Peripheral Public Spaces. Types in Progress

ELA ALANYALI ARAL

Istanbul, like many cities throughout the world, is continuously changing due to the developments in technology and comparative alterations in lifestyle. One of the most frequent and rapidly spreading spatial typologies in the city comprises spaces along urban motorways, in accordance with the increase in the quantity and speed of motorized transport.

These spaces are usually conceived and treated as green areas by local authorities - only as visual assets to the city. Yet, as in many Turkish cities, many of these spaces also remain untreated. Regardless, they still attract a considerable amount of urbanites for certain types of uses. Users of these spaces, if not only trespassing, are mostly enjoying the surroundings; standing, sitting, resting on the ground, having a look around, talking to each other, even having picnics, especially in good weather.

Repeated observations of such uses, which are public in character, have initiated contemplation on the role that these spaces play in the public life of the city. In that regard, this chapter includes a discussion about the significance and potentialities of spaces along urban motorways as public spaces. While doing this, two primary concerns to be discussed in subsequent parts will be to comprehend how users in Istanbul, and thus in Turkish cities and culture in general, perceive and conceive these spaces, and to investigate the role of the circulation networks in the formation of urbanity and public spaces.

Discussion on public space

Hannah Arendt identifies the public realm with the urban milieu of the polis in ancient Greek culture »where everybody had constantly to distinguish from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all«, and it was »reserved for individuality; the only place where men could show who they really are and inexchangeably were« (Arendt 1958: 52).

Comparatively, the public realm implies an individual or a group that presents his/her/its own specific qualities, and a »public« observing them from diverse perspectives and aspects (Arendt 1958: 57). In that context, public spaces are those which embrace individuals or groups revealing diverse peculiarities as well as the observing public - also with manifold features as being formed by individuals/groups from different formations. Specifically, public spaces in the city refer to all urban spaces physically containing users who express themselves, and observers who perceive and experience these expressions. Throughout the discussion on spaces along urban motorways, their qualifications and potentialities as public open spaces in the city have been portrayed.

Appropriation, as a spontaneous and self-expressive activity, becomes an agent for the revelation of identities in space, and it may be praised as an opportunity for enhancing the public realm of the city (Alanyalı Aral 2003). The diversity of the user profile and how intensely and frequently the urban space is used become important matters in substantiating any contribution of spaces to the public realm.

Public space, when defined as the space of encounter and self-expression, entails two key properties:

- The coming together of a large number of urbanites – due to accessibility and activities in the space.
- Appropriation presenting the circumstances for the revelation of identities (Alanyalı Aral 2003).

In contemporary debates, public space is being discussed with regards to its validity for the masses that live in urbanized areas. For the fact that no other means of communication has been substantive enough to replace face-to-face contact, public spaces still hold the core of research and contemplation. As technology increasingly introduces agents that alter everyday life, qualities and characteristics of public spaces alter.

New forms of public space evolve as new functions, new types of use and new institutions arrive on the scene; movie theaters, shopping malls and play centers for video games are some of the public space

types introduced since the last century. On the other hand, urban open spaces which welcome numerous and diverse urbanites – streets and squares as the basic typologies – preserve their prevalence in the contemporary city. They acquire great public value for their accessibility and dense use, especially as spaces also comprising the indispensable spaces of circulation.

Public open spaces of the past have extensively generated models for the production of contemporary ones. Yet, the existence of praised historical public spaces in our lives rarely goes beyond nostalgic images and experiences predominantly used as attractions in tourism. For many city dwellers, living environments are not comprised of such places and some of the individuals in urbanized areas do not even experience any public open space that we would conventionally mention as a plaza or a square. In many cities throughout the world, daily experiences mostly depend on high-speed travel by vehicular means; aiming to bypass the inevitably experienced public open spaces – specifically those along circulation routes – in the shortest possible period of time.

Cities become exposed to most heterogeneous life patterns in cultures and economies under rapid change; this change for the most part being produced by the mobility of populations in both spatial and socio-economic terms. The diversity of dwellers is reflected in urban space: for every group – or even individuals - somehow holds a territory in urban space; and by expressing themselves to others.

Metropolitan areas, especially in developing countries, present an unsettled social milieu, as they are places where great numbers of people from different origins continually face each other in different contexts and modes. Such cities, which are under great changes due to social, political or economic compulsions, produce more breaks in the urban area where their dwellers find the opportunities to develop their own informal use patterns. Seemingly chaotic, they engender more leftover spaces - »leftover space« being defined as a space that is not ›possessed‹ by people (Alanyalı Aral 2003) - which signify more uncontrolled and more temporary spaces, and more spontaneous uses. Today, Berlin is one example of this type in Europe, and Istanbul is another one at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

While discussing the future of public open space as a medium for serendipitous encounter of urbanites, a primary concern should be to understand what is actually displayed in urban areas; involving specific current spatial typologies and use patterns in cities. Apart from regular and planned types of public spaces, there exist a variety of emergent contexts in contemporary cities, mostly in disregarded urban areas (Oswalt/Overmeyer/Missewiltz 2004).

Spaces along urban motorways comprise a common urban spatial typology in contemporary cities. These spaces challenge closer investigation in the context of Turkish cities, for they display some specific public urban space qualities as spaces of encounter and self-expression. Spaces along urban motorways entail two key properties: the bringing together of large numbers of urbanites, due to the dense use of the motorways and high accessibility; and the potential for appropriation, allowing urbanites to reveal their identities through spontaneous use patterns.

Searching for ongoing patterns in public open spaces

Spaces along urban motorways in Turkish cities, and in Istanbul in particular, display instances of unexpected and extensive uses by urbanites. The circumstances behind present usage characteristics should be studied in order to gain a proper comprehension of how users perceive and conceive these spaces.

Perception and use of spaces vary to a great extent in different cultures and different geographical regions. We may suggest that these circumstances are much related to the cultural formations and expectations of users, which can be tested through a survey on use patterns of public open spaces in Turkish cities throughout history. Yet, this inquiry can by no means determine whether we may appraise or devalue present use patterns in the city; it can only contribute to determining the motives which bring them about. Whether or not related to the motives of the past, use patterns in the contemporary city do exist with their significances for the public realm in the city, and their qualities and inadequacies should be well understood and re-considered for decisions about their future and for designing new spaces.

