



Neoliberal Reproduction of Public Space and (“New”) Middle Class Spatiality: The Case of Tepe Prime*

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Abstract

The neoliberal transformation of the cooperation between the state, market and society in tune with devastating processes of capital accumulation has been drastically transforming the public spaces as well. Now new forms of public spaces, diverging from conventional understandings and practices come along with new relations of power and subordination inherent in new dynamics, dispositions and strategies. What these relations stimulate is the constant process of reproduction of the volatile and uncertain axes of middle class through the symbolic and ideological struggle on the consumption of every instant of everyday life, and needless to say, of space. This article aims at examining the process in effect in terms of the production of both a new spatiality and publicity concerning the interplay between social classes and space. It attempts to conduct it by drawing on the juxtaposition of two examples which are considered to address the new sites of the production and consumption of capitalist urban life: Shopping malls, providing a space of mobilization struggle for the lower segments of middle class; and Tepe Prime, constituting a constructive space for the symbolic legitimacy of ‘new middle class’ subjectivity. The article consequently argues that unlike shopping malls which nowadays seem to be allowing class mobilization as a semi-public space, Tepe Prime not only falls short to offer a genuine public use of the space, but more significantly, it well illustrates the dialectical relation between the social production of space and intra-middle class inequality peculiar to global market society.

Keywords: Neoliberal production of public space, Spatial segregation of social classes, Middle class, Symbolic exclusion, Tepe Prime, Consumerism

* I owe special thanks to Tark Şengül, Esin Kıvrak, Seriy Sezen and Özgür Sarı with whom our discussions have notably contributed to the development of the problematique. The usual disclaimer applies.



Kamusal Mekanın Neoliberal Yeniden Üretimi ve ("Yeni") Orta Sınıf Mekânsallığı: Tepe Prime Örneği

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Öz

Sermaye birikiminin tahripkâr süreçlerine koşut olarak devlet, piyasa ve toplum arasındaki içsel ilişkinin neoliberal dönüşümü kamusal mekânları da dikkate değer biçimde dönüştürmektedir. Geleneksel kamusal-lik anlayış ve pratiklerinden ayrılan yeni kamusal mekân biçimleri, toplumsal sınıflar açısından yeni dinamikler, yatınlıklar ve stratejilere içkin yeni tür iktidar ve tahakküm ilişkilerini beraberinde getirmektedir. Söz konusu ilişkilerin gündelik hayat ve mekânın tüketimi üzerinde gerçekleşen sembolik ve ideolojik mücadele aracılığıyla harekete geçirdiği süreçlerden biri de, orta sınıfın geçirgen ve muğlak eksenlerinin sürgit biçimde yeniden üretimidir. Çalışma, bu türden bir süreci toplumsal sınıflar ve mekân arasındaki etkileşime ilişkin yeni bir kamusal-lik ve mekânsallığın üretimi bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, kapitalist kentsel yaşamın üretim ve tüketim mekânlarını temsil ettiği düşünülen iki örnek olgunun karşıt konumlanışı üzerinden hareket edilmektedir: Bir yanda, orta sınıfın alt katmanları için mobilizasyon çabasına olanak tanıyan bir mekân örneği olarak alışveriş merkezleri; diğer yanda, 'yeni orta sınıf' öznelliğinin sembolik meşruiyeti için yapıcı bir mekân örneği olarak Tepe Prime. Çalışmada, son kertede Tepe Prime örneğinin, sınıf mobilizasyonuna göreli ölçüde olanak tanımaya başlayarak bir yarı-kamusal mekân görünümü kazanan geleneksel alışveriş merkezlerinden yalnızca mekânın kamusal kullanımına ilişkin sınıflar-arası sınırlılıklar açısından değil, yanı sıra mekânın toplumsal üretimi ile küresel piyasa toplumuna özgü sınıf-içi eşitsizlikler arasındaki diyalektik ilişkiyi sergilemesi açısından da farklılaştığı tespit edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamusal mekanın neoliberal yeniden üretimi, Toplumsal sınıfların mekan-sal ayrışması, Orta sınıf, Sembolik dışlama, Tepe Prime, Tüketimcilik

Introduction

One of the chief moments of the strategies of capital accumulation prevailing in Turkey particularly over the last decade is urban rent and mass consumption, the affinity between which has been carefully pioneered on genuine ideological, moral and cultural codes of interpellation. In congruence with this tendency which is apt to revive the retail market as well, the number of shopping malls in the capital city Ankara has drastically increased to outnumber its many counterparts in Europe, and eventually become a central component of urban social life. Undergoing structural changes, the malls have also been the subject of an attempt to incorporate local street culture – as another tendency which is difficult to be considered typical in many leading capitalist societies. What is going on throughout this process thereby does not only indicate the extent of consumption in the form of shopping, but it also addresses the new sites of “distraction industries” (Kracauer, 1930/1998) which come to operate as part of the constant commodification of public space.

This article attempts to sketch out the micro-class implications of such process through the example of one of these hybrid public sites in Ankara, Tepe Prime. The place indeed can be regarded among the principal touchstones of the public sites reflecting the recent urbanization processes imprinted by the articulation of local capitalism to the global consumption culture in Turkey. Another facet that makes it distinctive is on the other hand its contested ‘public’ quality in terms of class accessibility.¹ Bearing extensive trajectories for the production of contradictory class locations (Wright, 1997), it is believed to offer an instructive portrait of the dialectical contours between public spaces and middle class spatiality which have been fluidly transformed in capitalist urbanization. The specificity of the place that breaks away from the conventional conception of shopping mall

¹ The study is based on a research conducted in the year 2013. It could be only normal to admit that the quality of public accessibility of this particular site has changed since then. This would, yet, not contradict with the basic warrants of the rationale behind the study; on the contrary it certifies the ways how the competitive and unstable logic of capital reflects on the temporality and vulnerability of the present-day public spaces. Hence what is problematized herein is not a peculiar public space or site, but instead how capitalist production of space happens to constantly affect and in turn get affected by the enduring symbolic formation of class subjectivity.

is tried to be followed from the illustrative discourses employed by its official presentations, venue managers and the consumers all of which are sampled by the snowball technique.

On a final note, concerning the historical junction between public spaces and the prospects of socio-political struggle there is no doubt that such sort of inquiry does not appear as politically vital as the spatial segregation and exclusion exerted on the lower segments of the working class. The middle class debate, which has gained prominence in Turkey particularly following the exceptional 'class situation' mobilized in the practices of urban popular resistance in 2013, is beyond the scope of this study. But following the fundamental class mapping that integrally overwhelms the capitalist social formation I shall still propose to seize on the middle class(es) as a contradictory position in the working class, the structuration of which however has no a simply direct hierarchy in itself. This aspect of contradiction is of profound importance mostly in relation to political subjectivity: The individuals in question not only tend to identify themselves within a separate social class, but also a separate group in that class largely with reference to socio-cultural commitments, interests and concerns constituted in urban processes of social reproduction. Inasmuch as it seems to gloss over the class positions in relations of production, such contradiction could be considered to be abstracted from subjective constructions. Yet what is no less true is that it happens to correspond neatly to an objective and structural relation in the way it is manifested on the everyday practices and understandings of public space. This relation yields the point that makes the issue worth to care about as a political concern as well.

1. Pertinent Questions on the Conception of Public Space

Public space has always been the subject of a constant tension between abstract theorizations and the material reality of social practice. The tension seems to emanate from, let alone the ambivalent identification of what is/ought to be public, the potential problems in explaining the necessary relation assumed between space and social phenomena. Indeed, there is always a gap, a discrepancy between the ideal/intelligible and real/sensible forms of space, as the social processes pertaining to its codification cannot be fixed historically. Far beyond a simply geographical

place, space permanently requires the process of recodification or reconfiguration for it is shaped, produced and reproduced through the conflicts of social processes, actors and practices which take place within the historical context of political and economic structures (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Moreover, although the terms public and space may refer, one by one, to analytically distinct subjects, they together reflect a slippery and multifaceted relation of overlapping and intertwining (Weintraub, 1995, p. 281). Given the further questions on the theory and practice of publicity, the issue of public space therefore indicates a varying series of problematics in the face of the social transformation that generates new forms of spatiality.

