



A University of Sussex PhD thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

Mastery of Life:

*Mobility, Interaction and Connectivity among Iranians
in Istanbul*

Yunlong Jia

DPhil in Social Anthropology

University of Sussex

Sept. 2019

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the lives of Iranian people unfolded on the transnational terrain between Iran and Turkey. Migration and diaspora, while providing useful tools for understanding the movement of people, are often disembedded from the historical and social relations with others in the surrounding world. Iranians in particular, are often conceptualised in an association with a normative narrative of diaspora from Iran to Western countries. Building on an investigation into historical accounts as well as a 12-month ethnographic field research, this thesis explores into the ways in which transnational mobility is conceived, configured and practiced within the crisscrossed space between Iran and Turkey. Through the conceptual lenses such as ethics and aesthetics, convivial sociality and everyday interactions among the Iranians both living in Turkey and travelling between the two countries, the thesis zooms into the social, spatial and material connections and interactions that give shape to the transnational garment trade linking communities of Iranian people in Istanbul and Tehran. In doing so, I aim at translating abstract terms such as mobility and sociality into ethnographically informed understandings of the variegated population of Iranians in Turkey and display the disparate yet entwined migratory worlds that are often absent from much of works in migration and diaspora studies. By taking the historically saturated connections and vernacular interactions of migratory experiences into consideration, I propose a connected approach to migration and transnational mobility which instead of focusing on migrants and diasporic communities, reconceptualises such “mobile societies” in relation to the various forms of their embedded connections.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
LIST OF FIGURES	4
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 SCOPE OF THE THESIS	6
1.2 SITUATING THE RESEARCH	12
1.3 CONTEMPORARY IRAN AND THE LOCATION OF ISTANBUL.....	18
1.4 METHODS: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTERS.....	25
1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	33
2. THE IRANIANS IN ISTANBUL: CONNECTED HISTORIES BETWEEN IRAN AND TURKEY	37
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	37
2.2 FROM "SILK ROAD" TO "BLACK SEA ROUTE": THE SHIFTING ROLE OF TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS	39
2.3 TRADERS, MOBILITY AND POLITICS: THE IRANIAN COMMUNITY IN ISTANBUL FROM LATE 19TH TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY	49
2.4 CONTEMPORARY INTERACTIONS	55
2.5 CONCLUSION	57
3. MOBILITY REDUX: ACTORS, AFFECT AND TRANSNATIONAL TRAJECTORIES	60
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	60
3.2 IRANIAN DIASPORA	65
3.3 DEVISING DEPARTURE FROM IRAN	69
3.4 CONVERTING INTO REFUGEES	72
3.5 TABRIZ TRADERS.....	78
3.6 CONCLUSION	84
4. CONVIVIALITY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG THE IRANIANS IN ISTANBUL	86
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	86
4.2 FROM COSMOPOLITAN NETWORKS TO CONVIVIAL SOCIALITY.....	90
4.3 HUBS OF CONNECTIVITY	93
4.4 CELEBRATING NOURUZ ON THE BOSPORUS.....	103

4.5 EMZA" TRIPS: THE OSCILLATION OF CONNECTIVITY.....	114
4.6 CONCLUSION	122
5. MARKET, "CARGO" AND INTERNATIONAL BUSES: LANDSCAPES OF ILLICIT GARMENT TRADE	124
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	124
5.2 GÜNGÖREN GARMENT MARKET	130
5.3 MULTI-LAYERED TRADING SPACES.....	140
5.4 A DIFFERENT SHUTTLE TRADE	147
5.5 CONCLUSION	150
6. TRANSLATING TRADE INTO AESTHETICS	153
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	153
6.2 FEMALE TRADERS OF THE GARMENT TRADE.....	157
6. 3 FORMING AESTHETIC SPACE.....	162
6.4 NASI MAISON: POLITICS OF AESTHETICS AND REVERSION OF GENDERED SPACE	172
6.5 CONCLUSION	177
7. CONCLUSION	179
BIBLIOGRAPHY	187

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would have been impossible to finish without those who have helped me with my fieldwork in Turkey and Iran. I would like to mention Mehdi, Tahere, Habib, Farhad, Hamed, Arvin, Kasra, Hasan, Jamal, Gulnaz, Rana, Nelin, Can and Deniz to thank their hospitality and friendship and also for the generosity to accept me and share their lives with me.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Magnus Marsden and Prof. Filippo Osella for their guidance, encouragements and unwavering support throughout the four years. Without your patience and insightful perceptions it would have been much harder for me to conceive this thesis or complete my studies. It has been a great honour for me to be your student.

Outside of Sussex, I'm very grateful to Ahmet Icduygu, Aysen Celikbilek and Damla Bayraktar at the Migration Research Centre at Koç University in Istanbul for accepting me as a Visiting PhD Researcher. The affiliation has made my fieldwork much easier, especially in a time filled with security concerns. I'd also like to thank, in particular, Sebnem Akcapar, Jenny White, Engseng Ho, Serkan Yolacan, Mona Harb and Deniz Seebacher for either leading me to enter my field sites or for the intellectual support, discussions and kind help at various stages of my fieldwork.

I thank the Anthropology department and also the Asia Centre at University of Sussex, in particular, Raminder Kaur, Rebecca Prentice, Jon Mitchell, Diana Ibanez-Tirado, Saheira Sha and Marina Marouda for your critiques, ideas and help. I thank Di Song, Tianyang Zhou, Po-han Li, Piyarat Panlee, Wen-qing Ting, Yeyang Su, Esra Demirkol, Evie Brown, Valerio Colosia, Basak Kilerci, Ali Kassem, Silva Meybatyan, Sara Kermanian, Man Tang, Tzu-Wei Liu, Zhushuai Shao, Shenghao Wang, Tuo Chen, Weijie Huang, Mel Chen, Ying Wang and Lily Lin among many other people for their encouragement, ideas, companionship in different parts of the world. A special thanks to Leo McCulloch for all of the kind help.

Last, I thank my family and in particular my mum, Sumei for the immense love and support.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Street views of Istiklal and the general election campaign flags	24
Figure 2 Map of transnational routes between Iran and Turkey	32
Figure 3 Map of Istanbul	32
Figure 4 Valide Han mosque	64
Figure 5 Bosphorus cruise tour for the celebration of Iranian <i>Nouruz</i>	113
Figure 6 A courtyard in Göngüren garment market	140
Figure 7 Signs of a cargo office written in Persian	146
Figure 8 Neon lights of the shopfronts in Göngüren garment market	156

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For the transliteration of Persian, I adopt the transliteration scheme of the *Iranian Studies*. The linking particle *ezafeh* is written as *-e* after consonants and *-ye* after vowels. The plural suffix *ha* is added to the singular words. In everyday life, however, Iranians tend to simplify some words and use a spoken version of Persian. While Iranians stick to certain rules of the spoken language, there is no standardised knowledge of it due to regional variations. Throughout this thesis, I transliterate these spoken phrases in a way that reflect the pronunciation of Iranian people. The guiding line of transliteration is a systematic and pragmatic one that provides consistency and clarity to recognise the words.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE OF THE THESIS

“Why do Iranians have to go to Turkey to buy clothes, and even smuggle them back to Iran? They are just clothes!” On more than one occasion, I was asked the questions above in conferences where I presented sections of my PhD research. Indeed, those conference presentations extracted from my thesis on the Iranian communities in Turkey have revealed unusual aspects of the lives of Iranians living in Turkey, including the circulations of large number of garments between Iran and Turkey, which are difficult to associate the portrayal of Iranians who are, sometimes, presented on media as “infamously” religious through images such as the “moral police” on the streets of Tehran ensuring people's compliance with the Islamic dressing code in public spaces. Regardless of an the oversimplified nature of association of Iranians with a religious social life, however, the everyday life of Iranian people living in Turkey is situated in complex social interactions between variegated social groups and across vast spatial boundaries. Focusing on the various forms of social interactions facilitated by the transnational mobilities connecting Iran and Turkey, this thesis explores the variegated population of Iranians in Turkey and the ways in which migratory experiences unfold on a transnational terrain. It argues that social interactions facilitated by transnational mobility not only open up arenas for understanding important notions revolving sociality, but also bring up opportunities reshaping power relationship. Through these opportunities created by various forms of transnational sociality, Iranian people renegotiate the ways in which they relate themselves to existing power relationships.

Based on my 12-month ethnographic field research in Istanbul and Tehran, this thesis explores the transnational lives of Iranian people, the reasons why, and the ways in which the Iranians carry out transnational lives between Iran and Turkey. Focusing on the sociality constructed in disparate contexts, this thesis considers

the inherently variegated population of Iranians in Turkey through the construction of contrasting yet entwined migratory worlds of diverse communities. The interwoven universes of Iranian people informed by contrasting registers are maintained on the strength of their skilful endeavours that, at once, underpin everyday life in the wildest sense of the term and peculiar enough to enter the most contesting arena where social boundaries are negotiated. Ethnographies of the thesis covers, for instance, stories of people with a host of identities including traders, refugees and sojourners such as tourists, family members and friends temporarily traveling to Turkey to visit those Iranians living in Turkey. The chasms that distinguish the various types of Iranians, contrary to a centrifugal element, provide interstices which allow for the Iranian management and presentation of the image of the self and their communities. The management and presentation are achieved in ways that calibrate the social relations and the shared emphasis on the value of local understandings of sociality. Such management and presentation often deal with much more than the superficial handling of appearance and concern the constituent elements of the self, the subjectivities of Iranian people such as “face” or “reputation” (*āberou*), and notions of harmonious and convivial forms of inter-personal interactions.

In order to understand such processes of self presentation and social interactions, I attend to the different aspects of transnational lives of Iranians in Turkey through a close examination of the social networks among Iranian people which facilitate a transnational garment trade between two of the major countries in West Asia. These processes are, on the one hand, diversely embedded in the contrasting scenarios of the transnational lives between Iran and Turkey, and, on the other hand, carved out through skilful tactics and techniques as well as engagements with cultural norms, public life, political economies and social forces. Epitomising trading activities of low grade commodities prevalent in many other parts of the world, the garment trade between Iran and Turkey opens

up a space for economic as well as social connectivity which is facilitated and sustained by the diverse mobile trajectories of Iranian people pursuing fortune and opportunities in life. Such a focal point, in turn, enables us to observe, analyse and understand the divergence and confluence of the various Iranians, as well as the ways in which transnational life is mastered by Iranians.

Thus, responding to the remark at the beginning of this introduction, and simultaneously to the literature deriving from the scholarly works on mobility in anthropological studies and beyond, which often displays ambiguous relationships between the self and the societies (Chu 2010; Reeves 2011; Wilson 2017), I propose using conceptual notions including *conviviality*, *space*, and *ethics and aesthetics*, as analytical tools to understand mobility and transnational lives of Iranians in Turkey. The issues I'm trying to engage with are the ways in which local forms of sociality and understandings of the self are constructed. Such an approach, however, raises questions regarding the relationships among these conceptual notions. Embedded in my ethnographic encounters, conviviality, space and ethics and aesthetics are complimentary notions demonstrating the multi-facet dimensions of ethnographic materials in this thesis. By deploying the concept of conviviality, I explore how people with disparate backgrounds live together with difference. By proposing the notion of space and ethics and aesthetics, I aim to demonstrate how disparities and chasms are conceived and traversed and overcome not only across spatial boundaries but also among groups with different moral affiliations.

Anthropologists have in the last two decades increasingly engaged with moral philosophies and theorised the importance of ethics and particular ideals of personhood (Laidlaw 2002; Lambek 2010; Robbins 2013). Nevertheless, as Schielke (2015) has rightly pointed out, how moral boundaries delineate ideal personhood and demarcate the preferable from the undesirable are still inadequately addressed. Situating ideals of personhood in the context of transnational mobility, I discuss how ideals of the self are negotiated and related

to the specific context of inter-Asia connectivity. Within such mobile experiences, personhood is often negotiated and embedded in ambivalent social interactions. Taking such context into consideration, importance should thus be granted to the ways in which people live their moral codes and approach good deeds, and in particular “ambivalence, contradictions and experiences of failure” (Schielke 2015) need to be foregrounded. This attention to the fine-grained conception of ethics does not evade the idea of an ideal personhood itself. And the skilfully cultivated ambiguity is but the other side of the same coin which only exists and makes sense through considering moral ideals. Thus, to approach morally ambivalent scenarios, I pull together the personal and the social by discussing the ambivalence of convivial sociality while reconsider the relationship between ethics and aesthetics and valorise the potentiality of aesthetic presentation in understanding the transnational lives of Iranian people and the concurrent movement of objects.

