

The Visual Impact of Islam: A Special Focus on Turkish Migration to the United States and Europe

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This paper employs a visual sociological and semiotic approach to attempt to connect the ordinary practices of Muslim and Turkish migrants to ideas about global diasporas. After a selective review of some pertinent theories about urban culture and public space, the authors offer theoretical discussions of spatial semiotics as well as data about Turkish migration from a wide variety of sources and a small sample of photographs. The images have been selected from thousands taken in fifteen Turkish and/or Muslim neighbourhoods in nine European cities as re-presentations of quotidian local life (Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Frankfurt am Main, Darmstadt, Gothenburg, Oslo, Paris, and Rome). It concludes with a closer, comparative, look at how Turkish migrants in the New York City show themselves to others in spectacles of a prideful national parade and religious celebration. Other images capture glimpses of residential family life as well as commercial activities in both concentrated and dispersed Turkish urban villages or enclaves.

Keywords: Visual studies, Islam, Turkish, migration, public space.

In this visually enhanced essay we investigate the ways in which urban spaces are both the context for and the product of ethnic cultural transformations. Starting with a phenomenological insight, that people change the meaning of social spaces by changing how those spaces look, we develop a semiotic interpretation of visual markers that reveals the visual basis of ethnic neighbourhoods in global cities. Because a major complication for Turkish migrants is that ‘Turkish’ serves as both an ethnic identity and, increasingly, a religious one, we will look at Muslim and Turkish spaces in a variety of geographic and demographic environments.

In recent decades, cities on every continent have been deluged by migrants from cultures very different from those of their native-born residents. Consequently, as ‘cultural strangers’ live and work within the same political and/or geographical boundaries, the sense of community is tested during the course of everyday life in the shops and public spaces of urban and suburban neighbourhoods. Visual analysis of such changing and changed neighbourhood communities is not merely an aesthetic exercise of finding images to illustrate relevant sociological concepts (Krase and Hum 2004, Krase and Shortell 2011). Rather, it is an increasingly important way to investigate those social, political and cultural dynamics that are usually framed within notions of ‘multiculturalism’.

There is a visual aspect of multiculturalism. Discussing different approaches to the ‘politics’ of equal recognition, Charles Taylor explains, ‘The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized’ (Taylor et al. 1994: 36). Meanwhile, Muslims are increasingly, and globally, appearing in public spaces *qua* Muslims, adopting visible religious ‘micro-practices’, such as the wearing of veils, that are part of what Ammann calls ‘Second-wave’ Islamism: a social movement that has become a cultural movement (2002: 277-79).

In sociological and cultural studies, the word ‘space’ has many meanings, and Barbara Metcalf provides an extensive overview of how the term is used to explore the cultural life of Muslims in North America and Europe. As visual clues of many Muslim migrants’ ‘vivid sense of “displacement”, both physical and cultural,’ she cites, besides the simplest beards or head coverings, ‘the ever-increasing array of objects distributed by Islamic shops and catalogues: posters, hangings, mugs, bumper stickers, key chains, jewellery and so forth’ (1996). Although the outsider may look for homes, mosques, shops or neighbourhoods that seem ‘Muslim’, some Middle Eastern architectural styles, such as arches and domes, serve as symbols of self-indulgence, luxury and decadence in clearly non-Muslim casinos and theatres. Even so, Metcalf reports, some Muslims have turned to such conventional styles (1996).

Ball and Gilligan (2010) have noted that a growing number of social scientists have developed diverse visual methodologies to study migration, such as that of guest workers in Germany. In this regard, they argue that although all methods have their limits, especially as to issues of timing and movement of migrations, ‘Visual methodologies can provide insights that are not available through other methods, but they can also complement, corroborate and/or challenge non-visual methodologies’ (2010). For example, attention to the visual semiotics of difference is especially important as American and European cultures increasingly interact with Islamic cultures. In the wide array of visual representations of Islam common in the US and the EU, many in the media are negative and often derogatory. One search for ‘Islam’ conducted for this essay on December 12, 2011, found 390,000,000 results. Among the first twenty-five were: (#11) ‘death to Rushdie’, (#21) a bloody scimitar, and (#22) a child with suicide bomb strapped around him.¹

Here, however, we do not look at how others portray the nation and the religion but instead at how Turks and other Muslims display themselves in the vernacular landscapes of urban neighbourhoods outside Turkey. In contrast to ‘the symbols of permanent power expressed in the “Political Landscape”’, explains Jackson, the social activities that make up day-to-day life for the non-élites define the neighbourhoods that belong to the vernacular landscape (1984: 6).

In this essay, we focus on three major metropolises: Berlin, Paris and New York. In Berlin, slightly more than a third of the 443,064 registered foreigners in 2004 were from Turkey. In 2003, in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg borough, non-Germans were 23 percent of the population and of those 57,600 foreigners, 23,500 were Turkish (Kil and Silver 2006). According to recent census estimates, there are about 325,000 Turks in France; they are 1.4 percent of the population in Paris, and between 1 and 5.3 percent in the immediate suburbs (Laurence and Vaisse 2006, Shortell 2011). They are the largest predominately Muslim group in France after North Africans. In New York City, 36.7 percent of its 8,128,223 residents were foreign-born in 2008, and of those, 10,156 were from Turkey. In the neighbouring state

¹ The search string was:

https://www.google.com/search?q=%22islam%22&hl=en&prmd=imvnsb&source=lnms&tbn=isch&ei=iOwET9_sNdLfggFL25GJAg&sa=X&oi=mode_link&ct=mode&cd=2&ved=0CCMQ_AUoAQ&biw=1665&bih=935, accessed 12 December 2011.

of New Jersey, of its 8,682,661 residents, 1,718,304 were foreign-born and of those 12,664 were Turkish migrants.