Notwithstanding the debates on what is really going on in actual public spaces, it is possible to argue that the most prominent emphasis common in different theoretical accounts on the idea of public space is probably on its 'public' quality. It is this unique quality which sheds light on the relation between different forms of spaces and public social life that gives access to, brings together, reproduces and even constitutes different segments of society. In this respect, public space is often described as 'spaces in between' (Atkinson, 2003) and used to refer to streets, city squares, sidewalks, parks, and open spaces giving rise to the flow of human exchange (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992; Parkinson, 2012). It is thus necessarily linked to the idea of democracy and equal civic rights, though equal accessibility to all has always been a contested idea. The concept of public has indeed drawn notable inspiration in political philosophy from ancient forms of democracy as the notions of the agora (Greek) and the forum (Roman) were considered ideal models of public arenas where public affairs of the city are discussed among an assembly of equal citizens (Tonnelat, 2010, p. 1-2). It is generally acknowledged that the genuine democratic characteristic of public space is issued from the protection of the rights of user groups. According to Carr et al. (1992), public space should allow for outright freedom of action along with temporary claim and ownership, as it can ultimately be transformed by public action for it is owned by all. A "true" public space is thus democratic in the sense that it enables citizens to act more freely offering a sense of power and control limited only by the rights of others (Carr et al., 1992, p. 19-20).

However, to the extent that one sets forth the depiction of public space in terms such as equal accessibility and whole community ownership, it requires an opposing category of private space/sphere conceptualized on

the basis of private property rights. The opposing and necessary boundaries between the public and the private would in turn render the conception of public space more problematic. First of all, each social formation is a peculiar historical mixture of values expressed by the public and private domains, balance between which is a constantly shifting one. Public space thus, as Carr et al. argue, serves as a mirror of both kinds of values reflected by different degrees of privacy and publicness in a particular spatial order (1992, p. 22). Yet, what is much more to the point is that the substantive distinction of public/private is not precisely an 'innocent' one as it is predicated on fundamentally distinct imageries that essentially contrast between what is hidden and what is revealed, what relates only to the individual and to social whole, to particular interest and to common interest, and so on. As argued by Weintraub, such distinctions might be seen from a republican perspective as an outcome of the analytical separation between the public realm (political community and citizenship) on the one hand, and the market and administrative state on the other (1995, pp. 285-287). However, for the fact that capitalist relations of production are being historically produced and reproduced within the very realm of civil society which cannot be grasped separately from what republicans address as public sphere, historical reformation of the boundaries that demarcate public and private spheres emerge as an outcome of the market economy which has the appearance of a spontaneous and separate field outside the political formation. In this sense, it is not baffling to see that the public/private dichotomy has been employed as a cornerstone of liberal politics and liberal democratic theory (Parkinson, 2012, p. 50). The task of incorporation of this conventional liberal dichotomy into the question of space would imply a plane of split where the private space of activity functions as the "locus of initiative" enabling free individuals who autonomously act, whereas public space connotes the place "where the rules of association are defined and the problems to which it gives rise are resolved" (Baechler, 1980, as cited in Parkinson, 2012, p. 50). The dichotomy is thereby taken to be constitutive in the formulation of liberal democracy since it, in principle, sketches out a normative ground for citizens to enjoy individual autonomy as well as a social realm in which conflicts between the repercussions of those autonomous practices could be publicly discussed.

The problem lies on the fact that the dichotomy implies these forms of spaces as if they are not only *analytically* but also *ontologically* distinct

realms of reality. This sort of claim of authenticity subtly conceals the reproductive functions and conditions that these two spaces bear on each other, particularly the integral structure of social relations that ultimately links and reproduces the domination and exploitation in both forms of space, as well as the political and ideological implications of these relations. The further problem is a methodological one that, as Geuss notes, the dichotomy lacks any foundation outside itself concerning the concrete context of human political action (Geuss, 2001/2007, pp. 104-5). In this sense, it is merely a tautology to argue that we should not interfere with something because that is the kind of thing we think we ought not to interfere with. What is more, even the most 'private-oriented' space, the household usage of domestic space is possibly open to litigious challenge in the sense that there might as well be public extensions of the individuals' ways of behaving, as in the case of the distinction between "front and back regions" conceptualized by Goffman (1959).²

Notwithstanding the problems regarding the substantive dichotomy between what respectively appeals to the public and private, it holds true that public space is distinctively grasped through the components of what is known to be the public life. In effect, it is thought to constitute the site of the social exchange of a widely ranging nature that encompasses both individual and communal issues (Carr et al., 1995, p. 23). However, the emphasis on the 'publicly available' characteristic of public space tends to imply this social exchange as an equal provision of the channels for movement, nodes of communication, and common grounds for social play and relaxation (Carr et al., 1995, p. 1; Sennett, 1992). It is important to underline that many critiques of the newly emerging forms of public space seem to glamorize urban public space by drawing on such ideational assumption of an egalitarian basis. Although assumed to be a collective whole, public space is in fact a highly fragmented domain which renders the use of power far more dispersed (Dijkstra, 2000, p. 1). Use of public space has always been open to social exclusions due to the inequalities of power and

² Goffman simply notes that individuals employ different "fronts" when they act with their social roles such as students, friends, siblings, sons and daughters, or the social faces how they intend to represent themselves to "the others", i.e. the public. Hence, even different rooms of the house can be associated with different states of publicity and/or privacy, such as the kitchen or bedroom being the back stages of the public representation of our subjectivity, and the living room being a front stage that maintains the publicly accepted patterns of act.

differences defined on such as class, gender, ethnicity, etc. That is because, as Lefebvre notes, space is not entirely an intellectual or a physical category, but both a tool of ideas, actions and a means of control, power and domination (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 292). It should thus be regarded an essential field for the exercise of hegemony through the struggles on both knowledge and action:

"Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which the combination takes on body, or the aggregate of procedures employed in their removal? The answer must be no." (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 11).

The exercise of hegemonic relations being the case, we shall therefore mention a *politics of public space* concerning the power differentials between and among its contending parties (state and non-state actors) and the participants of public space themselves (Rappa, 2002, p. 7). Since these power differentials and domination tend to be altered over time and space with the changes in economic, social, cultural variables through contradictions and struggles (2002, p. 7), the meaning, form and function of public space are always open to the processes of redefinition and reconfiguration. Both the transformation of political struggle over the space and that of the space itself indeed further signify the impossibility of the precise and permanent enclosure of both the space and publicity. Nevertheless, the conventional idea of public space based on the values of democracy, equality and social plurality is still of core significance for such political characteristic of public space. Although the democratic quality of public space could be considered typically unstable for it is both the object and subject of dispersed power (Dijkstra, 2000), we still need relatively distinctive measures for the historical idea of the term concerning its basic attributes in order to discuss the ways through which the transformation of public spaces has been occurring. Moreover, even if the principle of equality is of a pure abstract category, it can still serve as a point of reference for the prospects of socio-political struggle on public space. From a radical viewpoint, the empirical/practical lack of equality is the very reason that the idea of equality could be the ultimate reference of any political contest (Ranciere, 1995/1999). Such perspective would not testify the democratic quality of public space on empirical basis, as it already departs from the idea of the equality of all. It would rather radically politicize the incurable

void, the inevitable discrepancy between such idea and the factual, empirical reality.

Not excluding the power/hegemony-centred approach, public space could be simply addressed as the *practised place* (de Certeau, 1985, as cited in Dijkstra, 2000, p. 4) where interaction and exchange of goods and ideas, as well as the demand and struggle for individual and socio-economic rights take place. Regardless of how one intends to approach to them, it is a fact that we are bounded with and dependent on public spaces with which we always interact whilst practicing our everyday routine, in order for us to actualize our day-to-day lives as well as to reproduce our social existence. Although public spaces might not always succeed in providing unconditional access in actual terms, Dijkstra sets out the key measure for a “truly public space” as having potential as much as possible for encounters that would not occur in a more controlled environment (Dijkstra, 2000, pp. 6-7). He draws on three criteria suggested by Arendt with respect to the public realm which she teases out in detail in *Human Condition* (1969):

- *Be accessible by all* (lack of social segregation)
- *Be used by all* (level of tolerance to individual freedom in a public space)
- *Outlast one generation* (historical connection with local history and geography)

Although the public realm is not exactly the same as a public space as the former might refer to non-spatial qualities as well, such criteria could be employed to examine the spatial qualities of public spaces that are associated with a public in a more or less democratic sense. In the same vein, one can also derive a comprehensive and common description of a public space from the conception Neal and Orum offer in *Common Ground*, which is defined as “including all areas that are open and accessible to all members of the public in a society in principle, though not necessarily in practice” (Neal & Orum, 2009, p. 1). Here, the authors’ note on “not being so in practice” is also crucial to bear in mind to politically examine the ambiguity of the lines between the public and the private. Such political examination seems to acquire more relevance than ever, as the conventional publicity of public spaces are being drastically dissolved and replaced by new public forms and practices in favour of the neoliberal strategies of accumulation.

