyle to rethink their approach to the city. And what they are deciding is that they will henceforth seek to realize their objectives, not at the scale of the city as a whole, but through the construction of small islands of modern urbanity. This new approach has become manifest through the proliferating development of housing schemes like Bahçeşehir, Esenkent, and Boğazköy. Here we see how an ideal that once had universal and inclusive aspirations has come to express itself as no more than the survival strategy of a particular group of people. What they are seeking to create at the outer edges of Istanbul are new kinds of self-contained, self-sufficient, and self-regarding community. In these satellite colonies, it will be possible to sustain modern identities and modern lifestyles, in sequestration. Communities in orbit. This insular variant of modernism is choosing to turn its back on the city at large. In its new solipsistic form, we think that the modern vision threatens to promote greater segregation and consequently division in Istanbul.

We have heard it said that there are two kinds of people in Esenyurt: there are those who elect to live in comfortable and ordered conditions, in Esenkent; and there are those who prefer and choose to live in the conditions of squatter existence, in Esenyurt. What is implied is that there is one group that is urbane and civilized, and another that is primitive and uncivilized in its urban culture. Everything is in this implication. The former are constituted as the ones who must deal, in whatever way, with the problem that is created by the existence of the latter. And, in the very form in which the urban question is imagined and conceived, the very impossibility of its resolution is guaranteed.

Trial by Space

The modernist agenda dominated the discursive space of Istanbul even as the *gecekondu* culture came to prevail over the physical space of the city. But now, as circumstances have made their ideological supremacy seem increasingly vain, the proponents of the modernizing agenda are feeling the need to assert themselves

through more than just words. Now there is a growing recognition that the control of real space is as important as – and perhaps more important than – the control of the city's intellectual and symbolic space. What we see in Istanbul at the century's end is an escalating struggle between competing social groups to register their existence on the urban scene – the growing politicization of urban space.

The middle classes, who suspect that they can no longer expect the city as a whole to develop in conformity with their own urban ideals and aspirations, are now choosing to invest both their resources and their identities in the new satellite developments at the edge of the city. And the poor and migrant populations of Istanbul continue with their illegal building activities on whatever land they can appropriate. What is consequently taking shape, through the ensuing frenzy of building activity, is an increasingly segmented and segregated urban landscape, a landscape of striking, often obscene, contrasts. Esenkent and the even more exclusive Bahçeşehir – which is selling luxury villas and even "intelligent houses" ("everything that a civilised person would aspire to") stand just across the road from, and in full view of, the poor and deprived *gecekondu* settlement of Esenyurt. The escape capsules of the affluent next to the survival zones of the urban poor. Worlds apart, but fated to be worlds together in space.

It is in space, said Henri Lefebvre, "that each idea of 'value' acquires or loses its distinctiveness through confrontation with the other values and ideas that it encounters there":

Moreover – and more importantly – groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognise one another, as "subjects" unless they generate (or produce) a space. Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating (or producing) an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs, resolve themselves into abstract descriptions, or mutate into fantasies (Lefebvre 1991: 416–17).

Today, Lefebvre maintained, no one can avoid "trial by space." Our discussion has precisely been concerned with how such contestation is pushing and pulling on the contemporary urban space. In the particular and distinctive circumstances of Istanbul, and more specifically of Esenyurt, we can see, all too clearly, how competing social groups, vigorously striving to make the presence of their end-of-century identities felt, are now dramatically recasting the morphology and texture of the city.

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