Late twentieth century globalization has set in motion not only people but also visual signs that challenge time-honoured concepts of home and place, making the visibly ‘foreign’ so commonplace that ‘foreign’ is losing its meaning in the landscapes of most global cities. What happens when so many people of different cultures migrate to such cities — whether they maintain their distinct identities in the pluralistic urban culture or they merge and form a new adaptive culture — depends largely on the reaction of the receiving society to the differences displayed by the newcomers. Often, such visible signs of difference, as skin colour, clothing, foreign language signage and social practices in public view, symbolize a greater challenge to native cultural dominance than do the actual numbers of migrants themselves. When migrants are not visible, or are confined to their separate spaces, they are symbolically less threatening and therefore do not appear in the virtual space of public discourse.

Proclaiming the failure of multiculturalism in Europe, Buchanan (2010), the well-known conservative American commentator, has chronicled examples of how the large-scale influx of racially and culturally different immigrants and the symbolic transformations they represented were met with political and cultural resistance in Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

On the other hand, observing intercultural interactions on the public B68 bus along Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn, sociologist Jerome Kruse described the kind of intercultural intuition common in global cities:

‘In a sense it’s a marvelous thing to see. Because we see Orthodox Jews and we see Muslims. We see Mexicans, people from Pakistan. We see people who might be warring with each other in some other part of the world—and maybe even the day before they got here—all getting on the same bus. They just kind of understand. They kind of grasp, almost immediately, that this is not the place for that’.²

In discussing the distinction between cultural pluralism (and the attendant interactions) and multiculturalism as a ‘political project’, Prato (2009) points to the subtle risks of those projects that might in fact result either in mere ‘tokenism’ or in the ‘ghettoization’ of minorities.

As Simmel (1924) explained, urban life makes people interdependent and forces people to interact in ways that they might not choose to otherwise as a part of the day-to-day rhythms of local life. Simmel also noted the importance of ‘visual impressions’ in making sense of the urban environment. Kruse and Hum (2007) and Shortell (2012) have emphasized that visual analysis of changing urban neighbourhoods is an increasingly important way to investigate social change.

² Jerome Kruse interviewed by Larry Clamage, ‘Board “The Magic Bus” for Tour of Coney Island — A Multicultural, Multiethnic Community’. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2004-11-23-voa38.html>, accessed 5 January 2012

In this regard, the expression of negative reaction to Muslim migration known as Islamophobia has, as one ubiquitous local expression, the opposition to the building of mosques and cultural centres.³ For instance, the purposely misnamed ‘Ground Zero Mosque’ controversy in New York City over the building of an Islamic Cultural Centre and mosque can be seen as tethered to one in Rome some decades ago when it was feared that a new minaret would be built higher than the cross on St. Peter’s Cathedral, thereby challenging the hegemony of Roman Catholicism — or simply insulting it.

Spatial Semiotics of Urban Neighbourhoods in Global Cities

Our simple analysis, based in part on the work of semioticians, such as Jacobson, and of symbolic interactionists, such as Lofland, is that ordinary people change the meanings of places and spaces by changing what those places and spaces look like. We believe that this is a neglected aspect of migration studies, especially from the point of view of those who see ‘difference’ as challenging the visual hegemony of the dominant culture. It goes as much for large mosques as it does for veils, skin colour, *suk*-like markets, street life and so forth.

Drawing upon Jacobson (1960), we find that the visual markers of collective identity in neighbourhoods of global cities represent two different types of signs. *Expressive* signs are intentional enactments of some aspect of a person’s identity for the purpose of signalling that identity to others whether they share it or not. Urban dwellers often use national colours or symbols in this way. In contrast, *phatic* signs of collective identity are produced in the quotidian activities of the community. Religious dress, for example, is a phatic sign because it is meant to enact the shared culture of the community, to affirm one’s membership, to express piety — or some combination of such motives. Although these phatic signs signal collective identity to members of both the in- and out-groups the production of phatic signs is not primarily about advertising identity. The main difference between expressive and phatic signs thus is similar to the distinction Goffman makes in contrasting ‘the expression that he *gives*, and the expression he *gives off*’ (1959: 2, emphasis in the original). The former is intentional communication; the latter involves the interpretations observers make.

The signs of collective identity in immigrant neighbourhoods have meanings that relate to the patterns, rhythms and places of urban life. Because the vernacular landscape includes both the social and the built environments, social interactions in public spaces give as much meaning to the vernacular landscape as do its physical properties, though we often overlook the significance of people in public space since the presence of strangers in urban settings is so common. Yet urban dwellers are generally adept at reading public spaces, even if they do not always realize when they are doing it.

The code for messages of ethnic identification includes verbal and visual signs. For example, there are visual codes that relate colours to identity and codes for alphabets as

³ See, for example: Laurie Goodstein, ‘Across Nation, Mosque Projects Meet Opposition’, *New York Times*, 7 August 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/us/08mosque.html>, accessed 9 August 2010 and Paul Vitello, ‘Church Rejects Sale of Building for a Mosque’, *New York Times*, July 22, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/23/nyregion/23mosque.html>, accessed 9 August 2010.

physical signs of geography. These codes tend to signal group boundaries. This is one of the reasons that unfamiliar language scripts, such as Arabic, are so powerful in communicating collective identity. The inscrutability of verbal messages (on signage, facades, posters and so on) creates anxiety as a clear signal that we are not ‘at home.’