2. Neoliberal (Re)production of Public Space

A discussion on the forms of the production of publicity requires at least a brief glance at the production of space within capitalist processes of urbanization. First and foremost, if what is indicated as the production of space refers to the activity of constructing a built environment, then meaning of this reference lies on the settlement of capital upon and within the space at certain levels of concentration (Şengül, 2009, p. 16). Taken on as much more a matter of organization of relations of production, circulation and consumption, urban space is located into the very heart of processes of capital accumulation which leads its ultimate route of commodification (Harvey, 2010). Besides the social expenditures required for the reproduction of labour power, it is also the investments made on the built environment that makes the processes of urbanization and those of capital accumulation come together (Harvey, 1985). As a natural outcome of the commodification of space itself, space tends to occupy also a chief part of the class-based political processes. In this light, social production of urban space is carried out by the constant conflict and struggles applying to the interests of social classes and groups (Castells, 1977). It is thereby apposite to consider the production of urban space a social and dialectical process between spatial affairs and social actors.

Nevertheless, the link between space and class relations does not only involve the relations of production, for the social relations of reproduction, as an interrelated process with the relations of production, are at play as well. Once the formation of social classes entails a process of continuity and constant reformation rather than being a historically stable object or moment, urban space comes into prominence as the site and medium of such relations of reproduction and reformation. As argued by Lefebvre, the reinforcement and reproduction of capitalist social relations depends on the everyday use of space due to the imposition and penetration of commodification and subordination of space by the logic and power of capitalism (cited in Gottdiener, 1994, p. 209). Such account provides an insight to understand class relations beyond the moment of production and grasp the relations of reproduction as a complementary part of class relations (Katznelson, 1981, as cited in Şengül, 2009, p. 17). What is more herein is the direct and indirect role played by the state and state actors within the relations of simultaneous reproduction of the social classes and

urban spatial forms. Thanks to its legitimate power on regulation and distribution of public resources, the capitalist state plays an essential role on this reproduction process.

Given such multi-faceted dynamics observed in the process of reproduction of the urban space, in order to refrain from any functionalism it can be argued that the relation between the dynamics of capitalist urbanization and space is in fact of a continuous interaction of the contexts, activities and agents. From such vantage point, capitalist production and reproduction of urban space is always open to contingencies in spite of the conscious or unconscious activities and inferences of behavioural units and actors (Keskinok, 1998, p. 92). Encompassing a variety of political geography and socio-political relation, capitalist urbanization, hence, cannot be precisely theorized by a macro and general 'narration' of capital accumulation. It rather depends on the regulative mechanisms and forms of socio-political relations differentiating with regard to distinct political, social and cultural contexts (Penpecioglu, 2011, p. 63; Keskinok, 1997, pp. 1-2; Gottdiener, 1994). However it is at least as accurate that the political-economic restructuring that has been conducted following the early 1980s has gradually led capital to achieve its hegemony also on the processes of urbanization. The investments made by the medium and large scale capital groups on urban spaces have been demonstrating particularly throughout the 1990s that it is the capital that happens to occupy the essential locus of the processes of urbanization. The uniqueness of this neoliberal era which can be defined as the "urbanization of capital" (Harvey, 1985) is characterized on the fact that the incoming balances that have been changed in favour of capital has resulted in the fabrication of urban space by the logic of capital as much as never before. In the light of this factual process, it is possible to sketch out a 'relational' approach which tends to contextualize the questions with regards to capital accumulation, class struggle and state in one integral context as the components of the same social processes (Şengül, 2009, pp. 41-56).

If the processes and practices concerning capital accumulation, the state, as well as the social classes and groups are to be considered in a relational and holistic context, then it is by no means analytically possible to exclude the question of transformation of public space from it. The significance of such question in this context stems from the essential role of public spaces in the formation of urban areas, thanks to their social capacity to constitute the sites upon which the structuring of 'the social' come

into being. What makes the transformation of public spaces, on the other hand, an organic problematique of the neoliberal processes of urbanization is the very fundamental discrepancy that whether the space is settled by reference to its 'use value' of its concrete feature of being a site for living, or to the 'exchange value' of its abstract feature of being bought and sold. In this light, particularly from the 1980s onwards, for the urban space has been commodified being located into the very centre of the relations of capital accumulation and begun to be evaluated solely by its 'exchange value', some new forms, conceptions, respective practices and understandings of public space come to be observed.

These new forms are also witnessed as part of the process that unevenly and uncontrollably developing metropolises are increasingly losing their quality of providing ideal environments for living (based on 'use value'). The fundamental change in the organization of urban social space can be epitomized by a process of deconcentration which involves both a socioeconomic movement from the older central cities to outlying areas, or decentralization either indirectly through endogenous sources that responds to a boost in socioeconomic activity, or directly from the exogenous effects of centrifugal relocation outside the central city (Gottdiener, 1994, p. 9). Once used to indicate the most accessible places within whole city by concentrating the mixture of commercial, financial, administrative, social and cultural activities (Pacione, 2003), city centres now tend to be both the subject and structure of a tension that takes place within the seemingly alternative forms of public space and within newly emerging class practices, experiences, tastes, necessities and expectations regarding everyday living on a new spatiality. It is a constant dialectic interaction between the supply and demand immanent to neoliberal urbanization which is represented by this process. While the former tends to carefully ponder and meet the new spatial-class necessities in politic-economical dispositions, realization of the latter in turn helps to lead further sociological shifts in the spatial-class necessities. The process can hence be considered an articulation of the built environment to the competitive logic of capital leading to uneven geographical and social development (Harvey, 1985, pp. 155-162; Harvey, 2010, pp. 140-155). As a striking consequence of this ongoing process, the spatial boundaries between different social classes and groups are increasingly becoming sharp and clear culminating

into the fact that public space itself now appears to acquire a direct or indirect function of reproducing social diversities and inequalities, either in symbolic or material terms.

On an aside note, one might also question the newly emerging understandings and forms of public spaces along with the occurrence of new axes of hegemony and domination in terms of their 'public' quality. If the conception of public is grasped solely with the sense of the 'fluid and polymorphous sociability' in the way it is employed in the works of Aries and Sennett (cited in Dijkstra, 2000, p. 6), then there is always a risk in approaching to the newly emerging forms in a cynical way which tends to oppose these new forms to the conventional forms identified with the so-called democratic urban area. This cynical attitude originally stems from a sort of romantic tendency to understand the new forms of public spaces solely of an illusionary, *pseudo* public form (e.g. see, Sennett, 1996; Saygın, 2006). Nevertheless, even this cynical/romantic perspective is refrained it is a fact that it is the public places by which we are encompassed and dependent on, with which we always interact whilst practicing our everyday routine in order to actualize our day-to-day lives and social existence. This being the case there would be still reasonable concerns on whether the abstract depiction of the term public space (as the *signifier*) itself is also being transformed in tune with the changing public spaces (as *signified*) in objective and material sense. Whether the conception also needs to be reviewed or whether the new forms bring about new understandings of public space that contradict with the conventional ideal of it, in any case, it is a fact that there is a significant rupture regarding the quality of accessibility of the new forms of public space. As could be observed in the salient case of the 'gated communities', there is a certain extent of challenges in the use of even the roads or pavements without a physical and/or symbolical belonging. The owners, designators and managers of cafes, stores or plazas seem to hold the unique authority to impose 'appropriate' rules, norms and 'legitimacy' criteria of accessibility upon the social and cultural dispositions of the people who are to consume the food, drink, music, and most chiefly the sign value (Baudrillard, 1972/1981) of the class experience supplied. What is more, as will be demonstrated later in the Tepe Prime case, even the consumers who seem to meet the legitimacy criteria become consequently subject to the socio-technological control of access. All in all, the transformation of public space generates new social grounds upon

which people are 'hierarchically' located into a symbolic system of differences and superiorities defined through the cultural practices and tastes of consumption that are converted in large from economic capital, and eventually, the social inequalities, the existing forms of domination and class differences get naturalized and reproduced. As far as the main focus of this article is concerned, it is from the social construction of identity within the middle class that the social asymmetry between different socio-spatialities driven by the dynamics of neoliberal urbanization needs to be understood.

