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ABSTRACT

This paper develops the concept of spatial imaginations as the constructions of places as meaningful entities that establish identities of self and other through particular narratives and associated practices. It argues that traditionally, International Relations has ignored question of space despite their obvious centrality to the discipline. This has changed with the "spatial turn", which has its precursors in critical scholarship, especially drawing on sociology and political geography. The paper traces these contributions to the conceptual development of space in its material and discursive dimensions. It proposes that spatial imaginations are central to relations between "Turkey" and "Europe", establishing both as meaningful yet contested entities. In the works collated in the special issue of which this paper serves as an introduction, we may thus see facets of three core claim of the spatial turn: that space matters,that space needs to be made, and that spaces need to be formed. Against the prevailing attempts to fix the meaning of the spaces of "Turkey" and "Europe", I end with a plea to provide room for the articulation of a multiplicity of spatial imaginations.

Keywords: Turkey, Europe, space, spatial turn, identity

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Spatial Imaginations

International relations are always also spatial relations.[1] Territory is an organisational feature of international society in the sense that it is one of the constitutive elements of states. John Ruggie, in his reflections on "territoriality and beyond", thus defined modern states as "territorially defined, fixed, and mutually exclusive enclaves of legitimate dominion".[2] Thus, space figures in international relations in the form of borders and border controls, geopolitical ambitions and strategy, territorial sovereignty and contestation, or disputes over continental shelves and Exclusive Economic Zones. Yet such territoriality is only one dimension of space that is relevant to international relations. Territorial space is replicated and simulated in different

1 I would like to thank Cihan Dizdaroğlu for all his support in producing this special issue. My thanks also go to the contributors for their comments on a previous version of this introductory article.

2 John G. Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations", *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No 1, 1993, p. 139–174.

locations and through different practices: in ghettoised city quarters, in the extraterritoriality of embassies, through flagpoles in front of public and private buildings, through cordoning off military compounds, and in the demarcations of sandcastles and playgrounds. Nor is state territory where it is supposed to be. Borders have been extended through immigration control measures in faraway countries or behind state boundaries[3], the use of currencies such as the Euro in countries that are not in the Eurozone,[4] or transborder visa or trading schemes.[5]

In all of these contexts, it is not only the physical space, the place and location of an activity, that matters. It is the meaning that we give to these locations, it is how we turn such places into meaningful spaces for societies and politics. Space in this understanding is the socially constructed sphere that establishes identities and contains the everyday practices of conflict actors.[6] Space is often linked to geographical places, but those places only become meaningful through their construction as spaces in particular narratives and associated practices.[7] I suggest we treat these processes of space-making as instances of *spatial imaginations*. Such spatial imaginations construct images of ourselves and others. They involve stories of distance and proximity, of identity and difference, of hostility and friendship, of common heritage and hereditary rivalry. They are carried forward in newspaper reports and political speeches as much as in paintings, novels, movies, or advertisements.[8]

The relationship between Turkey and Europe is full of such spatial imaginations. Think of geographical placements of Turkey as part of Europe or Asia (minor),[9] the orientalist depictions of the harem (constructions of both a specific place and larger cultural spaces),[10] the contestations of historical places such as Hagia Sophia,[11] the settlement patterns, transnational identities and spatial practices of migrants and local administrations,[12] the different spatial experiences of tourists,[13] or the use of Turkish and EU flags staking out particular spatial

3 Julien Jeandesboz, "Inside-out?, Trajectories, Spaces and Politics of EU Internal (in)security and its External Dimensions", Didier Bigo et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies,* London and New York, Routledge, 2021.

4 Florent Marciacq, "The Political Geographies of Europeanisation:, Maping the Contested Conceptions of Europeanisation ", *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 8, No 1, 2012, p. 57–74.

5 Stanislaw Domaniewski and Dominika Studzińska, "The Small Border Traffic Zone between Poland and Kaliningrad Region (Russia): The Impact of a Local Visa-Free Border Regime", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 21, No 3, 2016, p. 538–555.

6 Martina Löw, "The Constitution of Space, the Structuration of Spaces through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 11, No 1, 2008, p. 25–49; Annika Björkdahl and Stefanie Kappler, *Peacebuilding and Spatial Transformation: Peace, Space and Place,* London and New York, Routledge, 2017.