Assimilation strategies partly determine the interpretations of signs of Muslim culture (Cesari 2000). The global Islamic diaspora has both ethnic and religious dimensions that create a ‘triangular relationship’ between the ethnic minority, the home country and the host nation (Cesari 2000: 93). That relationship then varies according to the differing migration policies of the host nations. For example, Germany’s ‘guest worker’ model generates ethnic enclaves of effectively permanent ‘temporary’ workers whose long-term status is accepted but who have no path to political belonging or participation in the host community. In France, the assimilation model makes citizenship easier and more predictable but renders minority cultural practices problematic. The UK and US ‘ethnic minority’ model fosters accommodation, meaning ethnic minorities can be mobilized and minority cultural practices integrated into majority institutions. Within all three migration-policy models, ethnic mobilization, whether through political action or cultural practices, creates political feedback. One consequence of this nativist backlash is social isolation. As immigrant spaces become contested, a distinct kind of social conflict centres on ‘visibility’, which concerns what is noticed (including how it is framed) more than what is perceivable and is not directly related to demographic trends. In fact, members of the ethnic majority tend to overestimate the size of minority groups; those with less education tend to overestimate by a larger margin than those with more education (Strabac 2011, Sides and Citrin 2007, Alba et al. 2005).

The group-threat interpretation of ethnic competition posits that those in lower-class positions are more likely to be anti-immigrant because they view immigrants as economic competition. While overestimating the size of minority populations makes them appear more threatening, the mass media tend to frame migration in terms of social problems — cultural differences, strain on social welfare, increased crime and so on — and political parties, particularly but not exclusively on the right, regularly engage in scapegoating for short-term political gain. The persistence of the threat interpretation, is, therefore, hardly surprising. Within this dynamic, seeing signs of ethnic identity in urban public space is not a simple matter of perception. Rather, given that, visibility is a matter of competing interpretations of the signs of collective identity (Demerath and Levinger 2003) conflicts arise when those signs are interpreted using a group-threat hermeneutic.

Most cultural practices are relatively diverse and unnoticed, because they are part of the common and ordinary ‘background noise’ of dynamic urban life. Practicing certain styles of dress, dietary norms and forms of socialization are among the things that urban dwellers ‘just do’. But communication of identity also includes more spectacular activities, such as ethnic parades, holiday celebrations, and even forms of public protest (Micaleff 2004).

When the group-threat frame of interpretation contributes to the process of ‘othering’ minority ethnic groups, however, the quotidian activities of commuting, working, shopping, socializing, and everyday cultural practices, such as religious worship and participating in voluntary organizations, become spectacularized. In other words, urban dwellers sometimes

misinterpret the signs of out-group members to be expressive when they are not, as recent controversies over mosque building illustrate. To opponents (both explicit nativists and others), the building of a mosque is perceived as a declarative act — often interpreted as ‘they’ are ‘taking over’ space that belongs to ‘us’ — when it is nothing more than a phatic practice.⁴

Diaspora populations have attachments to both home and host places. First-generation immigrants tend to have a ‘dual frame of reference’ that colours their affective attachment to the host community. The second generation, on the other hand, tends to feel less connected to the places of the home nation, having been socialized in the host culture (including its language), but also to feel less confident in the social institutions of the host communities, having experienced their institutionalized prejudice and discrimination (Roeder and Muelhau 2011). As a result, the signs of collective identity among immigrants are multilayered and often contain ambivalent or conflicted meanings that get ascribed to and transform the urban landscapes where such migrants are present.

According to Lofland (1985), because of a city’s size, residents generally have no personal knowledge of most of the people with whom they share its space. Instead, social life in the city is made possible by an ‘ordering’ of the urban populace in terms of appearance and spatial location that enables people to ‘know a great deal about one another by simply looking’ (Lofland 1985: 22). As a result, public space is transformed into private or semiprivate space by the creation of *home territories* and *urban village* (*ibid*, 119). Lofland explains:

‘In its ideal form, the concentrated urban village is a small settlement, set intact in the middle of a large city. All its inhabitants know one another personally, their relationships are long-lasting—from birth to grave—and whatever one knows, the others are likely to know too. The ideal neighbourhood village neither needs nor requires the intrusion of ‘outside’ organizations. It polices itself, it cares for itself, it plans for itself.’ (1985: 133).

Fast and efficient means of local transportation and instant communication, however, have given rise to dispersed urban villages that are not concentrated in one neighbourhood. For example, Turks and others groups can reside and work in many different parts of a city and easily travel through public spaces to their own home territories to gather for religious, family and cultural events, or to patronize preferred shopping venues. In the following vignettes we will consider a range of concentrated to dispersed Turkish villages in Europe and the United States.

⁴ Social psychologists have long discussed the fundamental attribution error, in which we tend to attribute the negative behaviours of others to dispositional factors but cite situational factors for our own behaviour. It can be somewhat oversimplified as, ‘Your mistakes show you are a bad person, but mine show how unlucky I am’. For its demonstration with group dynamics, see Allison and Messick (1985).

