"There Is an Istanbul That Belongs to Me": Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City

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The citizenship ideal of the Turkish republic has taken shape through the logics of alterity, defined by and through both a paradoxical understanding of Turkishness and the rise of Kurdish identity politics. Citizenship in Turkey represents an uneasy marriage between ethnic and civic conceptions of national identity and belonging. This article develops an analysis of citizenship and everyday spatial practice in Istanbul through the narratives produced in focus group discussions with Kurdish-identified, migrant women. Their stories explore how citizenship, as a hegemonic process that assembles identities, fixes power relations, and disciplines space, is encountered and contested through the spatial practices of everyday life, through what Michel de Certeau calls the tactics of "making do." Viewing dominant discourses and practices of citizenship as techniques of spatial organization ("strategies," in de Certeau's terms), this study focuses on how participants narrate their own spatial stories of resistance to and appropriation of dominant codings of "the citizen" and "the stranger" in the Turkish context. This analysis brings to the fore the ways in which focus group participants encounter discourses and practices that position them as strangers and citizens, their use of tactics of anonymity and strategies of identity as they traverse city spaces, and the moments in which they situate themselves as political subjects in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces in Istanbul, through the spatial enactment of the strategies of citizenship and the tactics of everyday life. *Key Words: citizenship, urban geography, Kurdish identity, Turkey, Michel de Certeau.*

We came to Istanbul in 1995. Our family broke up. We don't know who's where. We came to Istanbul. One or two of my sons have now escaped to Russia. We said, "There's no money here, no work, whatever we do." We opened a telephone stand in Taksim [a central part of Istanbul]. If I am a citizen, if my son has done his military service here, if my father gave his blood at Canakkale [Gallipoli], my sons must also have rights. . . . Three times the Terror Police have taken my son, and said you are not going to be able to eat bread here, you are not going to stay here. They broke three of his ribs. "Kurds, you are all terrorists. . . . " Night came and I had heard nothing from him, then they came to our house and raided it, they searched it. . . . Last week, I went to Taksim, and there were the Mothers for Peace, peace protesters. "Despite all this we want peace," they were saying. I also walked. I walked for peace. I said, "Let there be peace. Let neither a Turkish mother nor a Kurdish mother cry." Because we are all equal, because we are brothers and sisters. All of those living in Turkey have the right to claim this. But the police are always holding me! If you saw my back, pitch black where the billy club was. I was held by my hair, my throat was purple. I got better—I mean, I went to a doctor, they gave me an ointment. All right, how has our life been here? They do not feed us one piece of bread here, yet we are in our homeland. . . . Every language is beautiful, my daughter. Look, I am speaking [Turkish] with difficulty; I am having a hard time speaking across from you. Our language is Kurdish. God created it. It

is something created by God. The situation is this: we have passed through difficult times.

> —(Semiha, age 48, migrant from the Bismil district of southeastern Turkey, focus group participant, Istanbul, 2001)

Becoming political is that moment when one constitutes oneself as a being capable of judgment about just and unjust, takes responsibility for that judgment, and associates oneself with or against others in fulfilling that responsibility.

> —(Isin 2002, 276; emphasis added)

Semiha narrates her moment of "becoming political," the moment in which she lays claim to a political subjectivity as citizen-mother. Not only does Semiha find herself joining the Mothers for Peace in their appropriation of public space in Istanbul, but in doing so she is articulating her rights in the idioms available to her, in defiance of the course of her life. This article takes one cut at the lived politics of identity and space in Istanbul. It explores how citizenship—as a hegemonic process that assembles identities, fixes power relations, and disciplines space (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Natter and Jones 1997)—is encountered and contested through the spatial practices of everyday life, through what Michel de Certeau calls the "tactics" of making do, the "innumerable practices through which

users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (de Certeau 1984, xiv). Viewing citizenship as a technique of spatial organization (in de Certeau's terms, a "strategy"), this study shows how the identities of "citizen" and "stranger" become markers, staking out positions in the contests over rights and belonging that take place through city spaces. Citizenship as a "strategy" works to define and lay claim to a bounded space of belonging delimited against an *exteriority*; "Every strategic rationalization . . . is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other" (de Certeau 1984, 36). Drawing on de Certeau, the discourses and practices of citizenship can be seen as founding a "proper space," a proprietary, circumscribed space of rationalization. Transecting state and society, citizenship operates through such spaces as part of a regime of power and administration that asserts particular definitions of belonging, identity, and rights within liberal democratic ideology. Approaching citizenship as spatial strategy, this study thus aims to contribute both theoretical and empirical insights to an understanding of citizenship as a process that fixes identities, delineates boundaries, and disciplines the meanings and practices of social space (Natter and Jones 1997, 153; see also Smith 1989; Painter and Philo 1995; Staeheli and Clarke 1995; Rocco 2000).

Stories such as Semiha's show that citizenship, as a hegemonic strategy, never completely succeeds in its administration of citizens and strangers. In Isin's understanding, "becoming political" is embodied in the moments when "strangers" and "outsiders" overturn the "various strategies and technologies of citizenship in which they [are] implicated and thereby [constitute] themselves differently from the dominant images given to them" (Isin 2002, 33).[1] Thus when Semiha casts herself and her sons as citizens, rather than terrorists, she is upending the discourses that position Kurds as strangers, as dangerous, internal "others" within the Turkish polity. Hegemonic strategies of citizenship discipline the meanings and uses of social space in Istanbul, but these strategies are also disrupted through the politics of everyday practices, the tactical trajectories through which citizen-strangers trace unintended, heterogeneous spatial stories within and against an imposed political terrain (de Certeau 1984, 34).

I begin by situating my fieldwork with Kurdish women in Istanbul within discourses of citizenship that work to assemble and locate ethnic and civic identities in the Turkish context. This discussion traces the co-construction of Turkish citizenship and Kurdish identity politics through the logics of alterity and leads into an analysis of how focus group participants narrate their own encounters with the strategies of citizenship that position them as strangers within particular urban spaces. Through tactical maneuvers that disrupt the dominant meanings and practices of space and identity in the city, focus group participants narrate their own spatial stories of "making do" and "becoming political" in everyday life. Finally, this reading of focus group narratives and dialogues generates further questions about the political potential of discourses of anonymity, solidarity, and the public sphere as they are mobilized in various strategic or tactical ways in the politics of citizenship in the city.

The Research Site

Citizenship works not only at the state level to assemble identities and position them variously in relation to discourses of "belonging" and "rights," but also at the scale of everyday, urban life. Lefebvre (1996) links strategies of citizenship to the urban through "the right to the city," the right to inhabit the city in the broadest sense and thus to be a producer of the city as a work. Indeed, setting aside the historical and etymological links between cities and citizenship in the Western context,[2] cities are prime sites where identities are staked, belonging is negotiated, and rights are pursued. Such processes are understood to be constitutive of the meaning and practice of citizenship (Holston and Appadurai 1999; Holton 2000; Isin 2000). While the diversity of cities has been celebrated and urban public spaces idealized as arenas of tolerant encounter, cities are also marked by processes of exclusion, segregation, and repression (Mitchell 1995; Ruddick 1996; Smith 1997). The everyday life-spaces of the city—its neighborhoods, parks, streets, and buildings—are thus both the medium through which citizenship struggles take place and, frequently, that which is at stake in the struggle.

Istanbul has over 12 million inhabitants, approximately 60 percent of whom were born elsewhere (State Institute of Statistics 1993). Of the almost one-quarter million rural-urban migrants Istanbul absorbs each year, many are economic and political refugees from the southeast, where the ongoing conflict between the state and the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*—Kurdistan Workers' Party), a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish separatist movement that gained ground in the late 1980s, has not only intensified economically motivated rural to urban migration, but at times led to the forced migration of whole villages. The Human Rights Association estimates that 2 to 3 million people have been internally displaced

as a result of the conflict (Kirişçi 1998). According to a report prepared by a committee of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2001, the state's security forces have evacuated almost 3,000 villages and hamlets. The official, undoubtedly low, estimate is that 400,000 were displaced in these operations.