7 Anssi Paasi, "Nation, Territory, Memory, Making State-space Meaningful", David Storey (eds.), *A Research Agenda for Territory and Territoriality,* Cheltenham, United Kingdom, Northampton, Massachusetts, Edward Elgar, 2020.

8 Robert T. Tally Jr., *Topophrenia, Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination,* Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2019; Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity, The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000,* London, Taylor and Francis, 2017.

9 Viatcheslav Morozov and Bahar Rumelili, "The External Constitution of European Identity, Russia and Turkey as Europe-makers", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 47, No 1, 2012, p. 28–48.

10 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* New York, Pantheon Books, 1978.

11 Doris Bachmann-Medick, Jens Kugele and Katharina Stornig, "Conceptualizing Sacred Spaces", *Saeculum*, Vol. 71, No 2, 2021, p. 155–166.

12 Annika Hinze, *Turkish Berlin: Integration Policy and Urban Space,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

13 Derek Bryce, "Turkey, Tourism and Interpellated 'Westernness': Inscribing Collective Visitor Subjectivity", *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 14, No 3, 2012, p. 444–466.

claims of belonging.[14] The underpinning argument of this special issue is that the way we engage with each other, in which societal actors encounter each other, and in which politicians bargain and deliberate with each other, is heavily influenced by these spatial imaginations. At the same time, such practices reproduce yet also have the potential to alter our imaginations, if only incrementally.

The aim of this special issue thus is to investigate some of the spatial imaginations that inform and underpin the encounters between "Turkey" and "Europe", to show how these entities are imbued with meaning through such imaginations, and to demonstrate how the encounters reproduce and transform the imaginations of "Turkey" and "Europe". The contributions thus take part in a broader critical exercise of questioning the ontological standing of "Turkey" and "Europe" as given and showing how they come into being through discourses of space-making. They problematise the inherent representations of the respective Other as dangerous or desirable – or, in Orientalism, as a mixture of fear and longing, domination and freedom.[15] They critically analyse the effects of prevailing spatial imaginations in terms of societal marginalisation and exclusion, restriction of freedom, and practices of suppression and supremacy.

Spatial Turn(s)

This special issue builds on arguments associated with what is often labelled the "spatial turn" in International Relations (IR) and the social sciences more broadly.[16] Leaving aside the question of whether the many "turns" that we have seen in the past decades really relate to profound changes in the discipline, the authors that have contributed to the relevant literature have broadly made three arguments: that spaces matter; that territorial places must be turned into social spaces in order to be meaningful (space-making); and that space, while often related to territory, is not bound to particular territories but may be constructed in the interlinkages between actors (human or otherwise) across territorial confines (space formation). I will take these arguments in turn.

Spaces matter

It may seem odd, but a lot of the IR literature does not actually take space very seriously. While states are often recognised as core actors, their spatiality is reduced to questions of border infringement in the realist conceptualisation of the security dilemma and the ever-looming threat of war. Different generations of liberalism have been built on the normative aim to overcome the territoriality of the nation state through empowering civil society or functionalism but have disregarded new forms of spatiality that may arise in the process. Alternatively, under the impression of globalisation and interdependence, they have focused on the functional

14 Aslı Çırakman, "Flags and Traitors: The Advance of Ethno-nationalism in the Turkish Self-image", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 34, No 11, 2011, p. 1894–1912.

15 Said, *Orientalism*.

16 Barney Warf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives,* London and New York, Routledge, 2009; Morgan Brigg and Nicole George, "Emplacing the Spatial Turn in Peace and Conflict Studies", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 55, No 4, 2020, p. 409–420.

linkages and painted a picture of the world in which the categories of territory and space do not matter much anymore. Even social constructivists have often emphasised the importance and relevance of norms and institutions while being less concerned about the relevance and impact of space(s). For example, their treatment of identity has not always considered the spatiality of identity as an important aspect and instead focused on the malleability of identity[17] or treated it as an explanatory variable for foreign and security policies.[18]

In contrast, literature associated with the spatial turn stresses the importance of space as a social category.[19] This literature points to the centrality of space for the self-understanding of societies and their engagement with each other. They highlight processes of inclusion and exclusion associated with space and demonstrate how such spaces are demarcated through the construction of material and immaterial boundaries. They demonstrate how spaces empower some actors and weaken others. Such work is not confined to the study of international relations but has illuminated practices of identity and politics across different scales, including cities, regions, states, and transnational formations.