3. Shopping Malls: A New Form and Activity of Public Space for Middle Class?

Running the risk of overgeneralization of distinct historical experiences, it can be argued that the emergence of shopping mall as a form of public space alternative to urban public space in Turkey follows a similar tendency to that of Western capitalist societies. The tendency can be explicated on the basis of a process of reorganization of central city and the metropolitan area in line with the new logic of global capitalism and with the abandonment of industrialization in developed economies (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982 as cited in Gottdiener, 1995/2005, p. 121). According to Gottdiener, the hierarchical and fragmented form of social organization of late capitalist society which underpins the metropolitan world as a deep structure of social relations does not now, for each area, require the convergence of functions that affects the societal future in a new way (Gottdiener, 1995/2005, p. 123). Put it another way, the fundamental change observed with the dissolution and restructuring that have been emerging in the current phase of late capitalism refers to the end of the functional unity between the central city and underdeveloped outlying areas. Indeed, what can be called the "multi-centred metropolitan region" (Gottdiener, 1995/2005, p. 124-5) has now been witnessing an increasing shift and reorganization in multi functions towards specialization with respect to its functionality within global capitalist economy. In this light, the dominance of business and commerce, high amounts of land costs and taxes at central places with small number of open spaces, the choice of outside urban as the residential areas, occupation of open spaces by parks or buildings, and invasion of residential use by workplace use (Aksel, 2005, p. 64) can be regarded among the problematic processes that address such shift

on behalf of city centres in Turkey case. All of these processes have adversely affected the liveability of city centres, paving the way for further dissolution and decentralization of retailing, office and leisure activities, along with the problems on security in public spaces. On the other hand, it would not be wrong to claim that the newly emerging public spaces formed within the multi-centred metropolitan region to offer a form of public social life which was once peculiar to city centres or town squares have been compensating the decrease in the facilities for public socialization in city centres.

Among these spaces, located at structurally closed and controlled, fully pedestrian, providing sufficient parking spaces, the covered retail and so-called lifestyle centres labelled as shopping malls seem to fulfil a considerable part of the metropolitan everyday publicity. The outcome of this fulfilment is a way of multiplication of the public space in a mollified form in the city. Shopping malls, in this respect, can be argued to represent the increasing structuring of everyday practices of urban people by the contemporary 'postmodern' society identified as a realm of social action, interaction and experience (Falk and Campbell, 1997, p. 1-2). It goes without saying that such representation cannot be reduced solely to the unique meaning of shopping and consumption as cultural phenomena in capitalist urban life. The significance of the new consumption sites is therefore not only that the social activities and spatial practices they are characterized with are new. It is rather the combination of the practices and dispositions that is kept aside from the classic portraits of consumption in modernity (Shields, 1992, p. 6).

The new (postmodern) consumption sites, in their whole context, can thus be characterized by a peculiar spatial form which highlights "a synthesis of leisure and consumption activities" that were previously held apart being located in different sites and performed at different times or accomplished by different people. They are indeed identified as the social spaces which carry out the illusion or the reality manufactured by the designers that "something else other than mere shopping is going on" (Goss, 1993, p. 19). It is true that the components such as controlled climate, ease of access, reduced price based on a higher market volume are among the functional attractions of the mall. However these can be quickly outstripped as far as the symbolic and social value of the mall environment is concerned (Shields, 1992, p. 5). Therefore, it seems inapt to confine the

spatial functioning of the mall to its physical organization that orients visitors towards more consumption. The public facet of the shopping mall is in part indebted to the social environment it offers so as to encourage the feeling of being connected, the excitement and the exhilaration of being in and around others (White and Sutton, 2001, p. 67). It is subsequently noteworthy that shopping mall constitutes a new spatial, public and cultural form (Shields, 1992, pp. 7-11) which originates from a combination of two sets of spatial practices and understandings: on the one hand there is the practices symbolizing the spatial performance typical of leisure spaces, and the spatial practices, on the other, that symbolize the performance of commercial sites. Yet what makes such combination more meaningful in its functioning as a new spatialization is its capacity to respond to the needs of the consumer based on new modes of identity and subjectivity. Thus it is not possible to contextualize the meaning in this unique set of spatiality brought about by the social and symbolic form of the shopping mall separately from the respective representation of the subject and of the social reality.

The link between such symbolic representation and its material basis, the making of middle class identity and cultural patterns has in fact its roots in the historical convergence of consumption and middle class that has been triggered even by the first stage of the social prominence of consumption. As suggested by Miller et al., it was a whole new landscape of consumption and an implicit opposition to production that was coming into view following the 1960s in Britain (Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook, & Rowlands, 1998, p. 2). Consumption could therefore represent the sign of a shift in the nature of production towards new times: the rise in consumption-based middle class cultures at the expense of production-based working class cultures. However, what is represented by consumption is not limited to the performance of pre-given genres of identity. Consumption sites, or shopping malls do not only respond to the necessities oriented by the preconditioned sociological and cultural dispositions of the middle class. They rather take part in reshaping and reconfiguring these dispositions in their unique spatial form and practice. The mall thereby becomes itself "a form through which the nature of such identity is discovered and refined" (Miller et al., 1998, p. 187). This can also be approved by the conspicuous words of Donald Dayton, one of two designers of the first shopping mall in the world, Southdale Center. Dayton, in his an-

nouncement in the opening of the mall, had implicitly sketched out an articulation between an ideal space and an ideal community stating that "Southdale is not the usual strip-of-stores plan. We are planning to create a community" (Nelson, 1998, p. 459). It is worth considering that Turkey's social experience of late capitalism in terms of the social meaning occupied by shopping malls in everyday life reflects a similar articulation between space and an ideational envision of free market society after almost half a century from the opening of the first mall in USA. The shopping mall reality in Turkey has indeed succeeded to fit into the changing shopping and consumption needs of Turkish urban citizens. The development of the shopping mall as a postmodern site has turned out "to be timely for the Turkish urban citizen searching for modernity through new identity components in consumption patterns" (Erkip, 2003, p. 1073).

Combining shopping with other leisure and recreational facilities malls are then supposed to offer packaged spaces particularly for the middle class to easily consume the modern city life. This being the case it is apt to elaborate on the total sets of practices and performances conducted within the mall, as a dynamic social process rather than a single, isolated moment of exchange. As Douglas, drawing on Bourdieu, suggests, modern identities are constituted through our interaction with the symbolic world of consumption rather than through a direct relationship with the material world. In this sense, consumption as a choice does not only occur between different kinds of goods but also between different kinds of relationship (Douglas, 1996, as cited in Miller et al., 1998, p. 23). Nevertheless this does not imply that the symbolic world of the mall performance is explicated merely on pure subjective terms. What renders the class dispositions in symbolic and material form of social reality an integral one is the pioneering role (inheritance) of economic class in any form of appearance. For this reason, using the term *habitus* can be conditionally beneficial for its relational context. As Bourdieu notes of the material taxonomies in habitus, there is no one single feature, such as design, rationalism, value, compromise etc. that creates the class disposition, but instead "the structural homology between a whole set of compatible values expressed in the taxonomic orders which together come to be recognised" in particular socio-spatial experiences within the mall (Bourdieu, 1968, as cited in Miller et al., 1998, p. 187). Once one peculiar set of values tends to reinforce the others in this habitus, the habitus can in turn be addressed as the essence

of a particular range of values of what we understand from class. The symbolic environment of the shopping mall therefore functions as a material habitus in which different stores and consumption patterns indicate different dispositions inherited from different economic and cultural capital.

In this way, we can consider the term class –here particularly the middle class– also as a practice which marks a processual relationship between the actors and the space (Miller et al., 1998, p. 187). Yet, if this very relationship constitutes the basis of how we make sense of the production of a new spatiality in shopping malls, then there is one more dimension that would apply to the public quality of it: the terms of the (re)production of the peculiar form and understanding of public activity for the middle class. This would normally require an analytical reference to and comparison with the conventional and prescriptive form of public space that has been discussed at the outset.