Studies have suggested that we can talk about two waves of Kurdish migrants, those who migrated during the 1940–1980 period for predominantly economic reasons and those who migrated during the post-1980 period, whether in search of work, in flight from the war, or as a result of the village evacuations (Çelik 2001). While rural-urban migrants in Turkey have been the subjects of much scholarship from the 1960s to today (Karpat 1976; Heper 1978; Erder 1996; Wedel 2001a), as Kirişçi and Winrow (1997) note, few studies have explicitly focused on Kurdish migrants. What studies have been done on Kurdish migrants in Turkish cities have offered disparate perspectives on the experience and meaning of Kurdish rural-urban migration. Some scholars have seen urbanization as a process that invests Kurdish migrants in urban life and thus leads to their assimilation (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997), while others have seen the city as a site of identity formation and mobilization where migrants are likely to forge stronger ethnic solidarities (Seufert 1997; van Bruinessen 1998; Wedel 2001b). In addition, both Seufert (1997) and Çelik (2001) have questioned whether Kurdish identity is reinforced or undermined by the multiplicity of communities and identities that migrants form in the city. While Seufert finds that the politicization of Kurdish identity makes it a more salient axis of identification than Alevism for one particular group in Istanbul, Çelik finds that Kurdish identities in the city become folded into and subsumed within identities based on migrants' regional origins (*memleket* or *hemşehrilik*) (Çelik 2001).

All of these currents—assimilation, solidarity, and multiplicity—can be read in the focus group discussions upon which this study is based, and in many ways it is the mobilization and disruption of these very narratives that this article will show to be bound up with strategies of citizenship and moments of becoming political. Instead of viewing assimilation and solidarity as alternative trajectories, this article shows how Istanbul becomes inhabited through daily peregrinations between silence and solidarity, anonymity and identity, and the spatial stories that focus group participants narrate as they negotiate the contested political terrain of the city.

This study is based on the discussions and debates that took place among 33 women who participated in four focus groups conducted in Istanbul in the summer of 2001.[3] Structured by age cohort and length of time in

Table 1. Focus Group Structure

Group	Age Cohort	Years in the City
I. Younger newcomers	18–35	⩽10
II. Younger old-comers*	18–35	>10
III. Older newcomers	36–55	⩽15
IV. Older old-comers**	36–55	>15

*Three participants born in Istanbul.
**One participant born in Istanbul.

the city (see Table 1), the focus groups were comprised of 7 to 10 women each. The participants, who were identified through the author's informal networks, did not previously know one another, and were brought together in a rented conference room for conversations that lasted for two to two-and-a-half hours.[4] The participants were self-identified as Kurdish, though not all of them spoke Kurdish, and a few of them had only one Kurdish-speaking parent. The focus groups were conducted in Turkish.[5] While most of the participants had migrated from other areas of Turkey, three of the younger women and one of the older women had been born in Istanbul to migrant parents. Most of the participants were Sunni Muslims, but 12 of the women were Kurdish-speaking Alevis, members of the heterodox Islamic community that comprises somewhere between 10 and 40 percent of the Turkish population and includes Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, and Azeri speakers (Hirschler 2001).[6] While we might conveniently refer to the participants as "Kurdish migrant women," the purpose of this study is not to present ethnicity, gender, and migrant status as discreetly bounded categories of identity or experience. Instead, this study focuses on the spatial strategies of citizenship[7] that have themselves, in the process of delimiting the "subject of rights" in the Turkish context, worked to define, represent, and locate such subject positions through sociospatial exclusionary processes (Sibley 1995), processes that are continuously negotiated through everyday practices.

Turkish Citizenship and Kurdish Identity: The Logics of Alterity

Citizenship has increasingly been seen not merely as a legal category, but as a set of discourses and practices that are translated unevenly across unequal social groups and local contexts. We can also add that citizenship as a hegemonic strategy works to define these groups or localities, to fix the power differentials between them, and then to naturalize these operations; at the same time, as discussed above, these hegemonic strategies are never

completely successful. Critics of the liberal citizenship ideal have shown how the discourse and practice of citizenship universalizes the particular constellation of dominant subject positions (such as maleness, bourgeois status, or identification with the titular ethnic or racial group) that is occupied by "the citizen," defining those identities that are not encompassed within the seemingly neutral category as particularistic and therefore properly excluded from expression within the public sphere (Pateman 1988; Marston 1990). The following discussion presents a brief reading of the history of Turkish citizenship, thought through the logics of alterity, as it is inflected with the tensions embedded in Turkey's nationalist ideology and state institutions and with the relational formation of Kurdish identity.

Following World War I, the Turkish national revolution, led by General Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), overthrew the defeated Ottoman Empire, unseated the Islamic Caliphate, and, in 1923, created the modern, secular state of Turkey. While the Ottoman Empire had organized its subjects along confessional lines (the *millet* system), the new state aimed to sublimate its constituency's identification with the transnational Islamic community (*umma*) and instead to consolidate its rule through a nationalist ideal that had its roots in the Ottoman period and the Young Turks government (Committee on Union and Progress—CUP) of 1908–1918. It was during the CUP period that the main ideologue of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), laid the foundation for what was to become the "paradox of Turkish nationalism," its contradictory embodiment of both the French cosmopolitan model and the German organic, ethnic model of national identity (Kadıoğlu 1996; Poulton 1997). Thus Turkishness, as constructed within the discourse of the new republic, referred variously to a civic, territorially defined identity (all those within the Turkish state) and to an exalted *ethnie*, the Turkic people of Anatolia whose language and culture the architects of the new regime historicized and valorized (Poulton 1997). In this way, at the same time as "Turkey was a geographical concept, and the Turkish people were (ideally) defined as those living in that territory" (Gülalp 1995, 117; quoted in White 1999), the new state was also and paradoxically constructed to be "the nation state of the Turks" (White 1999, 80).

The citizenship ideal of the new state embodied this unresolved tension between territorial (*jus soli*) and ethnic (*jus sanguinis*) principles (Argun 1999). In its attempt to transform former Ottoman subjects into republican citizens and to establish a basis for the nascent state's legitimacy, the Kemalist (that is, following the principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) regime defined a republican Turkish identity that would ultimately harness citizenship to an uneasy Turkish nationalism.

> In that ruling [of who was a Turk], the modernizing elite tried to establish a strong link between citizenship and nationality or national identity. . . . The conceptualization of citizenship, as it was argued, came hand in hand with constructing a unique, unchanging and historic Turkish identity that would be made possible only by newly fabricating and imposing a new monolithic culture, while ignoring ethnic and sub-cultural identities
> —(İçduygu et al. 1999, 194–95).

The "monolithic culture" that would be imposed in this instance of "citizenship from above" (Turner 1992) was to encompass modernist, secularist, and nationalist ideals and in doing so to spawn processes of Turkification. Although the Turkish Republic followed the Ottoman tradition of acknowledging only non-Muslim groups (Greeks, Armenians, Jews) as internal minorities, the boundaries of the new state encompassed many different Muslim groups that could claim non-Turkish ethnic identities, from the Laz of the Black Sea region to the Kurds of the country's east and southeast (see Andrews 1989). Nonetheless, Turkish was made the official state language, and the use of any other language in the new public sphere was proscribed.[8] Consistent with the top-down creation of citizenship, rights were conceived of as those that were granted by the state, and citizens were understood to be primarily in possession not of rights, but of duties and obligations towards the state (Heper 1985).