In this part, for a better understanding, the common peculiarities of urban public open spaces coming from the past will be outlined; namely in Anatolian cities in the earliest and latest centuries of the Ottoman period, questioning also their possible relation to the legal layout.

Rigid classifications and definitions are mostly problematic when examining historical incidents. There may be many alternative ways to investigate common characteristics in cities, regarding different periods, regions or specific attributes like three port cities being evaluated in Eldem, Goffman and Masters'(1999) inquiry; their approach does not necessarily aim to embrace all cities in the extensive lands that remained under Ottoman reign in different periods.

Eldem, Goffman and Masters (1999: 15) reject both the Weberian exclusion of Islamic cities, and the definition of European or Arab cities as normative, as the ideals to which other civilizations must be measured against. Likewise, Tanyeli (1987) has shown that many features of the Islamic city model were not applicable to Anatolian Turkish and early Ottoman cities. Furthermore, it has been discussed that »there does not exist a typical Ottoman, Arab, or Islamic city that imposes fundamentally unique and thus ghettoizing characteristics upon all such urban centers and their inhabitants« (Eldem/Goffman/Masters 1999: 15).

There is a limited number of research works on the urban characteristics of cities in the earlier periods of Anatolian Turkish cities. For that period, Tanyeli (1987) portrays a comprehensive study and he states that Turkish tribes brought not only a nomadic but also an urban culture to Anatolia in the 11th century, along with stimulations from various cultures, such as the Iranian culture. Many motives in Anatolian Seljuk cities and also in later Ottoman cities have also been rendered as relevant to the nomadic past of Turkish tribes (Evyapan 1972) or Turkish cities in Asia: For example, Kuban (Cerasi 1999: 86) relates the Ottoman cities' principle of detachment to the Turkish cities in Asia, which were formed of three different parts: the city of aristocrats and »*zanaatkâr's*« –namely »*şehristan*«, the settlement area in the inner castle, and bazaar area –namely »*rabad*« or »*birun*«, which exists outside the walls and far from both.

On the other hand, Cerasi (1999) introduces an extensive study about urban civilization and urban architecture portraying Ottoman cities in Balkan and Anatolian Ottoman cities in the 18th – 19th centuries. When relevant studies are compared, it is possible to sort the shared characteristics; some basic properties have been in existence from the beginning of the Turkish period in Anatolia and can be traced in the later periods – even in Cerasi's discussions on the cities in the latest period of the Ottoman Empire.

In the scope of this paper, the shared characteristics, especially physical properties and use patterns in public open spaces of the past, have been studied relying mainly on the comprehensive studies of Tanyeli (1987) on Anatolian cities in the 11th– 15th century Turkish Anatolia and early Ottoman periods, and of Cerasi (1999) on the Anatolian and Balkan Ottoman cities in 18th – 19th centuries.

The urban layout and the physical properties of public open spaces

Tanyeli (1987: xi and 128) claims that the earliest Ottoman settlement pattern appeared at the beginning of the 15th century and that it was unique: Anatolian cities contained the earlier Byzantine fortress area, yet the city did not only expand from the old nucleus outwards, but expanded also from the margins of the city inwards: The commercial center extended outwards from the old fortress-city and the »*bedesten*« became the most outstanding element of this area, whereas in the surroundings semi-rural units were formed around »*imaret*« complexes. Afterwards, the evolution occurred through the intensification of this semi-rural texture no more as an outward expansion, but as an inner development – the process he names as »counter-focused« expansion of the Ottoman city.

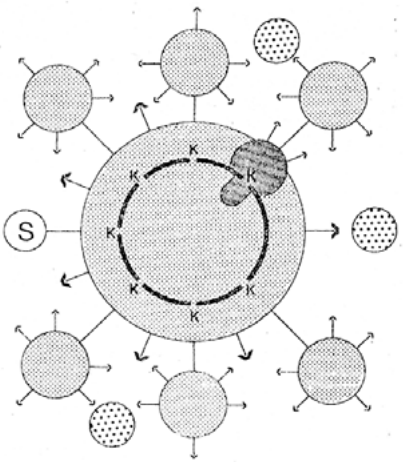

Figure 1: The »counter-focused« expansion of the early Ottoman city, by Uğur Tanyeli (1987)

»S« indicates the palace, »K« indicates the gates of the castle from earlier periods, dark areas indicate the commercial area, lighter areas show the settlement areas and the lightest areas show cemeteries.

In the earlier Ottoman cities in Anatolia, especially *fütuvvet* mosques were located on the outer surroundings of the city, and new districts were formed in these half-rural half-urban areas by inhabitants who were comprised probably of nomads and former villagers (Tanyeli 1987:

130). So the fortress walls were not definitive for the cities; they were rather open cities with no definite boundaries between inside and outside, or between the rural area and the city (Cerasi 1999: 79). The loose and fragmented growth pattern left great vast areas between the numerous neighborhoods in the city.

As a multi-centered structure the old center mostly retained, whereas other settlement areas gathered around centers with social buildings like mosques, schools, religious buildings (*tekke* and *zaviye*), libraries and public baths (*hamam*). These centers were scattered around critical locations within the topography, leaving vast areas in between (Cansever 1996: 379). These vast areas mainly encompassed four types of activities:

- supplementary areas like agricultural and breeding land
- spaces for sport and military activities (*at meydanı, ok meydanı*)
- social / meeting activities (*bayram yeri*)
- recreational activities (*dere boyu/mesire yerleri*) (Cansever 1996: 382).

Within this urban layout, in the cores of fragmented district groups, there existed public spaces like mosques, schools, baths, etc., with their open spaces like the courtyards of mosques and complexes. On the other hand, another group of public open spaces with social and recreational activities emerged in between and sometimes just on the peripheries of the fragmented neighborhoods of the city.

A closer investigation shows that predominantly two factors were important in the formation of these public open spaces: the natural virtues of places and their location, and relationships within the city.

Ottoman cities have usually been discussed to produce informal public open spaces in physical terms. The urban design during the Ottoman period gave buildings freedom for expression; the monumental public buildings were designed to be observed not only from a close vicinity but also from a far distance (Tanyeli 1987:xi). As (*imaret*) complexes or as single buildings, they were usually of a high geometrical order. Except for the monumental and religious complexes, Ottoman cities had a rather disorderly settlement pattern, which was loose and coincidental (Erzen 1991) with a great amount of vast areas.