Central to an aesthetic approach to the migratory worlds of Iranians is the departure from the focus on the moral enquiry into *what good is* or *how to be a good person*. The life worlds of the Iranians in Turkey, nevertheless, demonstrate that sometimes, it is not noteworthy, necessary nor desirable to strive for goodness or having a beautiful soul. Instead, over the course of ethnographic chapters revolving around these Iranians, I engage with questions such as *how to live a life*, *what are the ways to master the art of life*, *what is the savoir faire for one to be the type of person one wants to be* and ultimately *how to be good at being a person* (Herzfeld 1988). Aesthetics of life (Foucault 1997) thus deals with styles that are presentations of life choices rather than prescriptions of ideal personhood. The empirical question then, becomes what happens to the Iranians in Turkey that become self-consciously distinctive. I argue that transnational lives and mobilities of Iranians in Turkey incur tensions that at once retain old and generate new arenas in which notions of the self are simultaneously enacted and contested. Such contestation has resulted in the attempts by Iranians to

become distinctive in particular ways. Rooted in the cultural norms such as the *savoir faire* of *pichundan* (tweak and twist) such endeavours render Iranians in Turkey *good at being a person*. This argument will be further elaborated on and explored in relation to the specific ethnographic contexts in which particular forms of sociality are also played out.

By engaging with these questions, the contribution of this research is threefold. First, it broadens the understanding of transnational mobility which is not only a reflection of the movement of people and goods in contemporary times but in many cases is also very much informed by historically saturated connections (Henig 2014; Marsden et al. 2018). Amid the “Refugee Crisis” of Syrian people, narratives about migration tend to reduce mobility into synchronic snapshots and therefore render analyses problematic. An engagement with the connected histories of Iran and Turkey, as both a thematic issue and a method, situates contemporary enquiries into transnational movements in the longer *durée*, and reveals less transient but more embedded connections (Chatty 2010) which are often neglected by the dominant writings on migration and transnational mobility.

The second contribution of this research is a holistic understanding of the region crisscrossing Iran and Turkey. This holistic view of the formation of the region effectively challenges approaches which use nation state as the analytical tool to conceive of societies in West Asia and critically responds to methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003) more generally. Such a stance, while it has its roots in the local and regional context of transnational connections between Iran and Turkey, evokes wider ramifications. It echoes the evolving literature on transnational connections such as maritime connectivity in the Indian Ocean (Ho 2006), the Black Sea (Humphrey et al. 2014) and the Mediterranean (Ben-Yehoyada 2017) on the one hand, and adds to the scholarship delineating overland connections (Scheele 2012; Marsden 2016; Green 2019) on the other. Building on this holistic view of inter-regional

connections, I push the analytical point further by considering transnational mobility in relation to its social effect. I therefore, propose to look at the social dimension of mobility which could be effectively used to transform ideas of the self as well as the ways in which the self is related to society.

Last but not least, this research conceptually explores the notion of aesthetics and the constituent elements of aesthetic practices which are deployed, manipulated and facilitated by transnational movement between Iran and Turkey. It therefore distinguishes, enriches and connects the anthropological understanding of aesthetics (Overing et al. 2002; Winegar 2006) to wider debates and concepts such as ethics, notions of the self and politics and power. Aesthetics, should by no means be solely described as the trope for artefacts or artistic representation of the social world. Manifested in the ethnographic accounts of the relationships between traders, brokers and consumers, the notion of aesthetics is a powerful tool, for instance, in understanding the everyday lives of wealthy Iranians and in demonstrating how this urban lifestyle is intricately involved in and composed of seemingly disconnected themes such as illicit conducts of contraband networks.

To achieve these, I draw on research, engage with debates and deploy conceptual tools from three separate but inter-connected areas. First, historical research provides a temporal longitude which situates this research in the long-standing historical connections between Iran and Turkey. The continuity of enduring connections not only provides the background for the ethnographic accounts of the Iranians living in Istanbul today, but also reveals the complexity of narratives and of the social lives of migrants. In addition to history, I use the help of theoretical concepts and debates that resonate with the ethnographies arising from my fieldwork to conceptually advance the understanding of the migratory worlds of Iranians. Last, I engage with the anthropological works on the region and in particular on Iran and Turkey to give form to an empirically grounded articulation. In the rest of the introduction I will lay out my engagement with the various literature that undergirds the conceptual articulation of this thesis.

Building on the relevant scholarly works, I will also briefly introduce the context of this research, which connects the site and social background of my field research in Istanbul, Turkey to broader discussions on place, politics and the Turco-Persia interactions. Then I will account for the rationale, process and ethical considerations of my ethnographic fieldwork and reflect on the methodology of the research. At the end of this introductory chapter of the thesis, I will provide an outline of the chapters to follow, detailing the theoretical and thematic issues covered in each chapter in relation to the overall structure and argument of the thesis.

1.2 SITUATING THE RESEARCH

To answer the broad research question of why and how Iranians live in Turkey, and to delve into the construction of the distinctive Iranian selves through skilful presentation and management of the self, I propose using aesthetics as the conceptual tool. Theoretical engagements with aesthetics however, encompass contrasting understandings of the term. Are aesthetic inclinations a form of moral judgment or a choice pursued by free will? Anthropologists have probed into the connotation of the concept through various empirical studies. They have attempted to analyse political aesthetics through image-making in protest (Werbner 2014), to understand the intellectual world of Afghan refugee poets (Olszewska 2015), to conceptualise the aesthetically connected Indian Ocean through the spread of material culture (Ivanov 2017), to uncover the symbolic meanings of rhinoplasty performed among the Tehranis (Lenehan 2011) and also to deconstruct a dichotomy between Islamic morality and the Westernised presentation of the self through wearing the Islamic headscarf *tessetiir* and other forms of Islamic chic (White 1999; Navaro-Yashin 2002). The inclusiveness reflected in the convergence of different thematic enquiries needs a clearer theoretical codification for the analytical purpose of this thesis.

Anthropological explorations have long before incorporated aesthetics into their discussions on art and artistic representations of local lives (Kaur et al. 2015). Classic examples of body decoration in Melanesia for instance are argued to be the sites where people display the self, “bringing things outside” (Strathern 1979, 79). Not only does the presentation of artistic life in indigenous societies serve as the vehicle by which anthropologists understand cultural variations and the politicisation of culture (Wright 1998), public art and art projects in places such as contemporary urban Egypt also reveal social, political and historical processes which construct modernity and social hierarchies through debates of cultural authenticities and artistic value (Winegar 2006). Among these attempts, Alfred Gell provides a more systematic framework for conceptualising art and aesthetics through the consideration of agency. It directs attention to a conceptual understanding of aesthetics through artistic forms of presentations and objects allowing for the externalisation and distribution of personhood, which in Gell’s words, is termed a “distributed personhood” (1998, 2).

Related to the “personhood in aesthetic form”, a focus on the body, aesthetic body modification and beauty practices have developed and resulted in an emerging literature and ethnographies on local conceptions, practices and striving for beauty (Liebelt et al. 2018). Such scholarly writings, following Strathern’s proposition that appearance is “anything but superficial” (1979, 249), adopt a phenomenological approach which looks at issues of embodiment methodologically. Thus it challenges the conceptualisation of a mind-body dualism and proposes an inextricable linkage between body, self and personhood (Sharp 2000). Situated in contemporary China, Wen Hua’s research (2013) examines female bodies as both disciplined by power and a manifestation of agency from within. Wen displays how consumerism and the beauty industry deliver beauty as an option while creating desires ensuring the choice of beauty enacted through cosmetic surgeries. Edmonds (2007), on the other hand looks at the cosmetic surgery and beauty industries in Brazil which, he argues, are able to

promote upward mobility. Similarly, Taussig (2012) zooms into aesthetic body modifications in Colombia and conceptually examines the phenomenon in relation to wasting and squandering (*depense*). Common to these works are the politics revolving around aesthetic understandings of the body which is evocatively demonstrated through collective fantasies shaped by aesthetic norms and images that are at once culturally specific and globally informed. Aesthetics and beauty are thus often used inter-exchangeably by scholars to explore both notions of aesthetics and also the global beauty economy and industry. These variations of local manifestations and ramifications of aesthetic practices are well explored through the notion of “beautyscapes” (Holliday et al. 2015) informed by Appadurai’s (Appadurai 1990) global flows and scapes. Such a “beautyscape” accounts for “a particular form of coming-together” emerging out of globalisation as a particular assemblage which is constituted by actors such as surgeons, patients, agencies, technologies, media and imagery (Holliday et al. 2015). The interplay between the local and the global is well epitomised by Miller in her book on the unique Japanese culture of beauty “which is taught through the global advertising and imagery to hide or correct” (Miller 2006, 6).

Nevertheless, as is shown in these enquiries, a beautyscape is never only about beauty itself. Alongside the momentum considering aesthetics in relation to body, appearance and beauty, anthropologists have also acknowledged aesthetics in the broader sense of its meaning. Taking the Amazonia as the example, Overing (1989), for instance, argued that beauty in daily practice should be understood as an expression of moral and political value so as to make sense of the characteristics and affective conditions of everyday social life. The idea in which moral value is linked to the aesthetics of social existence takes its roots in anthropology’s engagement with moral philosophy and the development of “moral aesthetic”. Such an approach responds to the tradition of philosophical enquiries into morality which could be traced back from Michel Foucault’s articulation of the “aesthetics of existence”, through Adam Smith and Kant’s

“moral beauty” back to the advent of modern ethics in the theorisations of British Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and David Hume’s “liberal virtue” (Norton 1995).

Anthropological works focusing on the aesthetic forms of morality often look into specific aspects of social lives that display local understandings of aesthetics. Conviviality for instance, is the aesthetic lens in understanding the notion of “good life” in Amazonian societies. The indigenous emphasis on happiness is often linked to an appropriate interaction between the members through goodness and beauty. A “beautiful, quiet vital soul” is essential for the loving relationship necessary for a successful community (Overing et al. 2002, 19). Such an emphasis on aesthetic attached to the notion of conviviality and the construction of community is indispensable to the concept of indigenous morality and a good life. Another example of the confluence of aesthetics and morality is the morally ambiguous economic activities of favour in socialist and post-socialist societies. Rather than a type of exchange, favour according to Humphrey is “initiator, ‘extra’, ethnical and gratuitous” (Humphrey 2017, 51). It is based on personal connections but also does not require obligatory return. The improvisation and gratuitousness of favour make it a “moral aesthetic of action”. Based on the circuits of social connections, favour thus generate a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Aesthetics in these analyses is inherently endowed with a sense of morality. What is socially celebrated epitomises what is beautiful. There is no clear line drawn by anthropologists between aesthetics and morality just as the boundary between the two is often very blurred for many Enlightenment philosophers. Aesthetic is most of the time considered as being a trait of virtue.

Nevertheless, such an approach of moral aesthetics raises the question of what if aesthetics does not encompass the good deed? Hence, a distinction needs to be made between the moral and the beautiful. What I find particularly useful is Michael Herzfeld’s research on the construction of manhood in Crete. Herzfeld explores shepherds’ involvement in livestock theft and how theft constructs

friendship and alignment between the thief and the victim. The explanation for the bizarre phenomenon Herzfeld provides is an emphasis on performative excellence. In Cretan villages, the focus is less on “being a good man” than on “being good at being a man” (Herzfeld 1988, 16). In other words, Cretans celebrate how the act is performed instead of what people actually do. But rather than attributing the Cretan aesthetic values only to “dramatic performance” (Goffman 1969), Herzfeld delineated the importance of style, flair and the ability to “play with the conventions in aesthetically intriguing ways” as well as the mastery of seizing opportunities from unpromising materials (Herzfeld 1988, 47). By exploring into “being good at” and the concurrent issue of style, aesthetic meanings of social actions in the case of Cretan livestock theft give rise to their own significance and social worth. In a similar attempt, Anderson (2019) demonstrates how vendors’ style and tactics of selling are essential for an understanding of commercial civility in the pre-conflict Aleppo Bazaar. Although Anderson’s preoccupation is with “ordinary ethics” (Lambek 2010) these skilful abilities of the vendors embody, mastery and artistry as such “transcend the adversarial tension of the sale” (Anderson 2019, 385) and thus perfectly fit into Herzfeld’s aesthetic notion of “being good at”.