The official position of the young republic was that everyone within the Turkish state borders was Turkish. There were no Kurds in Turkey, only "Mountain Turks" who were presumed to have merely forgotten their Turkish ancestry. Within the state's conception of citizenship, the Kurds, like other cultural or linguistic groups, had only to assimilate into the newly defined Turkish nation in order to enjoy full membership in the polity. As Mesut Yeğen shows in his analysis of Turkish state discourse, the word "Kurd" was not to be pronounced, while the eastern and southeastern regions and their population were referred to as tribal, outlaw, reactionary, and backwards, "all the evils of Turkey's pre-modern past" (Yeğen 1999, 555). In this way, "the Turkish state has, for a long time, consistently avoided recognizing the *Kurdishness* of the Kurdish question" (Yeğen 1999, 555, emphasis in original).

Of course, Kurdishness itself has also been produced through relational processes occurring at multiple scales. With total numbers estimated to be somewhere between 20 and 25 million, the Middle East's Kurdish population

spans the borderlands of four states: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The Kurds, like the Turks, are assembled from a diversity of religious and linguistic affiliations. Internationally, the fissiparous Kurds differ along linguistic (Kurmanji/Sorani/Zaza) and religious (Sunni/Shi'i/Alevi) lines. Turkey's Kurdish population, within which Kurmanji is the dominant Kurdish dialect and Zaza is the second most prevalent, hovers somewhere between 7 and 12 million, with the exact numbers unknown due to the state's reluctance (since 1965) to collect data on the ethnolinguistic diversity within its borders. While most Kurds in Turkey practice Sunni Islam, approximately 30 percent of Turkey's Kurds are Alevi Muslims. Kurds (Kurmanji and Zaza speakers) comprise an estimated 10 to 30 percent of Turkey's total Alevi population (Andrews 1989; Hirschler 2001).

Scholars of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey have emphasized the effects of state policies, the relative economic deprivation of the region, and the rise of a new Kurdish intellectual elite, both in Turkey and abroad, in the construction of Kurdish identity in the late twentieth century (Hassanpour 1998; van Bruinessen 1998; White 1998; Hirschler 2001). Consistent with Kemalist ideals of nationalism and citizenship, Turkey has historically viewed emergent claims to Kurdish linguistic, cultural, or political rights as sources of instability and threats to national unity (Rygiel 1998; Ergil 2000; Yavuz 2001). As a result, the military elite and other state elements have responded to Kurdish unrest and expressions of Kurdish consciousness with strong-armed tactics of repression that have only further strengthened and politicized Kurdish identity (Gunter 2000; Yavuz 2001). In 1984, a year after the military regime of the 1980 coup had returned the state to civilian control, the PKK launched the guerrilla movement that would end up politicizing the peasantry, drawing the state into a protracted conflict in the southeast and costing an estimated 30,000 lives.

At the same time as the Turkish security forces asserted their domination over the restless southeast, and while strict limits to Kurdish political expression continued to be enforced, the recognition of ethnicity as a fault line in modern Turkey gained ground (Kasaba and Bozdoğan, 2000). This shift was in part due to the policies of Prime Minister Turgut Özal (from 1983 to 1991) who recognized Kurds as a distinct ethnic group within Turkey. But perhaps more significantly, the transformations enacted by rural to urban migration, the liberalization of the Turkish media since the mid-1980s, and the rise of international Kurdish media, such as the satellite station Med-TV (licensed to Britain and broadcast into Turkey from various European sites), have increasingly enabled the production of Kurdish identity within and against the Turkish public sphere. This is the context within which at least some elements of the Turkish state have reluctantly acknowledged what former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel famously called "the Kurdish reality."

The politicization of Kurdish identity in Turkey reflects a larger trend toward the cultural reorganization of citizenship. As Bryan Turner points out, whereas class was the major axis of contestation in the early stages of industrialization, "citizenship struggles in early twenty-first-century society are more commonly about claims to cultural identity and cultural history" (Turner 2000, 133). As groups such as the Kurds organize around specific identities in order to affirm the importance of difference for their exercise of rights, they call into question the idea that liberal citizenship offers a universalistic, culturally neutral way to accommodate difference. These challenges have given rise to new theories of citizenship that seek to reconcile principles of difference and equality in such a way that both acknowledges cultural specificity and avoids reifying group boundaries or stigmatizing group membership (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Minow 1990; Young 1990; Kymlicka 1995). Recognizing that individuals may claim membership in a range of different groups and may act politically within and through these communities, recent theories have suggested that we might speak of multiple levels of citizenship (Yuval-Davis 1991) or even multiple public spheres (Fraser 1992), that together could ideally constitute a civic culture characterized by cosmopolitanism and diversity (Young 1990; Sandercock 1998).

According to Kirstie McClure (1992), and following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), what is at stake in these citizenship struggles is the reinscription of the "subject of rights," who can no longer be represented within the frame of the liberal model's "unitary subject-as-citizen." As Isin (2002) argues, despite calls for "the right to difference," difference should not be assumed to be prior to the very act of claiming such a right; like Laclau and Mouffe, Isin locates the political moment in the processes through which identities are assembled and rights-claims are articulated. Approached through the narratives of Kurdish migrant women, this political moment is infused with the contradictions, tensions, and ongoing negotiations over Turkish citizenship and Kurdish identity that have historically given shape to Turkey's political arena. The focus group dialogues among Kurdish women show how the spatial strategies of citizenship are enacted and tactically subverted as "strangers" in the city reinscribe their own presence within discourses and practices of citizenship and, in

the process, not only become new "subjects of rights" but reconfigure the meanings and uses of urban spaces. These discussions both push against the limitations of the liberal citizenship ideal and, at the same time, animate the political potential that infuses the everyday encounters through which citizenship becomes meaningful.

Traversing the City: Gender, Class, Religion, and Ethnicity

Walking is, for de Certeau, a performance similar to a speech act; walking is a narrative action through which places are traversed and organized, selected, and linked, and so strung together into "sentences and itineraries" (de Certeau 1984, 115). "Walking," writes de Certeau, "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks'" (de Certeau 1984, 99). These spatial stories, written in the footsteps of the city walker and yet also assembled from fragments drawn from earlier stories, operate to mark out boundaries in the city, "to compose spaces, to verify, collate and displace their frontiers," (de Certeau 1984, 123). Traversing the city and inhabiting its places can thus be seen as both negotiating and creating what Geraldine Pratt (1998) calls "grids of difference," the variously fluid and fortified boundaries of urban space that provoke a range of identity performances. In the case of the participants of these focus groups in Istanbul, identities and spaces of gender, class, religious practice, and ethnicity were intertwined within narratives of mobility in the city.

Spatial trajectories of everyday life are gendered not only through divisions of labor and the production of "male" and "female" spaces and identities, but also through the ways in which walking and mobility are read by others. For example, one woman described how her waged work as a house cleaner (made necessary, despite her conservative community, by her husband's disability) takes her all over the city, but how her father-in-law beats her because he sees this mobility as signaling lax sexual morality and prostitution; her neighbors also shun her and even her children are harassed at school. However predominant stories and discussions of gender differences in urban life were in the focus groups, it should be noted that focus group participants frequently explained that while gender relations within families and communities vary a great deal across Turkish society, no particular constellation of gender relations can be mapped onto Kurdish culture or identity per se.

Focus group participants did represent religion and religiosity as intersecting with gender practices in the city and as affecting women's spatial trajectories in the city. Not only is veiling discussed as a spatial discipline ("Sultanbeyli Istanbul is more backwards than a village. Even if you weren't covered [veiled] in the village, it will be forced to cover there"; see also Secor 2002) but as focus group participants describe their everyday lives in the city, they frequently refer to specific, religiously differentiated neighborhoods and districts within which different performances of gender and identity are required. Urban enclaves of conservative Sunni Islamism, such as Sultanbeyli[9] in 37-year-old Deren's description above, are especially alienating to Alevi women, whose religious practice not only differs from that which is being asserted in these spaces, but has also historically been persecuted as heretical by the Sunni mainstream. Thus, while some women represented places of entertainment and consumerism as exclusionary spaces, areas that they would avoid due to their own class *habitus* and to the gender norms of their communities, others felt more out of place in religiously conservative areas. In the group of older women who had been in the city for 20 years or more, when one woman said that she was uncomfortable in the entertainment district of Beyoğlu, another woman rejoined:

> Really Beyoğlu is much better than Sultanbeyli . . . Dress as you would dress in Beyoğlu and go to Sultanbeyli. They would lynch you.