These vast areas included public open spaces which were rather indeterminate in their formal characteristics and in harmony with the natural characteristics of their specific location. Usually, they were not designed nor were they orderly urban spaces, but pieces of land left in their natural characteristics.

Cerasi (1999: 229) claims that Ottoman interventions absolutely adapted the existing forms in the natural space both in urbanization schemes and in open space forms. Love and the enjoyment of nature were important attributes to them. Nature was seen as one of the complementary values in Ottoman Istanbul; there were always fragments of nature in the city like gardens, graveyards, green courtyards and vacant lots (Erzen 1999: 94). Regarding the preservation of natural characteristics in most public spaces, the intrinsic qualities themselves seem to have been inspiring – or sometimes determinant – for city dwellers in appropriating them for certain activities, as in the case of gardens: Evyapan (1972) states that the Turkish garden was located according to the properties of place due to its qualities, with a regard for weather, water, view and other conditions. These properties of place inspired people to decide making a garden by way of using and improving them.

As the second important factor, the relationship of spaces to the inner-city movement arteries and to the city entrances was decisive for the public quality of open spaces. Primarily, public spaces developed on the main arteries and close to city entrances.

Tanyeli (1987: xii) claims that one of the specific public open space typologies, *meydan,* was formed from the earliest periods on and has continued to exist as an »unlimited« open space just near the outskirts of the city – there were inner-city *meydans*, but these were living public squares continuing their functions from earlier Byzantine periods.

The relationship of open spaces to the inner-city circulation arteries and to the peripheries played an important role in qualifying their public character: Those close to the city entrances, like Namazgâh in Ankara, in important locations and along the main arteries of the city (Atmeydanı in Istanbul as a public square continuing its function from Byzantine period) were the primary multi-functional gathering public open spaces of cities; whereas those rather remote ones emerged as merely recreational public spaces: Evliya Çelebi (Cerasi 1999:203) mentions ten strolling areas outside the walls of Istanbul in the 17th century, which all social classes used, Bazaar areas outside the walls and far from the city, or marketplaces just outside the city walls like in medieval cities in Europe (Carr/Francis/ Rivlin/Stone 1992: 54) were also seen in other cultures. Yet, one typical location for public open spaces in the Ottoman city was the vast areas in-between fragmented groups of neighborhoods. Specific public spatial typologies like *çayırlıks,* or cemeteries, which were used as *gezinti* strolling areas, were located at the exits of these neighborhood groups; mostly on hills with a panoramic view (Cerasi 1999: 201).

Main Types and characteristics of public open spaces

As far as public open space typologies go, Ottoman cities included mainly *meydan*, *mesire*, *çayırlık* and *pazar*.

Meydans (public squares) in Anatolian Ottoman cities existed from the earlier periods on, and though there was no disagreement in function – as »an open space to serve the whole city for some urban-social functions« – *meydans* were different in design from those in the West (Cerasi 1999: 201), not being defined by buildings on at least three sides and not having a geometrical order, as was prevalent in Western cities since the Renaissance.

Usually mey*d*ans were vacant, unenclosed, wide areas, which were placed on the outskirts of settlement areas. They were not designed or orderly urban spaces, but rather pieces of land left in their natural circumstances. While the basic functions were essentially the same – namely to bring many people together for public interaction – use patterns and qualities were different in Ottoman cities as opposed to Western cities. Cerasi (1999) mentions that while informal in character, they showed inconceivable use patterns in the context of western plazas – embracing tents and huts, groups of people sitting in circles, eating, playing games, even meditating. The Persian term »*maidan*« was translated into Turkish as connoting a vacant, unclosed, wide area:

Meydan: »1. Flat, open and wide place, area – like *Taksim meydanı* [in English: Open space, public square, the open square]; 2. Field of game / contest or combat – like *sava ş meydanı, at meydanı, ok meydanı* [in English: Field, area]; 3. One's immediate surroundings – like in '*meydanda kimse yok'* [in English: Arena] […]« (Okyanus Ansiklopedik Sözlük IV 1981: 1931).

»*Meydans*«, for all their differences in their formal representative qualities and usage qualities, were rather likened to the campo in Italian cities, which were rather more informal than the piazza: an open and undefined empty space where daily activities, like bazaars etc. took place (Yerasimos 1996). In the Ottoman city, such wide-open spaces were almost always casual and they lacked specific purposes. These properties are also valid for *meydans* in Turkish villages (*köy meydanı*), where the land is not designed or altered for a strict order, but used in its natural character, with a minimum of intervention.

»*Mesire*« was a recreational public space where people could stroll and spend time in nature. *Mesire*: »Place to stroll, to enjoy open air and to entertain, walk« [in English: Promenade, excursion spot] (Okyanus Ansiklopedik Sözlük IV 1981:1916).

The »*çayırlık*« was also one of the main typologies, and there was a *çayırlık* with trees in every settlement in western and eastern Turkey (Hobhouse 1913 in Cerasi 1999). These were areas left in their natural layout and used publicly as strolling places and they were widespread in cities in the 18th century. Sports games and public entertainment/ festivities on special days were held in these spaces, as in Cebeci çayırlığı, Ankara.

»*Pazar*« (bazaar) was another public open space in the Ottoman city, and every city had one or more grain or animal bazaar in its peripheral area. *Pazar* areas were also usually *meydans* with regard to the great flexibility of activities that could occur there.

All these typologies had some common properties in their formal and programmatic qualities, namely the overlapping of activities and serenity and holding place as behavioral patterns in public open spaces.

Features like the informality of public open spaces in physical terms and the use of cemeteries, *çayırlıks*, and *bostans* (Cerasi, 1999), in addition to *meydans*, for recreational purposes, formed the definitive properties of Ottoman cities' distinctive character. Tanyeli (1987: 169) explains the reasons for *meydans* to be placed on the outer skirts of the city in relation to their flexibility of usage –as they were also used as bazaar areas (for easy access of nomad groups), horse riding sports areas, and for ceremonies and celebrations (which sometimes necessitated large areas for sultan tents).

Main public open spaces, like *meydan, mesire or çayırlık,* were mostly experienced in their natural properties. All these types were very close in their use characteristics so that even a very well-known *meydan* in Istanbul – At Meydanı – could be mentioned as a *mesire* in Seyahatname (Evliya Çelebi 1971: 146).

