Building Beyoğlu

*Histories of place in a central district in Istanbul*

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A 2016 article in *The New York Times* entitled ‘On İstiklal, Istanbul’s Champs-Élysées, Symbols of a City’s Malaise’, the author offers a prozaic description of the central artery in one of Istanbul’s historic districts, Beyoğlu, framing it as a ‘mile-long sea of humanity, with a quaint streetcar rumbling down the middle’. This ‘quaint’ scene is no more, he claims: ‘These days, though, it is a symbol of the city’s malaise.’ Extrapolating the situation of ‘malaise’ of the İstiklal Caddesi (İstiklal Avenue) to the district of Beyoğlu at large, the author quotes a prominent voice from Istanbul’s urban activist scene who states:

“All the characteristic landmarks that made Beyoğlu special disappeared one by one,” said Mucella Yapıcı, a member of Istanbul’s Chamber of Architects. [...] “And the neighborhood turned into a place that entirely lost its soul. Old taverns, bookstores, theaters, and especially movie theaters, shut down.”

This representation of Beyoğlu’ perpetual demise, a recurrent trope about the area, lies at the core of this dissertation, exploring the historicity of place-making in Beyoğlu, between 1950 and 1990. It argues that perceptions of the district’s change in terms of its socio-cultural composition and built environment have resulted in discursive over-determinations of the area’s identitarian representations or associations: cosmopolitanism, urban deterioration, socio-cultural marginalism and a place where people fail to claim their rights to the city. By means of six case studies, delineated by six concrete spaces, the thesis will aim to highlight the historical complexity of the district’s processes of place-
making in the district, thereby problematizing representations of processes of continuity and discontinuity in Beyoğlu. The thesis’ historical focus is the period between 1950 and 1990, four decades marked by Istanbul’s development from a middle-sized city into a metropole, ending with the acceleration of gentrification processes in the area. To provide relevant historical context, however, each chapter will reach back in its analysis to the nineteenth century, incorporating the work of historians, art and architectural historians, geographers and others. Geographically, the thesis will focus on the area known as Beyoğlu, although that name should be considered as a geographic container primarily from a discursive point of view; as this thesis will demonstrate, what is associated with Beyoğlu as an area is a dynamic process subject to change over time. The six case studies provide meaningful limitations to the thematic, geographic and historical scope of this dissertation and although they should not be considered to be exemplary, they do shed light on broader processes that took place between 1950 and 1990 in Beyoğlu, Istanbul and Turkey.

This introduction serves to present the objectives and structure of the thesis. Firstly, it will situate the thesis within its multi-disciplinary field, between historical geography and urban history and indicate the methodological considerations on which this thesis is based. It will continue with a reflection on positionality and the process of conducting research for this project and a discussion of the presented source material. Finally, the thesis structure will be outlined, providing a summary of each of the chapters and the conclusions.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

‘You have chosen the most uninteresting period for your research!’, said an acquainted prominent Istanbulite during an informal conversation about our shared interest in the history of Beyoğlu. My research focuses, indeed, on the period between 1950 and 1990, not typically considered to be the district’s glory years. For an urban historian, however, these four decades are particularly significant because they mark a period perceived as the era in which Beyoğlu lost its true ‘cosmopolitan’ self, and ceased being the vibrant and wealthy belle-époque setting that it
had allegedly been some eighty years prior. When I started investigating Beyoğlu as a potential topic of research, I was struck by how little work had been conducted on this period. A few in-depth studies existed focusing on one of the most dramatic events in the district, the September 1955 pogroms on the Greek community of Istanbul. Yet while the district features explicitly or implicitly in publications examining these tragic events, the burgeoning popular and academic literature on the history of Beyoğlu from the 1980s onwards has zoomed in nearly exclusively on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the post-1940s period is mentioned, if at all, it is typically as an object of nostalgia. At the same time, a wealth of research exists on the district’s more recent evolution, mostly by urban sociologists, geographers and cultural analysts. So why is it that a crucial period in Beyoğlu’s transition - marked by important shifts in its demography, society, cultural production, position in the city’s economy, and fundamental transformations in its urban landscape – is barely studied?

A recent article by Moritz Föllmer and Mark B. Smith shows that the case of Beyoğlu from that perspective is, in fact, not exceptional. The authors indicate that modern urban history has been marked by a tendency to focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those studies that do focus on contemporary issues, struggle in integrating their research into the broader range of topics featuring in the disciplines of social and cultural history, dealing mostly with issues of planning instead. On the other hand, however, the authors argue that social and cultural historians still have difficulty in finding their way in urban contexts and, rather, focus on social movements, state formation or other topics related to social, political or intellectual trends. Urban historian Leif Jerram has similarly remarked on this seemingly ‘natural’ attitude, which reduces the dimension of the spatial to simply a ‘significant setting’. His remark becomes clearly relevant when one considers the countless studies focusing on national contexts in recent and not so recent historiography. National-spatial descriptors such as the ‘Netherlands’, ‘Turkey’, or ‘Europe’ are used as simply thematic containers, without asking the question what the specific container, the ‘where’ itself entails.

Cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove reminds us of the Latin aphorism *geographia oculus historiae* (likely after the famous sixteenth century geographer Abraham Ortelis or Ortelius from Brabant), in a plea to rethink the long-lasting connection between the disciplines of geography and history. This is a highly meaningful plea, yet when historians (including myself) borrow terminology from colleagues in geography or urban sociology they tend to overlook or underestimate the complexity of the debate that underpins these terms, almost as a form of academic tokenism. How relevant is it, for instance, to refer repeatedly to the same pages of Henri Lefebvre’s English-language edition of *La Production de l’Espace* without considering the work’s ambiguity, context and afterlife? Föllmer, for instance has opted to consider Lefebvre’s work rather as a historical source, instead of using it to reiterate the New Left’s critique of modernity. When discussing urban ‘space’, moreover, different disciplines attribute an array of different meanings to the term. Do we talk about space as a setting, as a physical and material environment? Does it have agency? Or does it only have meaning when invested with meaning by social actors? These are crucial questions to which historians can in part use answers formulated by their peers in different disciplines, but also need to consider more critically within the methodologies of their own discipline.

It matters particularly for cultural and social historians, engaging with the agency of social actors within specific geographical communities. In that context, it is significant to think about Jerram’s suggestion that ‘no-one is indifferent to where he or she is’. This is one of the key premises on which this study is built, borrowing from Jerram who has founded his understanding of the importance ascribed to space and place in society on this phrase. Jerram argues that what changed through the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the fact that the planning of urban environments did not limit itself to constructing the infrastructure of public spaces, but more broadly to the ‘production’ of (modern) societies, families and individuals. His work is innovative in the context of urban historiography, but can also be considered as a long-awaited connection between the fields of urban historiography and historical geography. One of the main issues that Jerram addresses is that of bringing space back into history writing, since the so-called spatial turn that occurred (belatedly) in other humanities disciplines did not really happen in history, according to Jerram. This is a provocative premise which I will use here as a starting point for situating my own research project, straddling the fields of urban history and
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Introduction

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historical geography.

In this dissertation I will investigate the historical interplay between specific social institutions in Beyoğlu and their surrounding urban landscape. Although informed by work in urban history (such as that of Jerram and Föllmer) my use of the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’ will draw more directly on geographical understandings, and specifically those elaborated by John Agnew, who sees the two as related to each other through human action and practices of meaning making. Agnew suggests, indeed, that space and place are potentially best understood in a humanist or agency-based fashion. For Agnew, ‘places’ are spaces endowed with meaning by human agency and human experience – through what he terms ‘sense of place’. In the case of my reading of Beyoğlu’s places this is particularly important, since different experiences of space can produce different place-based experiences and, as Agnew points out, places are always relational: they are constantly made and re-made as ‘changing constellations of human commitments, capacities and strategies’. It is significant also to refer here to Doreen Massey’s concept of a ‘global sense of place’, that conceives of places as extrovert rather than introvert: that is, constituted not (simply) by their boundaries, but by their connections and relations to other places. Places are always processes, snapshots of much larger social networks and, importantly, she argues that places should also be considered as intersectional. This is what makes place ‘a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both’. Place, moreover should not be identified with community, since communities can exist beyond places, and coherent communities hardly if ever exist in one place and never experience place in exactly the same way.

To illustrate this in a historical setting, David Gilbert and Felix Driver have for instance demonstrated in the context of the imperial city that spaces are always in movement and shaped – at least in part – by their inhabitants. To understand the spaces of cities, it is necessary to consider the reciprocity of different spaces – for the sake of clarity I would prefer to use the term ‘dimensions of space’ – representational, lived, spectacular and architectural. Gilbert and Driver’s argument follows the theorization of urban landscape of Denis Cosgrove. In Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape (1984) Cosgrove puts forward the visible world or as the connection between human and natural phenomena which can be verified by scientific enquiry. It is about making the connection between the two categories and understanding landscape as a cultural and social product of great complexity. Landscape is the relationship between ‘land and human life’, or more simply put: the way human beings perceive – and construct – their surroundings. Cosgrove underlines that ‘(...) [landscape] is an ideological concept. It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others concerning external nature.