European Cases: Berlin and Paris

In Germany, a significant proportion of urban population has origins in foreign lands, and approximately four million Muslims, especially those from Turkey, are part of this mix. As a result, the sights and scenes of religious and ethnic diversity have become commonplace, but in Germany and elsewhere, religious, racial and ethnic difference can produce negative reactions. Currently, visible signs of Islam or of nationalities historically associated with Islam have attracted the most attention. For example, plans for building a large mosque in Cologne announced in 2007 resulted in loud opposition that continued even as the cornerstone was laid in 2009 (Landler 2007). Similar sentiments have spread in Germany in relation to the construction of new mosques or the conversion of other structures for religious uses.

Likewise, vocal opposition to what are essentially even more visual aspects of Islam, from headscarves to *burkas* for women, have become a common feature in European politics as the Muslim population has grown in size and assertiveness. In this context, phatic signs of collective identity, such as styles of dress, can become expressive signs when the migrants themselves adopt icons of their identity in the face of nativist backlash. Here, separating religious from racial and ethnic visual signs is not easy, so other Middle Easterners and South Asians who wear turbans and other head coverings or long dresses often are mistaken for Muslims.

The Berlin neighbourhood of Kreuzberg has a 'Muslim' reputation (Krase 2011). As we mentioned earlier, in 2003, 23,500 Turkish immigrants lived in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg borough. Central Kreuzberg can be described as a concentrated immigrant urban village with a distinctly Turkish flair. There, Kreuzberg Center, a residential and commercial complex built in the 1970s, offers community and recreational centres, a mosque, a municipal library, as well as the Kreuzberg Museum. Despite such well-intentioned development efforts, the area still suffered from a mix of old tenements and high-rise, mostly social-welfare housing estates, and from continuing social and economic problems that in 1999 led to creation of the Neighbourhood Management area Zentrum Kreuzberg/Oranienstrasse of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. As is true today, at the time, about 4,500 people lived in the area, about half of whom did not hold a German passport. Migrants make up almost three-quarters of the residents, with almost half the total population receiving state aid.

Although known for nightlife, criminality, the drug scene and poverty, Kreuzberg has attracted students, young professionals and young couples, as well as mostly Turkish Muslim immigrants. The attendant gentrification and its own visual claims on the streetscapes compete with the almost 'oriental' pan-Muslim appearance of the commercial vernacular landscapes, making the language in commercial signs as important phatic sign of the residents' collective identity and, as a result, an expressive sign of the identity of the neighbourhood. For example, in Turkish places barbershops are likely to sport *Berber Salonu* as well as *Schneiden*, the Turkish and German terms, respectively. In a related way, while food stores will advertise products for Middle Eastern customers with signs in Turkish, German, Arabic and South Asian languages, *Orientalische Lebensmittel* or *Spezialitaeten* are often-repeated commercial signs on food stores. As we have noted in global cities around the world, food is one of the most significant phatic signs of ethnic identity (Krase and Shortell

2011). Thus, some of the most well-known visual markers of Turkish Islam in Germany are signs offering *Doner Kebab*; its prevalence and popularity have made it almost a ‘German’ food. Less conspicuous foreign-language signs announce separate religious and entertainment activities for women. Especially noticeable during the World Cup soccer tournaments are Turkish and other Muslim-themed national flags hanging from windows or prominently displayed as expressive signs of collective identity. Newspaper racks found in multi-ethnic residential and commercial neighbourhoods are also good indicators of diversity.

To see a ‘Turkish’ neighbourhood, tourist guidebooks and immigrant taxi drivers alike direct visitors to the Kottbusser Tor, near large signs on opposite sides of an imposing underpass announcing *Kreuzberg Zentrum–Kreuzberg Merkezi* in Turkish (see figure 1).



Figure 1. *Kreuzberg Zentrum – Kreuzberg Merkezi*. Berlin, 2008. Photo by Jerry Krase.

The Kottbusser Tor, at an important traffic and public transportation junction, supports a busy commercial area with Turkish shops, ‘alternative scene’ locales, bakeries, bookshops and artists’ studios, as well as banks and other services. Kottbusser Tor and Oranienstrasse have long been well known to tourists and the young for nightlife and as a hub for drug and alcohol addicts as well as the homeless. Moreover, according to local officials, the concentration of migrants has periodically produced inter-community conflicts as better-off Germans and Turks moved out, leaving the poor and older people behind. Over the years, Arab, Kurdish, Bosnian, Kosovar and Lebanese refugees, and asylum seekers and ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe have joined the Turkish workers and their families there.⁵

The pedestrian route to Kottbusser Tor passes through ethnically mixed areas. At its start, few stores cater especially to Turks, and Turkish-language store signs are not dominant. Female clothing, however, is an important phatic indicator of Islam that contrasts especially to the style of dress for young Berliners, and the clothing stores along the route feature

⁵ ‘Berlin-Kreuzberg – Kottbusser Tor’, Deutsches Institut fuer Urbanistik gGmbH, <http://www.sozialestadt.de/en/veroeffentlichungen/zwischenbilanz/2-berlin-english.shtml> accessed 23 December 2010.

headscarves and long dresses displayed on modest mannequins. In addition, Turkish and other Muslim pedestrians remain segregated by gender if they are in groups on the streets.