Likewise, Cerasi (1999) refers to *çayırlıks* as *mesire*, claiming that they represent the attempts to appropriate or re-appropriate a natural environment of the city, the materiality of a place with its meadows, ambience and panorama. This point signifies that it was possible to view the same kinds of use in many public open spaces, with the essential characteristic being the enjoyment of nature.

In Ottoman cities, functions were overlaid in the urban context, for example open spaces, like cemeteries being used as public open spaces (public gardens where dwellers could stroll, enjoy, sing, eat etc), and fruit gardens along the Meriç river in Edirne being used as public strolling areas (Cerasi 1999: 201, 203).

The specific use typologies and preferences in public open spaces in Ottoman cities can be considered as a reflection of the overall behavioral patterns of urban dwellers.

Ottoman use – or Balkan and Anatolian Sociabilité (Boué in Cerasi 1999: 199) – was different from uses in Europe; it was more static and sometimes lead to contemplative and more multi-functional activity (the group sits, rests, sings, eats…). Many urban public open spaces appeared like rural picnic areas, and families or groups of friends occupied a certain location and stayed/enjoyed being there for hours and even for days with tents (Boué in Cerasi 1999: 205). This feature may be related to the fact that in Ottoman cities, the rhythm of daily life was rather slow – without rush – as observed in the long greetings, elongated business dialogues and bargains as mentioned by Mantran (1999) for the case of Istanbul in the 16th and17th centuries.

Cerasi states that meydan*s* were used in astounding ways: Tents and huts were set up and there were groups of people sitting in circles, others eating, and some playing games on horseback. These *meydans* were multi-functional and they also provided the milieu for meditating, as a group or a person appropriated a location in the space to sit, like a corner in the field (Cerasi 1999: 199).

These use patterns depend mostly on the main properties of the public open spaces. The enjoyment of nature as it is and the multi-functionality produce their specific atmosphere: a calm, static, slow and peaceful way of occupying a place which brings together singing and eating groups with those meditating within the same space.

Legal layout of public open spaces in the Ottoman city

Ottoman cities shared some common principles with the Islamic cities in general, but they were particular in their open space typologies (like *çayırlık* and *mesire*) and use characteristics. Yerasimos (1997: 67) claims that individual and collective properties are determined through the two main principles in the Islamic city: positive benefits and negative benefits. This means that anyone who can evaluate a common property without disturbing others has the right to possess it. This principle was applied to many spaces, a significant example being the formation of dead-end streets typical also in Ottoman cities.

For this impermanence, public spaces in Islamic cities were mentioned as merely areas of transition or temporary use, institutionalized no further than their usage properties (Yerasimos1997: 67). As mentioned before, many features of Anatolian Turkish and early Ottoman cities were incompatible with these models and definitions. Moreover, it is not possible to state that they were temporary, for some of them have continued to exist until today or until very recently.

In Ottoman cities, it is difficult to state that public open spaces were not institutionalized. As they received regular care and maintenance, meydan, çayırlık and mesire were well maintained by responsible groups like »*çayır bekçileri*« and »*fideciler*« (Cansever 1996: 382) and »*bostancılar*« (Cerasi 1999: 199). There was also a specific legal structure defining public and private spaces.

Land ownership patterns

In the earlier periods of Ottoman cities in Anatolia, the different characters of the old centers and new centers (in their »counter-focused« expansion) were also reflected in the difference of land ownership patterns in these areas. The outer lands, where new centers emerged, were not »*mirî*« – which means that as state-owned land, they cannot be the property of individuals, but were only rented to them. Inner old center land however could be private property (Tanyeli 1987: 132). This »*mukataa*« system was in use only in earlier periods, but can not be spotted after the 15th century.

The Ottoman system was based on land owned by the State, except for *mülk arazi*, which was comprised of privately owned land, including the land of houses and their use areas in villages and towns (Sönmez 1998: 205).

In the Ottoman property system, common land (»*res publicae*« in Roman law) was the category of metruk arazi. Land in this category also belonged to the State and was reserved for the use and utilization of the public or of the inhabitants of a certain settlement (Sönmez 1998: 205). These comprised routes, *meydans, namazgâhs, mesires, pazars* and *panayır*/festival places and was protected strictly in the sense that they could only be used for the purposes they were reserved for – through laws forbidding any personal utilization/appropriation (Sönmez 1998: 206).

Another category was the *mevat arazi* or *hali arazi* (»res nullius« in Roman law), which applied to the land that was in nobody's ownership – though its *rakabe* (*kuru mülkiyet*) belonged to the State – and where no permanent appropriation occurred. These lands were not reserved for the utilization of the public. They were not usable in any way – neither available for agriculture nor for buildings – and they started 1.5 mile from the buildings at the peripheries of a settlement (Sönmez 1998: 207). By definition, these lands could not be considered as urban lands in Ottoman period, however in the Republican period, with the enlargement of city areas, they were converted into public and private property in the urban context.

The Ottoman property system brought spontaneity and disorder to ownership patterns, which was also reflected in the physical properties of settlements, in their irregular and compact structure (Günay 1999). It was only by the end of the 19th century that spontaneous possession of land, spurred by urban growth of the Ottoman city, began to be replaced by planned ownership-based real estate (Günay 1999: 235).

Layout of the transportation network

As in many Islamic cities, streets in Ottoman cities were either held in common property or they were the shared property of neighborhood dwellers - like in the case of dead-end streets, which could be closed to strangers by the decision of these dwellers (Yerasimos 1996: 10).

Basically, Ottoman cities had three types of streets, including main streets, which connected the entrances of the city to the center, streets connecting the center or the wider streets to the neighborhoods (*mahalleler*), and streets in the neighborhoods (Yerasimos 1996: 13). The latter two street typologies formed a *salkım* type of neighborhood development with dead-ends which were later connected to the main axis, whereas main streets formed a radial-concentric scheme, with public buildings like *keravansarays, zaviyes, hans, medreses,* closed bazaars and great mosques along them (Yerasimos 1997: 68-9).

Figure 2: At Meydanı and İbrahim Paşa Sarayı with Sultan Ahmet mosque. Engraving after Antoine-Ignace Melling, in Maurice, Cerasi (1999): Osmanlı Kenti – Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Kent Uygarlığı ve Mimarisi, p.370

Public open spaces are also usually placed in relation to these main streets – like *meydans* and bazaars at the main entrances of the city, and promenades (*çayırlıks*, cemeteries etc.) at the exits of city fragments and neighborhood districts.