Cosgrove, who himself has made significant contributions to reflections on historical landscapes provides a clear argument as to why it would only be natural for historians to reconsider understandings of landscape. As Cosgrove indicates, thinking about landscape is particularly significant between the field of history and geography, as it is this term which connects ‘geography most closely to history and the humanities’. He uses the example of an Italian piazza, in which the architectural surroundings are considered the product of social conventions, memories, political practice, performance, rather than as something that ‘contains’ them (or produces them). Landscape, he argues, is something that ‘acts to “naturalize” what is deeply cultural’. The value of conceptualizing landscape for historians lies, according to Cosgrove, in its quality to be ‘not inherently territorializing’, i.e. opting culture over nature or politics, and facilitate the understanding of relative conceptions of space, affected by the continuous interaction of different scales – local, regional, global. This point is also stressed by historian Simon Gunn, who indicates that what ‘the urban’ historically signifies has always been dependent on context. In post-war European urban settings, this becomes apparent in the manner in which the local and transnational are connected through networks of urban planning, with similar priorities set at the policy level in Europe and North America having a direct impact on the development of local contexts. Gunn illustrates this by quoting from Daniel Rodgers’ Atlantic Crossings (1998): “an intense, transnational traffic in reform ideas, policies and legislative devices. For a moment London’s East End and New York’s Lower East Side; the “black country” of Pittsburgh, Essen and Birmingham;
and university debates and chancery discussions in Paris, Washington, London and Berlin formed a world of common referents. As will be discussed in chapter 1, attempts to break up the urban landscape with motorways and construct suburbs beyond the limits of the historical city centre, would be a few discernible aspects of this trend in the context of Istanbul.

Cosgrove and cultural geographer David Atkinson refer to David Harvey’s reading of the Montmartre as a place of ideological contest as the opening for a discussion in the field of geography on memory and landscape. Cosgrove and Atkinson themselves use the case of the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome to demonstrate the intricate relationship between memory and landscape, framing it as a ‘memory theater’. They show that the Vittoriano is a revealing example of a concretized and performed transference of official rhetoric to the urban landscape, communicating the ‘national space’ to the ‘local space’. The monument shows how the spatiality of the city can be – in part – produced by the ‘complex interweaving of empire, memory, modernity, geopolitics and the gendered bodily presences’. Cosgrove and Atkinson’s suggestion to ‘read’ landscapes as text has been similarly taken up by Wendy Ashmore and Bernard Knapp’s work on archaeological landscapes, noting how memory can materialize in landscape and thus provides individual and social histories fixed points in space (and time, I would argue).

This fixation of individual and social histories was illustrated to me once by the memories of a prominent Istanbulite Rum who alternates between living in Istanbul and Athens, while he gave a lecture in Amsterdam. I asked him about his sense of belonging: which factors were important for making him feel at home? It may have been the lack of clarity of my question, but he understood it as though I had asked him whether he felt ‘Turkish’ or ‘Greek’, which would be rather non-sensical considering his complex life story. He answered that people often asked him this and he noted that, quite understandably, the question was wrong. The complexity of this particular question (and my intended question), has been expanded by İlay Romain Örs who carried out an in-depth study on the Istanbulite Rum community’s sense of belonging and their connections to Istanbul and its historical multicultural ‘milieu’. What triggered my question, however, was the way he narrated
his past, which was so strongly imbued with the places of his youth. He recounted, for instance, how he had fond memories of playing football around the buildings of the former Bomonti beer factory in Şişli, or driving to Robert College in Rumelihisarı as a student on his scooter bike, through empty plains which would later become the upscale Etiler neighbourhood. Rather than asking about his ‘national’ sense of belonging, I made an – unsuccessful – attempt to understand his ‘local’ sense of belonging.

The significance of the landscape beyond individual history, however, can be appreciated through ‘reading’ the urban landscape, and specific buildings or monuments. The reading of landscape can potentially highlight the importance of ‘physical, bodily spatialities’ in the framework of urban meaning. Veronica Della Dora’s research on Alexandria, for instance, reveals the city as the uncanny, “a disturbing phantom, a ghostly memory of a mythical city which may never have existed.” Della Dora carefully dismantles the discourse on Alexandria as a cosmopolitan city and analyses how the image of the city can be ‘fixed’, made stable, through architecture. In the case of Alexandria, nostalgia has become stabilized through restoration projects which materialize memory and juxtapose different temporalities in the contemporary urban landscape of the city. A related argument is made by Mercedes Volait, who discussed the imagining of Cairo’s ‘belle époque’ as a powerful trope that facilitated the ‘making’ of cultural heritage. In the case of Cairo this was less for objectives of nation building – commonly associated with the making of heritage – than for recognizing previously underappreciated fragments of heritage and real estate speculation. Rather than a rediscovered historical reality, the imagining of a Cairo belle époque, is a narrative which facilitates the social and economic re-appreciation of specific buildings and districts in Cairo. As Volait indicates, this is in fact similar to Istanbul’s Beyoğlu and Galata, but also to Casablanca, Oran and, in a different setting, post-Soviet re-appreciation of Soviet architectural heritage.