Space-making

To the extent that space has played a role in traditional accounts of international relations, it has largely been treated as the objective existence of bounded territory.[20] Such territory has been construed as the foundation of claims to power in geopolitics, or as a variable to explain rivalry, which has thus been essentialised and considered "natural".[21] Claims to some Eurasian "heartland",[22] references to natural boundaries of states[23] such as rivers or even of continents (the Urals[24], the Bosporus[25]), the supposed necessity of states to have access to open seas,[26] the right of great powers to maintain spheres of influence,[27] or, as discussed in the contribution

17 Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No 2, 1994, p. 384–396.

18 Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics,* New York, Columbia University Press, 1996.

19 Daniel Lambach, "Space, Scale, and Global Politics: Towards a Critical Approach to Space in International Relations", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 48, No 2, 2022, p. 282–300.

20 John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: the Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 1, No 1, 1994, p. 53–80.

21 Richard K. Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics", *Alternatives*, Vol. 12, No 4, 1987, p. 403–434.

22 Emre İşeri, "The US Grand Strategy and the Eurasian Heartland in the Twenty-First Century", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 14, No 1, 2009, p. 26–46; Charles Clover, "Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland: The Reemergence of Geopolitics", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No 2, 1999, p. 9.

23 Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State,* London, Routledge, 2020.

24 Mark Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No 1, 1991, p. 1–17.

25 Gerard Delanty, "Borders in a Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure", *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 4, No 2-3, 2006, p. 183–202.

26 Basil Germond, "The (Critical) Geopolitics of Seapower", *The Maritime Dimension of European Security,* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

27 Evan N. Resnick, "Interests, Ideologies, and Great Power Spheres of Influence", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 28, No 3, 2022, p. 563–588.

of Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm and Gençkal-Eroler to this issue,[28] depictions of Turkey as either a bridge or a "central country" – all of these do make spatial claims but treat space as an objective territorial category.

The literature associated with the spatial turn recognises the significance of space in its materiality, but at the same time sees this materiality as co-constructed through social and discursive practices that provide territory with meaning and thus turn "places" into social "spaces".[29] It is this transformation of places into spaces that makes them relevant to societies. A river is not meaningful in and of itself. While it does pose an obstacle to movement, it does not as such demarcate a society, a state, or a continent. What turns city quarters into ghettos (and how we understand ghettos) is not an imminent feature of their geography but a social and discursive construction.[30] As Hoffmann reminds us in his contribution, historical narratives are crucial in the construction of space, as history is told through references to concrete places that then acquire a specific place in collective memories, which becomes hard to disentangle from a place's bare geography and materialism.[31]

Such work thus reorients our analysis from treating territory and geographical places as mere givens, as variables with an impact on behaviour. Instead, it turns our attention to the processes through which geographical features of international relations obtain their meaning and as such are turned into powerful dimensions of international and world society.

Space formation

Liberal approaches have been more attuned to the formation of transnational relations,[32] although they have rather rarely been conceptualised as *spaces*.[33] I have already pointed to the analysis of functional linkages beyond nation states as signs of a transformation of politics, whether analytically explained or normatively endorsed. Questions of how migration and the resulting diaspora communities,[34] tourism,[35] scientific communities[36] or transgovernmental

28 Rahime Süleymanoglu-Kürüm and Elif Gençkal-Eroler, "Spatial Constructions of Homeland in Turkish National Identity, Exclusion and Inclusion of Europe", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 17-33.

29 Martina Löw, *The Sociology of Space: Materiality, Social Structures, and Action,* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Harvey Starr, "On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No 3, 2013, p. 147-164; Lambach, *Space, Scale, and Global Politics: Towards a Critical Approach to Space in International Relations*.

30 Kristina Bakkaer Simonsen, "Ghetto-Society-Problem: A Discourse Analysis of Nationalist Othering", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 16, No 1, 2016, p. 83–99.

31 Clemens Hoffmann, "Delimiting Europe: Greek State Formation as Border Making", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 51-69 .