Adopting Herzfeld’s conceptual terms, Rebecca Bryant (2001) returns to a synthesis of aesthetics and morality by connecting “being good” and “being good at” through her focus on education in Cyprus which links a hierarchy of goods and how the goods are realised. In constructing this connection, Bryant coins the notion of “an aesthetics of the self” by picking up Foucault’s concepts of “aesthetics of existence” and “care of the self” and proposes that her “aesthetics of the self” as a moral judgment differs from a “practice of deliberation and choice” in Foucault’s theorisation where the “care of the self” symbolises conscious striving of the free man’s will to embody virtues which are “evident in his clothing, appearance, gait, in the calm with which he responded to every event, and so on” (Foucault 1997). Bryant skilfully carves out how virtues are

realised. Yet aesthetics in her argument still goes back to fit into moral ideals. Nevertheless, Bryant aptly developed Herzfeld's notion of "being good at" by looking into the techniques and process of self-making in which one consciously shapes oneself into a certain type of person (Bryant 2005). These projects of self-fashioning through a consideration of how to conduct oneself, I suggest, provide practical modes of pursuing an aesthetic understanding of the endeavours of Iranians in the migratory worlds between Iran and Turkey.

These empirical and conceptual attempts engaging with various aspects of morality and aesthetics evince similar efforts from other disciplines. Adam Smith, although more likely to be considered as an economist, has provided a sophisticated exploration into the relationship between moral approvals and aesthetic approvals in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2002). Smith treats the fundamental judgment of propriety in his system of moral philosophy as a kind of aesthetic judgment (Lyons 1993). For Smith, approbation arises when we sympathetically respond to others' sentiments and actions. In Smith's term, this process has to do with aesthetically charged notions such as "decency" or "ungracefulness" (Smith 2002) which resonate with Herzfeld's preoccupation with "style", "flair" and the aesthetically intriguing ways to be "good at". This emphasis on aesthetics replaces "*a priori* reasoning or the conformity of actions to pre-established moral principles" (Fudge 2009, 135) and centres "harmony and correspondence" in social interaction which engenders pleasure irrespective of whether the sentiment is pleasant or disagreeable. In a note on Adam Smith's consideration of the nature of aesthetics, Griswold commented "this pleasure is what one might call aesthetic, because it consists in the apprehension of harmony, symmetry, and peace between self and other" (Griswold 1999, 111).

It is thus clear that aesthetic considerations of social life provide insightful explanations in their own right. Building on the conceptualisation of aesthetics by Adam Smith and Herzfeld, this thesis explores the ways in which "harmony and correspondence" are achieved in aesthetically intriguing ways in the life

worlds of Iranians in Turkey. I deploy the term “mastery in transnational life” to refer to such dynamics and this often involves playing with conventions and seizing opportunities from unpromising materials.

1.3 CONTEMPORARY IRAN AND THE LOCATION OF ISTANBUL

A number of ethnographies have focused on the different ways in which people deal with social interaction and the relationship between the self and the society in contemporary Iran. These works could serve as a useful entry point to delve into Iranian society and shed light on the background to this thesis. In recent years, the majority of ethnographic research on Iran has shifted the focus from pastoral communities and rural villages to urban settings. Among these ethnographic observations, an emerging body of literature has focused on a particular segment of the social fabric of Iran, that is the middle-class youth in Tehran who are often identified as a distinct component of the Islamic republic who lead a secular lifestyle (Yaghmaian 2002; Varzi 2006; Mahdavi 2009; Khosravi 2011). Exposing the previously enclosed post-revolution Iran, the ethnographic lens of city dwellers effectively revealed the global influence on urban and social culture in general. Nevertheless, Iranian society under the gaze of these ethnographic studies on urban youth tended to be conceptualised as the binary between the secular and the religious, the modern and the traditional and the defiant and the obedient. While this problematic construction often neglected the complexity of class, ethnic and spatial dynamics¹, these emerging ethnographic studies have engaged with some of the issues vital to the understanding of contemporary Iran, such as Islam, modernity and the influence of global cultural transmission.

In retrospect, the tumultuous history of contemporary Iran is characterised by international political and economic sanctions, a stagnant economy, eight years

¹ This is displayed for instance, in Olszewska’s exploration into the non-Persian communities in the provincial city of Mashhad (2015).

of war with Iraq and most importantly the drastic change from the Shah's westernised governance to the Islamic rule brought by the Islamic Revolution which set an unprecedented example for its neighbours. From the political structure of the Islamist state to the religious policing in everyday life, Iranian society today has unarguably been shaped by the convergence of Islam and politics. Nevertheless, political Islam aside, the Islamic ideology itself is far from adequate for understanding contemporary Iran. Rhetorics of resistance to Islam, displayed through sexual practices (Mahdavi 2009), the creative deployment of media in reaction to state's efforts to construct an Islamic subject (Varzi 2006) as well as the "culture of defiance" (Khosravi 2011, 3), apart from challenging associations between Iran and Shiite fundamentalism, also pointed to an autonomous subject that is not only secular or political but also moral (Mahmood 2005). Adelkhah, (1999) for instance, explicitly placed the representations of modernity in Iran within the realm of morality. With a dialectic approach, Adelkha did not take the "resistance" in Iran as a result of the "rift between despotism and freedom" (Adelkhah 2009, 209). She associated different ways of cultivating lifestyles and choices of life which, according to Adelkhah, were intrinsic to the idea of being modern in Iran with the evolving social ethic of *javānmardi*, a term in traditional Iranian culture denoting integrity and generosity as well as courage and honour which sometimes implies violence (Adelkhah 1999, 31). Such an idea of integrity in today's Iran however, has been instilled with new meanings including the notion of citizenship and the idea of legality which manifests the expansion of sovereignty and state control to the personal sphere by requiring individual respect for the law.

Alongside the social changes in domestic Iran, lies international politics and its repercussions on the social development of Iran. The prolonged war with Iraq and the drop in birth rate have led to a youthful population. Political confrontation with the West on the other hand, has incurred decades of sanctions affecting both economic growth and commodity supplies in Iranians' everyday

life. The Iranian government has thus carried out the Import Compression policy, selectively constraining its commodity importations (Amuzegar 1997) to only allow the import of essential commodities. To some extent, this measure has sustained the development of Iran's domestic economy. But this policy among other elements, has also resulted in the flourishing informal economy and the black market of foreign currency (Pesaran 1992; Keddie et al. 2006). Informal or semi-formal economy in today's Iran not only sustains the consumption of commodities such as medicine, electronic devices and garments that can not be obtained through official channels - its networks have also infiltrated into formal networks of economic and political structure. Keshavarzian, (2007) for instance, has demonstrated in his book on Tehran Bazaar that the traditional Islamic marketplace is now the confluence of traditional economic ties and the illicit trading networks connecting Tehran and Dubai. In a different context, linking Tehran and Dubai through Istanbul, the more renowned illicit "gold for gas" trade², facilitated by Reza Zarrab, illustrated the interaction between states and their efforts to allow for and sometimes promote the informal manoeuvre in order to transfer and evade their own responsibilities. The intricate transnational networks and forms of mobility forged by Reza Zarrab included the participation of political elites and high rank government officials such as Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This interwoven network of illicit trade epitomised the contemporary "Turco-Persia" interaction against the background of complex and dynamic international relations. Such interaction is not only shaped by antagonism and confrontation with regard to grand stakeholders such as the United States and Russia, but is also affected by the necessity of cooperation incurred by, for instance, regional conflicts in Syria.

² For a thorough analysis of the illicit trade, see Yolacan's article on the Azeri networks (Yolacan 2019).

During the period between 2016 and 2017, when this research was conducted, the so-called “refugee crisis” was at its peak. Amid the conflict, Turkey hosted 2.7 million registered Syrian refugees by the end of 2016 (Eder et al. 2016), making it the largest refugee recipient in the world. Syrian refugees were not only received by the camps located in Turkish cities near the Syrian border. Big cities in Turkey, Istanbul in particular, also received a considerable amount of Syrian people, which altered the demographic composition of the urban population over a very short period of time. The presence of Syrian people has transformed the urban landscape by increasing the visibility of elements associated with Islam and Arab ethnicity such as the wearing of veils and the predominant use of Arabic language in places like Fatih district where many shopfronts were written in Arabic. Social security was also considered challenged by some Turkish residents due to an increase in a “floating population” (Zhang 2002) in urban spaces. This change has intensified the existing social differentiation that is characterised by the pre-existing practices of “othering” in Turkish society. By distinguishing selves from others, boundary demarcation delineated social categories in relation to class, ethnicity and religion, etc (Özyeğin 2002), and thus contributed to a fragmentation of culture (Kandiyoti et al. 2002). Such fragmentation of culture is most evidently displayed in the disparate social contours of Istanbul’s *mahalleler* (districts/neighbourhoods) (Biehl 2014; Woźniak 2018), dissecting Istanbul into various social spaces inhabited by residents with contrasting social backgrounds.

Historically, the coexistence of social cultures is not something new to Istanbul. With its long-standing diversity, Istanbul has expanded considerably in the past decades, incorporating internal migrations from small towns in Anatolia (White 2004) and settlers with other nationalities such as countries in Central Asia (Piart 2013) and the Balkans (Vasileva 1992). The city’s geographic location has also led asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq to use Turkey as a transit country in their pursuit of refugee status in other countries (Koser Akcapar 2006;

2010; Biehl 2015). The complex configuration of settlers situated in different parts of Istanbul as well as the concurrent transnational linkages have added considerable dynamics to the social space of a city with a longstanding legacy of “global assemblages” (Ong et al. 2005). This, however, does not necessarily suggest that the status of Istanbul being a global city (Mayaram 2009, 6) only remains in its history. In fact, various people take advantage of Istanbul through new forms of connectivity. These dynamic processes will be explored in the following ethnographic chapters, through which I display the emerging modalities of social interaction and transnational movement. Behind the global connections of Istanbul, the political geography of Turkey’s largest city in recent years has been characterised by the construction of Muslim space and the Islamic revival projects promoted by the ruling AK Parti (White 2002; Lord 2018). Amid these currents, however, the “place-making” process is far less marked by a division between religious and secular. While Muslim space has been continuously constructed in Istanbul, the shaping of the city, as is argued by Henkel, is not a territorial one, but rather, connected to “ways of life” and “their perception in far more complex ways” (Henkel 2008, 60). With a view to social history and ethnic composition, Istanbul thus provides a unique vantage point for research on transnational mobility. Yet, the specific choice of conducting ethnographic research on Iranian communities in Istanbul merits a closer examination.

It is first and foremost out of pragmatism that Istanbul was chosen as the field site. Due to potential difficulties concerning research visas, legal status and the security issues of conducting similar research in Iran, the obvious option for studying the transnational life of Iranian people appears to be outside of the country. In retrospect, this constraint, nevertheless, is also generative. It evidently reveals the relationship between Iranian society and other parts of the world, a relationship this thesis documents and explores. Moreover, to choose Turkey and Istanbul in particular as the field site rather than other locations such as Europe,

North America and Australia compensates for the blind spot in the literature on Iranian studies and beyond. Long term economic sanctions imposed on Iran and political disputes over issues such as the nuclear facilities have resulted in an isolated society and the arrested mobility of Iranian people. Parallel to the isolation of Iran is the constant emigration of Iranians and the formation of diasporic communities. On the one hand, research on the Iranian diaspora has predominantly focused on the long-distance migration of Iranian people moving from Iran to Western countries where there are sizeable Iranian communities and a trackable history of transnational mobility (Karim et al. 1999; Sullivan 2010; Elahi et al. 2011; Mobasher 2018). Connections, mobility and transnational trajectories between Iran and adjacent settings, with some exceptions, are much less explored (Yildiz 2013; Sarmadi 2013; Moghadam et al. 2016). On the other hand, the cosmopolitanism once embedded in the “inter-Asian space” which was characterised by “native genealogies, letters of merchants, and temple and tomb networks” (Ho 2017, 917) seems to have dissipated and dispersed among mobile societies in other parts of the world. Mobile trajectories and networks between Iran and Turkey thus provide a timely departure point to reorient to the inter-Asian connections that are not only evident in the shapes and dynamics in history but are also enduring and continue to enrich the social life of the people inhabiting the space today.