In the context of Beyoğlu I consider the comment by one of my informants at the beginning of this introduction, ‘You have chosen the most uninteresting period for your research!’ to be illustrative of this phenomenon as well. I will indicate in more detail in chapter 2 how nostalgia for ‘convenient cosmopolitanisms’ – narratives of Istanbul’s so-
cial history that fit the goals of various urban actors (municipalities, the private sector, NGOs and private individuals) – have a tendency to colour our understanding of Beyoğlu's recent history, during which spaces and communities were ceaselessly marked by simultaneous stagnation and change. Nostalgia in Beyoğlu can also have oppressive qualities, observed in the context of Alexandria by Della Dora as well. In that context, she explains how monumental institutions, like hotels and patisseries, were deprived of – what she defines as – their ‘original charm’ by over-romanticization, restructuring and renovation. What frequently occurs, indeed (and as noted by numerous studies), is that the urban environment becomes an embellished, sanitized version of an imagined historical ‘reality’, with disregard for the ‘uninteresting’ episodes that somehow sully the supposed ‘original’ and its reproduction. The desire for a past that never was, has also been observed in a different context by Svetlana Boym. In her analysis of 1990s St. Petersburg, she describes how a ‘nostalgia for world culture’ or a ‘provincial cosmopolitanism’, rather than a nostalgia for empire, would briefly take root in the city, making some of its citizens ‘not nostalgic for the past it [the city] had, but for the past it could have had’.30

In the case of Beyoğlu, such dynamics can be clearly observed in the Cercle d’Orient building and the Emek Cinema, claimed for decades by urban activists and re-fashioned by a public-private cooperation between a real estate developer and the Beyoğlu Municipality. That being said, it should also be pointed out that – following Edhem Eldem’s critique of Istanbulite urban nostalgia – it is also necessary to be critical of the tendency to painstakingly cherish ‘authenticity’, since it has the capacity to be as oppressive as the over-romanticized variations on nostalgia in the context of Beyoğlu.31 Is opening an exhibition space or cultural institution in a historical building inherently ‘better’ for the accessibility of that space than opening a hotel, restaurant or shopping mall? In this sense, it is significant to pay attention to all the voices that are silenced in processes of urban renewal, regardless of the intentions of the actors involved. There is no ‘neutral voice’.

The analysis of the six case studies presented in this thesis should therefore not be interpreted as a ‘complete’ (impossible) or representative (questionable) history of Beyoğlu. It should be read primarily as an attempt to critically re-assess some of the previous interpretations of Beyoğlu’s and Istanbul’s recent history by drawing attention to the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between the district’s spatial and social continuities and discontinuities. I thus explore how six institutions and their physical locations have functioned within a period between the 1950s and 1980s: a period commonly represented as one of change, demise and decay. Some of the cases in part confirm this thesis, while others contradict it. The first of the case studies, the German club ‘Teutonia’, shows for example how a historically vibrant community struggled to survive and barely managed to hold on to its properties. In my analysis, I attempt to show how this was only in part caused by the shifting demographies and social functions of Beyoğlu, and much more by the institution’s own troubled history, as well as decreasing interest in sustaining ‘national’ communities. The case of the Cercle d’Orient building, highlights how a building can become progressively dissociated from its namesake, although its longer histories (and significance) are maintained in other ways. Indeed, as its relevance to the club declined, its significance as a hub for the booming film industry only grew. The case of the English School for Girls, on the other hand, reveals how a flourishing institution was much less affected by local conditions as it was by decision-making in London. It is precisely such at times disconnected, at times inter-woven histories and places that this thesis aims to render more visible.

RESEARCH IN PLACE

In an article from 1994, geographer Kim England argues for reflexivity and intersubjectivity in the discipline of geography, particularly as regards to the geographer’s position in fieldwork. Quoting sociologist Michael Burawoy, England argues that what had been frequently ignored in geography is the ‘actual making of geography’.32 Burawoy describes this as ‘the separation of the intellectual project from its process of production’.33 England goes on to describe research as an intersubjective activity, structured both by the person doing the research and those who are the subject of research. While this sort of self-reflexivity is by now common to research in disciplines such as geography and anthropology, in the discipline of history (possibly with the notable exception
of oral history) reflexivity as a tool and indeed an actor in the research project is not a priority. The historian observes her or his sources and weaves a narrative based on these sources. A considerable misunderstanding which might be in part responsible for this lack of reflexivity is the fact that historians still by and large rely on sources which do not ‘talk back’. Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, however, point out that archives do ‘speak’, as they silence the narratives of those who were not entitled or enabled to speak through the archive: ‘Archives – as records – wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies.’