As an overall evaluation, public open spaces in Ottoman cities included several typologies, some of which we may call »peripheral« public spaces. Peripheral public spaces were usually natural in their formal characteristics; they suggest a ruralized urban scene. These spaces presented an overlapping of several functions: *as meydan, çayırlık, mesire* or cemetery, they were promenades and sports areas, and being used for gatherings and contemplation at the same time. Appropriation patterns included serenity and enjoyment of nature as well as persons or groups occupying a place sometimes over extended time periods with huts or tents.

Public spaces as defined with regards to circulation networks

The previous discussion has demonstrated that Ottoman cities – specifically in Anatolia – had some particularities in the formation and use patterns of public open spaces. A second step should be to evaluate their significance in relation to contemporary discussions about the definition of public open space with regards to circulation networks. We may then evaluate whether these particularities remain or if they form a basis in the use and formation of typologies of the contemporary city – particularly in Istanbul – with positive or negative implications.

The periphery and centrality

The duality of center and periphery was questionable within the settlement and growth pattern of Ottoman cities. The fragmented open city model produced numerous centers and in-between areas, which signified the transitory character of open spaces resembling the rural in the urban.

Cupers and Miessen (2002: 31-33) claim that this distinction was rigorous in the western city until very recently, yet the divisions in western culture as rural and urban, or center and periphery, no longer structure the geographical position of the city. Today the center, or rather the centers are spread over the nodes of the network; the peripheries are smeared over the folds of the urban fabric (Cupers/ Miessen 2002: 33). We may claim that this layout of the contemporary western city has some similarities with the settlement pattern in Ottoman cities.

The role of the periphery with reference to centrality is being discussed in various dimensions. Nijenhuis (1994: 14) states that the distinctive opposition between center and periphery is secondary and misleading - it is rather the networks of movement that create the city.

Primarily, the city is formed and informed by heterogeneous speeds – by the difference between inertia and traffic. The form of the city is thus, finally, an unstable effect.

The robustness of peripheries was an expression of the power controlling them. Thus, the surrounding walls meant a cautious insurance of security for the wealth acquired through the control of goods passing through the city gates – a model which accounts well for the existence of markets just inside or outside the city walls, near the city gates. This characteristic of cities faded away in 19th century Europe with the strategies following Saint-Simonian thinking, which attempted to liberate the flux of goods, people and information (Nijenhuis 1994:16).

The »ordinary urban« and the »supergrid« defining centrality

Bruyns and Read's (2006: 63) definition of the city is also constructed upon the idea of the city as an outcome of movement networks. They propose that the superimpositions of space-time frames and speeds produce the »event« of the place, which affects the centrality. The crucial point in this model is the intersection/overlapping of two networks with different speeds and different scales of movement:

»Centrality emerges [...], in a developed traditional type urban fabric, out of a relation between two distributed infrastructural grids rather than being a simple inverse to the edge condition as it would be in a village… the active principle […] is a matter of […] the focus of one scale of movement or relation towards another. The first urban ›revolution‹ […] is one of the addition of another scale of movement and connectivity grid over the first, and a shift in the focus of activity and centrality towards this new grid« (Read 2006: 75).

What emerges in the areas of superimposition is defined as the »ordinary urban« spatial pattern, which supports the sociability by making possible the encounter of people from different origins.

The shift from a simple centering of one scale on itself, to centering as a structured interface between two scales means a shift from an identification of the social unit and its activities and movements with a static internally centered space, to one which founds a social space, or rather the social effect of urban space, in a systematic dynamic exchange between local people and activity and people and activity of a wider surrounding. The spatialities concerned account on the one hand for the immersion of the individual in a world of familiarity and local identification, and on the other for his or her exposure to a world where he or

she is confronted on a regular basis with the unfamiliar, with people from other neighborhoods and other ways of life (Read 2006: 75).

Concerning the properties of public space, the ordinary urbanity is a model which accounts for the public realm in urban space emerging through the capability of movement networks to bring together people from different origins (Alanyalı Aral, 2003).

Read's definition signifies the complexity of a »public« milieu where urbanites meet a range of others. Urbanity or rather the centrality (as this quality is basically what makes a real center) evolves as far as people spend time in these spaces of encounter. Then, they have the opportunity to view others, while at the same time expressing themselves to this variety of people.

In Europe throughout history, the marketplace close to city walls sustained this role as the meeting place of locals and strangers. Then, with the disappearance of city walls, there emerged an altered centrality more distributed through the main movement axis:

»Urban infrastructure development from the early 19th century was characterised by boulevard and avenue building, creating networks geared to the increasing size of the city and the increasing mobilities of its populations at that time. These primary movement networks […] were the ›freeways‹ of the day cut to the speeds and mobility ranges of their time, and these longer routes through the dense fabric of the European centre reveal themselves as surprisingly coherent grids – we'll call them ›supergrids‹ […]« (Bruyns/Read 2006: 61).

The center-periphery relationship was different in that model than the conventional urban models. The center of the urban whole was distributed through the grid which integrated it into an already multi-place, multinodal entity (Read 2006: 76), and this was continued in European cities until recently.

Like Nijenhuis' (1994: 15) approach, which renders the city as an inhabitable circulation which is formed from the boundary, the ordinary urban model regards the edge as a productive frontier rather than a barrier. In the history of European cities, the edge formations were incorporated into the spreading urban fabric, leaving as their relics significant crossings and spaces, which themselves became centers in the larger-than-local infrastructural network (Read 2006: 78).

We can discuss the existence of peripheral public spaces in Ottoman cities in the context of the ordinary urban model: Public spaces were located either as nodes/centers, around which neighborhoods were shaped (Cansever 1996) – with public buildings and public open spaces like

meydans and bazaars on main streets (Yerasimos 1997: 68f), or they (especially *bazaars*, *çayırlıks*, cemeteries etc.) were scattered throughout these neighborhoods, close to their exits on the routes which connected them to other neighborhoods and other cities.

Centrality in the Ottoman city has comparable properties with that of the 19th century European city without walls. The sequence of public open spaces along the main circulation arteries included different types, ranging from the squares of the mosques, which were formal in the overall layout, to a variety of loose informal public open spaces.