As far as the sociability offered by the public form of shopping mall is concerned, it is probably its restrictive character that would take priority for examination. Compared to the conventional public space, the first distinctive feature of the malls is that the sort of quality and form of public usage and access is determined precisely by the decisions of the titleholders due to private ownership. Unlike urban streets or open public spaces, citizens are expected to produce a precisely anti-political subjectivity as they are not allowed to act upon the space by taking collective action such as organizing demonstrations, making propaganda, delivering speeches, unfurling banners etc. Concerning the idea that it is the public civic action and the act of speech which gives human existence its unique characteristics (Arendt, 1969), it becomes more significant to underscore the quality of public action taking place in the malls. Indeed, the social activities organized for general public within the malls are confined only to the ones such as exhibitions, fashion shows, autograph sessions which are programmed by the mall executives and managers. In this light the analytical distinction between public access and public use employed by Dijkstra seems relevant (2000, p. 20). Although public access to the mall is ensured, public use is interrupted due to the highly-controlled environment lacking the diversity, tolerance, and the political rights identified with the conventional conception of city center. Similarly, Lees underscores the *civic* characteristic of urban public spaces. She argues that unlike the public spaces that reflect a civic significance constituted through history, public memory and political legitimation, shopping malls fall short to provide a civic

space for they lack the public memory as well as the political and ceremonial functions of civic spaces, although they are publicly used (Lees, 1994). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to situate Lees's standpoint into the conception of *pseudo* public space. For her, since there is not a fixed meaning and form of public space, shopping mall should be examined within the context of public space insofar as it relates to the shared needs and components of a collective life (1994, pp. 444-450).

Another dimension of the restricted public use is the identification of social interaction with social relations of leisure based on the consumerist economy. The public space of the mall substitutes open streets by passages of stores, parks by entertainment centers, cafes, restaurants etc. publicity of which have transformative impact upon both the content and context of the patterns of spent time (thus, the very form of relationship) with the family, the social circle or the workplace milieu. The only possible social interaction with others substantially seems to be with the shop assistants and salesperson. Following Voyce, it is thus plausible to suggest that the new public space of these consumption sites is coterminous with particular discourses, technologies and activities which are to constitute a *consumerist citizenship*. It assures that any activity detrimental to consumption and disruptive potentiality should be limited or removed (Voyce, 2006, p. 269). The public form of shopping mall in this respect represents a commercial form of governance in which visitors are endowed only with *customer* rights and responsibilities instead of those associated with full *citizenship* (Mc Laughlin & Muncie, 1999, p. 113).

Private ownership also applies to the time spent in the mall. It is a crucial shortcoming to serve only in definite opening and closing times in the face of the public life in city centres. The fact of restricted hours is also what impairs the alternative quality of the mall compared to open urban public spaces in terms of offering a nightlife. Along with restricted range of time, opportunities for public transportations constitute another peculiarity for physical accessibility. Although this does not seem to constitute a problematic issue in the context of Ankara city centre, physical access is in principle always open to restriction for particular groups (e.g. seemingly nonconsumers, homeless, beggars etc.) due to the technology of advanced surveillance by private security guards and security cameras. Moreover, the so-called undesired groups are not only exposed to physically limited accessibility. What is much more remarkable is a sort of sym-

bolic-ideological surveillance on access to the extent that a class based segregation (pertaining to economic and cultural capital) is provoked through the symbolic landscape of the global world of consumption.

Notwithstanding all of these shortcomings that might make one consider that public access to the mall on physical and symbolic terms is a contested idea, at least for the Ankara case, it should be admitted that the visitor profile of many shopping malls is far from being homogenous. The increasing social allure of shopping malls appeal to various segments of population in the capital city, in which there are currently 284 square meters of mall space per a thousand people ("Kişi Başına Düşen AVM Alanı", 2016). Although the middle class publicity is said to be redefined within the semi-public space of shopping mall, more and more people at a wide range of income levels corresponding both to middle and lower classes appear to internalize the mall environment as a routine space for shopping and spending leisure time. It is pertinent here to note as a primary determinant that many malls in Ankara are reachable from wider terrains of the population for being close to the city centre. As Salcedo notes on Chile's experience, "having been located in places with easily connected to malls through major roads" is a primary facility to encourage lower class to use the mall as a public place (2003, p. 1094). Over and above, the malls are also preferred for providing a site of social and cultural mobilization for the lower class people. Whether by window shopping, family rambling, or shopping, eating in some particular sub-places, social and cultural dispositions of lower class have been passing through a positive learning process in terms of their 'respective' use of the mall space. This can be regarded both an outcome of the public access quality of the shopping malls, as well as a reproductive constituent for that quality. Consumption of westernization and modernization in everyday life through the symbolic values that the malls offer as an absent component in conventional bazaar system is a common quest for all social segments in accordance with their specific economic and social capital.

Consequently, public experience of shopping malls in Ankara context seems, in course of time, to have been indicating a site of popular culture through which the social patterns of lower and old middle class are articulated by the capitalist colonization of leisure time. That means, if not the quality of public use, that of public accessibility to the malls does not constitute a challenge compared to urban public spaces, thanks to the current social and physical environment the malls provide. However, the process

of neoliberal reproduction of space still maintains to supply the sign/symbolic values of consumption and leisure time demanded by the new segments of social classes emerging as peculiar to post-industrial society. In this respect, for having been addressing one of the spaces as a consequence of this dialectical interaction between supply and demand, Tepe Prime will be examined in its distinctive characteristics pertaining to not only public use, but also public access.

4. Spatial Segregation within Middle Class: The case in/of Tepe Prime

Tepe Prime is a public site located on one of the main arteries of Ankara. It combines business centers operating in the global service sector, stylish residences, home-offices and shops with food and entertainment venues serving within the outdoor concept. In addition to commercial activities, the site thereby offers an alternative social and cultural function to the city center.

The construction of the site started in 2008, and has been completed and put into service by 2011, with a huge investment of \$200 million on Eskişehir Road, the new business and commercial axis of Ankara (“Ankara Tepe Prime’da”, 2009). It involves two separate high-rise buildings for the compartments of *Business* which have respectively 18 and 19 storeys as well as one 10-storey building for *Residence*, between which there is an open space called *Avenue* consisting of cafes, restaurants, entertainment venues as well as daily shops such as music store, shopping centre, bank, beauty parlour, drugstore, Mercedes showroom, tourism agency, tobacco & wine boutique etc. Besides the 218 offices and 100 business studios (“Tepe Prime Avenue Açıldı”, 2011), it is this space of Avenue in Tepe Prime which is designated to offer an alternative both to the main streets in city centre and shopping malls for the consumption of (post)modern everyday life and leisure time. Identification of consumption with the tempting discourse on the “quality and privilege” of life, or “higher standards” of living could be clearly followed by the announcements of the actors on the side of investment and architecture in the press launch (“Tepe Prime Avenue’nun Tanıtımı Yapıldı”, 2011):

“As we complete each new project it contributes brand new values to our institutional accumulation which does intend nothing but always to bring life to high-quality standards. We have mounted Tepe Prime Ave-

nue in a unique way from the beginning. Denying the concept of the classical shopping mall we wanted to build for Ankara residents a meeting space which would be alive both in the daytime and nighttime. Instead of usual indoor shopping malls, we have designed it as a place in which daily needs are met, the venues for food and entertainment are gathered up in open air" (CEO of the responsible construction company).

"We have moved from the idea of agora dating back from the ancient city to modern city. Tepe Prime is located in one of the most qualified places in Ankara. We have an expectation of great interest in the daytime not only from about 2500 people who are to work in Business and Residence buildings, but particularly from the surrounding universities, as well as from private and public organizations around." (Development Coordinator of Investment Projects of the responsible construction company).