The site in which the majority of my fieldwork took place is a garment market which sells items appealing to a Western aesthetic standard. It is located in one of the most conservative neighbourhoods in western Istanbul. While such a market dealing with commodities commonly perceived as “secular” is occupied by traders, brokers and travellers who work as shuttle traders, it is also connected in various ways to the community of Iranian religious refugees in Istanbul. Being a trader in Istanbul, resembling many other similar contexts explored by anthropologists (Yukseker 2004; Rabo 2005; Erami 2009; Marsden et al. 2016), has to do with something more than just selling and buying. The garment market

as the interface between the moral universe and the religious tensions among Iranians in Istanbul thus provides an ideal entry point to explore the cross-cutting themes of this thesis: social interaction, coexistence, conviviality and in particular, the aesthetic presentation of the self, which require an elaborate set of methods to carry out the ethnographic research.



Figure 1 Street views of Istiklal and the general election campaign flags

1.4 METHODS: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTERS

Ethnographies have often used the “narrative of arrival” to display the processes in which ethnographers encounter the exotic world in the field. While this “arrival narrative” may overemphasise the boundary between ethnographers and their fields and contribute to an illusion of a highly segregated ethnographic world existing on its own, such an account helps clarify methodological and epistemological issues, which are essential to understanding the knowledge production process of ethnographic research. It is thus useful to reflect on the ethnographic encounters which illustrate how knowledge in the field is obtained (and is not obtained), processed and interpreted. The ethnographic production here does not only refer to the writing of texts by using relevant field research methods, but also, on an epistemological level, to the selection and classification of particular aspects of the conceptual analysis in the following ethnographic chapters.

To some extent, my entry into the Iranian communities in Istanbul resembled the mobile trajectories of many Iranian migrants. It started from a Farsi-speaking church which served as the anchor point not only for Iranian Christians and religious converts but also for other Iranians, who were not entirely committed to Christianity, to meet people, mingle with the local community and continue their journeys. I was first introduced to the Farsi-speaking church and the Iranian Christian population through the migration research community at Koç university in Istanbul, where I was based as a visiting researcher. Because my arrival in Istanbul was in December, right before Christmas, my first visit to the church happened to be the annual Christmas assembly. The event, although taking place in the church, was a festive celebration which combined religious observance, an entertaining performance and a carnival joined by Santa Claus distributing gifts to children and adults. The plurality of the celebration attracted various groups of

people. Iranians routinely attending the church's weekly assembly brought families and friends who were otherwise not associated with the Christian community. The variegated population of Iranian people attracted my attention and invited me to delve into their intricate connections, ways of interaction and mediation across boundaries of different groups of people. Similar to some of my Iranian interlocutors, who I met during my following visits to the assemblies in the church, the network of my Iranian acquaintances unfolded and stretched from the church into other communities of Iranian settlers in various parts of Istanbul.

It was not particularly difficult to get involved in conversations and make connections during and after the weekly religious assemblies when people gathered in the tea room to chat over a cup of tea. My Farsi, (a language which I had previously studied as an undergraduate and postgraduate student at universities in China and Britain), was sufficient and thus very helpful in getting me noticed by friendly Iranians and engaging in conversations with them. Most of the time, warm-hearted Iranian people would become curious and approach me before I made my attempts to speak to someone. I got to know Pari, a religious refugee from Tehran, in the tea room of the church early in my fieldwork. Pari helped me to make connections with other Iranian communities in Istanbul. Iranians who operate business in Turkey include a variety of groups of people. Iranian Travel agencies, currency exchange offices (*serāfi*), cargo companies and garment shops are among the most obvious presences on the streets of the Turkish neighbourhoods visited by Iranians. Nevertheless, establishing connections with these business communities was not a smooth process, even with the help of Iranian people. Through some of Pari's friends at the church who worked in garment markets on weekdays, I managed to make some contacts. Pari and her friends also tried a few times to introduce me to the Iranian cargo companies in the garment markets. These attempts would often bring me the chance to conduct an interview with the Iranian owners. They were particularly useful in giving me an overview of the business and lifeworlds of

Iranian traders and businessmen. But closer connections were difficult to build through these interviews. My intention to get further involved in the daily operation of their businesses was often ignored or turned down politely. Some of them openly expressed the preference of interviews than having me around all the time. When I suggested taking on some work voluntarily, they could not figure out what job I could do for them. For more than two months, my attempts to gain access to the circle of Iranian businessmen were not very successful.

One of the factors contributing to the difficulty was the illicit nature of the transnational trade, and its logistics, between Iran and Turkey, which often involves evasion of official inspection on the border but at the same time relies on complex networking between the formal state institution of customs and the informal practices of trade. It was not impossible to obtain the knowledge of the insiders, as such trading activities were widely practiced and discussed not only in Iran and Turkey, but also in many other similar contexts around the world (van Schendel et al. 2005). Nevertheless, to get accepted and work as a part of the insiders meant that socially discussed illicit conducts became personal and thus required a much higher level of trust and rapport. This trust and rapport are often constructed over a long period of interaction and are based on the willingness to reciprocate, and thus, could not be easily achieved in my interviews with the cargo owners.

The other factor behind my lack of success in being accepted into the circle of Iranian cargo companies was the pattern of the logistics business itself. Cargo companies sustained transnational trade between Iran and Turkey. The pace of logistics work was very fast but unsteady. Transactions in the cargo companies often dealt with multiple stakeholders in a fugitive period of time. It was unpredictable when orders would come. But when work comes, it needs to be processed swiftly. Similarly, other commercial spaces such as travel agencies and *serāfi* were more concerned with the fleeting opportunities in the flows of

passers-by and thus, people in those spaces were reluctant and not well placed to provide a position for me to conduct research.

The breakthrough of my fieldwork took place during the Iranian new year, when celebrations in various forms were organised by the Iranians in Turkey. Occasions as such not only allowed people to escape from their ordinary routines to have a break but also provided an opportunity to bring together disparate Iranians from far and wide, fostering connections and interactions with fellow countrymen. In one of the celebrations organised by the Farsi-speaking church, which I will discuss in detail in chapter four, I came to know some Iranian garment traders attending the event. Through their connections, I entered into the Iranian trading community in one of Istanbul's garment markets located in an industrial and working-class residential neighbourhood 10 kilometres to the west. My relationship with the garment traders, which originated from the new year's celebrations, added the colour of personal connection that was forged outside of the market. It allowed the distance to avoid abruptness and the space to forge a stronger mutual trust which eventually helped me establish a close relationship with the Iranian shopkeepers in the garment markets.

Shortly after the Iranian new year, I found myself regularly alternating between three locations in Istanbul, the Farsi-speaking church, the shops and offices of the garment market and the restaurants and cafés on and around the historic Istiklal³ Street in central Istanbul where not only the Iranian dwellers in Istanbul go for leisure but tourists from Iran also visit. I soon realised that, in many ways, my fieldwork, in particular my trajectories across these different urban spaces where Iranian people with various backgrounds work, live, visit and attend social and religious events, delineated forms of interaction, mediation and connections between the variegated population. The different lifeworlds of Iranian Christians,

³ Istiklal street is a commercial pedestrian street running through the historic Beyoğlu district, formerly known as Pera, the Greek quarter of Istanbul. The street is both a touristic hub and a frequent venue for political protests.

traders and tourists started to connect to each other along with my increasing observation and understanding of their daily lives.

I spent most of the daytime in the garment market “working” voluntarily for the Iranian shop owners. This participatory research method gave me the chance to chat with brokers and talk with Iranian tourists and shuttle traders coming to Istanbul for both leisure (*tafrih*) and purchase (*kharidan*). My appearance and in particular my East Asian look combined with my ability to speak Farsi was at once surprising for Iranians who did not know me and appreciated once I started engaging in conversation with them. Although my presence did not directly imply any resource for the traders, I sometimes felt I was regarded as the representation of global connections aspired to by the traders. I was often introduced by brokers and traders to their friends in the market as “a friend from London”. With their hospitality and help, I observed how the garment trade was arranged, conducted and sometimes interrupted between Istanbul and Tehran. I focused on the hierarchical roles among the traders and other actors in the trade through their daily interaction and their hierarchical status in relation to the usage of different forms of space, for instance, shops, offices, streets and homes. As time went on, I was slowly treated more as a friend, while my identities of an anthropology student and researcher became less prominent. I was thus exposed to the personal and family lives of the traders which often exceeded the trading community and overlapped with other groups of Iranian people. I attended gatherings of family and friends at homes, restaurants and other social spaces such as nightclubs, which allowed me to encounter the business networks outside of the market. These occasions of sociality translated transaction, trade and transnational movement of commodity, which are often abstract, into socially embedded relationships and interactions manifested through cultural terms such as hospitality (*mehmān parasti*), etiquette (*taārof*) and friendship (*dusti*). Outside of the market, I spent a considerable amount of time on the Istiklal Street, usually in the evening when I finished work in the garment shops. Some of my

interlocutors I met in the Farsi-speaking church work at the restaurants and cafés on Istiklal. They often spoke both Turkish and Farsi, so that they understand Turkish customers while using Farsi to cater for the large number of Iranian tourists. I regularly visited these places to chat about their life stories between Iran and Istanbul and also to observe how they orchestrated different connections and lifeworlds that are intrinsically interconnected.

In the middle of my fieldwork, I travelled from Istanbul to Iran by bus, following the trajectories of the Turkish garments, and spent a few weeks in Iran among the traders conducting garment business. The journey enabled me to explore the process of transnational movement of people and goods. It did not only provide an embodied experience in relation to the ways in which legal boundaries were negotiated during the process of cross-border transportation. The trip also revealed the economic and developmental imbalance between Iran and Turkey, which has been mediated by channels such as the garment trade. One of the representations of the imbalance that, to some degree, has been sustained by the transnational trade, is the transformation of values and meanings attached to the garments from Istanbul's market to Tehran's boutique shops in upscale districts. To collect data that adds to my observation in Istanbul, I visited the boutique shops in Tehran run by some of the long-term customers who regularly visited Istanbul's garment market and conducted interviews. Although it was an arduous process to embark on the bus trip to Iran, the observation and interviews I conducted broadened the scope of my focus on the trading community in Istanbul and allowed me to zoom out from the garment market, situate trade on a transnational scale and explore the dynamic process of garment trade itself.

In total, my fieldwork lasted twelve months from 2016 to 2018 including a one-month follow-up research trip when I went back to Istanbul a few months after I had finished the major part of the fieldwork. Throughout the course, the thematic concern of my research has shifted from a contextual understanding of the illicit trade between Iran and Turkey to the interaction and mediation among the

Iranians in Istanbul which not only undergirds the transnational trading activities, but, at the same time, is strengthened by the trade. It is, however, worth mentioning that this thesis does not aim to construct a segregated Iranian world parallel to the Turkish and Iranian societies in which it is situated, nor does it suggest that the connections and interactions depicted in the subsequent chapters are exclusive to the rest of the population in Turkey, both Iranians, Turkish and others. Precisely because of the ethnographic encounters driven by the “field” and, in particular, the difficulties and challenges in my “arrival narrative” as delineated above, the particular course of entering into the field site illustrated the epistemological nature of my ethnographic knowledge which manifested through the text. This ethnography packed with “vignettes” serves as the footnote itself, telling the story of an illicit, contested and ethically loaded movement of people and goods that contributes to a process of obtaining, selection, classification and interpretation of the ethnographic research data, which is by no means definitive.



Figure 2 Map of transnational routes between Iranian and Turkey



Figure 3 Map of Istanbul

1.5 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis is thematically divided into five chapters in addition to a conclusion. The next chapter starts with the historiographies concerning the transnational connections between Iran and Turkey dating back to imperial periods. With the help of a consideration of published historical literature, I delve into the rupture and continuity of historical connections in West Asia, while trying to chart out the changing status of Iranian people in Turkey. By using the concept of West Asia rather than Middle East, I conceive of the region as an inter-related arena which differs from the the notion of the Middle East which is often associated with boundedness and artificial demarcations (Harper & Amrith 2012; Green2014; Ho 2017). In so doing, selfhood is placed in the wider historical context and examined through the changing political, economic and social relations between Iran and Turkey, which not only involve communication, trade and cultural intellectual exchanges but also encompass friction, competition and warfare. The evolving notion of selfhood understood with regard to the interactions between the Persian and Ottoman empires complicates our understandings of what constitutes the self and recounts a long-standing transnational history by which contemporary connectivities between Iran and Turkey are shaped.