Source critique is at the core of the historian’s discipline, but still it seems ‘not done’ to reflect on the author’s responsibility for the construction of the historical discourse in the same way that Schwartz and Cook critically assess the role of the archivist in memory making. As oral historian Alessandro Portelli indicates, written sources are often based on ‘the uncontrolled transmission of unidentified oral sources’. A difference between written and oral sources however, Portelli notes, is that oral sources are accounts that are cornered by their own subjectivities, from start to finish, whereas written sources are considered to represent the impersonality of an institutional context. Portelli stresses that for historians subjectivity ought to matter as much as ‘facts’. The value of conducting an oral history interview, therefore, is not about truth-finding. It is, rather, its departure from the ‘facts’. The task of historians is to analyse how the informant or, more broadly speaking, the ‘source’ perceives and relates to these ‘facts’. This, I would argue, holds true for cultural historians who employ other sources than informants as well. It helps them to become aware of the processes through which their source corpus has materialized, and encourages them to analyse this process in their research and – equally importantly - consider their own agency within the research process.

From my own perspective, I have been quite strongly influenced by the advice of a colleague, a human geographer from Istanbul, who suggested to focus on documented material rather than oral material, since my language proficiency could become a problem in the process. I followed my colleague’s advice, which enabled me to search for documented primary material. I think it is unlikely that I would have been able to compose a similar source corpus if I had tried to balance written and oral documentation. I have, however, in some cases, decided to add oral testimonies through semi-structured interviews, as complementary material when I considered it to be a relevant contribution. Needless to say, I am fully aware of the lacunae that will remain due to the lack of a systematic and structured usage of oral histories. It proved, however, already more complicated than I could ever anticipate collecting a suitable corpus of source material that would enable me to adequately tackle my research questions. I am therefore convinced that my choice to work primarily with materials that I was trained to work with (mainly texts) was the best possible one in attempting to recount a history of the district.

I also believe that what my research has brought to the fore is that the dichotomy between insider and outsider has far less to do with the social constructs that allegedly facilitate or inhibit a relationship between a researcher and an informant. I have found that it is far more significant that a researcher is able to make a connection with an informant on an individual level, i.e. as a human being, earning someone’s trust. In the case of my research, which was in many cases reliant on information not entirely open to a larger audience, such relationships have been vital in directing my research choices. While investigating my case studies I have witnessed highly divergent strata of human emotions and responses to my research, from enthusiasm and friendliness to contempt and jealousy. During my work I was struck both by the abundance of interest and disinterest in my research. A colleague explained to me when I told him about another archive that I was unable to access: ‘do not try to work with sources which are not there’. In fact, it does not matter so much for the historian whether or not they are there, since an archive is only as good as its accessibility. In one of the case studies I investigated I had a meeting with an executive director who said to me (in Turkish): ‘tell me son, what is it that you want from us?’. When I told the director that I would like to work in their archives, the director said that they do not let anyone work in their archives. Moreover, and this proved to be a recurring trope in my negotiations for access to several archives, the director told me that a book had already been written about the institution and that everything there was to find out about them ‘was in that book’. Elsewhere, I was greeted with enthusiasm and
people insisted on connecting me to relevant contacts from their network on the spot. It is to them that this research is greatly indebted. Within another institution I have also experienced how different personalities can direct this process of facilitation and inhibition. In one of my case studies I was, to my surprise, welcomed in an amicable, almost colloquial, manner. I was granted full access to their facilities and no-one seemed particularly surprised that I was doing research on their institution. When I tried, encouraged by some people within the institution, to try to get access to (archival) material, a different actor from within the institution’s hierarchy showed up who apparently felt that I, or the other people within the institution, had overstepped the institution’s (or his) boundaries. What followed was a blatant attempt at intimidation. I was summoned to the institution’s building to explain myself. I remember the person in question asking me: ‘Mr Maessen, what is the purpose of your research?’. Following his question I explained to him what I thought the objective of my research was, after which he said: ‘I read this, I did some research about you. But what is the exact purpose of your research?’. At the moment the conversation took place I was rather baffled, since his question clearly implied that I might have a hidden agenda to portray his institution unfavourably. What followed was an attempt to frame me as a charlatan, asking when I had been to Turkey before, who financed my research, when I had spent time at a particular university in Turkey and claiming I had acquired access to his institution under false pretenses and falsified letters of my supervisors. Despite this rather straightforward display of power I still tried to follow the ‘performance’ of the interview. It was towards the end of our conversation, however, that I realized that the other person’s objective had never been to negotiate anything, but rather to put me in my place. Right when I thought we had reached some sort of a mutual understanding, he took a few printed sheets of paper and asked me: ‘Mr Maessen, are you a newspaper man?’. I responded somewhat confused and said that I indeed had written some articles for Dutch newspapers in the past. He proceeded by ‘confronting’ me with a translation of an article I had written in 2013 on the Gezi Park demonstrations in Istanbul, and then told me in an angry tone that ‘this would not reflect well on me’ and that the only access I would have to his institution would go through him. After this I thanked him for his time and the pleasant conversation and left. The entire situation was kafkaesque: a small room with TL light, two people – one clearly angry, frustrated and suspicious, the other not entirely sure what the purpose of our meeting was – and a bunch of printed documents gathered to ‘make a case’ against me. It is at that point that I came to the realization that I as a researcher was not always obliged to follow the rules set by the informant. For the sake of courtesy and practicality, I had always been at pains to meet the informants’ terms, but I felt quite strongly – particularly after the interrogative conversation – that a part of a researcher’s integrity is not only to make sure that the researcher’s informant’s integrity is not violated, but also to make sure that she or he is not violated either.