Unlike the many *Doener Kabep* shops decorated in red and white and sporting Turkish flags, other phatic sign of Turkishness are unobtrusive such as the higher number of satellite dishes to receive television broadcasts from home outside apartment windows closer to the center of Kreuzberg. A much more cryptic, but expressive, sign above the doorway of a building adjacent to the *Fleischerei Kasap Ziya* contains the three faded, hand-written words: ‘HEREKETA ISLAMIYA KURDISTAN’, which is the Kurdish Islamic Movement in southern Turkey. On the second floor of the same building, near a satellite dish, are displayed, ‘MIZGEFTA SELAHADDINE EYYUBI’ and a drawing of a large domed mosque with two minarets, the sign for the Selahadine Eyyubi Mosque named for the general of Kurdish origin better known as Saladin. In Germany, small places of Islamic worship typically have been tucked away in immigrant areas.⁶ Similarly, the Maschari Islamic Centre, one of Germany’s largest mosques opened in Kreuzberg in 2010, was designed to be indistinguishable from modern office buildings at street level. Nevertheless, many native Germans not only see these phatic religious signs of collective identity as expressive, but also occasionally impute nefarious motives to them.

Approaching Kottbusser Tor, or ‘Little Istanbul’ (*Kucuk Istanbul, Klein Istanbul*), the pedestrian density increases; women wearing head scarves, most accompanied by children, as well as older, white-haired ‘Germans’, mixed groups of young men and women looking like students and workers pass each other on the busy streets. It is in these spaces that phatic, and inevitably expressive, signals compete for attention and meaning. A young deliveryman pushes a hand truck loaded with *halal* chickens even amid the evidence of commercial gentrification and of competition for street-level retail space while Turkish restaurants, such as the Istanbul Passage, appeal to outsiders with menus in German and other languages for tourists (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Istanbul Passage, Kreuzberg, Berlin, 2008. Photo by Jerry Krase.

⁶ Günther Jikeli, ‘Guided Tour in Berlin-Kreuzberg with Claudia Dantschke: Islamic and Islamist Organisations’, International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism <http://www.iibsa.org/cms/index.php?id=118>, accessed 1 February 2011.

The most visible Turkish neighbourhood in Paris is centred on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin and Boulevard de Strasbourg toward Boulevard Saint-Denis/Boulevard Saint-Martin, near Place de la République in the Tenth Arrondissement. Many of the businesses advertise some connection to Turkey; cafés and food shops offer ‘*spécialités turques*’, such as Yunus (see figure 3), and the street has many *halal boucheries* (butcher shops). Because it is near a busy transit hub, there is a lot of foot traffic during the day; many of the shoppers appear to be French, whereas, the shop workers appear to be almost exclusively immigrants. Although in the Parisian Muslim neighbourhoods, especially North-African enclaves, it is common to see women wearing traditional dress, in particular headscarves, our field data collected in November 2010 and November 2011 show that in this Turkish neighbourhood the only women wearing *hijab* were panhandling while sitting on street corners.



Figure 3. Yunus, Turkish Specialties Shop, Paris, 2011. Photo by Timothy Shortell.



Figure 4. Arabic Script for Turkish Business, Paris, 2011. Photo by Timothy Shortell

There also are a few Turkish businesses on Rue Marx Dormoy between Boulevard de la Chapelle and Rue Ordener. This enclave is separated from the one just discussed by a South Asian neighbourhood of Indians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. Both Turkish enclaves are adjacent to primarily North-African neighbourhoods, in part because North Africans are the single largest Muslim immigrant group and the dominant visible presence in areas of Belleville (in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Arrondissements) and in La Goutte d'Or (in the Eighteenth Arrondissement), and the Tenth arrondissement sits between them. Among the visual similarities between the Turkish blocks and surrounding migrant areas are food-shops advertising '*halal*' (see figure 4) and the use of the Arabic script, which obviously connects signage for Turkish businesses and North-African ones (without knowing the languages, it is very difficult to distinguish between Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Urdu signs).

In many cultural markers, though, the Turkish enclaves look more like the South-Asian than the North-African ones. Western styles of dress are more common and there is more mixed-gender interaction visible on the streets, including parents with children. This may be due to the relative secularization of the various Muslim groups in Paris, as well as to the defensiveness that results from anti-Arab sentiment in France.

New York City

The visual appearance of Islam in the neighbourhoods of post-9/11 New York City has been altered since federal law enforcement authorities combed areas that were identifiably 'Muslim' and therefore, according to panicked security experts, potential havens for terrorists. As noted by Mohammed Ravzi, the founder and Director of the Council of Pakistani Organizations in Brooklyn, after the fall of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Immigration and Naturalization Service descended upon the area to roundup many South-Asians and others who had 'Muslim' names similar to those of suspects they were looking for. It was about this time that local immigrant businesses owners began to display American flags outside their shops or in their store windows (Krase 2012). More recently, Muslim leaders have complained, the New York City Police Department Terrorism Unit has practiced the surveillance, targeting and infiltrating of Muslim neighbourhoods and organizations.

Nevertheless, immigration of increasing numbers of Muslims to New York City has changed the appearance of some areas by altering their temporal dimensions (Laguerre 2003, 2004). According to Laguerre, Muslim immigrants engage in social practices that are regulated by America's civil society while also living in a kind of temporal enclave, or chronopolis, that maintains their connection to a more global Islam. Like those of other religions, Islam's calendar gives direction to believers for appropriate, and to the more orthodox for required, daily, weekly and annual activities that often intersect and crisscross with each other. Muslims residing in the non-Muslim world, however, find it necessary to adapt their religious activities to business and government regulations, as well as other local rhythms. For instance, Friday has the dominant position in Muslims' secular week because of the Quran's prescription of noon prayers at a mosque on that day, but Sunday for Christians

and Saturday for Jews are New York's more or less official days of rest, and most public and private organizations do not yet recognize the rhythms of the Muslim week. Thus, Muslims face challenges in their temporal adjustment and make temporal accommodations that allow for the creation of a locally distinct, yet Muslim, timeframe.