Building on the historical connections between Iran and Turkey, chapter three examines contemporary mobilities constituted by the movement of people, goods and ideas between Iran and Turkey and explores in which ways the migratory lives of the community in Istanbul today are informed or affected by the rupture and continuity of historical connections. In this chapter I also introduce the ethnographic milieu of this research by focusing on the different types of Iranian people I have engaged with in Istanbul and Iran. These constituent actors of transnational movement either live in Istanbul or travel between Iran and Turkey. I explore who these different Iranians are and why they engage in their transnational lives. By tracing the motivations of mobility, these considerations

around mobile lives put aesthetics in the existential and subjective dimensions of the migratory lives of these diverse Iranian people and look into the rationale certain forms of self-presentation and image-management explained in other chapters are based on.

In chapter four, I examine the convergence and social networks of the diverse Iranian communities presented in chapter three. Vividly displayed in the event of Iranian Nouruz, when celebrations and gatherings are organised, contrasting groups of Iranians such as garment traders, religious refugees and Iranian tourists chasing leisure and pleasure during their holiday are confronted with each other in Istanbul. Through the depiction of a Bosphorus boat tour, I analyse the status of coexistence among these inherently diverse communities and the convivial sociality constructed and demonstrated by the Iranians on the boat and thus examine conviviality in relation to both the moral ideas permeating the communal space and also the aesthetic construction of a desired social distance which responds to Smith's notion of a harmonious approbation. Convivial coexistence, I suggest, can be understood through the presentation of the Iranian character, *khun garm* (hot blood), and the pursuit of a lively and bustling social atmosphere (*zande va por jonobo jush*).

Chapters five and six look at the transnational garment trade which at the same time gives birth to and is also born out of the networks of Iranian people explored in chapter four. In chapter five I provide an account of the trading activities in one particular garment market in West Istanbul and the different types of urban space that constitute it. Garments organise everyday lives in different ways for the Iranians who work in the market. Different life patterns are intricately related to the spatial arrangement of the market which epitomises the hierarchy among garment traders. For some traders with financial capital, the garment trade is a decent way to provide for good living conditions. For some brokers, the trade and the market may indicate hardship and do not guarantee any profit. For everybody however, trade requires skills, in particular for the illicit garment trade between

Iran and Turkey. How to manoeuvre through the illicit trading nexus and be good at it are the themes that connect transactions in the garment market to the aesthetic theme which looks into the display of savoir faire, style and flair.

Chapter six continues the attention to the garment trade. It takes gender and gendered space as the ethnographic focus and looks at the transnational movement of female garment traders and their purchased goods between Iran and Turkey. This chapter conceptually connects aesthetics and space and explores how the symbolic meanings of the aesthetically charged objects — garments — shape and are shaped by the demarcation between public and private space in Iranian society. Responding to the often taken for granted division between a female domestic and a male public space in West Asian societies, I provide an account of Tehran's underground boutique (*Maison*) where domestic space is reversed into quasi-public space through the display, selling and purchasing of contraband Turkish garments. Such an account of the garment trade accentuates the aesthetic worlds of participants in the trade. Aesthetics is, in this case, most evidently showcased in the form of intriguing ways to present the self, in the form of style and tactics to transcend unpromising materials and in the form of the manifestation of being good at being a person.

In the conclusion, I reconsider the relationship between my ethnographic accounts and conceptual frameworks in order to reflect on aesthetics as a conceptual tool and its wider implications. Building on my findings concerning migratory worlds between Iran and Turkey illustrated through the course of ethnographic chapters, I argue that the pursuit of an aesthetic life is demonstrated through the pleasure of reaching a sympathetic and harmonious sentiment between Iranians in Turkey. Aesthetics thus provides possibilities and arenas to manage the relationship between the self and others as well as the surrounding world. Nevertheless, comparing some of the scepticism raised in relation to the moral commitment to aesthetics, I also examine where aesthetic values stand in

the interaction between the self and others and consider the limitation of the concept.

2. THE IRANIANS IN ISTANBUL: CONNECTED HISTORIES BETWEEN IRAN AND TURKEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The outburst of Arab Spring and the subsequent Syrian crisis have drawn the international attention to West Asia and North Africa, a conflict afflicted region featuring economic discontent, political turmoil, ethnic conflicts and civil unrest. Although remaining relatively stable in the wider region, Iran and Turkey have witnessed a series of political and economic transformations in recent years. Following the multiple protests across Iranian cities against the continuous increase in commodity prices in the beginning of 2018 as well as the Iranian Rial plunging to a record low, the Turkish Lira has also collapsed amid the complex international political situation. However, historically speaking, such incidents have never been new for the region, in particular, for Iran and Turkey. Similar conflict, turmoil and unrest in retrospect, has continually replicated itself, either as the causes shaping a certain historical incident or as the manifests of a particular historical process⁴.

Delving into the history of the transnational interactions between Iran and Turkey, I aim to provide a historical and contextual understanding of the Iranian communities in Turkey. To achieve this, in this chapter, I trace the continual contact between the two states with special focuses on the premodern, late Ottoman and post-imperial periods. I situate human interaction within these particular historical moments to display and discuss the long-standing history of Iranians in Turkey. Along with the temporal dimension, I also look at the identities and status adopted by, and the roles played by the Iranians and how

⁴ The reigns of the Iranian Shah along with the Ottoman Sultan have all struggled with interference from grand powers in the 19th century.

they have evolved throughout history. I, first, discuss how trans-imperial merchants have contributed to shaping imperial contact through an analysis of the silk trade conducted by Iranian silk merchants in the Ottoman territory. I then move on to address the the multi-dimensional role the Iranian traders played in the late Ottoman era. Relating these different positions and roles held by these Iranians in transnational contexts, I display how they sustained transnational connectivity through the various forms of participation in social life. In so doing, I consider transnational connections in relation to history and propose an understanding of the transnational interaction between Iran and Turkey through the lens of historical continuity which is also constructive for understanding Iranians in Istanbul today.

CONCEIVING OF THE REGION THROUGH CONNECTED HISTORIES

The historically saturated sensibilities of transnational and cosmopolitan experiences are under-explored in the existing scholarship on Iranian migration and transnational connections across the region. Previous works have focused primarily on migration strategies and the Iranian diaspora, underlined by a territorial epistemology, or methodological nationalism. In the context of Iran and Turkey, methodological nationalism is still central in conceiving of border, territory, society, etc. It is understood as the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world (Wimmer et al. 2002).

In anthropological studies, it is reified through the focus on culture. When conceptualising culture, especially in modern times, some scholars have constructed culture as unitary and fixed within territories. Fixed state cultures, national identities and unitary social representations, in return, reproduce the image of the social world as divided into bounded, culturally specific units, typical of nationalist thinking. Nevertheless, historical interactions between the

two epitomise the interactive modern history of West Asia, which is shaped by interstate conflicts, territorial claims, sectarian tensions and different scales of warfare. Trade, exchange and economy are especially affected and accompanied by a mixture of political allegiances, ethnicities, as well as cultures. Yet relevant scholarly work concerning these economic interactions and transnational transactions tend to classify if not fragment this region of intersection into either geographical categories (Anatolia, Caucasus, Iranian Plateau) or political sovereign nations.

Echoing Humphrey's (Humphrey et al. 2014) call that "themes and ethnographic emphases should be foregrounded in regional study", I will draw more attentions to interactions, movements, and the everyday coexistence of the Iranians in Turkey rather than a grand geopolitical vision. Focusing on transnational form of connections and experiences, therefore, I take historical works such as works by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1997) and scholarship on global history (Freitag et al. 2009; Green 2012; 2014; Alavi 2015) as the point of departing for addressing issues located at the intersection of historical anthropology and historical studies, particularly in relation to the idea of cosmopolitanism, connected histories and empire (Ho 2002; Bayly 2007; Rothman 2012; Aslanian 2014; Marsden 2015; Alavi 2015; Sood 2016). My focus on the transnationally mobile Iranians in Turkey will thus build on long-standing imperial encounters and explore the interactive, relational and convivial dispositions that situate mobile Iranians within a shared translocal composition of relations, taking origin in the sustained historical connections.

2.2 FROM "SILK ROAD" TO "BLACK SEA ROUTE": THE SHIFTING ROLE OF TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS

The relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the empires of the Iranian plateau has been entangled for centuries (Subrahmanyam 1992; Canfield 1991; Tapper 2008; Canfield 2008; Inan 2019). On the one hand, as the major powers in Islamic West Asia, they have always competed with each other. On the other hand, the successive Persianated empires (Green 2019) of Turkmen origin such as the Tirmurid and Safavid empires have maintained continuous contact and interaction with the Ottomans. Through these connections, people with different origins travelled across the region between the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Russia and the Mediterranean basin, and connected not only Iran, but also other places along their mobile trajectories, to the wider world. Although it is not difficult to observe the presence of merchants, scholars and artists from Iran in the Ottoman Empire in the various forms of texts and manuscripts, early settlements of Iranians in Turkey are difficult to trace. This is partly due to the fact that, until the second half of the 19th century, Iranians in the Ottoman Empire had been treated and documented as undifferentiated imperial subjects rather than foreigners from outside. Thus, detailed records of residence such as those of the Europeans in the Ottoman territory were absent in the Iranians' case. Nevertheless, a growing number of studies on the economic history between Iran and Turkey have focused on the Eurasian trade connections among the empires. A large amount of material has emerged, shedding light on the significant role played by the Iranians in trans-imperial connections.

- Economic connections

Histories of the imperial economic activities and commodities have often put the Western world, Western market and consumers to the foreground. Turco-Iranian interaction, on the contrary, illustrates the non-Western actors' relationship and their roles in facilitating the movement of global commodities between empires, specially in relation to their Western counterparts. Focusing on the inter-Asian

vernacular economy of turquoise, Arash Khazeni's (2014) *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History* explores how the coloured stone originating from northeastern Iran was transformed into an "object of inter-imperial contact". Arash illustrated how turquoise was circulated first through tribinary exchanges among the empires of Islamic Eurasia and eventually entering into global circulation. Brought from Tabriz to Istanbul during the Ottoman occupation (1514) of the Iranian city Tabriz, the Iranian craftsmen of turquoise, joined later by the Iranian-Armenian merchants, witnessed the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry through their participation in transforming the stone into a renowned Turkish trade goods with the particular symbolic value of victory and conquest in Iran. These Iranians then got involved in the guilds in Istanbul among other craftsman handling the objects associated with Iran with their craftsmanship, which itself is also an embodiment of associations to the Iranian land.

Parallel to the exchange of turquoise, another strand of literature examined the commerce of silk and its circulation, in which merchants from Iran have served as important figures. Connecting the surrounding regions through the caravan trade, Iranian silk merchants were depicted in historiographies of various sources. From Iran, the crossroads of Eurasia, merchants traded textiles and spices from India, furs from Russia, coffee and tobacco from Yemen, and silk, leather goods and wool from Iran itself (Zarinebaf-Shahr 1993, 204). In particular, towards the west, these merchants travelled from various places in Iran to Anatolia, Levent and even as far as Venice and Florence. Among these goods, silk from Iran was the first and one of the most prominent commodities which contributed to the cross-region connectivities.

The long history of the Iranian silk trade dates back to the Sasanian period. Silk textiles produced by the Iranians were among the commodities sold to the Byzantine textile workshops (Matthee 1999). The silk trade flourished under the IlKhanid Mongol reign when the capital city Tabriz developed into a silk trade hub. At the beginning of the 14th century, Iran had already become the principal

exporter of silk to the Ottoman Empire, from where silk and silk products were transported to Europe (Dale 2009). The early capital of the Ottoman Empire, Bursa, known for being the transit centre of silk, was dominated by Iranian silk and Iranian merchants. Inalcik (1969, 111), in his article on Bursa, suggested that silk caravans carrying a great amount of the commodity travelled to Bursa from Iran several times a year. In 1513, for instance, one of the caravans, in a single journey, brought 400 yük (i.e. 24,600 kg) of silk, equivalent to a value of about 220,000 ducats. In a compilation of the mercantile documents during the era of the Medici, Florentine Giovanni di Francesco Maringhi, who was a merchant, and frequently visited Bursa from Florence to trade cotton and silk, depicted, in his letter back home, how the Iranian silk caravan was eagerly awaited by Jewish merchants and their counterparts who competed with each other to make purchases in order to dispatch the goods early (Gertrude 1932).

- Trans-imperial subjects

The prosperous silk trade was thus highly dependent on the Iranians. The trans-regional transactions of silk were conducted both directly between Iranian merchants and the Europeans, and also through local Turkish merchants as intermediaries. Yet, zooming out from the silk trade, not only Turkish merchants, but also Bursa and the Ottoman Empire served as the intermediaries.