While I have endeavoured to build a balanced set of case studies, I am well aware that this work, like any other scholarly work, is also the product of chance, luck and my own personal interests. This is not the ‘history of Beyoğlu’ that anyone else would have written or could have written. Bearing in mind my reflection on methodology I believe that research in general is a reflection of the researcher’s personality, which in many ways it has to be in order to be engaging and committed. As many researchers before me, I have also tried to adequately address the differing interests of the audience at home and the audience in the field; what may seem to be as a perspective far too microscopic for the former, may be dismissed by the latter to be missing the point, or exempting the most essential bits. With all its shortcomings, I hope that both parties can find the dissertation of some interest.

**Sources**

There are a significant number of institutions based in Istanbul whose documentation can provide insight in the history of Beyoğlu. Although a great deal of the material and library collections pertain to the period preceding the focal period of this dissertation, there are a number of institutions which should be mentioned here for the relevance of their collections. Most of these institutions are either state institutions, private initiatives of major Turkish corporations or foreign research institutes. One of the most recent and successful additions is the SALT Research Centre, based in the premises of the former Ottoman Bank and
founded by Garanti Bank, Turkey’s second largest private bank. Apart from its growing research library the centre has, under the leadership of Lorans Baruh, managed to collect and, importantly, provide public electronic access to thousands of documents ranging from maps to Ottoman Bank records, newspapers, private collections, postcards and drawings. Although much of the material dates from the nineteenth or early twentieth century, the collection on the later parts of the twentieth century is steadily growing. Apart from SALT, the Istanbul Research Institute (İÅE), founded by the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation, a charity foundation of the prominent business couple Suna and İnan Kıraç, deserves mentioning for its large photography collection. The Atatürk Library, a state institution, holds one of the largest collections of maps and newspapers. Unlike SALT, however, much of the library’s collection is not digitally accessible. That is not the case for the Archives of the Prime Ministry, which have been recently renamed as the Presidential State Archives (following the dissolution of the Prime Ministry under the new Turkish constitution of 2018), where one in fact is currently only able to access most resources digitally. Another valuable collection is held by the privately established Istanbul Library, founded by prominent Istanbulite Çelik Gülersoy. The library of the Istanbul Chamber of Architects holds a rich collection of material, ranging from court case files, dissertations, unique publications on Istanbul and film material. Foreign research institutes whose collections have been proven to be particularly useful are the German Orient Institut and German Archeological Institute (DAI), the French Institute for the Studying of Anatolian Civilizations (IFEA). All these institutions are publicly accessible and have provided a wide range of supplementary source material for this thesis. Due to the nature of this research project, centered around six institutions, the bulk of the source material took significantly more effort to acquire access to either because it was based in different countries, or because it required mediation to get access. I will now discuss the most significant source corpora for each of the case studies.

For the Teutonia case study I have been fortunate enough to work in the, mostly uncatalogued, private archives of the association. This has given me invaluable insight in its workings. The building of Teutonia is currently under restoration, which initially proved to be a problem for accessing the club’s archives. Through the mediation of the German Archeological Institute’s director Felix Pirson I was able to get in touch with Beate Kretzschmann, a Teutonia board member who was investigating ways to preserve and catalogue the club’s archive. Through her kind assistance and time I was able to spend a number of days in March 2017 and investigate the incredibly rich archive, which contains anything ranging from minutes of club and board meetings, club magazines, menu cards of the club’s restaurant, financial reports, renovation plans and drawings, correspondence with members and partners. The archive, which contains materials ranging back to the nineteenth century (although the bulk pertains to the twentieth century due to fires that destroyed parts of the archive) deserves significantly more attention than I have been able to grant it. I can only hope that the initial ideas about the conservation of the archive will soon be materialized.