As far as the 'natural' visitor profile and the one intended to appeal by the designators are concerned, there is a need to situate the place on a more concrete class position in order to discuss the particular socio-spatial character of it. First of all, although such particularity and uniqueness manifests itself even at the first glance, and once makes the place itself worth to be critically grasped, the limitations applying to shopping malls in principle (such as regarding the public accessibility and use, lack of civic space, replacement of the virtues of citizenship with those of consumerism, etc.) are mostly viable for the case of Tepe Prime too. This is because of the commonality of two in terms of being merely subjacent to consumerist ideology provoked by the economic motivation of private ownership. However, when it comes to public accessibility, Tepe Prime marks a notable difference from shopping malls. As discussed before, while the social reality of shopping malls was initially to confirm the highly exclusive quality analysed for those in the U.S as well as in Europe, the present situation indicates a relatively different case for Ankara. Today, the point is rather that many shopping malls in Ankara appeal to a substantial portion of population being located close to metropolitan centre with the facilities for public transportation.

As the domination of global capitalism over the reconfiguration and consumption of lifestyle tends to generate social and cultural tastes that are being continuously occluded and reproduced, organisation of the space should always meet these tastes in accordance with the symbolic system of class dispositions. This very interaction between the supply and

demand of tastes is also underlined by Bourdieu who notes that the field of production “enables taste to be realised by offering it, at each moment, the universe of cultural goods as a system of stylistic possibilities from which it can select the system of stylistic features constituting a life-style” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 230). Tepe Prime with its socio-spatial form and understanding, in this light, represents a further shift in the middle class so as to encompass the practical logic of a ‘higher’ standard of cultural and symbolic tastes along with its *symbolic struggles*, just as what many shopping malls once had done. Here, it would be apposite to identify the currently homogenous subject of this weight of standard through the dominant discourses of the agents from both supply and demand side which are described by the socio-economic categories indicated with such labels as New Middle Class, Upper Middle Class, New Petty Bourgeoisie, White Collar, Yuppie or White Turks, economic depictions of which are highly litigious though.

Among a wide range of debate on the term, transformation of the middle class can be roughly considered the historical outcome of economic polarisation within the middle strata which is originally imprinted by the introduction of advanced technologies into the forces of production: the rapid growth of employment and concentration in economic activities pertaining the service industries in both public and private sectors has resulted in an increase in the number of high paid jobs (e.g. financial and producer services, high-tech manufacturing etc.) as well as a decrease in middle income jobs (skilled blue-collar manufacturing) (Knox, 1993, p. 21). Today although the so-called new middle classes, the growing part of which is constituted in service economy, refer to a highly heterogeneous group in socio-economic terms (Lange & Meier, 1999, p. V) they generally come to be defined on income (above-average), education (advanced degrees) and occupation (mostly of white collar) as the predominant indicators. The tricky aspect of the task of fixing the ‘legitimate’ visitor profile of Tepe Prime by employing, for instance, occupation-based class schemes is that spatial performances and practices are themselves effective in the reproduction of the middle class: They tend to generate a common judgment of ‘distinguished taste’ produced in a more or less uniformed symbolic world of consumption and lifestyle in a way to identify it as a meaningful social class – which is not less significant than the objective positions occupied in the relations of production. Since one side of this production

process is of the supply, it would be helpful to have a glance on through what discourses the subject of Tepe Prime comes to be 'interpellated'.

The motto on which Tepe Prime Avenue promotes itself is "the pulse of life is beating here!". On the other side, the common motto of both Tepe Prime Business and Tepe Prime Residence is "the world is turning around you!" The promotion text of the former uses tag lines such as "the highest expectations in your career" and "it reflects of the prestige you hold in your business life", whereas that of the latter calls attention to "the leading role of life you'd not renounce", or "the herald of the innovations and comfort brought along by modern life".³ It is thus by no surprise that the catchwords employed by the developers illustrate the temptation of consuming the modern urban life in a postmodern site. The wordings are decorated with an overemphasis on 'power' in terms of the capitalist logic of competitiveness, as well as on 'privilege, quality and conform' in terms of the conformist-consumerist ideology. All of them are processed in the grammatical form of the second-person address, daring to narrate one who he or she 'really' is.

However, these might not make too much sense by themselves for they can be easily interpreted as stereotype commercial mottos. What is significant here is that the overall discourse is not simply written down, but rather symbolically and physically engraved and embedded into the architectural motive of the place, serving as an instrumental code between the consumerist fantasies depicted in detail within the place (also within the broader culture) and the presentational allurements in order to ensure the consumption (Gottdiener, 2005, p. 131). Now, to derive the more direct and concrete surface of the implicit functioning of such encoding relation it would be fruitful to appeal to an interview conducted with a franchising manager of one of the entertainment venues in Tepe Prime. The franchise is a well-known venue throughout Turkey and the only one in Ankara. The informant is a 38-year-old man who has been declaredly working in the restaurant and bar sector for 25 years. The interview mainly intends to gather information from the sight of a manager particularly on the issues such as social and spatial specificity of Tepe Prime, visitor profile, symbolic construction and 'legitimate' consumption patterns of his own place:

³ Retrieved from <http://www.tepeprime.com.tr/avenue.php>
<http://www.tepeprime.com.tr/business/business.htm> <http://www.tepeprime.com.tr/residence/residence.htm> (15.10.2016).

“We have preferred here because of its location. It is an advantage to have it on the road to Ümitköy, close to Bilkent and beneath two business centres. So, we are the only [*name of the venue*] in Ankara (...) Tepe Prime has a distinction of reflecting a unique concept. People jump into their cars and come to a place far from the city and not a shopping mall. I guess number of such examples will increase.”

Stating that there are no precise criteria applied, the manager in fact explicates the criteria of cultural legitimacy of his place. He implies the distinctive components of upper middle class with high respect to social and cultural capital besides economic class indicators:

“The visitor [*denying the term consumer*] group we target for our venue is the same as of Tepe Prime, people with A+ elite status. Tepe Prime is currently the most “trendy” place in Ankara. So people think it is an incomparable privilege to come here. In this sense, we have a unique visitor profile in Ankara, which might be comparable only to those in Çukurambar. The social structure of the place is important, I think, and we endeavour to protect it. It is not only about money. It is rather a matter of education and culture, and we have a certain culture in our place so that rather those who know and feel a part of this culture prefer to visit here. Recently, an elderly man came to us saying “let me taste from your delicious coffees”. We kindly refused him telling that here is not a coffee house or a bakery-alike place [*although the place serves a list of coffee beverages*] (...) In order to protect this culture, for example we behave in a selective way in letting people come into the entrance. We cannot precisely apply a pre-given criterion but it is easy to judge from, you know, the general outlook, the dressing... For example, a guy is coming probably from the fitness centre, with a sweaty smell and some loose gestures, we cannot accept those like him to come in. You can’t come here with a tracksuit bottom or something shabby like that. You shall take care of your clothing.”

The manager agrees with what the designators manifest on the distinction of Tepe Prime from shopping malls. It is also worth noting that public transportation facilities, which are thought as a positive motivation for the public accessibility to shopping malls, is evaluated in an opposite way that Tepe Prime’s distance from public transportations is acknowledged by the manager for protecting the class homogeneity. He considers transport facilities in terms of taxicabs:

“People are now tired of the crowds in shopping centers. Only those who want to have a drink and eat come to Tepe Prime. So here is not a

place that brings together those who need to buy socks with those who'd like to eat some quality meal accompanied by some decent, fresh music. Here has nothing to do with shopping malls. There are no such problems like crowd, parking lot here. I remember one visitor of us asking after her meal whether we have a washbasin of our own. The thing she needed to ask surprised us a lot, but she had probably identified the place with the shopping mall environment. (...) Here is a too sterilized place compared to other places. It is way preferable to the places in city centres as well, because you know the profile of people and security issues are likely to create problems there (...) Another thing that makes Tepe Prime special is that transportation to here is chosen only by private cars or taxis. No one comes here by using dolmus or bus. This indicates that those coming here have a certain level of income. In fact, our prices do not differ too much from the venues in city centres or shopping malls, our place is not expensive in that sense. But our visitors are quite different both in cultural and financial terms. (...) Some of the venues in Tepe Prime have branches also in city centre, such as Tunalı, 7. Cadde, but for the reasons behind the priority of here, I think the essential point is both the visitor profile and security issues. Also, sometimes it is a problem to find a taxi in city centre, whereas it is not a mess here, it provides more comfortable transportation in this regard."