Located in the chain of trans-imperial connections, commercial centres in the Ottoman Empire often functioned as the transit spaces between extended participants of the cross-regional trade on a larger scale, such as the Indo-Roman trade. Through Bursa and the land of the Ottoman Empire, merchants from Tabriz travelled to European silk markets such as Venice and Florence. They, as the people who inhabited and negotiated the interstice between the Venetian and the Ottoman empires, were not actors in the background. Rather, the Iranians travelled to the Ottoman Empire and participated in the trans-imperial interaction of the Eastern Mediterranean, just like those other people, discussed by Rothman

(Rothman 2012) under the term “trans-imperial subjects”, such as the freed slaves, religious converts and diplomatic interpreters.

Focusing on these different types of trans-imperial subjects who were inherently infused with “in-betweenness”, Rothman brought attention to the rivalry and collaboration between the Ottomans and the Venetians from late 16th to 17th century. She discussed the interwoven web of imperial mechanisms (such as the institutional domains of membership and belonging, the juridical and ethnolinguistic categories) which were calibrated, classified and demarcated through kinship, patronage and political exigency that were articulated and elaborated by the trans-imperial subjects. Yet the vital role of the trans-imperial subjects was not only played by the Venetians or the Ottomans. Iranians as the extended or “peripheral” imperial brokers in the Venice-Ottoman interaction are also boundary makers. They did not only appear in traders’ letters but also helped shape, define and, most importantly, enrich the understanding of the “actual location of sociocultural boundaries” and the “prototypical centres of different categories” such as “Islam”, “the levant”, “the Turk”, and “Christendom”, etc. (Rothman 2012, 13). Similar to the calibration and elaboration of the Eastern Mediterranean’s imperial boundaries and categories discussed by Rothman, the Turco-Iranian encounters in the 19th century also highlighted the Iranians in the Ottoman Empire who were directly involved in trans-imperial issues such as the legal identities of foreign merchants. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Another facet of the Iranian silk merchants’ presence in the Ottoman Empire is manifest through the role of Bursa as the entrepôt for the silk trade. The prosperity of the transit centre of silk was depended on and supported by the Muslim Iranian Silk merchants from the Caspian region, where raw silk was produced. The continued silk trade ensured the city retained its importance even after the political centre of the Ottoman Empire was transferred to Istanbul. Iranians, while collecting silk from different sellers, mainly sold raw silk

produced in Iran through caravan trade. Based on the studies on caravans in South and West Asia (Faroghi 1979; Dale 2002), Zarinebaf (1993) suggested Iranians have formed their communities in the Ottoman Empire since the fifteenth century if not earlier. Although it is difficult to verify such deduction, the silk trade could be taken as the miniature of the trans-imperial contact between the Ilkhanate and the successive empires in Iran, the Ottoman Empire and other states in Europe. Such connections, however, feature both the exchange of profit through trade and also interstate conflicts such as the different degrees of war between the Ottomans and the Iranians.

A noticeable development along these conflicts was the rise of Armenian merchants in Turco-Iranian trade when Shah Abbas of the Safavid Empire in 1605 relocated the Armenian community from northeastern Anatolia to the newly constructed suburb area New Julfa in the imperial capital Isfahan. Entitled by Shah Abbas as the principal silk broker, the Iranian Armenians utilised their networks composed of family connections and firms stretching from India through the Ottoman Empire to Holland (Dale 2009, 123). With the strength of their political support and ethnic networks, the Iranian Armenian traders in the seventeenth century virtually held the monopoly of the silk trade with the Ottoman Empire (Chardin 1988). Those who were conducting business in Istanbul maintained a good relationship with the Sultans and were treated as Ottoman subjects, enjoying privileges similar to the local population, while their Western counterparts, who were recognised as foreign citizens, were cut off from local life and forced to trade with designated groups of Greeks, Jews and local Armenians. (Curtin 1984) This effectively shaped the Iranian Armenians, in addition to their predecessors, the Iranian Muslim silk merchants, as the cross-cultural brokers between the Safavid and Ottoman empires.

FROM OTTOMAN SUBJECTS TO FOREIGN CITIZENS: THE RISE OF MODERN PERCEPTIONS

The status of Iranians in the Ottoman Empire and how they developed in Ottoman history are particularly pertinent for understanding the Turco-Iranian connections through history. This transformation does not only provide factual information concerning the trans-imperial trade such as taxation, but also presents the evolving living condition of Iranians in Turkey in relation to other ethnic groups, which is significant for mapping out the historical processes of imperial interactions in different periods of time and how they were connected to the political and social context in the wider region.

Building on the strands of literature on trade between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, Philip Curtin (1984, 198) examined the Armenian cross-cultural traders in the 17th century. In the process of analysing the Armenian traders between Europe and East Asia, Curtin underlined the Armenian diasporic communities' relationships to their host societies. The New Julfa Armenian merchants from Iran, brought Iranian silk to the Ottoman cities such as Bursa, Aleppo, Izmir. In so doing, they joined the Ottoman Armenian community who were autonomous Ottoman subjects with the privilege of trading with Western Christians. In another account of the non-Muslim traders in the Ottoman Empire, Alexander de Groot (1981) portrayed the segregated lives of the French, English, Dutch and people of other European nationalities in the designated districts of Galata and Pera⁵ in Istanbul and on the "Apartheid" street *rue des Francs* in Izmir. Only the recognised non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan were allowed to act as the intermediaries between foreigners and Muslims. This role of broker was legalised by the Ottoman authorities to avoid disputes arising from direct contact between local Muslims and the non-Muslim foreigners.

⁵ Present day Beyoğlu

Turning to a later period, Bruce Masters (1991), in his article, traced the status of Iranians throughout the entire Ottoman Empire through customs records. He analysed the changing status of Iranian people throughout history and linked it, in particular, to the Treaties of Erzurum, which were signed by the two empires in 1823 and 1848 respectively. Iranians, until the first half of the 19th century, had been considered as Ottoman subjects, whereas the Europeans living in the Ottoman Empire were granted the permission of residence as distinguished groups of people. According to Masters, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Muslim caravan traders from the East were all liable to pay import duties at a rate of 2.5% of the goods imported and all non-Muslim traders were required to pay 5% (Ibid). Here, religion was a more relevant factor than sovereignty when it came to the legal categories of trader. Imperial political boundaries were thus avoided, even against the backdrop of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry. This view of citizenship and nationality on the part of the Ottoman, however, kept evolving. The Iranians in the Ottoman land, at the same time, were also striving for better treatment concerning issues such as taxes on pilgrims, the head tax on non-Muslims and the confiscation of the estates of deceased Iranians, which were issues experienced by various religious communities governed by the Ottoman Millet system as well (Ibid). Echoing Natalie Rothman's (2012) elaboration on trans-imperial subjects, the Iranians in the Ottoman Empire, who were subjects both of the Ottoman Empire and the Iranian Shah, helped demarcate categories and sharpened the current understanding of legal identity by bringing up legal proceedings concerning the issues mentioned above. By the beginning of the 19th century, when the Ottoman Tanzimat reform introduced the Western conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy and nationality, the status of Iranian people epitomised the ramifications of the Turco-Iranian interaction through which the logic of a secular law reified in the 1823 treaty of Erzurum eventually defined the Iranians as outsiders from a foreign country.

STEAM BOAT AND MARITIME TRADE ROUTE

The shift in legal status of the Iranians in the Ottoman Empire marked the beginning of a different era, in which reforms and modernisation replaced the imperial rhetorics of the past. Legislations concerning trade, and the banning of monopolies in Iranian foreign trade, in addition to the stable political environment, provided conditions under which Turco-Iranian economic connections could be strengthened. With the development of transportation technology, the Tabriz-Trabzon-Istanbul maritime trade route was opened in the 1830s.

Regular steamboat services between Istanbul and Trabzon were then established in 1836. The introduction of this route transferred the majority of the inter-state trade from the overland route through the Ottoman Levant, to the Black Sea. This route transferred the volume of the inter-state trade commodities from the overland route through the Ottoman Levant to the Black Sea. It directly boosted trade between the Azeri merchants from Tabriz and the Ottoman empire, and consequently led to economic development in the northern part of Iran by diverting the exports and imports of Tabriz to Trabzon (Trebizond) and Istanbul (Constantinople), instead of Izmir (Smyrna) or Aleppo. Most of the studies on the economic connections in this period suggest that, until the mid 19th century, this route already made up half of Iran's total importation and almost the same amount of its exportation (Issawi 1991; Zarcone et al. 1993; Amirahmadi 2012). In addition, trading connections forged through this route were not confined to those between Iran and Turkey. Goods from Britain, Austria, Germany and France were all imported to Tabriz from Istanbul through this route. Commodities that were exported from Iran include carpets, raw silk, dyes, shawls, water-pipe tobacco, dried fruits and local agricultural products such as gallnuts. In return, Tabriz imported English cotton, woollens, silk products, velvets, leather, sugar, tea, metals, spices, drugs, weapons, and china (Issawi

1971). Improvements in transportation promoted commerce and trade. In line with the development of trade, various business strategies were deployed by Iranian traders. Some of the more important wholesalers included Hajji Sayyid Husayn, Hajji Mahmud Nur and Hajji Ali Akbar established firms in Istanbul and agents in Trabzon. With the help of these connectivities, they conducted business and commodity transportations between Tabriz and Istanbul. Some less prominent merchants resided in one place, with their agents in different cities in the Ottoman territory and some others kept travelling between Iran and Turkey (Ibid).

Traders conducting business in Istanbul established an extensive network connecting Tabriz and Istanbul via cities around the Black Sea such as Trabzon, Tiflis and Erzurum. The increasing importance of the trading route benefited Tabriz and allowed the broader area of Azerbaijan to flourish. The welfare of these merchants was largely dependent on the situations of Azerbaijani entrepôts, as these merchant communities were closely connected to their hometowns in Azerbaijan. Khan-Malik Sasani (1966), the Iranian consul during the late 19th century, in his memoir, wrote that by the end of the 19th century, Azeris originating from places such as Tabriz, Salmas, Shabestar, Khuy, etc. made up three quarters of the Iranian residents in Istanbul. The composition of the Iranian community, as well as the prosperity of Iranian cities, was thus thoroughly transformed by the maritime trade route. The maritime trade connections between Iran and Europe via Istanbul were also considered to be the beginnings of Iran's involvement in the world capitalist market. Influenced by the rapidly shifting global economic order, traders from Iran had no choice but to engage with the newly formed trading opportunities. This may seem to conform with the centre-periphery structure. Nevertheless, the interactivity of commerce between Tabriz and Istanbul challenges the conceived passive role of actors such as Iranian traders confronting the world economic system.

2.3 TRADERS, MOBILITY AND POLITICS: THE IRANIAN COMMUNITY IN ISTANBUL FROM LATE 19TH TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY

THE (IN)VISIBLE IRANIANS IN LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

Under the treaties of Erzurum, the status of Iranians officially shifted — from Ottoman subjects to foreign citizens. Formerly dubious and ambiguous regulations incurred by the ill-defined identity of Iranian people, such as multiple taxations by different local authorities in the Ottoman provinces and the discrepancy between legal enforcements, were settled. Along with these changes, the treaties also brought political stability to the relationship between the Qajar Empire in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, which allowed for increasing mobility of people and goods between the two. In addition, the developments in transportation and technology have also contributed to the increasing volume of trade since the beginning of the 19th century. By the mid 19th century, there was already a sizeable Iranian community established in Istanbul, and the Iranian state also opened its permanent embassy in Istanbul following the opening of embassies in London, Paris and St. Petersburg (Marashi 2008, 20).

Many historians have highlighted the importance of this period in terms of economic and political connections between the two countries. Zarinebaf (1996, 373) for instance suggests that this period marked the most important of the three waves of migration from Iran to the Ottoman territory, following those in the 13th and 17th century. Similarly, Turkish scholar Cetinsaya also points out the specificity of this period and compares the role of Istanbul for Iranians to that of Paris for the Turkish (Çetinsaya 2000, 13). Indeed, the Iranians in late 19th century Istanbul, both in terms of number and diversity, manifested a highly complicated and connected relationship and interaction with the two empires in West Asia. These Iranians went to Istanbul to take part in trade, search for jobs and pursue education. Others went as diplomats, political exiles and refugees (Kiren 2017, 202).