Considering the fact that use characteristics were almost the same in all typologies of informal public open spaces, one can see a particular centrality effect in these spaces of encounter, almost producing rural qualities in the urban.

The dilemma of centrality in the contemporary city

A major subject of criticisms directed towards the contemporary city comprises the deficient public role of urban spaces: the isolation of the individual from the public sphere in connection to the regression in means of encounter and expression. This issue is much correlated to the improved means of transportation and accordingly increased speed of vehicular traffic in the city.

Taking into consideration that post-fordist needs have mainly been determined by mobility, one might argue that today's loss of street life is mainly connected to the fact that the street's function has been lowered to that of pure infrastructure (Cupers/Miessen 2002:18).

This speedy movement system on the circulatory arteries in the city fails to generate the appropriate milieu for urbanity, as is also discussed by Virilio (1997). Mutual relationships necessitate the overlapping of a rather moderate vehicular movement system with one where pedestrian movement is possible and enlivened.

Bruyns and Read (2006: 62) state that in the late 20th and early 21st century the primary city development networks were built at the scale of the metropolis and the mega-city region, at which dominant movement takes place, and that this represents the main problem for urbanity:

»Our loss of a certain place quality today is substantially due to the fact that we have stopped building particular grids (the supergrid – a grid which today could intervene and mediate between local and metropolitan scale grids), which carried those qualities in the 19th century«. (Read 2006: 80)

In search of urbanity and new public spaces

Today, the urbanity of urban space in conventional means has become questionable. New attitudes that have evolved elucidate unrecognized types of urbanities and public spaces in cities. Bearing in mind that public space is the space of encounter and self-expression, these attitudes may embrace all accessible urban open spaces – including the daily experienced voids and leftover spaces usually disregarded or undervalued – for their probable public qualities: »When void space is relatively visible to locals or strangers it can turn into a local meeting space […]« (Cupers/Miessen, 2002: 95).

Public space as an outcome of action

Baird (1995: 337-339) distinguishes two attitudes in the formation of public spaces: One is the consideration that the public realm can only proceed from the individual act cumulatively outward to the resultant collectivity, the other is the attitude of using the iconographic power of architecture to constitute a new public realm.

When exposed to actual urban spaces, the public realm proceeding from the individual act outward to the resultant collectivity is an outcome of action in urban space.

Unless the place is a spiritual, ethnic, national or historical one, where indirect experiences form images and meanings that are evoked by the name, repeated direct experience is a requirement for connections to develop. By means of observations of spaces through time, it is possible to find out the patterns of action producing meaning.

Appropriation, defined as a self-expressive action, may or may not alter urban space physically. Physical modification of the urban space by spontaneous action may be realized either through intended alterations or unintended alterations – these two may well exist in urban space at the same time:

»Unintended alterations by spontaneous action in space are acquired by means of appropriation through repetitive use and continuity of appropriative activity in time. These are activity-based ways of making space meaningful; altering space through leaving traces of action in space. Examples comprise path formation in vast spaces, defining a specific space by sitting on the same part of slope all the time, etc.

Intended alterations of inhabitants may embody spontaneity at a different level: appropriation through building/altering within urban space by inhabitants following their own organization patterns: appropriation through act of

self-organised alterations. These are building-based ways of altering space and they do make space meaningful somehow« (Alanyalı Aral 2003: 133).

These two attitudes both produce expressions of individuals or groups shaping these spaces – to be perceived as elements of the public realm – as a resultant collectivity of spontaneous action.

Activity-based alterations, as observed through traces of action in the urban space, are more expressive of spontaneous preferences and behaviors, though they usually are ephemeral. In that context, spontaneous actions of inhabitants reveal self-expressive qualities.

There evolve two different groups of appropriation to be examined and evaluated:

- Typical ones – continuous, repeated, which may also have become patterns with the traces they leave in the space
- Exceptional ones – may be valuable with regards to their contribution to the public realm (Alanyalı Aral 2003).

Observation of appropriation patterns and traces of action in space, which are formed through continuous and repetitive use, may construct the basis of evolving attitudes for the elaboration of public urban spaces.

Public space and urbanity has always been connected to disorder, functional heterogeneity, and diversity (Cupers/Miessen 2002, Sennett 1970). Daily experience – though underestimated – includes examples of them with spaces along urban motorways forming one extensive linear typology.

Spaces along urban motorways as public spaces

Crawford (1999) mentions the incoherent landscape of roads among everyday spaces, which defeat any conceptual or physical order; as everyday spaces comprise »the connective tissue that binds daily lives together, amorphous and so persuasive that it is difficult even to perceive«. It is the space that we experience every day through our movements for daily activities like work, home and school.

Spaces along urban motorways are spaces left over beside/along/ between/under/within urban motorways. They also include spaces along or under elevated highways passing through urban areas. These spaces are almost always free for everybody's access and use, so they do present a potentiality for appropriation.

Spaces along urban motorways exist everywhere around circulation routes in the city. Their sizes and shapes vary: some are linear in shape,

as related to the route form, usually leveled and sometimes treated for greenery.

Such spaces are among the non-places according to Augé (1995), for they are spaces experienced through journeys. Lampugnani (2006: 304) mentions them as the emblem of globalization, as their dramatizations are interchangeable everywhere, and he groups them as »benign« residual spaces – spaces which may contribute to the city like the spaces left between the carriageways on highways –, and »malignant« residual spaces – spaces like viaducts and underpasses as hopeless cases which should not be allowed to arise in the city.

The contemporary city continuously produces its own structures and systems in relation to the evolving/changing life patterns within. Spaces along urban motorways anyhow are among evolving public spaces in the contemporary city, as they present public qualities due to their inherent characteristics - as spaces visually and physically accessible to inhabitants (Alanyalı Aral 2005).

As a result of their transparency, these spaces obtain a certain stage character: no matter how ephemeral or small-scale, the space attracts theatrical behavior (Cupers/Miessen 2002:95).

In many western cities, surfaces facing these spaces – mostly beneath elevated motorways – are usually used as boards for graffiti exposed to passers-by either as pedestrians, or traveling in cars or on bicycles.