32 Joseph S. Nye and Robert O. Keohane, "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction", *International Organization*, Vol. 25, No 3, 1971, p. 329–349; Thomas Risse, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back in:, Non-state Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

33 Peter Jackson, Phil Crang and Claire Dwyer (eds.), *Transnational Spaces,* London and New York, Routledge, 2004.

34 Peggy Levitt and B. Nadya Jaworsky, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 33, No 1, 2007, p. 129–156.

35 Sune Bechmann Pedersen, "A Passport to Peace? Modern Tourism and Internationalist Idealism", *European Review*, Vol. 28, No 3, 2020, p. 389–402.

36 Carolin Kaltofen and Michele Acuto, "Rebalancing the Encounter between Science Diplomacy and International Relations Theory", *Global Policy*, Vol. 9, 2018, p. 15–22.

cooperation[37] may change international politics have been the focus of many analyses. Yet all too often, studies have not conceptualised these processes as the development of new spatial demarcations, of exclusion and inclusion, or of the reproduction of state boundaries in new contexts.

From the perspective of the spatial turn(s), spaces, as I have already argued, are not givens: they are produced in and through social practices. This applies to cities or states as much as it does to transnational spaces. Such practices may be conscious efforts to organise a developing community, but they are also part of the mundane, everyday life of actors in their private as much as their professional lives. The clothes that people wear, the pubs they go to, the ID cards they carry – all of these are aspects of what constitutes social spaces, sometimes tied to, sometimes unrelated to concrete places.[38] The formation of space is an ongoing struggle of many actors in very different locales and contexts. Some of these spatial imaginations run counter to the hegemonic representations of any given time. In her contribution, Najslova, for instance, investigating aid workers assisting migrants, points to "islands" of alternative imaginations of transversal spaces that cut across conventional borders in EU-Turkey relations.[39]

While these arguments have been associated with the "spatial turn", at a closer look it is probably more appropriate to speak of multiple "spatial turns". Partly, this is because the IR literature, in performing this "turn", has referred to a variety of sources in geography, sociology, urban planning and other disciplines. Yet it is also worthwhile remembering that space has figured in many critical and constructivist IR approaches at least since the late 1980s. One may recall, in this context, Ashley's 1987 call for a Foucauldian, geopolitical reading of geopolitics,[40] or Agnew and Crobridge's review of how the territorial imagination of states has dominated IR thinking.[41] Or, from a very different angle, Ruggie's 1993 investigation of the historical processes that brought about territoriality and possible challenges to it.[42] Scholars interested in regional identity formation thought about the construction of regional spaces such as the Mediterranean,[43] often drawing on long historical processes following Braudel's notion of the "longue durée", an argument taken up by Savaş and Yılmaz in their analysis of French and Turkish spatial imaginations of the Mediterranean.[44] Indeed, many have considered

37 Tim Legrand, "Transgovernmental Policy Networks in the Anglosphere", *Public Administration*, Vol. 93, No 4, 2015, p. 973–991.

38 James Wesley Scott, Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti, "Bordering Imaginaries and the Everyday Construction of the Mediterranean Neighbourhood: Introduction to the Special Issue", *European Urban and Regional Studies*, Vol. 26, No 1, 2019, p. 3–8.

39 Lucia Najslova, "Architectures of Similarity: Fragments, Islands and other Escapes from Turkey and Europe Framework", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 147-164.

40 Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics".

41 John Agnew and Stuart Crobridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy,* London, Taylor and Francis, 2002.

42 Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations".

43 Scott, Celata and Coletti, "Bordering Imaginaries and the Everyday Construction of the Mediterranean Neighbourhood: Introduction to the Special Issue"; Emanuel Adler, Federica Bicchi, Beverly Crawford and Raffaella A. Del Sarto (eds.), *The Convergence of Civilizations: Constructing a Mediterranean Region,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006.

44 Cem Savaş and Atakan Yılmaz, "French and Turkish Representations of the Mediterranean, Artificial Intelligence Based Content Analysis", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 89-107.

the construction of "new spaces" within and beyond a state-centred international society.[45] Meanwhile, the core-periphery analyses of many world systems and dependency approaches had been interested in the construction of spaces since the 1970s.[46] And we ought not to forget critical geopolitics whose authors set out to question previous geopolitical truths and prefigured a lot of the later spatial work.[47] This is by no means a complete list – it just serves as a reminder that questions of how space comes into being and what role it plays in international politics and the discipline of International Relations have been tackled long before this varied work was bundled as the "spatial turn" in the 2000s.