The demographic data on Iranians in Istanbul are inconsistent in different materials, as most of the numbers are estimated, and the Ottoman state did not count the Iranians living in its dominions. In his memoirs, Khan Malik Sasani, the Iranian consul at the Istanbul embassy at the time, recorded that in 1888 the number of Iranian families residing in Istanbul was around 4000 (1966, 94). Although this figure is somewhat arbitrary considering the complexity and mobile nature of the population, it provides a general estimation of the size of the community. A more comprehensive examination of the Iranian population comes from the recent doctoral dissertation of Akcasu (2017, 184) on the expatriates in Hamidian Istanbul (1876-1909). In order to achieve a more contextualised understanding of the Iranian community, Akcasu looks into accounts from the travelogues written by famous Iranians, such as that of the Shia scholar Mirza Hosayn Farahani, in which he writes of his pilgrimage to Mecca, and that of the political activist Jamal Al-Afghani, written during his exile in Istanbul. Akcasu considers the number of Iranians in Istanbul and concludes that there was a steady increase in the proportion of Istanbul's Iranian population during the last two decades of the 19th century, having started at 2% and increasing to 5% by no means a negligible amount. In particular, in the accounts of Farahani, the Iranian community was described taking "a prominent place among the city's immigrants, who constituted over half of the overall population" (Karpas 1985, 104).

These studies, through different sources, compose a bricolage of the Iranian population in late 19th century Istanbul. Despite the inaccuracy of the figures, various materials have undeniably demonstrated that the Iranians were visible components of the urban fabric of the "multi-ethnic, multi-religious, polyglot and convivial metropolis" (Akcasu 2017, 186), in the late Ottoman era. This bricolage not only illustrates an outline of the Iranian community in a foreign land, but also presents a snapshot of social life in 19th century Istanbul. Such a snapshot is particularly important in two ways. First, it gives an alternative

social history of Istanbul and the late Ottoman Empire in general, a history which differs from the perceived understanding of the city as shaped by the Western depiction and construction. In these depictions, the multi-ethnic feature of Ottoman Istanbul was composed of particular groups of people, namely Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and other Western foreigners. This perceived understanding places Iranians, who were the participants in the urban life of Istanbul, in the background of accounts. Second, such a snapshot provides valuable reference when considering contemporary Istanbul and sheds light on the urban life of Iranians living in Istanbul today.

Building on the long-standing connections and interactions between Iran and the Ottoman land as discussed above, the modality of the Iranian life in 19th century Istanbul raises issues such as imperial continuity and discontinuity. Studies on these 19th century Iranians suggest that they have played a dominant role in fields such as the Istanbul carpet trade with Europe, cargo, portage and transportation. Some of them even married Ottoman women and became Ottoman subjects (Metin 2011, 201-204). These findings are surprisingly similar to the sectors and situations with which Iranian people are engaged in today's Istanbul. In line with the resemblance and connections situated in these historical processes, it is sensible to explore how Iranians from this period of time are recorded and presented.

TRADERS AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Texts recounting, in particular, the lives and stories of Iranian traders in the late 19th century, are not common to find. Nevertheless, the everyday lives and activities of Iranian traders were recorded and could be observed in many more general historical accounts, such as memoirs and travelogues. In the following section I will use excerpts from Edward Granville Browne's famous travelogue *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1926) and I will also look into the memoirs of Hajj

Mohammad-Taqi Jourabchi, an Iranian trader from Tabriz, in order to explore into the lives of the Iranian traders in late Ottoman Istanbul.

Edward G. Browne was a student at Cambridge University studying Oriental languages including Turkish and Persian. In the summer of 1882, he travelled to Istanbul and stayed in the city for two months. In 1887 he made a long trip to Iran. *A Year Amongst the Persians* is the travelogue of Browne in which he wrote about his observations of, and interactions with the Iranian people he met. The book starts by describing his first trip to Istanbul. Browne also mentioned people's perception of Istanbul and concluded that "wherever one goes, one sees in great measure what one expects to see (because there is good and evil in all things, and the eye discerns but one when the mind is occupied by a preconceived idea); but I at least suffered no disenchantment" (Browne 1926, 13). This partly responds to the issue of "(in)visibility" of the Iranians in Istanbul raised above. Although Browne did not speak much Persian during that period of time, as the initiated, he had noticed the local Iranians since the beginning of his stay from their distinctive headdresses. But it was difficult for Browne to be introduced to the Iranians through the Turkish, who detested all the shiites. Eventually, he made his way to befriend carpet seller in the bazaar. In his letter home, Browne wrote about his initial encounters with the carpet seller:

Yesterday I made the acquaintance of a Persian in the bazaar. [...] I sat there for sometime smoking and talking to him — and he asked me to come and see him again — which I think I shall do today. I liked the way he spoke awfully — quite sing-song — with rises and falls all through the sentences. His name is Muhammad Ali, and he comes from Tabriz⁶.

So reads *A Year Amongst the Persians*, in which Browne described his entrancing trip to Iran and encounters with the Iranian people. Browne's initial contacts with the Persian-speaking merchant from Tabriz led to him spending much of his time with the Iranians in Istanbul. In Gurney's (1993, 152) studies on the book, he

⁶ Letters from Browne to his mother, 31 Aug 1882, E.G. Browne papers. Cambridge University Library, quoted in Gurney (1993).

thoroughly investigated into Browne's interaction with the Iranian community in Istanbul, depicting other meetings between Browne and Ali. For instance, Ali showed the Persian manuscript *Laili va Majnun* to Browne and Browne bought it from him. Browne gradually got close to Ali, who also took him to his room in the Valide Han which is the caravanserai adjoining the Grand Bazaar where Iranian traders in Istanbul resided. Browne met other Iranians in Ali's room at Valide Han. They looked at manuscripts together and drank tea "in the Persian way" with lots of sugar and no milk, and served with lemon slices. Through these encounters, Browne was then introduced to and connected with the Iranian community in Istanbul. He found an Iranian bookshop at Sultan Bayezid, where he bought many books written in Persian calligraphy. He also made his way to a Persian calligraphy shop and then a tea house. Browne met the owner of the tea house Javad Aga who hospitably encouraged Browne to spend long hours talking and listening to the attractive cadences of spoken Persian. The tea house also became Browne's favourite spot, which he visited everyday.

These encounters with the Iranians in the Ottoman capital at the end of the 19th century captured the economic connections and the concurrent circulation of goods and people between the two empires. These materials and stories made visible the connected economic histories between the two countries and presented a picturesque account of the lives Iranians led in Istanbul. Meanwhile, it also supplements the perceived ethno-linguistic composition and the urban culture of Istanbul with more nuances and texture. As the expanding body of historical research (Zarcone et al. 1993; Gheissari 2008; Dıġıroġlu 2014; Akcasu 2017) suggests, the Iranian community did have a significant presence in late 19th century Istanbul, which sustained the continuous transnational connections in West Asia. Yet these connections were not merely commercial. A lot of political interactions were embedded in these commercial ties.

The memoirs of Hajj Mohammad-Taqi Jourabchi display such entanglements through the writing of the Iranian Azeri merchant from Tabriz. Stories in the memoirs recount personal affairs and the transnational business of the merchant at the turn of 20th century (Jourabchi 1984; cited in Gheissari 2008). The author spared much of his free time to take notes on the everyday life of his big family, but, at the same time managed to maintain business connections within Iran and across the border with Turkey. His brother, Reza, while residing in Istanbul as the agent of the family business, picked up French and became associated with the political activist group *Anjoman-e Saadet* (Felicity Society) of Iranian people in Turkey. As the author's account unfold, we learn that the later constitutional revolution taking place in Iran was much related to and supported by these intellectual as well as facilitated by these political connections established through the commercial activities along the routes between Tabriz and Istanbul.

The complex bonds interweaving commercial, cultural and political events in the modern history of Turkey and Iran epitomise the experiences as well as the transnational identities of the individual Iranians living across imperial boundaries. Bringing these excerpts from historical episodes together, we see the importance accentuated by books, such as the travelogue and the memoir mentioned above, that calls for an exploration into the movement and circulation across the frontiers between the two countries in West Asia. The variegated texture of these circulations is often composed of multi-dimensional exchange and interaction which unfold the transnational experiences described above, which were not only built on historical processes but also exist today.

THE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF IRANIAN TRADERS IN ISTANBUL

Ideas and information are also circulated across the border. Trade, and the established community of Iranian traders in Turkey, facilitated a close contact between the Iranian traders living in Turkey and Turkish reformists and political

activists (Allworth 1994). Notably, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Iranian expatriate communities set up some of the precursors to Persian newspapers in Tabriz and published these newspapers in Istanbul through transnational connections sustained by Iranian merchants. These early print media were usually named after the shared vocabularies in Turkish and Persian such as *Qanun* (Law), *Hekmat* (Wisdom) and *Akhtar* (Star), etc., through which Iranians in Istanbul contributed to the introduction and transmission of western ideas that swept Turkey in late 19th century and directly influenced the Constitutional Revolution. One of the newspapers with the name *Akhtar*, translated the 1876 Ottoman constitution from Turkish to Persian and introduced a host of newly emerged vocabulary to the Persian lexicon. These words and ideas have since then taken root and permeated Iranian society up to the present.

This type of connection and interaction between communities, actors and ideas, in a transnational context, provide an alternative perspective of globalisation in which flows of ideas, capital, commodities are entangled and interwoven together. Defining these interactions as the phenomena of “archaic” globalisation, Hopkins differentiated it from contemporary globalisation. What make these inter-regional flows significant are the continuous strands they establish and sustain in the modern world (Hopkins 2002). In the case of Iran, Iranians in Istanbul produced and sustained trans-local connections and stimulated the momentum of modernisation in Iran. Such type of modernisation was not initiated by the state nor outspread from the West. Rather it was a grassroots production that sustained historical processes and served as the precursor to the fully-fledged transnational encounters in today’s interaction between the two states.

2.4 CONTEMPORARY INTERACTIONS

In contemporary Iran, it was not until the 1979 revolution that a massive amount of mobile population had been generated, this time because they were fleeing

from Iran. Turkey, just as in the first decade of 20th century, once again became the transit route towards the West for Iranians facing political and cultural oppression (İçduygu 2003). Political reasons constituted the major incentive for Iranians to migrate in the 1980s. In the “mixed flows” of Iranians moving to Western countries, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers are among the labels carried by these mobile Iranians. For them, Turkey is both a practical and logical exit considering the loose border control and visa exemption for Iranians. The demographic composition of Iranians who go to Turkey today varies from year to year, but mainly consists of both regular and irregular migrants, asylum seekers, traders, tourists, students, and a small number of pilgrims. A large number of this population takes Turkey as a transient step-stone (Koser 1998; Koser Akcapar 2006; Schapendonk 2013) in their passage towards the West and tends to be affected by the ever more institutionalised and well-managed Turkish migration policy.

Zijlstra (2014) in her studies on Iranian transit migrants in Turkey revealed that the easy access to Turkey and the visa exemption for Iranians facilitate mobility, but at the same time, lead unauthorised migrants to stay beyond their intended stay for reasons such as greater economic opportunity, difficulty in reaching the original destination and inability to return to Iran. However, some overstay their visas and illegally work as household staff, commercial sex workers, and labourers on construction sites, and in the tourism sector (Elitok 2013). In such cases, particular factors such as kinship, intimate relationships and emotional connections often reconfigure the hardship in the process of border-crossing and the precariousness generated along the trajectories of these mobile people. According to Dedeoglu’s research (Dedeoglu 2011) into the garment ateliers in Istanbul, considerable numbers of workers overstaying their visas made their trip through established connections and family ties. Living conditions and survival strategies for them are largely connected to migrants’ gender, existing

connections and literacy. Certain genders are preferable for specific jobs, yet, there is a gender imbalance among migrant workers in Turkey.

Particularly for asylum seekers and refugees, migration experiences are more often directly shaped and affected by policies. For instance, Turkey still upholds the geographic limitation of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. It therefore, does not grant refugee status to non-European asylum seekers or allow them to settle in Turkish society. The increasing number of Iranian asylum applicants in Turkey, therefore, would have to stay temporarily in Turkey and wait to be resettled in a third country. From the 1999 student protests to the 2009 'Green Movement', young and educated Iranians were constantly leaving their home countries for Turkey. Apart from which, well-organised human smuggling and trafficking networks also play a role in sustaining irregular migration. Turkish migration policy imposed rigid procedures on Iranian irregular migrants. As a consequence, settled Iranian communities are formed in major Turkish cities such as Ankara, Istanbul, Erzurum, Antalya, etc., by migrants that are still waiting for, or failed to be granted passage to the West, most of whom are middle-class and educated Iranians. Those from an Azeri-Turkish background formed the majority of the group, making it easier for them to acquire Turkish citizenship via the Turkish Settlement Law of 1934. These asylum seekers and other Iranians who choose not to apply for asylum in Turkey sometimes try to find an irregular passage to other countries and lodge their asylum applications elsewhere, a process whereby asylum seekers are turned into irregular transit migrants (Zijlstra 2014).