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons was kind enough to grant me access to their library facilities. Through the mediation of a ranking mason and former Grand Master Remzi Sanver I was able to get in touch with the Grand Lodge’s Secretary General and the archivists. I was able to use the Grand Lodge’s publications on its history, of which there were many, since the Grand Lodge is inherently interested in its own functioning and history. As I was mostly interested in the social dimensions of the Grand Lodge as an institution in Beyoğlu, much of the work related to the execution of Masonic traditions and rituals were less relevant to this dissertation. The Grand Lodge in the end did not grant me access to their substantial archive, which may or may not have been related to the sensitive political circumstances in which the Grand Lodge needs to operate and sustain itself. I have therefore relied mostly on secondary material written by brethren of the Grand Lodge, which is of considerable interest nonetheless since the interpretative layers that are projected on the source material in these texts also provide insight in the workings and self-representation of the brethren in Beyoğlu.

The Cercle d’Orient was a particularly complicated case since it took a great deal of effort to get in touch with the club’s representatives. With the help of a club member I was finally able to talk with the club’s director who, unfortunately, denied me access to the club’s archives. I then decided to focus, rather, on the building’s afterlife as a hub for the cinema industry, for which the library of the Istanbul Chamber of Architects proved particularly valuable. Thanks to the library’s staff I was
able to look into the court files on the Cercle d’Orient and Emek Cinema as well as find old publications by the Chamber and the Istanbul and Beyoğlu Municipalities Other important resources for understanding the development of the area were the digital archives of two prominent Turkish daily newspapers: Cumhuriyet and Milliyet, both historically center-left, Kemalist newspapers although the political orientation of the Milliyet has shifted towards the right in recent years. These newspapers contained cinema programs and, more significantly, opeds by prominent journalists and columnists and news messages on the area and its relation to the booming film industry.

A representative of the German High School claimed that they did not have any archives, which the director of the German Archeological Institute considered to be impossible. It would indeed seem highly unlikely, but despite numerous requests the representative maintained his claim. In the end the archives of the Teutonia club and the archives of the German Consulate General in the Berlin-based Politisches Archiv provided the necessary information. The archive of Teutonia was valuable due to the correspondence with the school as it was closely linked with the school through educational activities that took place in the Teutonia’s premises. The archives of the Consulate General proved the most significant resource for investigating the history of the school, with numerous field reports, budgetary overviews and policy documents. A complication was that numerous files were catalogued in particularly long periods of time which led to some files, particularly those containing information regarding the 1980s and 1990s, being still under the German Foreign Ministry’s embargo. Another valuable source were the school’s Festschriften, published to the occasions of various anniversaries.

The story of the English School for Girls was somewhat similar. I got in touch with the Alumni Association of the English High Schools where I was very warmly received and the association’s secretary tried to put me in contact with the administration of the school’s successor institution, the Beyoğlu Anatolian High School. The director there did not seem particularly interested and stated that I would need a research permit from the Ministry of Education, which would have taken many months to acquire. In the end I decided to leave the archive as is, since a prominent Istanbulite who was working on the English High Schools as well told me he also could not get access to the archives of the former girls’ school, although he did not have this problem with the former boys’ school in Nisantaşı. I managed to talk with two former teachers of the school, one who taught at the girls’ school during the 1970s and the other during the 1980s when the school had already become the Beyoğlu Anatolian High School. These interviews provided valuable background information which complemented the main source corpus of this chapter, being the archives of the British legations in Turkey and the British Council in Istanbul. These archives, based at the National Archives in London, provided a wealth of information, ranging from diplomatic cables, to reports and correspondences by the consulate, embassy and British Council.

Finally, for the case study on the Galatasaray High School I was brought in touch by the former director of IFEA with the Galatasaray Museum, which is responsible for preserving the legacy of the many associations and institutions connected to the Galatasaray brand. After some communication I was allowed to use some photographic material, but it was only through the help of a former alumnus of the high school that I could get access to a significant amount of material pertaining to the history of the Galatasaray High School. I have not been able to get in touch with the current high school’s management and have therefore not been able to access the school’s archive, but the alumni association’s many publications, yearbooks, commemorative volumes and historical magazines proved a workable and rich source corpus for this case study.