As far as the strategic selection of the neighbourhood and people around in terms of their overall capital volume – of their occupational status, income, lifestyles, friendships, and so on – is to be regarded an indicator for new middle classes (Blasius & Friedrichs, 2008, pp. 31-2), the general visitor profile along with which the place is to be consumed could serve as a reason to prefer that place, even if there is no physical public interaction with other visitors. Visitors of Tepe Prime are likely to predicate their class position by reference to other people around, as much as to the space itself. More to the point is that they undertake a part of the social surveillance of the desired visitor profile in a way to support Salcedo's remark that "it is not just the developers want to exclude certain groups to ensure profits but also that middle class consumers wish to separate themselves as well" (2003, p. 1099). This point could be approved by the following observations of the manager of another entertainment venue:

"For example, when a group of young women come here, they can spend a much more comfortable time, as no one intends to disturb them.

As soon as they feel disturbed, we are informed about it with their feedback, usually with complaints. They try to warn us telling that “this place is beginning to change, you are now allowing in everyone, we face strange types of people inside”. For sure, after hearing such things we also effort to take stricter measures beforehand. [*when asked that whether or not such undesired groups of people reveal any potentiality of physical harassment, annoying behaviour like having a glance or something, his answer is very clear*] No, I do not think they would reveal any sign of inconvenient behaviour. They just sit and eat their meal. It is just, they simply do not like them, you know, their appearance, impression, and the like.” (42, M)

The part of the exclusion undertaken by the consumers could be further highlighted for addressing a ‘status panic’ (Mills, 2002, pp. 242-50) which gradually forces the members of the new middle classes to subjugate themselves to the goods they consume for the aim of expressing their claims to social prestige and enforcing the status distinctions levelled by income. It is, on the other hand, argued by Conroy that the shift in the relations of production have replaced the traditional middle class of landowners and entrepreneurs whose position was anchored by private property with new middle classes of corporate managers and employees, whose position derives substantially from income (1998, pp. 74-5). However, this new emphasis on the income criterion leads the new middle classes to a more heterogeneous context and makes the social prestige of them much more volatile and uncertain. Therefore, as in the case of Tepe Prime, in order to maximize the advantage of the social resources inherited from their contradictory class positions and thus strategically deal with the status panic, new middle classes develop a strong care and control about the social semiotics, the codes of social meaning and reasoning of the space where they experience their peculiar publicity. In this respect, the emphasis on the ‘quality of the place’ and narration of such quality chiefly through the class and status indicator of other consumers around could also be fortified through the discourses on the side of demand, the social agents of the consumption. Now the information gathered by the informants interviewed who declaredly visit Tepe Prime not less than once a month, will be appealed selectively with regards to discourse contexts. The informants, on the other hand, are sampled through snowball technique.

Although with different levels and forms of consumerist envisions, all informants tend to consider the socio-economic indicators of the consumer group of Tepe Prime an effective factor for seeing the place unique. While its form varies from the narrations of feeling of control and security to freedom or quietness, the general reasoning on 'highbrow culture' seems to be common:

"The most important reason behind my preference is that Tepe Prime, as a concept, keeps me away from the mass of people that I can't identify. But I can easily identify the audience here. It is both a physical and emotional feeling, the feeling of presence of people whom I can't have a control on, for example, I heard that in the new year's eve there happened some incidents in 7. Cadde, kind of things like some groups stomping on the private cars. So I prefer to keep myself away from the possibility of such things and not to be disturbed, as being in a group of single-women is also important in that sense. We still don't have any interaction with others, but even if we do, I know that the reaction of him or her would be foreseeable, even if I hit his or her car by mistake, he or she will accept my excuse, I know we won't fight. So they are the people I would talk to, if there was some chance. I think this is a quest for a controlled life. Then, the very comfort of the car parking, and moreover, the feeling of sitting outdoor follows it. In fact I observe the same type of social environment in Çukurambar and Park Caddesi. If they had the same physical facilities, I would spend time there too. So the parking is crucial. Suppose you need to change place, you have an obligation to get into car and search for parking space. (...) It's not just that it speaks to my tastes, you can find it elsewhere, however this place offers the feeling of a holiday village, drifted apart from the road, the crowd... I mean you are still in the city but it feels as if you are in a holiday village or a camellia in a seaside site in which you are familiar with everyone. Still it can't be explicated solely on the basis of the outdoor space, but more relevantly, the controllability, as I said. The people are identical, their dressing, appearance, behaviours make me feel comfortable. Also it has the logic of the old arcades, the grand bazaars." (36, F, Single, Architect, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"Visitors' profile is an important factor for my preference, they are well-educated, with a certain level of income, owning private car... And it is an important indicator if they come here getting into their cars, it shows that they come here for a determined purpose, they show an effort for the

sake of coming here, I think this is important, Tepe Prime is not a place that you stop by on your road in a way that “let’s take a walk to that place”. For example, there are places like Starbucks in Bahçeli or in shopping malls, but here is enticing for not appealing to everyone, it calls for relatively the elite portion of the city, the purlieus of Bilkent, Ümitköy, Konutkent, rather the western side of the city. Visitor profile, location, outdoor, quality of the venues are all interrelated determinants for my choice. Yet I find it very weak in terms of the architecture. However, it is possible here to capture an instance of the square culture which is more common in Europe. Overall, what makes here attractive is I think it is planned as a project that provides a uniform culture of entertainment, food, shopping.” (27, F, Married, Urban Planner, PhD Candidate, Income: 3500-6000 TL)

“Its location is vital, it is almost in the middle of Çankaya and Çayyolu districts and provides a comfortable parking space when going by car. In addition, the venues in here offer a qualified food and beverage services as well as they serve as places that you would sit and chat for a long time. [*when asked about the counterparts of the venues in other public spaces*] Yes, there are many similar places providing similar quality of place. But when we are to decide as a family, we feel it more quite and appropriate to stay away from the crowd of urban community. Since the transportation is usually performed by private cars, it’s a fact that Tepe Prime is tempted by the higher income groups of the city than other popular sites of it. I think it provides a higher motivation not to find yourself and your family in a group of people that shows potential to disturb you” (32, M, Married, Engineer, Graduate Degree, Income: Over 6000 TL)

“It is certainly a warm, friendly and comfortable environment. The quality of the music bands performing and food service are also very high. It has a modern and young visitor profile, I think this makes here further different from shopping malls. People coming here are young, dynamic, often well-educated, so you feel comfortable and reassured to spend longer times accompanied by high quality music and food together. For this reason, it has become a place I frequently prefer” (34, F, Married, Engineer, PhD Degree, Income: Over 6000 TL).

It can be derived from the discourses above on the legitimate conditions of access that the social reality of Tepe Prime with respect both to the space itself and the customers as social agents, anchors itself with much more barriers on both physical and symbolical accessibility than that of shopping mall. In addition, as was implied by one of the venue managers,

physical and symbolic forms of accessibility are positively linked to each other. Unlike shopping malls that provide both a physical accessibility through public transportations as well as a realm of symbolic struggle for the lower segments of middle class, the case in Tepe Prime makes one take the indicators of physical access as a criterion on those of symbolic access, due to the consideration of income level as a primary indicator for the new middle class. However, this might mislead one to think as if the new middle class has a secure class position ensured by income level, and immune from symbolic struggle. On the contrary, it is the strategic dispositions within the constant symbolic struggle that makes the consumption of Tepe Prime meaningful on behalf of the new middle class:

"In fact, Sincan buses pass by it, but I think they fear from getting in. I guess they fear from both the prices and non-belonging. And also, even if they get in, no bar manager would allow them in. But it's not the fact in Tunalı, if one does not allow, then the other will. So for the moment, there is no physical but a cultural barrier, this is an important difference. But who knows, maybe this is a matter of time? So the managers would better think about a control mechanism in the entrance, but I can't imagine how they would achieve such thing." (27, F, Married, Urban Planner, PhD Candidate, Income: 3500-6000 TL)

"It has definitely a class meaning, economic, educational, cultural...It is a much stronger indicator of status and prestige among friends to tell them "I'm going to Tepe Prime" than "I'm going to Bahçeli". If I go to the shopping mall, I know that I can meet my doorkeeper at any moment. This would create a feeling in myself that "have I fallen in this class?". Let me give an example, you don't give your old clothes to your own doorkeeper, at least I do not, but I give them to someone poor that I don't personally know and won't see again. [*when asked "not to offend her?"*] No, it is because if someone, for example my neighbour, sees it she will think "does this woman dress from the same place with the wife of the doorkeeper?" (36, F, Single, Architect, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"I don't feel disturbed to present in the same environment with the people who hold upper class positions than me, on the contrary it feels like a privilege for those like us to share the same space with them. But if they were able, I think they would get away from the sections such as classical bureaucrats like us. I rather do observe this for the younger, snobby segments of those groups, I think they tend to despise us by reference to

the position of their families" (32, F, Single, Civil Servant, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"Once we went to the place, there was a birthday celebration of a child on the next tables. According to my impressions, the mother, with her stylish fur, was typically representing a model of nouveau riche. That day they spent an incredible amount of money, probably we could barely spend in months. The mother was constantly shouting at her son so loudly to let all the residents hear it, she was telling him that money is not important at all, and to order anything he wants. Actually I fear the fact that such unkind, provincial nouveau riche people might be constituting the main visitor profile in the course of time." (34, F, Married, Engineer, PhD Degree, Income: Over 6000 TL).