Some Muslims come to New York City from Countries that impose the Islamic calendar on everyone, while others come from places that have already adopted globalized Western temporal norms. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Friday is the official day of rest. In contrast, Turkey has adjusted to the Western weekend calendar to facilitate international trade and inter-state relations, and Sunday serves that purpose (Laguerre 2004). In New York, immigrants from either country could continue to engage in Friday communal prayers if allowed by employers. Already they can more conveniently gather to observe Muslim holidays now that New York has added them as exceptions to on-street parking regulations.

Given the relatively small size of the Turkish population in New York City, there is no definable Turkish enclave; in Lofland's terminology they comprise at a dispersed urban village. One of the events for which they periodically gather together is the annual Turkish Day Parade. Fox Graham, who has studied the transformation of Mardi Gras and similar urban celebrations, finds they provide '... possibilities for new expressions of local autonomy and resistance against social marginalization and exclusion.' Even though they are really intended 'to pacify people, ferment political indifference, and stimulate consumption,' they would exemplify expressive signs of collective identity. According to Graham, 'They have the potential for creative encounters and enabling social practices. They can also produce a host of unforeseen [sic] and irrational consequences, including period manifestations of social revolt' (Graham 2005: 242-3).

Indeed, for Turks, as for other ethnic groups, the annual parade in Manhattan is an opportunity to celebrate their heritage and display a positive image to the wider community. In 2011, the thirtieth annual parade was held on Saturday, May 28, but its organizers, the Federation of Turkish-American Associations, linked it to the celebrations in Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus of '19 May Youth and Sports Day, the anniversary of the day Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, landing in Samsun 92 years ago ..., which Ataturk also considered as his birthday'. More cryptically they added that the New York observance had begun in 1981 'as a Protest March'.⁷

⁷ *Nation of Turks*. <http://www.nationofturks.com/archives/848> (4 June 2011), accessed 21 December 2011.



Figure 5. Turkish Cultural Association Float, Turkish Day Parade, 2004. Photo by Jerry Krase.

In any case, the annual parade enables New York's Turks to show the diversity of their nation and visually counter anti-Islamic images. In 2004, many of the marchers and floats represented Turks from various regions as well as professional associations, local cultural associations and sports clubs (see figure 5). Only a small proportion of the women marching in that year's parade wore traditional Islamic *hijab*. In definite visual contrast to them was a popular float carrying Azra Akin, the Dutch-born Turkish model who had won both Miss Turkey and Miss World honours in 2002 (see figure 6). Perhaps the most unanticipated sight was a large float for a Turkish rap artist that, while resting on a side street, was surrounded by a crowd of African American New Yorkers. Visually and symbolically, it was a far cry from the 1991 Muslim World Day Parade in Manhattan, which Slymovics described as 'an outdoor mosque' (1996).

Historically, the Turks' popular image in the West has been influenced more by the term 'Ottoman' than 'Muslim'. In contemporary times and until recently, in New York City the image of Turks was defined primarily by a relatively small number of professional and business Turkish men and women in Westernized dress, the positive reputation of Turkey as an 'almost' European nation and fellow NATO member was enhanced in New York by its close relationship with the State of Israel. In addition, favourable images of Turks and Turkey have been actively promoted by the Turkish Consulate in New York City,⁸ and, by an array of organizations including the Turkish Cultural Centre of New York,⁹ the Turkish Cultural Foundation,¹⁰ the Council of Turkic American Associations,¹¹ and the Turkish American Business Improvement & Development Council of New York.¹²

⁸ <http://newyork.cg.mfa.gov.tr/>, accessed 30 January 2012.

⁹ <http://www.turkishculturalcenter.org/>, accessed 30 January 2012.

¹⁰ <http://www.turkishculturalfoundation.org/index.php>, accessed 30 January 2012.

¹¹ <http://www.turkiccouncil.org/>, accessed 30 January 2012.

¹² <http://tabid.org/en.php>, accessed 30 January 2012.

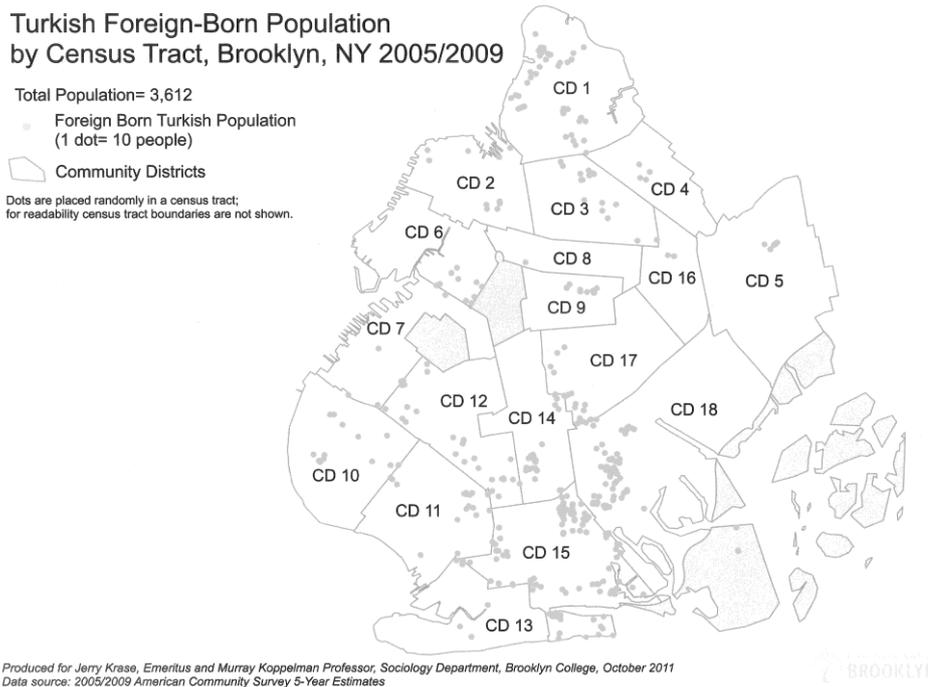


Figure 6. Miss Turkey/Miss World, Turkish Day Parade, 2004. Photo by Jerry Krase.