Perception of these spaces is related to the physical qualities and speed of movement through the circulation axes. Motorway travelers in passing vehicles usually grasp a short scene from the life in these spaces –seeing the action itself as appropriation patterns, or traces of action. The expression of life within these spaces is what makes one typical experience of the public realm in the contemporary city:

»They do not carry strong stories […], but are charged with meaning in a different way. The minor traces that remain in this kind of space are its little ›signifiants‹ […]: Cigarette ends, empty cans, broken toys, rubbish or paper tissues. These traces point to the fact that meaning in these spaces is constituted through ephemeral use rather than built matter« (Cupers/Miessen 2002:95).

The isolation of the driver from the surrounding space, increasing as the speed of the vehicle increases, signifies the hindrance for the encounter in this widespread urban space typology of the contemporary city. On the other hand, these spaces entail another type of experience for pedestrian users, which includes the actual enjoyment of space.

In Turkey, spaces along urban motorways are extensively used. Appropriation of these spaces evolves as either traceless appropriation, or appropriation leaving traces on the space.

Traceless appropriation comprises recreational activities, indicating many typical appropriation patterns in open spaces, like standing, sitting, leaning, sleeping, eating and drinking, having a picnic, playing, etc., which are performed by single persons or groups. These activities leave almost no trace in space – except for some litter sometimes. Re reational activities may take place easily in any adapted space, like in spaces along vehicular routes.

Figure 3: Traceless appropriation of spaces along urban motorways, photograph by Melih Aral

On the other hand, appropriation that leaves traces on space comprises mainly path formation, activities like vending in temporary or permanent additions to space, and minor traces left in the spaces after any actual enjoyment of it.

Figure 4: Appropriation that leaves traces in spaces along urban motorways -path formation, photograph by Melih Aral

Path formation is usually related to trespassing, which is typical in many spaces in which public access is not blockaded, as in spaces along urban motorways. Path formation emerges due to repetitive and continuous use, and is expressive in the sense that it presents the route preferences of users. Sometimes, spontaneously formed paths are converted into permanent hard-surface pedestrian routes by an intervention from the municipalities.

Vending is also typical, as temporary cars sales and counters usually appear in spaces along urban motorways, and sometimes trucks and cars appropriate an area next to vehicular routes to sell goods. A rather atypical pattern in this category is the appropriation of old ruined cars as vending huts. This kind of appropriation is relatively permanent in space, usually on some well-used spot/on route, so as to be seen, and bringing liveliness and a chance for encounter to users. Vending may introduce a richness in immediate experience (sounds, smells, etc.), together with an increased number of users – bringing together a diversity of many people.

Conclusion: Istanbul case and potentialities

Istanbul, until very recently, was a city physically circumscribed by walls at least on one side: Except for some neighborhoods outside the Yedikule and Mevlevihane gates, the city was surrounded by walls at the western edge, and the outer area comprised cemeteries, *bahçes* and *bostans* (Kuban 1998: 36, 41). Until the Republican period, in the walled area there were huge gardens and voids used as urban *mesires,* like the valley of Bayrampaşa Deresi, Langa and the area between Yedikule and Topkapı (Kuban 1998: 36). Outside the inner-wall area, there existed scattered fragments of neighborhood groups in Üsküdar, Galata, and villages in many spots along Boğaziçi (Figure 8).

Istanbul presented much of the public open space patterns of Ottoman cities. The urban pattern in the city was like a disorderly network with knots; with its dead-end streets and public buildings like *mahalle mescitleri, çeşmeler, sıbyan mektepleri* on knots; and *külliyes* on bigger knots (Kuban 1998: 27). The enjoyment of nature in the city was observable in the extensive green areas throughout as *bahçes*, *bostans* and *mesires* within the fragmental growth pattern of the city.

Much of the overall layout of the city remained in the first decades of the Republic. After the 1950s, the city began to develop more rapidly due to high rates of immigration and an increase in construction activities. The city, with alterations in circulatory networks like bridges over

Haliç and Boğaziçi, and perimeter ways, in addition to the squatter zones, changed into a collection of regular and irregular settlements dispersed in a wide area.

In contemporary Istanbul, settlement areas are no more groups of neighborhoods scattered in a fragmented pattern with *bostans, çayırlıks* and *mesires* in-between, but there are still peripheries in the city, in a different manner. When observed from the air, spaces along urban perimeter ways evolve as huge green areas with their surroundings, which break the congested settlement areas into pieces: In fact, these speed routes themselves draw peripheries within the city. Thus, they are regardless peripheral spaces, in varying sizes, mostly as linear green bands. Some of the spaces along urban motorways – especially those by the perimeter ways, contain considerably huge green areas within the urban fabric, and in some cases their size validates their use as public open spaces.

It is interesting that many spots within the spaces along the urban motorways emerge as informal public spaces with a variety of activities: These spaces on peripheries perform as modern public spaces, used for casual observation, picnic and retail areas. As an ongoing pattern, there is the enjoyment of the surrounding as it is, even though these spaces next to vehicular routes seem too unexpected and polluted for such public recreational uses. These spaces mostly offer high accessibility for users from the surrounding neighborhoods and from other parts of the city, and this is a primary factor in their use as public spaces. Pedestrian access is usually the case for numerous users living in the vicinity, and in situations when peripheral spaces are appropriated as picnic spaces, users usually travel much greater distances by vehicular means.

Figure 5 and 6: Picnic in spaces along urban motorway in Istanbul, photographs by Melih Aral

Users of spaces along urban motorways are mostly from lower and middle classes. Observations show that people usually prefer to be in loca-

tions where they can watch others, movement – of other people or vehicles – or enjoy a nice city view. Thus they usually stand, sit or lean on higher parts of inclined areas, or in any location where the view of the surrounding is not blocked. Natural-looking, spacious locations or green areas along and between fast urban perimeter ways are used as recreational spaces, since users do not demand neat and treated spaces.

The spontaneous use and appropriation by urbanites in such spaces transpire as actions or traces of actions, and they present patterns when observed through time. Traces of actions usually comprise path formations in spaces frequently used for trespassing, or vending cars and temporary huts placed by the motorways. Expressions and use/ appropriation patterns contributing to the public realm, very rarely lead to a permanent alteration in these spaces, like in cases where a pedestrian path formed through repetitive use is fixed as a concrete path by the local authority.

There are certain questions about the validity of spaces along urban motorways as peripheral public spaces. The crucial question lies in the public quality of these spaces, depending on whether they really function as spaces of encounter in the city: if they can bring together numerous and diverse urbanites.