While the spatial and temporal boundaries produced through relations of gender and class are clearly important to women's everyday experiences in the city,[10] of particular interest for this article is how articulations of Kurdish and Alevi identity intersect with and mediate these relations. Women represented Kurdish cultural difference and its spatialization as being strongly inflected by class, but not reducible to it. Pervin, a 44-year-old working woman from Ağrı who had been in Istanbul for 30 years, expressed a common sentiment when she explained, "Certainly, there is a class structure in Istanbul, but a poor Turkish woman and a poor Kurdish woman live through very different things."

The interplay of class and ethnic difference was expressed and debated throughout the focus groups, but its articulation in spatial practice became especially evident when women talked about feeling uncomfortable in spaces that they perceived to be both elite and culturally different. The following dialogue took place among three women in their early 20s who had spent all (in the case of Bahriye) or almost all of their lives in Istanbul:

> Şima: We are not comfortable there [in wealthy areas]. We feel like we are a different kind of person.

Ceyden: When we look at our own community, when we look at our family, they look different.
Bahriye: You can see yourself as a stranger. . . . It is as if people look down on you.
Ceyden: . . . I went a few times, and they looked at me strangely . . . I became ill at ease with myself. I don't want to go. I prefer to go to places that are of my own community. I am more comfortable there.
Bahriye We go to places that are of our own culture. Maybe everyone is like this. We go to cafes that are playing our own music. We go to bars where our people go, places belonging to our own people.

This discussion is one of many focus group exchanges that narrate women's encounters with spatialized strategies of differentiation, the "logics of alterity," to use Isin's (2002) phrase, that segregate and distinguish cultural difference in the city. Women see themselves as active participants in these processes of distinction and estrangement, which, though subjugating ("They look down on you;" "I become ill at ease with myself"), also may provide the basis for identity and solidarity as spatial strategies for the creation of "places belonging to our own people." While in the above dialogue Bahriye refers only to "our people," at other times the Kurdish content of such spaces was made explicit. Mahfuze, a 38-year-old, university-educated music teacher who had lived in Istanbul for 20 years, explained that although she felt able to move through other kinds of spaces, "Like our friend,[11] I also feel more comfortable in a place where there is a high proportion of Kurds." Vahide explained her perspective on the role of culture in constructing social—and spatial—boundaries:

> My social origins and my friends' determine that we will be found in Taksim or Kadıköy [areas of Istanbul]. It is this social origin, my culture, that designates my boundaries.

In the words of Deren, who claimed to prefer Kurdish places as well:

> There is a feeling of belonging that people have. When you go to a place you feel it.[12]

City walkers traverse interlacing "grids of difference" and find themselves taking up particular subject positions in relation to the various (religiously, ethnically, or class-based) communties and spaces that organize their spatial trajectories. As their footsteps narrate urban stories—fixing, assembling, traversing, and transforming urban boundaries—urban travelers become active participants in the production of difference, identity, and citizenship. In the focus group discussions, women traced the outlines of such stories. In doing so, they explained both the *tactics* through which they act within and

against dominant spatializations of the city (such as those that produce elite, nonmigrant, non-Kurdish spaces) and the *strategies* through which they and others participate in staking out spaces of Kurdish identification and hegemony. When asked where they felt most comfortable, however, women not only referred to strategic spaces of Kurdish and (sometimes) Alevi identification, but also to areas of diversity and encounter articulated through liberal democratic discourses and the ideal of the public sphere.

Strangers and Citizens

> If you go out in the public space of Taksim [*Taksim meydanı*] you feel free. Why do you feel free? Because every kind of person is there and nobody turns to you, nobody says, "Why are you like that?" Of course, aside from the police. If they think you look suspicious, they stop you immediately and ask for ID. Aside from this you are free.
> —(Kumru, age 23, six years in Istanbul)

On the one hand, focus group participants represented Istanbul, and especially Taksim, as a glorious public sphere, an arena of unassimilated difference where all kinds of people coexist, interact, and fruitfully broaden each other's horizons. For example, Lalegün, a 21-year-old university student who has been in Istanbul for four years, described the city in this way:

> Istanbul is better [than a village] for building communication, because you encounter more people, there is more variety. . . . I learned how to be tolerant of people.

Likewise, Kumru explained:

> In Istanbul you can build communication with people from all walks of life. You can debate and discuss.

Such interaction in the urban public sphere is seen as improving relations between Turks and Kurds; in Bahriye's words, "A Turk who meets a Kurd, if s/he meets a really good person, maybe his/her thinking changes, his/her point of view changes." Women often situated these encounters, debates, and transformations in the urban space of Taksim, an area referred to as "a cosmopolitan place," "a place where all cultures take shelter," "a place of alternatives," a place where "people feel a bit more free." In this sense, women—and especially younger women—saw themselves as participants in the city as "citizens" within a diverse public sphere of free encounter.

On the other hand, despite their engagement with this powerful liberal democratic discourse, women very often saw themselves as strangers, positioned outside

of the category "Istanbulite," estranged within spaces of cultural and class difference, marked and excluded from urban space and rights.[13] The position of the stranger can be understood theoretically through the work of Isin, who views strangers as internal outsiders, those who are excluded from citizenship rights at the same time as they are incorporated within the associational sphere of citizens. They are the closest "others," and as such their differentiation is particularly crucial for defining the citizen (Isin 2002). Thus, at the same time as women spoke of Taksim in terms of an ideal public sphere of unassimilated difference, tolerance, and interaction, they both recognized and resisted the processes that constitute them as strangers and police their presence, even in the most diverse of urban spaces. Kumru, in one breath expressing her sense of freedom in Taksim and in the next telling of police harassment, cogently captures this tension.

Citizenship, as a set of hegemonic practices and discourses, assembles and naturalizes the subject positions of citizen and stranger, situating them within a grid of power relations rendered across state and society. Focus group discussions drew attention to how participants experienced their own estrangement through encounters with the strategies of Turkish citizenship that position them as strangers in the city. When, in the dialogue between Ceyden, Şima, and Bahriye quoted in the previous section, Ceyden said that she could see herself as a stranger (yabancı),[14] she described a sensation frequently noted by other participants as well, that of suddenly seeing her own "difference" through the eyes of urban others. The feeling of becoming a stranger thus arises through the logics of alterity as spatial practices of differentiation and identity in the city. In Pervin's words, "If I come to a space with people who are contrary to my culture, then I feel like a stranger." Likewise Öykü, a 22-year-old university student, described her own feelings of becoming different as she moves through urban space:

> I have felt like a stranger in Istanbul. Speaking, moving around, and interacting socially have all brought about this feeling.

Echoing Semiha's pleas for meaningful citizenship with which we opened this article, 36-year-old Gizem, who came to Istanbul nine years ago from the Tünceli region, explained:

> For us, this place counts as a foreign place [gurbet].[15] This place is also our homeland, but we feel that we are in a foreign place.

Participants also linked processes of differentiation and estrangement directly to state discourses of citizenship in Turkey. For example, in the group of younger women who had been in the city most of their lives, Vahide expressed critical resistance to the positioning of Kurds as strangers when, after some thought, she revised a previous comment she had made:

> Before, I said Kurds and Turks were foreigners/strangers to each other, but I said this repeating the definitions of official history. It isn't that way.