Spacing Turkey-Europe Relations

There are few places in which spatial imaginations seem to be more relevant than in relations between Turkey and Europe. Constructions of the Bosporus as the boundary between "Europe" and Asia"; debates over migrants of Turkish descent being part of EU member state "cultures"; contestations over the extension of Exclusive Economic Zones and continental shelves in the Eastern Mediterranean; commemorations of "the Turks at the gates of Vienna"; varying tourist routes to the Turkish coast; proposals of concentric circles and privileged partnership in EU membership negotiations; Turkey as a buffer between security complexes; Turkey as a gate for migrants *en route* to Europe; the "Westernisation" and "Europeanisation" of Turkey – the list of such spatial imaginations of "Turkey" and "Europe", past and present, is long. They all have been leaving their imprint on our understandings of history and identity, and on the politics in Turkey, Europe and beyond.

The contributions to this special issue thus draw on the three core arguments of the spatial turn(s) identified above: that space matters, that space needs to be made, and that spaces need to be formed. They investigate different aspects of relations between Europe and Turkey, showing how the boundaries between the two are continuously re-drawn in many locales and many scales, and analysing the societal and political effects of these spatial imaginations. In many instances, Europe in this context is equated to the EU, but that in itself is a spatial construction not universally shared.

In the first contribution, Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm and Gençkal-Eroler demonstrate how the Turkish political elite has been constructed through different supranational imaginations and in turn has changed in their construction of Turkish identity through an imagination of the European space and Turkey's place in this space.[48] Emphasizing the spatialization of Turkish national identity beyond Turkey's borders, the authors take up a widespread theme in analyses

45 Mathias Albert, David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid, *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001; J. A. Scholte, "What are the New Spaces?", *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* Vol. 28, No 11, 1996, p. 1965–1969; Mathias Albert and Lothar Brock, "Debordering the World of States, New Spaces in International Relations", *New Political Science*, Vol. 18, No 1, 1996, p. 69–106.

46 David Slater, "The Geopolitical Imagination and the Enframing of Development Theory", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* Vol. 18, No 4, 1993, p. 419; Immanuel Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World System,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

47 Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1996.

48 Süleymanoglu-Kürüm and Gençkal-Eroler, "Spatial Constructions of Homeland in Turkish National Identity".

of Turkey-EU relations and narrate how these imaginations have moved from Turkey being embedded in Europe and acting as a "bridge country" to the Middle East and the Arab world to a self-centred construction of a Turkish homeland and Turkey as a "central country", focusing on its role as a "cradle of civilisation" and its Ottoman heritage.

In contrast to the increasing confrontation between the EU and Turkey, Parlar Dal and Dipama are more optimistic about the prospect of EU-Turkey cooperation.[49] They link the concept of space to that of scale and review EU-Turkey relations from the perspective of how the history of these relations have produced new scales, defined as the 'spatial configuration of social and inter-state interactions'. The authors trace how EU-Turkey interactions from the 1960 until today have produced not only different bilateral spaces but also bear the possibility of extending their relationship to a global scale and thus cooperate in different sectors of global governance.

As I have argued above, such imaginations of spaces of conflict and cooperation often work with references to historical events and their artistic depictions. Narrations of historical developments serve as legitimisations of spatial demarcations and power but tend to offer a highly streamlined rendering of events and neglect the ongoing struggles of multiple actors as much as alternative accounts of what happened. Taking his cue from Delacroix' painting *The Battle of Chios*, Hoffmann critically reviews accounts of the Greek independence wars that have often been romanticised in the European self-imagination, which has contributed to the construction of a European space and the othering of Turkey.[50]

Spatial imaginations do not only invoke and reproduce history, they also are deeply emotional. Karamik and Ermihan thus link the spatial turn to the emotional turn in IR.[51] They argue that emotions play an important part in turning geographies into social spaces. Their analysis builds on a study of the cases of Cyprus, Kreuzberg, and Syria, in which Turkey and the EU encountered each other in different ways. Each of these places however connotes not only a geographical territory but carries special meaning in national narratives of Turkey and EU countries such as Germany and in the construction of their identities. As Karamik and Ermihan show, these constructions have caused, as much as they have been sustained by, strong emotions.