The two main problems of encounter in these spaces are both related to high speed vehicular traffic on motorways: One is the fact that speedy motorways regardless detach the two sides generating a dangerous and polluted edge for parts of the city. As the spaces on the sides become bigger, these negative effects are lessened and they evolve as more usable pedestrian spaces.

The other problem is related to the isolating character of speed and vehicles as capsules, since travelers can perceive what and who exists in outer spaces only to a certain extent. Spaces along urban motorways are valuable to most urbanites for they are urban spaces that offer spaces physically and visually accessible to all groups in the city: For Istanbul, 94% of passenger transport, that is about 10 million travels per day, is held on urban motorways (Akay 2003). Drivers and travelers see pedestrians enjoying these spaces, and pedestrians watch the flow of cars; but the degree of the mutual relationship may only define a distinct limited sociability.

The contemporary problem in producing a network scaled to generate social space is valid for our cities, as observed in Istanbul (Read 2006: 80). Spaces along urban motorways may not necessarily be considered as centers in the city, but they may moderately retain the culture of peripheral public spaces if the appropriation patterns that they present

are tolerated and improved upon, along with precautions in upgrading their specific experience.

Actions and traces of actions in these spaces are generally disregarded by both authorities and designers, and they inevitably disappear in the contemporary city. Appropriation patterns in these informal public spaces do present valuable features of contemporary urban space use culture, also reflecting a specific public open space culture. Ways to tolerate their existence and learning from them should be searched out and the first step can be their consideration as assets of contemporary urban life.

Observations in the city are the foremost step for comprehensive investigation about peripheral public spaces. Yet, further studies involving detailed information about the specific physical characteristics, as well as questionnaires and other participatory techniques for learning users' profiles and preferences are necessary in order to develop ideas on how peripheral public spaces may retain and better serve public life in cities. Research on these spaces may primarily aim to improve the concern for these spaces and uses within, by designers and authorities, and may serve to integrate projective processes with such peculiarities of the existing urban life.

References

Akay, A. (2003): »Istanbul: Bir Eğlence Megapolü«. In Cogito-Yeni Istanbul, no:35, pp. 181-184.

Alanyalı Aral, E. (2005): »Spaces Along Urban Motorways – An Opportunity for the Public Realm in the City«. In Abstracts UIA 2005, Istanbul: UIA, p. 324.

Alanyalı Aral, E. (2003): Leftover Space as A Value and A Potentiality for the Public Realm in the City, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ankara: METU, Faculty of Architecture.

Arendt, H. (1958): The Human Condition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Augé, M. (1995): Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (translated by John Howe), London, New York: Verso.

Baird, G. (1995): The Space of Appearance. Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

Bruyns, G./Read, S. (2006): »The Urban Machine«. In: Stephen Read /Camillo Pinilla (eds.) Visualising the Invisible – Towards an Urban Space, Amsterdam: Techne Press, pp. 52-67.

Carr, S./Francis, M./Rivlin, L. G./Stone, A. M. (1992): Public Space. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cerasi, M. (1999): Osmanlı Kenti – Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Kent Uygarlığı ve Mimarisi, Istanbul: YKY. Altan Yayıncılık.

Crawford, M. (1999): »Introduction«. In: Chase, John / Crawford, Margaret/Kalinski, John (eds.) Everyday Urbanism, New York: The Monacelli Press, pp. 1-27.

Cupers, K./Miessen, M. (2002): Spaces of Uncertainty. Dortmund: Tuschen.

Eldem, E./Goffman, D./Masters, B. (1999): The Ottoman City Between East and West – Aleppo, İzmir, and Istanbul. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Erzen, J. (1991): Mimar Sinan Cami ve Külliyeleri –Tasarım Süreci Üzerine Bir İnceleme, Ankara: ODTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi.

Evyapan, G. (1972): Eski Türk Bahçeleri ve Özellikle Eski Istanbul Bahçeleri, Ankara: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi.

Günay, B. (1999): Property Relations and Urban Space. Ankara: METU Faculty of Architecture Press.

Kuban, D. (1998): Kent ve Mimarlık Üzerine Istanbul Yazıları, Istanbul: YEM Yayın.

Lampugnani, V. M. (2006): »The City of Tolerant Normality.« In: Graafland, A./Kavanagh, L. J. (eds.), Crossover, Architecture, Urbanism, Technology, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, pp. 295-307.

Mantran, R. (1991): XVI.-XII. Yüzyıl'da Istanbul'da Gündelik Hayat. Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık.

Okyanus Ansiklopedik Sözlük (1981) Istanbul: Pars Yayınevi.

Oswalt, P./Overmeyer, K./Missewiltz, P. (eds.) (2004): Urban Catalyst: Strategies for Temporary Use – Results of the European Research Project 2001-2003, unpublished report.

Read, S. (2006): »A Brief History of Flights to the Periphery and Other Movement Pattern«. In: Read, Stephen/Pinilla, Camilo (eds.) Visualising the Invisible – Towards an Urban Space, Amsterdam: Techne Press, pp.68-82.

Sennett, R. (1970): The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sönmez, T. (1998): Osmanlıdan Günümüze Toprak Mülkiyeti –Açıklamalı Sözlük. Ankara: Yayımevi.

Turgut, C. (1996): »Osmanlı Şehri«. In Vecdi Akyüz (ed.). İslam Geleneğinden Günümüze Şehir ve Yerel Yönetimler v. I, Istanbul: Bayrak Matbaacılık, pp. 373-388.

Tanyeli, U. (1987): Anadolu Türk Kentinde Fiziksel Yapının Evrim Süreci (11.-15.yy), Istanbul: İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Baskı Atölyesi.

Virilio, P. (1997): Open Sky (translated by Julie Rose). London, New York: Verso.

Yerasimos, S. (1997): »İslâm Şehrinde Sınır ve Geçiş«. In Zeynep Aktüre (ed.), Sanat ve Çevre, Ankara: ODTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Basım İşliği, pp. 67-70.

Yerasimos, S. (1996): »Tanzimat'ın Kent Reformları Üzerine«. In Dumont, P./Georgeon, F. (eds.), Modernleşme Sürecinde Osmanlı Kentleri (A. Berktay, trans.), Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, pp. 1-18.