Likewise, in another focus group, a 22-year-old woman who had come from Tünceli with her family nine years earlier associated her own estrangement with state discourses that disallow Kurdish difference. In the following narrative, she describes how she is marked as a stranger due to her name, which is unusual for being distinctly Kurdish:

> They see me as a stranger. At school the teacher asks all the time, "What does your name mean?" If the teacher doesn't like Kurds he says, "There is nobody calling himself a Kurd in Turkey." We are foreigners/strangers [yabancılar] in Turkey, I think . . . I'm a Kurd. This is not accepted. The police come. Saying that my name is Kurdish on my ID card, they take me under arrest. Although Taksim is a political space [mekân], they say, "You're suspicious, come! Your name is Kurdish, you're from Dersim, you're a student, you must definitely be a participant!" At school the teachers did this. This happened while I was sitting at a café in Taksim. Why must I live this? I don't want to be a Turkish citizen.

Quite simply, her name represents a difference that is not permitted within the official narrative of citizenship and nation in Turkey. As this difference is disciplined, public spaces such as Taksim are policed. Despite what she sees as her right to presence, this young woman also positions herself outside Turkish citizenship. Likewise, in Kumru's words, "Although it is written on your ID that you are a citizen of the Turkish Republic, it also says that you are from Mardin [in the Kurdish southeast]; you are not accepted as a citizen of Turkey, not really." Such is the power of citizenship, of the strategies of inclusion and exclusion that harness the ability to name and identify, to police and discipline, the power to delineate the spatial boundaries of the urban public sphere.

Spatial Stories: Anonymity and Identity

> Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them.
>
> —(de Certeau, 1984: 115)

The stories that emerge and are created through the focus group discussions are, like all stories, *spatial stories*.

They trace the tactics of everyday life that work to make use of and to disrupt the hegemonic strategy of citizenship. Two moments emerge as important in the narratives: anonymity, whereby women selectively choose to "pass" as Turkish; and identity, through which women selectively choose to identify themselves as Kurdish. While anonymity operates as a tactic (a maneuver on enemy territory, the "making do" of those without a "proper" space of their own), identity can be seen as a strategic move that stakes a claim to space (a neighborhood, a café, a workspace) by asserting unity and power over and through that space against an exteriority. What animates this distinction between strategic and tactical maneuvers is a particular relationship between space and power. As de Certeau explains, what is particular to strategies is their production of territory, of a spatial "property" that enables the projection and assemblage of "totalizing systems and types of discourse" (de Certeau 1980, 7). In other words, while anonymity may be a tactical maneuver through which everyday spatial hegemonies are covertly transgressed, *identity* is projected through claims to particular *Kurdish* spaces of power. Such a move to demarcate spaces of Kurdish identity and solidarity can, in these terms, be designated as strategic. Delineated by an idea of "Kurdishness," strategic spaces are constituted through an ethnonationalist exclusionary logic at the same time as they create the field necessary for political activities. Such an approach to de Certeau multiplies the possibilities of these terms (tactics, strategies) by acknowledging that strategies may also be used by "the weak" as they transform themselves, however fleetingly, into the powerful through spatial appropriation.[16]

Focus group participants trace their own mobility across spaces dominated by the liberal ideal of Turkish citizenship, where they often employ the tactics of anonymity, and alternative spaces of Kurdish solidarity:

> For us, to talk about some things comes with a risk. Because of this, people live in two worlds. One is a world that not everyone can enter, a place where you truly belong with the origins of your identity. For example, it is a place where I can unite with other Kurds. But let's say there is someone whose reaction I can't predict. I won't say anything to them on this topic.
>
> —(Esel, age 36, 19 years in Istanbul)

In her narration, Esel travels between and across different ways of making do and claiming identity in the city. Her words express the everyday nature of these maneuvers through which anonymity and Kurdishness are variously mobilized within the urban environment. The city is at once a site of identity where new communities of urban citizens, "counter-public spheres"

(Fraser 1992), are forged. At the same time, it is a site of anonymity, where focus group participants variously hide and reveal different roles as they travel from one urban space to another. Judith Garber, in her critique of the idealization of urban anonymity, argues that despite its association with freedom and tolerance, anonymity also connotes defensively hidden identities and enforced invisibility (Garber 2000). Garber suggests that while anonymity may be a defensive tactic for those who seek freedom from persecution, in the long run "identity replaces anonymity as the goal of urban living" (Garber 2000, 23). This critique captures the ambiguity of anonymity as a tactic in a context of forced assimilation and raises questions about its political implications; as Marilyn Lake (2001) points out in her study of aboriginal politics in Australia, there is a "'dangerous intimacy' between the 'progressive' principle of non-discrimination and the 'repressive' policy of assimilation, between the processes of subjectification and subjection" (Lake 2001, 567).

When women enact anonymity and identity, these "peripatetic 'writings' of the city" (Ahearne 1995, 177) represent spatial practices through which women are able to position themselves as new "subjects of rights." Such maneuvers are a response to the strategies of Turkish citizenship (enacted through policing, legal structures, and social life) that work to position Kurdish identity as outside, counter to, and even destructive of the ideal of the Turkish citizen. Strategies of citizenship are inherently spatial processes that take place in and through the differentiated urban spaces of the city. Thus, in order to show how practices of anonymity and identity are enacted, this section focuses on some of the everyday spaces through which citizenship, belonging, and identity are constituted in the city: schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

Schools

While others have written about the creation of Turkish citizens through public education (İçduygu, Çolak, and Soyarık 1999), and while focus group participants did discuss the politics of Turkish-language education in general,[17] what is of particular interest for this argument is how schools, as prime sites of identity formation and boundary creation, become implicated in the everyday construction of citizenship. Indeed, focus group participants frequently described themselves or their children first coming into contact with Kurdishness as a label and social position in Turkish society in school. For example, Dünya said, describing her brothers' experiences, "At school they are confronted—this is a Kurd!" Participants spoke not only of children taunting

other children, but also of children passing on messages from their parents, such as that they have not been permitted to play with Kurdish children: "In school, we lived the depths of this. In class, we were always the guests, the ones who had migrated." In some cases, women described their own or their siblings' experiences, but in many stories (especially those of older women who were newcomers to the city), their children encountered such early practices of distinction and exclusion. Semiha describes the pain of her own realization that her daughter was being socialized in this way at school in Istanbul:

> I have an 8-year-old daughter. "Mother, we need to beware because we are Kurds," she says. She was being taunted at school. I don't know if there is anything more painful than this.

In this context, women described various tactics of assimilation. Some of the participants who had grown up largely in Istanbul describe how their families did not tell them that they were Kurdish or, in some cases, Alevi, until they were quite old. Thus, even though they were speaking Kurdish at home and worshiping as Alevis in their community, these children were shielded from the power and politics of these labels in Turkish society. As Ceyden describes this tactic,

> As long as I was going to middle school, and even as long as I was going to high school, I did not know about either my Kurdishness or my Alevism because it was hidden by my family. They don't tell children that so that they don't say it outside the home. Most of us are like that.

Other women in this group of younger old-comers to the city concurred with Ceyden's generalization, and similar stories of families' attempts to insulate children from the consequences of claiming Kurdish and Alevi identity were shared in the group of older old-comers as well. While we will return in the following section to women's reclamation of these identities as adults, here the critical point is that such narratives provide a window into the processes through which schools act as sites where identities are constituted within and through discourses of citizenship.

At the same time, participants' stories communicate tactical maneuvers through which children act to create their own multiple and mobile political subjectivities in daily practice. Nowhere was this more explicit than in the story told by Bahriye, a 21-year-old woman who was born in Istanbul to migrant parents:

> My younger brother was going to first grade in primary school, and one time I looked at his notebook. He had written there, "The biggest military is our military," "My

fatherland is Turkey," etc. I saw these things and I laughed because these are things you are indoctrinated with. Our little sister started to tease my brother, saying, "Oh, are you a Turk? Look here what you have written!" So he said to her, "At school I am a Turk, it is when I come home that I start saying I am a Kurd."