Brooklyn

Kemal Karpat's historical survey of Turkish immigration provides important notes on Brooklyn, which is our final location. The second wave of Turkish emigration to the United States, between 1950 and 1970, was more of a 'brain drain' than a mass migration, for many of the 10-15,000 emigrants were physicians, engineers or technical personnel whose high standing and income and ease of interaction with American élites, had a considerable, positive impact on the local reputation of the group. These Turks were geographically dispersed so no definable local urban enclaves were established. As the number in high-status occupations continued to grow in the 1980s, numerous professional and cultural associations were established, especially in New York City (Karpat 2008).

Since 1970, a 'third wave' of about 200,000, Turkish immigrants have settled in metropolitan areas and smaller towns in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. While members the second wave identified themselves as 'westernized Turks', those in the third wave refer to themselves as 'Muslim Turks' (Karpat 2008: 179). Moreover, in contrast to the earlier professionals, the overwhelming majority of the third-wave Turkish immigrants are semi- and un-skilled workers from central and northern Anatolia (Karpat 2008: 180). Although they are less educated and less likely to speak English, many still have made their marks in small businesses, such as restaurants, groceries and home-repair services. Karpat further notes that, for the third wave, mosques and schools play a central role in community-building, serving not only religious but also important cultural and educational roles.



Map 1. Brooklyn Turkish Population 2005/09. Center for the Study of Brooklyn.

In Brooklyn, the Turkish population is small and widely dispersed (see map 1). According to the American Community Survey for 2007-09, there were 3,950 foreign-born Turks and 7,228 other residents of Turkish ancestry among Brooklyn's 2,551,440 residents.¹³ Given this scarcity, opportunities for visual display are characteristically minimal. As both Guler's data and our own show, the newer immigrants from rural Turkey are not poorer than other Brooklynites, but are less educated and more likely to work in less prestigious occupations such as food preparation and service or construction. They also tend to be religious (Guler 2008: 158). As a consequence, Turks also have a narrow visible presence, primarily limited to the Turkish food establishments that can be found in many part of Brooklyn.

Although there is no visibly identifiable Turkish neighbourhood in Brooklyn, there are several such 'Muslim' areas. These are usually defined by the traditional dress of the populace (especially of women), by commercial establishments displaying national colours, symbols, flags, foreign-language signs, and by the religious centres of the dominant nationalities — all phatic signs. Most notable are 'Little Pakistan' on Coney Island Avenue, 'Little Bangladesh' in the Kensington area, and 'Little Beirut' in Bay Ridge. Further north in Brooklyn is Cobble Hill, where Christian and Muslim Middle Easterners and North Africans (Moroccan, Syrian, Lebanese, Yemeni, Jordanian and Palestinian) have co-existed for decades. The less affluent

¹³ 'Turkish Community in Brooklyn', Center for the Study of Brooklyn, Brooklyn College, October 2011.

Muslims in this area, however, are now under great pressure from gentrification and are likely to be displaced. Further eastward along Atlantic Avenue is another visibly identifiable Muslim area where primarily North-African Muslims congregate around *halal* food trucks, restaurants and car services and religious facilities.



Figure 7. Sahara Restaurant, Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, 2012. Photo by Jerry Krase.

Nominally ‘Turkish’ restaurants can be found in a wide variety of neighbourhoods but mostly in areas defined as Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Central Asian or South Asian. On Coney Island Avenue one can see the Sahara restaurant with its gaudy allusion to the Sahara desert under Ottoman control (see figure 7). In 2010, on the other side of the street, there was an establishment offering Turkish and ‘Mediterranean’ food. In the popular seaside neighbourhood of Sheepshead Bay one found another Turkish restaurant which, in 2012, was renamed ‘Sinbad’. All three, as well as the Istanbul Restaurant Park in highly gentrified Park Slope and the Turqua Restaurant on Coney Island Avenue, given their stereotypical symbols and English-only signage, are obviously appealing to wider ethnic markets (see figure 8).



Figure 8. Turqua Restaurant, Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, 2012. Photo by Jerry Krase.

Our final example of how Turks and Muslims display themselves in Brooklyn concerns the Fatih Mosque on Eighth Avenue in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Karpas (2008) noted the establishment of this modernist Islamic mosque in 1980 by its first imam, Burhan Satar, who taught his congregants to be ‘good Muslims, Turks, and U.S. citizens’. According to Karpas, the mosque has 8-10,000 congregants and attracts 400-600 for Friday services and 3,000 on major holy days. It seems that the congregation was well received that Karpas quotes Stephen G. McAllister, head of the Sixty-Sixth Police District, as saying it had ‘... embellished the neighbourhood and increased the area’s security’ (2008: 183). At the time, Turks had settled in houses in the area near the mosque and opened many places of businesses, most notably the Birkal Market, next door to the mosque. The Fatih mosque also housed a small gift shop and had signs in English, Arabic and Turkish, the most prominent of which read ‘United American Muslim Association of New York, Inc. May 29, 1980’ (2008: 183) The imam wanted the mosque to have an exterior dome and minaret, but could not obtain the required permits.