**STRUCTURE**

The main chapters of this dissertation are divided into three sections. Section I consists of one overview chapter reflecting on the history of Beyoğlu and Istanbul. This first chapter will provides a bird’s eye view of the historical development of Istanbul in general and Beyoğlu in particular. The chapter will zoom in on the issues of identity formation and place-making in Beyoğlu between the nineteenth century and the 1990s, contextualizing the area within Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. It will demonstrate the intricate relationship between Beyoğlu’s physical environment and its communities in these process-
es and investigate the development, continuities and discontinuities, of representations on the district between the nineteenth century and the 1980s. It shows, moreover, how Beyoğlu was both a unique place in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey but also a microcosm, mirroring social, political and economic processes that occurred on a citywide or national scale.

Section II consists of chapters two, three and four and discusses the buildings and communities connected to three club buildings in Beyoğlu. Chapter two will discuss the Teutonia club, a German social club founded in the nineteenth century and a pivotal meeting point for German-speaking residents in Istanbul until the Second World War. The chapter will begin with an overview of the club’s historical roots, with particular attention to its surroundings and the building it owns in Galata since the late-nineteenth century. It will proceed with a discussion of unique post-war archival material from the Teutonia club to consider its development in Beyoğlu from the 1950s onwards. Chapter three will focus on the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, which has its main headquarters in one of the sidestreets of the İstiklal Caddesi. Due to the complex history of freemasonry the chapter will start with a general discussion of contemporary research on freemasonry before proceeding to an analysis of the historical development from a highly heterogeneous landscape of freemasonry in Beyoğlu to an Ottoman and Turkish monopoly on freemasonry. The chapter will attribute particular attention to processes of place-making by the Grand Lodge’s brethren in the second half of the twentieth century. Chapter four, the final chapter of section II, will focus on a group of buildings that is framed as the Cercle d’Orient parcel. This group of buildings gets its name from an elite gentlemen’s club which had its main premises in the main building until the 1960s. This chapter is different from the previous two in the sense that the discussion of the club’s history constitutes a relatively minor part of the chapter. This group of buildings is primarily known for the formative position it held, in terms of place and memory, in cinema production and consumption between the 1960s and 1980s. This chapter will zoom in on this history and discuss it in relation to its contested usage and appropriation by Turkish governments and private actors.

Section III is composed of three chapters which will discuss three schools and their respective buildings. Chapter five will focus on the history of the Galatasaray High School, founded in the middle of Pera/Beyoğlu as the first of a projected imperial system of high schools in the late nineteenth century and transformed into a francophone Turkish state school in the 1920s. The chapter will dedicate particular attention to the sense of belonging that its alumni attribute to growing up and being educated in a francophone institution situated in Beyoğlu. Chapter six discusses the English High School for Girls, a grammar school based in a building directly along the İstiklal Caddesi and founded in the second half of the nineteenth century. This school, the girls section of the English High Schools, with its counterpart for boys based in Nişantaşı, was a reputable educational institution that was particularly popular among the non-Muslim minorities until its closure and transferral to the Turkish state in the late 1970s. The focus of this chapter is the period between the 1940s and 1980s and is based primarily on documents from the British diplomatic legations and the British Council in Turkey. The last case study comprises of the German High School Tünel. Similar to the other two schools discussed in this thesis the German School has its roots in the second half of the nineteenth century. Founded to cater to the educational needs of the German-speaking community in Istanbul who preferred a secular style of education, the school would also attract large numbers of students from various Ottoman communities. The general overview discusses the period between its foundation and the 1940s. The discussion of the period between the 1950s and the 1980s is based on archival material from the German legations in Turkey and focuses on the pivotal position this school in Beyoğlu held in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Germany.

Following sections I, II and III, a general summary and synthesis of the findings are presented in the conclusions, the final part of this thesis.
# Building Beyoğlu

# Introduction


2 Arango, ‘On Istiklal’.


7 Ibidem, 403.


10 Ibidem, 90.


12 Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 153.


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**ENDNOTES**


2 Ibidem, 403.


8 John Agnew, ‘Space: Place’, 89–90.

9 Ibidem, 90.

10 Ibidem, 90.


12 Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 153.


17 Ibidem, 58.

18 Ibidem.


22 Ibidem, 46.

23 Ibidem.


36 Ibidem, 56.

37 Ibidem.

Map 3: Overview of the Istanbul region, the current administrative borders of the Beyoğlu municipality are highlighted in black.
Map 4: Overview of a part of the Beyoğlu district, indicating the İstiklal Caddesi, Galip Dede Caddesi and the relevant parcels.

1. Cercle d’Orient
2. Galatasaray High School
3. Freemasons
4. English High School for Girls
5. German High School
6. Teutonia