Different spaces, themselves the product of sociopolitical relations, call forth different performances of ethnic identity and citizenship. Bahriye's story not only further illustrates the spatiality of identity in the city, but also poignantly captures the competing pressures that children negotiate at school, at home, intergenerationally, and interpersonally. While positioning himself within the ethnic solidarity of his Kurdish family and community at home, Bahriye's brother is able to enact his own version of Turkish citizenship by claiming republican belonging, militaristic pride, and nationalism in the school environment. Thus, a story of "making do" that unfolds through a young boy's movement between home and school shows how a child can learn to parse his life in such a way that he enacts different identities in different spaces.

Neighborhoods

As focus group participants discussed their everyday lives, they described processes of affiliation and identification as well as those of exclusion and alienation. When neighborhoods were represented as spaces of community, identity, and belonging, focus group narratives evoked themes of ethnic and religious homogeneity. In the words of Güldem,

> I feel most comfortable in the place where I live. It is a housing development of 75 homes, mostly Kurds and Alevis. . . . Our culture is the same, our language is the same. I feel very comfortable there.

At the same time, other women described the exclusionary housing practices that they encountered in Istanbul. They talked about landlords being unwilling to rent to them because of their ethnicity and of other families being unwilling to move into Kurdish-dominated apartment buildings or to share space with Alevi families. Recent migrants who lived in areas where their neighbors were not Kurdish described feelings of alienation and isolation; as one woman put it, "There should be somebody who will understand me, there should be a community." In this vein, many women complained of Turkish (and for Alevi participants, Sunni) neighbors who appeared to censure the presence of Kurdish and Alevi families, making them uneasy by

complaining about Kurdish music, breaking TV satellites intended to bring in the transnational Kurdish channel (Med-TV), or, in two women's stories, objecting to Kurdish families shaking their linens from their balconies ("Now I notice, others shake out their things, and they don't say anything, but if I shake out the smallest thing they scold me").

Indeed, it is well known that migrant neighborhoods of both Istanbul and Ankara tend to be ethnically, regionally, and religiously segregated spaces (Robins and Aksoy, 1995; Güneş-Ayata 1991; Işık and Pinarcıoğlu 2001). While this segregation often results from informal networks and chain migration (whereby migrants from one village or region move to the same urban neighborhood) and may provide spaces of solidarity in the city, Kurdish migrants also find themselves operating across urban boundaries not of their own making. Rana, a 26-year-old migrant from Elazığ, told of how, when her family moved into a neighborhood of Turkish migrants in 1980, their apartment door was stoned and they were told to get out, that Kurds were not welcome there. Although this story dates from a particularly repressive period in Turkey's history, other women spoke of recent practices that excluded them from certain neighborhoods. In the following narrative, Feriha, a 39-year-old mother of eight children, describes her family's negotiation of Istanbul's ethnically differentiated housing market since their arrival in the city 15 years previously:

> We came from Bitlis here, and being Kurds, everyone excluded us. At the moment it is still like this. In the neighborhood where we live, we are the only Kurds. If we had said we were Kurds they wouldn't even had given us the house. . . . I am Kurdish, okay. I am proud of my Kurdishness. But did something happen to make me say 'Kurd, Kurd' constantly? Okay, we are Kurds. We do not deny it. We accept that we are Kurdish, but Allah gave the Kurds hardships . . . everywhere. Watch, if you go to an apartment building, they exclude Kurds; if you go to a school it is the same.

Feriha's defense of her family's use of tactical silence as they enter into spaces that demand particular identity performances—that is, spaces where the public performance of Turkishness, with all of its complicated and contradictory implications, is required—echoes across the multiple sites of everyday life (schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and others) where citizenship and identity are constituted. Her rhetorical question, "Did something happen to make me say 'Kurd, Kurd' constantly?" evokes the ambiguity of Kurdish identity and its place within the Turkish polity. When much is to be gained from assimilation, how and why does difference become a stance for political mobilization? These questions resurface and are addressed critically in the following discussion of anonymity and identity in the workplace.

Workplaces

Workplaces were described as environments policed by discriminatory practices that at once discipline the expression of Kurdishness and provoke resistance through the strategic enactment of identity claims. Focus group participants described Istanbul's labor market as structured through practices of discrimination based on markers of Kurdish ethnicity such as ID cards that give their birthplace as being in the southeast and accents that betray them as Kurdish speakers. Practices of exclusion based on regional origin were described by 40-year-old Nazan, who came to Istanbul 13 years ago, has seven children, and works two to three days a week cleaning houses:

> When you want to get a job, they ask where are you from. . . . I am from Diyarbakir. Okay, she says, we're not looking for help any more, there's no work.

Nazan's story was repeated many times in different forms in the four focus groups, and in fact may have been the most persistent narrative of discrimination in the city. Encountering job interviews as gateways where discriminatory practices were enacted, many women told of hiding their Kurdishness from potential employers. When women who were not marked by their accents found themselves in jobs where employers did not know they were Kurdish, workplaces became spaces within which they daily faced the decision of whether to dissemble or to articulate their Kurdish identities, a decision that sometimes had serious consequences. For example, İnci, a 35-year-old single, professional woman, said that she lost her job of 16 years when she finally announced to her employers that she was Kurdish. In the following dialogue, participants not only revealed how they perceive their own choices and constraints but also subtly debated the politics of assimilation and identity:

> **Pervin:** When I started working, a little bit later I saw that they did not like Kurds. I didn't feel any need to tell them. But a month later I was leaving and, in appropriate words, I told them that I was Kurdish.
> **Tülay:** But if your accent had been Kurdish—I know about this!—they would have been able to turn you away from the start. They don't give you work if they can tell that you are Kurdish when you speak. If you have lived here a long time, then your accent doesn't give you away.
> **Asuman:** I was working as a hairdresser. It was five to six months since I had started working. One day the people I

worked with there started to put down Alevis and Kurds. . . . I made them uneasy by telling them that I was Kurdish and Alevi and feel proud of this. "Ah," they said, "don't talk nonsense, you don't look Kurdish at all!" They were that irrational, it was as if I ought to have "Kurd" written on my forehead. I have never felt ashamed of being Kurdish. I feel proud. I am 36 years old. I was born here, grew up here. But to claim my true identity, I said to my mother, "Teach me Kurdish." And later I taught my own children their language too.

In this dialogue, Tülay's contribution points out that the accessibility of anonymity as a tactic itself varies *within* groups. Garber, in her critique of anonymity as a normative urban ideal (in the work of Iris Marion Young [1990], for example), argues that one of the limitations of anonymity is that it is not equally accessible to all groups (Garber 2000). Likewise, Tülay hears Pervin's story as expressing a kind of privilege of assimilation, and points out that others do not have the same opportunities to become anonymous in the labor force. Pervin's choice to tell her employers that she is Kurdish as she was leaving appears as an act of resistance to the discriminatory practices that she had also subverted through her own tactic of anonymity in the workplace. At the same time, Asuman's response, by representing the act of expressing Kurdish identity in the presence of prejudice as one of resistance and pride, further critiques Pervin's silence. This critique is reinforced when Asuman draws attention to the efforts she has made to reclaim and reproduce the Kurdish language in the city.