In a twist of architectural irony described by Slyomovics, the refashioned Al-Fatih mosque building was originally an Oriental Moorish Arabesque Revival style movie theatre. As one enters, on the left is the former ticket booth, now a religious bookstore; on the right, a wall decorated with beautiful Turkish tiles serves as a ‘wall of donors’.

What was once the lobby of the movie house is now divided into sections by a series of arcades layered with marble added by the Turkish carpenter, a genuine Oriental addition to the original Oriental decor. The arcades serve no structural purpose but provide a decorative and emotional tone. Once, the Oriental touches made the movie theatre feel like a luxurious, privileged space, set off from ordinary life; what they do now, say the Turkish leaders, is ‘to make the interior feel like a mosque’.

The main part of the praying area is the actual screening auditorium, the back wall of which serves as the *qibla*, with a wooden *minbar* and a tiled *mihrab*. The stage where the screen once was has become a cordoned-off women’s section. The Turkish mosque is thus a very powerful reinscription of interior space: American moviegoers once faced in the opposite direction to present-day Muslim worshippers, who literally turn their backs on the space where sex goddesses were once displayed on the screen, which is instead now occupied by women screened off from view (Slyomovics 1996).



Figure 9. Crowd and Parking for *Kurban Bayram*, Sunset Park Chinatown, Brooklyn, 2010.
Photo by Jerry Krase.

Since 1980, the Sunset Park neighbourhood around the mosque has become home to such a large number of immigrant and American-born Chinese that Eighth Avenue is now Brooklyn's largest Chinatown and most businesses, including those owned by Turks, have been replaced with those owned by Chinese (See figure 9). However, in 2012, the mosque, the association and small gift shop were still there as was a smaller Turkish market around the corner, where once a Turkish restaurant stood. In 2010, one of the authors (Jerome Krase) was invited to attend services during the celebration of *Kurban Bayrami* in Turkish, or *Eid al Adhar* in Arabic (Feast of the Sacrifice). Before entering, thousands of worshippers from the dispersed Brooklyn Turkish village, the vast majority of them male, overwhelmed the sidewalks and streets of Chinatown. In anticipation of the annual crowd, the local police precinct had closed off several blocks of the main shopping street so that cars could park close to the mosque (See figure 10). Inside, even the balcony space normally reserved for women was filled with male worshippers. When the service ended, the traditional sharing of food gave the interior spaces an equally crowded but chaotic appearance. Over the years there have been no obvious negative expressions by the dominant Chinese community to the activities of the mosque where signs of the two communities peacefully compete to define the spaces.



Figure 10. Outside Fatih Mosque, Sunset Park Chinatown, Brooklyn, 2010. Photo by Jerry Krase.

Suggestions of moving the Al-Fatih mosque to a more convenient location could prove problematic since controversies over the building of mosques seem to be globally ubiquitous. However, in reference to anti-Muslim attitudes it is important to note that in 2011, the tenth anniversary of 9/11, although there was a particularly hateful reaction to the building of a mosque supported by the non-Turkish Muslim American Association in Sheepshead Bay, the building of a new ‘Turkish’ mosque not far away in the Brighton Beach neighbourhood drew the following headline in a local newspaper: ‘Ground Zero Animosity Isn’t Seen in This Area: New Mosque Welcomed in Brighton Beach’ (Handy 2011). In this regard, we hope the reader will allow us some semiotic speculation. As discussed earlier in this paper, until recently in New York City and Brooklyn, as in the United States generally, Turks have not received much negative reaction. The often erroneous, stereotypical Ottoman images of scantily-clad belly dancers and Turkish taffy, as well as Turkey’s well-promoted, secular, modern images and NATO membership have served it well. Turkey, in other words, is still not seen as distinctly ‘Muslim’ but rather as a secular or perhaps, for the others less informed, an exotic/orientally-imagined nation.

Final Comments and Speculations

Our observations in New York mirror many of those we made in Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Frankfurt am Main, Darmstadt, Gothenburg, Oslo, Paris and Rome. On their basis, we suggest a major difference in the spatial semiotics of condensed and dispersed Turkish populations that corresponds to the kinds of signs embedded in public spaces and the variety of interpretations those signs promote. The concentration of phatic signs in condensed communities, or concentrated urban villages, in Berlin and, on a smaller scale, in Paris serves as a powerful frame for urban dwellers to ascribe the neighbourhood as Turkish. That is, these phatic signs come to be interpreted as expressive for the neighbourhood as an ethnic enclave.

In dispersed urban villages, like that in Brooklyn, this ascription does not occur, and it is the actual expressive signs, such as flags and commercial signs for ‘Turkish’ food or products, that draw the attention of those who share these spaces. Meanwhile, a whole range of overlapping factors — the number of immigrants, their proportion in the local population, the educational and occupational skills they bring with them, the migration policies of the host nation and the availability of fast, efficient means of transportation and communication — lie behind the development of those urban villages as either concentrated or dispersed. It also appears that the dispersal of the Turkish population and enterprises in Brooklyn, as well as the current lack of connection in the public mind between Turkey and Islam, has made Brooklyn a more comfortable mental and physical space for the community.

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