Savaş and Yılmaz focus their contribution on the relationship between France and Turkey.[52] They argue that this relationship ought to be understood in the context of constructions of the Mediterranean. In their analysis, they show how in recent decades both sides did not develop clashing imaginations of the Mediterranean until 2017, when France and Turkey started to link the Mediterranean with energy security but developed very different geographies. In particular, Turkey emphasised its exclusion from a shared space. The contribution by Savaş and Yılmaz is not only one in substance but also in method. They utilise

49 Emel Parlar Dal and Samiratou Dipama, "Re-scaling and Globalizing EU-Turkey Bilateral Relations in the Changing Global Political Landscape", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 35-50.

50 Hoffmann, "Delimiting Europe: Greek State Formation as Border Making".

51 İrem Karamik and Erman Ermihan, "Feeling Imagined Spaces, Emotional Geographies in the EU-Turkey Relations", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 71-88.

52 Savaş and Yılmaz, "French and Turkish Representations of the Mediterranean".

novel computer programmes to analyse speeches from actors on both sides drawing on word embedding models, which in turn build on development in artificial intelligence.

The following two contributions zoom in on the spatial imaginations in two different policy fields. First, Türkeş-Kılıç takes a look at migration, which has been a particularly rich source of spatial analysis – for all the wrong reasons.[53] She focuses on the spatial imaginations of Europe, Turkey and the Greek-Turkish border in the context of the 2020 border crisis, when President Erdoğan threatened to unilaterally open the border for refugee crossings to pressure the EU to fulfill what Erdoğan considered its obligations under the 2016 EU-Turkey deal on migration. Through an analysis of speeches from EU Commission President von der Leyen, Türkeş-Kılıç shows how these threats led to reinforced othering of Turkey and were embedded in the broader geopoliticisation of the EU's international identity.

In the following piece, Akçalı, Görmüş and Özel analyse the spatial aspects of environmental politics in the form of the EU Green Deal and the low-carbon transition process in Turkey.[54] They highlight the ambiguities and tensions of climate policy as it encounters different spaces created by environmental planning, security strategies, neoliberal markets, and authoritarian power. In such multi-spatial settings, political actors may operate across different spaces and play them off against each other. This makes possible a variety of different patterns of green energy transition with profound effects on domestic and international power structures. Akçalı, Görmüş and Özel thus remind us that functional policies always have a spatial dimension, that they compete with other spaces, and that such spaces may be instrumentalised to buttress power structures.

While many of the other contributions to this special issue and the debate about EU-Turkey relations more broadly emphasise difference or even antagonism in the spatial imaginations of "Turkey" and "Europe", Najslova in her concluding piece thematises proximity and similarity.[55] Her contribution is particularly important in reminding us that spatial imaginations are not homogeneous but subject to contestation and societal struggles. Thus, Najslova does not look at the political elite but at the articulations and practices of aid workers assisting refugees on both sides. In what she calls "islands", alternative spaces question the hegemonic narratives of territorial borders and opposition and demonstrate the existence of transversal lines of conflict and cooperation that open up new vistas of connectivity.

Najslova, together with the other contributions to this special issue, thus urges us to not take spatial imaginations for granted and to critically analyse their contestation and the way they work to reinforce relations of power, marginalisation, and exclusion. At the same time, her piece also serves as a warning to not reinforce hegemonic imaginations in our critical analyses. Instead, we must always supplement our critique of the practices of othering, difference and mutual securitisation that seem so prevalent in the discourse on Turkey-EU relations at the

53 Selin Türkeş-Kılıç, "'I Thank Greece for Being Our European Shield': Von der Leyen Commission's Spatial Imaginations During the Turkish-Greek Border Crisis in March 2020", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 109-125.

54 Emel Akçali, Evrim Görmüş and Soli Özel, "Turkey's Green Imagination, The Spatiality of the Low-Carbon Energy Transition within the EU Green Deal", *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, p. 127-145.

55 Najslova, "Architectures of Similarity".

present historical juncture with accounts of alternative imaginations that de-centre our focus and provide room for the articulation of a multiplicity of spatial imaginations without turning a blind eye to the powerful practices of seemingly "common-sensical" yet highly problematic representations of "Turkey", "Europe", and their relationship.

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