The give and take of this dialogue thus catches the participants between assimilation and solidarity, anonymity and identity, the contradictory and overlapping discourses out of which Kurdish identity, urban life, and the Turkish national imaginary are constituted in Istanbul. Do the tactics of anonymity, as Garber suggests, signal a response to the lack of a "genuine publicity or openness" in Istanbul? On the one hand, there is clearly a preference for being able to articulate Kurdish (and also Alevi) identities in public arena such as workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. Hiding these identities, becoming anonymous, is a tactic that focus group participants describe enacting reluctantly in response to the agonistic and alienating practices and discourses of Turkish citizenship. From this perspective, Garber is correct in her suggestion that anonymity is not an end in itself. On the other hand, Garber's rejection of this "pluralist vision of anonymity" is perhaps too strong, in that she dismisses the political potential and everyday importance of these tactics. On the contrary, Kurdish migrant women's descriptions of their everyday urban lives illustrate how the act of navigating different re-

gimes of power, identity, and space in the city can become a means to enact a critical politics of citizenship. By employing a range of tactics and strategies, women stake out multiple positions from which to claim rights in the city. In other words, making do can indeed be the basis of resistance and of "becoming political"; to return to de Certeau, we can evoke his assertion that such spatial practices

> have the function of *spatial legislation* since they determine rights and divide up lands by "acts" or discourses about actions (planting a tree, maintaining a dung heap, etc.).
> —(de Certeau 1984, 122)

Spatial stories, whether they trace tactics of anonymity or strategies of identity, should thus be seen as political narratives operating through the streets of the city.

The Political Moment: Claiming Rights and Identities

> For all of 16 years I forbade myself to speak of my identity in the workplace, and in my school days, and after finishing school, I forbid myself. They would say to me, your eyebrows and eyes look Kurdish, are you a little bit Kurd? "No, of course not, definitely not, you insult me!" I would say. Eventually I exploded. In the end, one day I went out and said, "Hey, now I want to know myself, I don't want to play this game. I am a Kurd."

The tactics, multiplicity, and mobility of Kurdish identities take shape through İnci's narrative, in which she moves between assimilation and the passionate reclamation of her Kurdish identity. After years of silence during which her Kurdishness was, as she put it, like a boogeyman to her, İnci now works at a Kurdish cultural center, takes frequent research trips to the southeast, and dreams of retiring to Munzur, a mountain in the Kurdish-Alevi province of Tünceli, with, she said, a fierce dog and a gun. Reconstructing her identity as a Kurdish woman, İnci described her own "becoming political":

> Last year, I was wearing traditional Kurdish clothes, and one week I walked around like that. . . . They stopped me in the street and asked, "What country are you from?" I said, "I am from this country, this land, but I am a Kurd and because of this I wear the clothes of a Kurdish woman." "Oh really, Kurdish women dress like this?" they asked.

Without a referent, "they" appear as the urban community, "the public," whom İnci confronts and teaches through her performance of Kurdishness. Positioning herself as a citizen (in the *jus soli* model: "I am from this country"), she declares both Kurdish cultural identity

and the right to its outward expression through her dress. This is İnci's claim to belonging, identity, and the right to cultural expression in the urban public sphere.

Like İnci, many women spoke of moving from assimilation to the assertion of identity over the course of their adult lives; Vahide, for example, told of how when she got married, she made her home in the "traditional" style, much to her assimilationist parents' dismay. In discussing the choices they have made, women frequently attributed their own active self-positioning as Kurds to changes in Turkish society since the early 1980s. Despite the many stories of encounters with prejudice and practices of discrimination, women frequently claimed that the expression of Kurdish identity was more possible today than it was 20 years ago. While few women attributed this shift to a particular set of causes, those who did try to explain these changes pointed towards the effects of the PKK's armed uprising, although they were guarded in this assertion. As Hasibe said,

> We are lucky that now we can express what it is to be a Kurd. That it was created from one side by the PKK connection cannot be said openly in all places. It carries the risk of being declared potentially guilty.

Within the social contexts of the focus groups, comprised as they were around the common characteristic of the "Kurdishness" of the participants, women tended to express pride in Kurdish identity, a desire to return to their lands under peaceful conditions, and a commitment to the preservation of Kurdish language and culture. Kurdishness and Kurdish identity were, for the most part, presumed to be unproblematic. Aside from occasional references to the diversity of Kurdish cultural practices (usually articulated in terms of regional differences), women rarely drew attention to the ways in which being Kurdish can be ambiguous. Referring to Stuart Hall's (1996) assertion that essentialism, though theoretically deconstructed, remains politically viable, and echoing Gayatri Spivak's (1988) call for "strategic essentialism," Lynn Stephen (2001, 67) argues that in El Salvador, women in civil societal organizations "are bound to exercise their citizenship rights—at least for now—through the imagined unity of identities that in everyday life are never experienced as a stable core of self, unchanging through time."

Among those who did raise questions about the unity and meaning of Kurdish identity was Dünya, a young woman who identified herself as half Arab and half Kurdish, and until recently presented herself as being Arab. Describing how being Kurdish is a label and social position that has, in many ways, been imposed upon her since she migrated to the city, she said, "When Eastern people come here, whether or not they are Kurdish, they are immediately labeled as such." Another participant who interrogated the category of Kurdishness was Öykü, in the group of younger newcomers to the city. Not only did she question the idea that there is a single Kurdish language (pointing out that, after all, Zaza, Kurmanji, and Sorani are not mutually intelligible), but she also debated the basis of Kurdish identity:

> **Öykü:** I don't know how we know we are Kurdish. We are from Adiyaman. I ask my grandfather, he says we are Kurds, but he speaks Turkish.
> **Hasibe:** But you don't accept being Kurdish.
> **Öykü:** There is no Kurdish state. Is this a race? I don't know where it comes from. Are the Kurds a race?
> **Hasibe:** Your grandfather, your grandfather's grandfather, if he spoke Kurdish then your mother tongue is Kurdish. You are from Adiyaman. You are a Kurd. Why did your grandfather say he is a Turk? That is the state's politics of assimilation. We say we are Kurds.

The question of what Kurdishness means when there is no state, that is, no formal *citizenship*, and of where the boundaries of the Kurdish community are to be drawn came to the fore once more when, later in the discussion, Yaprak (a 33-year-old piece-worker who has been in Istanbul for three years) joined the debate around the question of citizenship: "You say you want to be a Kurdish citizen," she intervened, "But still confusion will arise: Where is the Kurdish republic? You have to draw a border." By drawing attention to these challenges of differentiation and identification, these young women perform their own politics of identity and articulate their own understandings of what is at stake in struggles over citizenship in Turkey.

To say that the city is an ever-shifting terrain through which identity, belonging, and rights-claims are constantly being played out in different ways, and that, as such, the city materializes the political moment, is not to say that the city effects political transformation. It is not becoming urban that defines women as political subjects, but nonetheless becoming political is enacted through the city and its spaces. Istanbul is, for many women, a place where they find themselves engaging in political and social activities. In the discussions of the younger women especially, Istanbul is represented as a place where Kurdish identity is actively being made and transformed into a basis for rights-claims in everyday life. In Rana's words,

> There are Kurdish associations, and there are political parties; people can comfortably go out and find social activities. It is not *very* comfortable, of course, but they can express themselves, at least partly.

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Women spoke of their involvement in the Kurdish political party HADEP, both as supporters and as activists within the party's women's branch. Others talked about local neighborhood cultural centers where they participated in activities, attended women's sewing classes, and sat on committees. Women were also involved in unions, women's labor organizations, and Kurdish cultural associations. For some women who were housewives or house-daughters and were not otherwise active in associations in the city, HADEP's local festivals and the 8th of March Women's Day march, in which the women's branch of HADEP participated, provided them with opportunities for public political engagement. Hasibe described taking her mother there:

> She was very happy. It was the first time she had participated in something. A colorful flock of women. In the end she wondered why she hadn't done this before.