In addition to the same context, the symbolic struggle which inhales one at the outset leads consumers to not only have a control on others, but on themselves as well:

"The clothes on people, especially in summer nights, seem incredible for me. The first time I went to the bar at night, I felt myself in a fashion show or the fashionable nightlives of Istanbul which we know only from the magazine scenes. The clothes were those I don't see on anyone in daily life, but barely at the weddings or suchlike. I was, on the other hand, with my casual stuff in daily life. It was the first time I felt myself extrinsic and embarrassed. After that day, I've been taking care of what I wear in such nights." (36, F, Single, Architect, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"I definitely try to keep my formal and reserved attitude when talking to people I meet, and even to the waiters in Tepe Prime. What I've identified on myself that I have somehow developed a strong feel of self-control in the course of time I spend in here, trying to carefully pick and choose the words I say even when I chat with my closest friends, and also to avoid any long glances not to disturb the people around us. The ways I act have showed myself a different kind of me that I've never met before." (44, M, Single, Civil Servant, Graduate Degree, Income: 2500-3500 TL).

"My husband has a close friend (male, single) who dwells in that region, but knows so little about Tepe Prime. As I described and offered him the place, I didn't know how he imagined it but the first thing he said was that "I have to buy some new clothes" (27, F, Married, Urban Planner, PhD Candidate, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"When we once met in Tepe Prime as old school friends, it was the first time a friend of us (male, single) came to the place. When we asked him

to go in Hayal Kahvesi, he seemed to feel himself bad probably from the outlook of the venue and didn't want to enter in. After our insistence, he unwillingly came into the place and asked the waitresses for a backgammon before we sat down. When they said they had not backgammon, we went out of place. I thought that he should have predicted that it was not a place to play backgammon, but he intentionally asked for it to convince us to go out." (32, M, Married, Engineer, Graduate Degree, Income: Over 6000 TL).

Unlike the 'rationality' of the shopping mall environment preserved by the definite opening and closing times, Tepe Prime Avenue, providing a lively nightlife, offers the new middle class a tempting alternative to the urban experience peculiar to city centres. All of the informants have also declared that they rather prefer to visit Tepe Prime with their social circle from the decline of the evening or beginning of the night, instead of daytime. However, notwithstanding the uncertainty of the opening hours of the venues, the concept of Tepe Prime is also based on a certain 'rationality' – a class rationality identified with order, predictability and security. The only point that such rationality and predictability fall behind the post-modern nature of consumption is the subjective awareness lost for the time and money spent, which is openly declared by two of the informants as their biggest challenge during the course of their visit. On the other hand, for it provides the physical and symbolic ground of the socio-technological surveillance, the rational order symbolized by the site can be seen as the life insurance of the new middle class, without which it cannot subjectify itself. Over and above, the so-called liberal balance between public freedom and security seems to be overcome by a certain consumerist grasp of the latter:

"The environment here gives the feeling of a street, but that of "my street". Everything is safe and secure and in their right place here. Yes the streets were not that homogeneous in the past, our street involved both the very poor and the rich, but the key point is you used to know who was this and that, you used to know and recognize each other. We wouldn't even go to side streets to play, although we were passing through them. I remember we even used to beat the other kids playing in our street. I don't believe that it's a feeling of class-belonging, it's just a feeling of being encircled by some secure hedges, a feeling of "here is my street, you don't belong here". (36, F, Single, Architect, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL)."

"I define a different sense of freedom than public freedom. My individual freedom in that place contradicts with what you defined as public freedom. What I consider freedom is an outcome of the feeling of "my place" which provides a sense of control and predictability." (32, F, Single, Civil Servant, Graduate Degree, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

"I think here the concept of freedom is more severe. But the point is that people, according to their income level, freely prefer to spend money and time in Tepe Prime or any other place inasmuch as they feel themselves safe and secure." (27, F, Married, Urban Planner, PhD Candidate, Income: 3500-6000 TL).

Concluding Remarks

Ascendant discourses both from the supply and demand side of the Tepe Prime case apparently demonstrate the dialectical relation between the socio-spatial changes taking place in the urban space and the reproduction and polarisation of the middle class. It can be derived from the discussion that unlike the shopping malls which nowadays seem to be allowing class mobilization as a semi-public space, Tepe Prime not only falls short to offer a public use of the space, but particularly witnesses the intertwined physical and symbolic barriers of public access as an anchor for the restricted public use. The main context behind the narrations on the place is explicable on the basis of the exclusion of the unwanted. The exclusion in turn addresses a continuous symbolic struggle for the new middle class to maximize and reproduce the advantage of their contradictory class position by converting the economic capital to cultural and social capital through the use of the publicly restricted space. One big ruin within the process of such struggle is the transformation in the ideational representations of freedom, democratic presence, and accessibility, which were once used to be identified with the idea of genuine 'public' spaces as discussed in the beginning, although the idea that urban public spaces have ever been open to all is suspicious. The fact that many consumers do not even question the public quality of the space they adopt as their own public space, and identify freedom with 'consumption by free will' can be argued to be an outcome of "a parody of participation" where "credit card citizenship" allows the consumer to "freely" purchase an identity (Jackson, 1998, p. 178) in the preconditioned environment of "a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" (Marcuse, 1964, p. 3). The

comprehension of the terms associated with 'genuine and true' public spaces, can now only be found, as Shields argues, within the pseudo-democratic twilight zone between reality and a commercially produced fantasy world of commodified goods, images and leisure activities that gratify transformed desire and provide packaged self-images to a distinctive form of subjectivity (Shields, 1992, p. 40).

Overall, both instances of the shopping mall and Tepe Prime can be considered in the framework of social relations illustrated by what the designer of the first shopping mall once manifested: "the creation of a community". The creation of a community through the transforming forms of the capitalist space has now been witnessing a reproduction process of a complex web of social segregations and struggles in itself. The process is also imprinted by the temporality and vulnerability of the present-day spaces. While the circuit point where spatial supply meets social demand marks the true response to symbolic quests, it in turn paradoxically alienates the relation between the real and the symbolic, desire (*désir*) and demand (*demande*) in Lacanian terms. This is not because of a certain possibility to distinguish between the so-called 'true and alien needs' claimed by Marcuse (1964, pp. 7-13). But because even the category of need is subsumed by desire. Thus, the material facet of the everyday class relations in contemporary capitalism is always prone to distort the stillborn fantasies of the consumerist. In effect, although consumerism and the economy of desire are the terms rather belonging to contemporary capitalism, they are organically linked to the archaic principle of capitalism that allows no limit and stability on the driving forces of accumulation. By contemporary capitalism, the impossibility of desire is set in motion adjacent to the 'the constant revolutionizing, everlasting uncertainty and agitation of the whole social relations' (Marx & Engels, 1848/1985, p. 487). Now what we observe is that this organic link has been under way to severely transform the relation between public space and the idea of democracy: As the relations of reproduction ultimately results in the consumerist colonization of everyday life, public space is compelled to be constantly exhausted and reproduced in favour of the *impossibility* of capital accumulation at the expense of democratic presence. Yet, it is still this very exhaustion that renders the urban public space the ineluctable subject of social-political struggle in favour of the use value, which in the last instance requires the ultimate removal of human alienation from the socially produced space, i.e.

removal of the alienation as the 'political void', the parallax gap between the real and the symbolic.

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