Conclusion

> **Deren:** There is an Istanbul that belongs to me. In another place, outside of Istanbul, I can say I am an Istanbulite. I have a relationship with Istanbul, a place where I have achieved political and other relations, and I am a creator of this Istanbul myself.
> **Nimet:** If you say you are Istanbulite, your accent says you aren't.
> **Deren:** That isn't important. I'm talking about my own Istanbul.
>
> To exclude the *urban* from groups, classes, individuals, is also to exclude them from civilization, if not from society itself. The *right* to the city legitimates the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by discriminatory and segregative organization.
> —(Lefebvre 1996, 195, emphasis in original)

Following Henri Lefebvre (1996), "the right to the city" refers not only to rights to urban services, such as housing, work, and education, but also to the right to participate in making "the urban," the right to inhabit and transform urban space and thus to become a creator of the city as oeuvre. In other words, a critical element of urban citizenship struggles—that is, contests over identity, belonging, and rights to the city—is the assertion of the right to become a producer of the city, of urban space, and of citizenship itself. Focus group discussions narrate the insecurity and mobility of these claims to urban presence and ownership in everyday life; as İnci said, "No matter how long I am here, *they* don't feel that I am an owner of this city, and *I* don't feel like I am an owner of this place either." In becoming political, these

Kurdish migrant women in Istanbul construct themselves as new and ambiguous "subjects of rights," that is to say, as citizen-strangers, both within and outside the nation and the city. Even in the above dialogue, while Deren positions herself as a producer of a diverse Istanbul, Nimet reminds her that others will continue to position her as a stranger.

"[C]ontemporary Kurdish identity resides at the point of an intersection, the dangerous place where being (de-) constituted (assimilated) and constituting oneself collide" (Houston 2001, 18). This article has sought to demonstrate how this tension is played out within the everyday spatial tracings of urban life, the common ways in which hegemonic notions of citizenship are both accommodated and disrupted across urban spaces. At the same time, the processes through which identity, belonging, and rights are contested in the city take shape in relation to complex and historically ambivalent notions of Turkish citizenship and nationalism. As Chris Rumford points out, it has been a common though misleading move to read Kurdish identity as a "particularism," an instance of identity politics that is opposed to the "universal" of the Turkish state (Rumford 2002). Indeed, this tendency can be read in Betigül Argun's treatment of the Kurdish issue, in which she argues that the problem with the current conception of citizenship in Turkey is that it has insufficiently adhered to liberal principles of universalism (Argun 1999).

Kurdish identity is not a residual category that has merely failed to be accommodated within a (mythical) neutral state, but instead it is a product of what Isin (2002) refers to as "solidaristic, agonistic and alienating" processes that have relationally defined Turkishness, Kurdishness, and citizenship. In this vein, this article has tried to demonstrate how these identities and social positions are encountered, created, and contested through particular urban spaces (such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods) and everyday spatial practices. By becoming aware of the practices that both reproduce and contest dominant ideas of citizenship in everyday life, we gain insight into how citizenship is continuously being reconfigured from the bottom up. The stories recounted here not only describe the informal and formal policing of citizenship in Istanbul, but also reveal the fragility and partiality of liberal conceptions of "the public" and "the subject of rights." As the narratives of Kurdish migrant women in Istanbul illustrate, public space and rights are constantly being produced, claimed, and contested in ways that may appear to be no more than "making do" but are also always political. By refiguring concepts of the public, rights, and political subjectivity through the voices of ordinary people and the everyday spatial stories that

they recount, this analysis opens up the idea of citizenship to alternative possibilities, such as those of multiple public spheres (Fraser 1992) or multilevel citizenship (Yuval-Davis 1991). When focus group participants narrate their own mobility across various spatial regimes of citizenship, it becomes apparent that "citizenship" embodies a complexity and fluidity within their lives that defies any sense of a unitary or universal Turkish citizen.

Circulating through both formal and informal channels, dominant ideas of citizenship (however internally contradictory) serve to rationalize the administration of urban space in ways that designate inclusion and exclusion, citizens and strangers. At the same time, citizenship, as a set of practices and discourses, is open to constant renegotiation. By understanding the practices of citizenship as dynamic, spatial, and quotidian, we become better able to recognize and produce progressive democratic practice in everyday life. Finally, if we are to learn from Semiha's story, with which this article opens, perhaps we may learn how to recognize the politics of survival, the moment of political "becoming" and the spaces to which we must lay claim in the process.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Isin cites here Mahon (1992) and Frijhoff (1999).
2. Turner (2000) points out that the word for citizenship refers to the state, not to the city, in Russian. The same is true of Turkish, where the word *vatandaş* (citizen) refers to membership within the territory.
3. Focus groups were used because of the strengths of this method for exploring public discourse, meanings and narratives (see Montell 1999; Longhurst, 1996; Goss and Leinbach 1996). In analyzing the focus group discussions, I have not tried to pull out "consistent individual data" (Montell 1999, 64), but rather to emphasize the interactions, debates, and collaborations that arose through the performance of the focus groups as "social contexts for meaning-making" (Wilkinson 1999, 23). To this end, I have frequently quoted dialogues between women and elsewhere aimed to contextualize women's narratives within the focus group discussions.
4. Given the relatively small number of participants and the method of selection, this is clearly not a representative sample of Kurdish migrant women in Istanbul. The findings of this study should be taken as suggestive rather than generalizable. The focus group conversations were taped with the consent of the participants and translated by the author.
5. It would have been preferable to conduct the focus groups in Kurdish. Most of the women spoke Kurmanji, though some were Zaza speakers and some spoke no Kurdish at all. Unfortunately, having come to this work with Kurdish women only recently, I do not speak Kurdish. This meant that I was unable to speak with women who had never acquired Turkish. According to Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits (2001), 4 percent of Kurdish women living in Western Turkey do not speak Turkish. Such non-Turkish speaking women tended to be older and to have had no formal education (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2001).
6. On Alevi identity, see the collection edited by Olsson, Özdalga, and Raudvere (1998).
7. I refer to the "spatial strategies of citizenship" at various points in this analysis. Since I am using de Certeau's notion of "strategy," this is in fact redundant; strategies are the operations of power that delimit and work through "proper" spaces. However, I use this phrase to remind the reader of the spatial content of concept of strategy.
8. Although Turkey repealed the language law in 1991, the use of Kurdish is still effectively regulated through constitutional articles and laws that enable the prosecution of any expression that might be construed as threatening to state security or integrity (Hassanpour 1998; Kılıç 1998).
9. For an ethnographic treatment of poverty, migration and religion in Sultanbeyli, see Işık and Pınarcıoğlu's (2001) case study.
10. Focus group women extensively discussed both gender and class as factors that mediate their access to and engagement with urban life and politics. An analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this article, except as it relates to questions of ethnic identity.
11. Focus group participants frequently referred to each other as "friend," though of course they had not met before the group. In this case, the "friend" being referred to is Pervin in the group of older old-comers to the city.
12. I am happy to note that the focus group itself was cited as an example of such a space.
13. This feeling of alienation from the category of "Istanbulite" should not be taken as unique to Kurdish migrants in Istanbul. Discussions with non-Kurdish women have revealed a similar sense of difference, based on class and migrant habitus, from the dominant urban society (Secor 2003).
14. The word *yabancı* means both stranger and foreigner in Turkish.
15. *Gurbet* also means exile.
16. Jeremy Ahearne (1995) also argues that the lines drawn by de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics in

The Practice of Everyday Life are too clear-cut. While I am suggesting that it is fruitful to see strategic spaces as being tactically created within space dominated by the other, Ahearne argues that those with strategic control of space, "the strong," may also make use of tactics. Ahearne suggests that "'strategies' and 'tactics' cannot necessarily be set against each other as opposing forces in a clearly defined zone of combat. Rather, as Certeau presents them, they enable us as concepts to discern a number of heterogeneous movements across different distributions of power" (Ahearne 1995, 163).

17. Participants told moving and important stories about how their language was policed in the classroom, but since these stories were all set in the southeast rather than in Istanbul, they have not been included in this discussion.

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