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I aimed to trace the long-standing connection between Iran and Turkey and situate the Iranian community in Istanbul and Turkey within the history of imperial contacts between the two states. Through exploring into different historical periods, namely the premodern, late Ottoman and post-

imperial times, I have contextualised the transnational connections between Iran and Turkey into specific historical moments.

In addition to charting out the historical and social context of this dissertation, I put an emphasis on the roles Iranians in Turkey have taken up in their transnational journeys. I concluded that, although Iranians have always lived and participated in social life in the Ottoman lands, they are neglected and omitted in the construction of Ottoman history. In fact, Iranians, in the history of imperial contacts, have actively played the role of trans-imperial subjects (Rothman 2012) who have participated, shaped and defined ethno-linguistic categories and imperial boundaries which took shape from trans-local interactions. In addition, the Iranians under examination also participated in and traversed different milieus. Through their transnational interaction, Iranians in Turkey brought various social roles and social worlds into convergence as is manifested through the political involvement of Iranian traders in late 19th Istanbul.

Furthermore, through the exploration into the Iranian communities in history, I proposed a more nuanced understanding of mobility and connectivity between Iran and Turkey within the continuous historical process. Building on Sahlins' (1985, 3) discussion on history and cultural order, the lens of historical continuity illuminates connections between history and today's Iranians in Istanbul, which will be discussed in the next chapter. One of the continued pursuits of Iranians in Turkey, despite divergent trajectories of movement, has been the quest for the aspirational life. Iranians in different historical moments and episodes have travelled towards the west to search for fortune, to pursue opportunity, to learn new ideas, to mobilise political actions, to maintain the ability to aspire and to realise the aspiration. At the same time however, the pursuit of an aspirational life has always been subject to the world which Istanbul is righteously situated in and better connected to. Be it the capitalist market for carpet traders in the 17th century, the mentality of modernity for the political activities in the 19th century, or the international humanitarian agenda for the

Iranian asylum seekers staying in today's Istanbul, the vernacular agenda of Iranians in Turkey has always been affected by the global trends along with Iran's impact, which, in return, makes Iranians in Turkey the intermediary between their home country and the world.

Looking back into these historical processes therefore helps understand and explore into today's Iranian community and their transnational encounters. In order to analyse the Iranians today, in the following chapter, I turn my attention to the desire of people, so as to explore the ways in which contemporary mobility is produced and experienced, as well as to understand the complexity of the Iranian community in today's Istanbul.

3. MOBILITY REDUX: ACTORS, AFFECT AND TRANSNATIONAL TRAJECTORIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

On the fortieth day after the Shiite Ashura observance, also known as the Arba'in, Shiite Muslims get together to pray for one of the prophets Husayn, which marks the end of the commemoration of Husayn's death. Although the Arba'een day is not a major event for most of the Shiite Iranians living in today's Istanbul compared to others such as the Korban and Ashura itself, Muslim Iranians still organise collective events to get together, recite the Qoran, immerse themselves in religious grieving rituals and, in the end, share the culinary taste and memory of Iranian cuisine on a common *sofre*⁷. I was also invited to attend the Arba'in observance by my two Iranian interlocutors, who are, however, not Iranian Shiites, but Iranian Muslims who converted to Christianity⁸. In an evening in early winter 2017, I met Pari and Yusuf at the Bayazit station near one of the exits of the Grand Bazaar.

Pari, a middle aged woman from Tehran looked different from those times we met before, largely because she had already put on her headscarf so as to enter the mosque later. Pari's friend Yusuf is a lively man just a little bit older than her. Although Yusuf converted to Christianity and kept visiting the Christian assembly, his profession as a carpet repairman afforded him great help in stretching his connections into the existing Iranian networks that were built on the guilds, professions and businesses historically operating between Iran and Turkey. As the remnants of the trading connections, epitomised in examples such

7 A tablecloth spread on the ground around which people have meal together

8 There is an extensive literature on conversion from Islam to Christianity. For the analytical purpose of this chapter and other chapters in relation to Iranian religious converts, however, I will not expand my discussion into the topic. Wherever it is relevant, I will only try to make the context of the ethnographic accounts clear.

as the Tabriz-Istanbul trading route⁹ discussed in chapter 2, these networks are the manifestation of the historically enduring Iranian communities in Turkey. It traverses different periods of time while connecting Iranians of diverse backgrounds to each other, as is manifest through Yusuf himself, who is well connected to both the Christians and Muslims.

Our destination, as well as the venue where all the events took place, was the Valide Han Iranian mosque in the centre of the Valide Han caravanserai hidden in the labyrinthine old city of Istanbul. As a part of the remainder of the historical connections between Iran and Turkey, Valide Han caravanserai is among the relics functioning as sites of connection, linking the present to very different moments in time, in which flows of people and ideas sustained transnational linkages between the two countries. Other similar sites in Istanbul include the Karacaahemet Iranian Cemetery and its adjacent mosque in Üsküdar, a neighbourhood on the Asian side of Istanbul, connecting Iranians today to their ancestors and also to moments in the past. Across the strait of Bosphorus, the Iranian high school in Istanbul is located in the historical centre of the city, not far from the Iranian consulate. Today, the Farsi-speaking school is still in use and serves as the teaching institute for the children of many Iranians in Istanbul to provide an education that is closely linked to their own language and tradition. Differing from the cemetery and the school, Valide Han Iranian mosque, as a religious establishment, is in close association with the Iranian consulate today, and thus is frequently used as the venue for official events organised by the consulate. As is evident in Edward Browne's vivid description (Browne 1926), the mosque and the caravanserai, epitomising the stories of mobile Iranians in Istanbul, has witnessed figures such as the merchants and bookshop owners over various periods of time. At the caravanserai, Browne experienced his first contact with Iranians during his trip to the East at the beginning of the 20th century. "They

⁹ For more accounts of the trading routes, see Amirahmadi (2012) and Issawi's (1971) writings on the economic history of Iran.

looked at the manuscript and drank tea ‘in the Persian way’, with lots of sugar and no milk ... he discovered a Persian bookshop ... a Persian tea house, to spend long hours talking and listening to the attractive cadences of spoken Persian” (Browne 1926). Browne’s Encounters with the Iranians in the Ottoman capital at the end of 19th century on the one hand, enriched understandings of the multi-faceted ethnolinguistic composition, and therefore the urban culture, of Istanbul, which is often portrayed, through the eyes of the Great Powers, as confined within distinct ethnic groups. On the other hand, these encounters also captured the trans-imperial connections as well as the everyday lives of the Iranian people in motion that illustrated complex trajectories of movement.

The Iranian caravanserais noted in the writings of Edward Browne a century ago, where he spent hours listening to people talking in Farsi, and tasted the “Persian style” tea made by the Iranian traders here could be taken as a great entry point to probe into the variegated life worlds of Iranian people, not only because of the enduring “cadences of spoken Persian” language which could be heard in Valide Han throughout the past century, but also because it is a place connected to the overlapping networks of Iranian people. However, with no intention to present factual findings of the detailed urban lives of the Iranian communities residing in historical Istanbul, I take the accounts of Browne as a vantage point to explore the historically saturated contacts and experiences between Iran and Turkey at the present time. As manifested in the works on the connections between transnational trade and the Iranian constitutional revolution (Minuchehr 1998; Zarinebaf 2008), historical contacts between the two countries have rendered the cultural, economic and political realms of Iranian people in difference places interwoven with one another, although these realms are otherwise disparate. The ramifications of dis/connectedness have endured until today. These different episodes in history accentuate the importance displayed by books, such as *A Year among the Persians*, that call for an exploration into mobility and movement across the frontiers between two of the major countries in West Asia. The

movement of both goods, people and ideas unfold the transnational experiences that are not only built on these historical processes but also exist today.

Such a sense of connectivity indicates a complex composition of actors, their contrasting life worlds and distinct motivation and aspiration contributing to the networks of mobile Iranians in Istanbul and beyond. In a different setting, but perhaps a similar context, Lale Can (2012) discussed the multi-faceted attributes of Sufi lodges in Istanbul as sites of connections and how they promote interactions of various kinds. Can illuminated the economic, social, material, and also spiritual dimensions of these lodges, bypassing the analytical chasms between these categories and brought together the religious and the social. In the case of Valide Han mosque, encounters and interactions between different Iranians such as religious believers, carpet merchants and other traders, as well as other actors with diverse backgrounds and motivations, echoing Can's writing, constitute not only the Shiite mosque as a space and site of multi-dimensional interactions, but also on a larger scale, Istanbul as a node of different motivations and trajectories of mobility. In the following ethnographies, I will discuss the mobile experiences of these Iranian in details.

Revolving around these disparate lifeworlds of Iranians in Istanbul, this chapter zooms into the actors and participants of transnational mobility in contemporary times. Beginning with a focus on the Iranian diaspora in general, I engage with the existing literature on the long-distance diasporic communities of Iranian people in relation to migration studies' conceptualisation of the motivation to move. Followed by ethnographies of Iranians embedded in an imaginary cosmopolitan life, who then embark on journeys between Iran and Turkey, my explorations into "motives" will be contextualised into specific yet not self-contained settings such as trade and religion across Iran and Turkey. In doing so, I display the longing, aspiration and expectation of Iranians and how these affect and emotions facilitate journeys through the lens of inter-Asian and cross-border

mobility. Such an extended scope of motivation adds existential and affective dimensions to conventional understandings of motivation for migration, and also leads to my discussion of the overlapping networks of mobile Iranians in the next chapter, where I will further elaborate on the convergence, conviviality and coexistence of different Iranians along the concurrent and conflicting motivations of mobility.



Figure 4 Valide Han mosque

3.2 IRANIAN DIASPORA

Despite the long standing connections between Iran and its neighbouring countries, Iranian communities abroad or the Iranian diaspora have often been associated with the outcomes of more recent history. Typically, two political events, the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the Green revolution in 2009 are considered as triggers leading to the emigration of a large number of Iranian people, and subsequently, mark the history of Iranians moving abroad into three stages: pre-Islamic revolution, post-revolution and the more contemporary period. The small number of emigrants in the pre-revolution period included mainly students and economic migrants who are often neglected in comparison to the more massive waves of emigrants after the Islamic revolution who constitute the majority of Iranians living abroad today. Closely linked to the repercussions of the Islamic Revolution, Iranians abroad have thus been studied and written about under a political gaze with the usage of terms such as ‘refugees’ and ‘exiles’(Fathi 1991).

In the past two decades, the term diaspora has been adopted by scholarly and literary works (Sullivan 2010) which demonstrate a shift from an exilic narrative to “one that situates Iran and Iranian culture in the continuum of a more global diasporic consciousness” (Elahi et al. 2011, 84). Studies on the Iranian diaspora, to a certain degree, share common concerns, namely the issues of belonging, identity, integration and the melancholic nostalgia of Iranian migrants, who, most of the time, live in “first world countries” such as those in North America and Europe, and Australia.¹⁰ Such focuses on the issues of Iranian communities from specific diasporic and regional perspectives have mutually impinged on each other and therefore constructed a body of literature on Iranian diaspora (Karim et al. 1999; Mobasher 2018).

¹⁰ With a few exceptions such as Sarmadi and Moghadam’s writing on Iranian communities in the Gulf and Armenia.

Diasporic studies, on the one hand, have analysed different generations of Iranian immigrants in relation to the changing processes of identity formation, contested cultural belongings in the making as well as the challenging process of integration into host countries (Ghorashi 2018). On the other hand, they have also incorporated an autobiographic approach to narrate personal life histories or at least unfold experiences with a personal tone, which has effectively produced an essential notion of “in-betweeness” or a hybridity of the Western and Iranian self, as is shown in many diasporic accounts, memoirs and scholarly works (Moaveni 2007; Mahdavi 2009). These autobiographic narratives of cultural in-betweeness, as well as a distinct self returning to Iran, although they represent a conflation of cultural identity with discrete nation-states (Gilroy 1991), have subsequently contributed to a dichotomy of the authentic Iranian culture at home, as opposed to a hybridised culture in diaspora.

In line with the scope of the Iranian diaspora, theoretical perspectives on the trajectories of diaspora and migration have also emphasised the demarcation between home and host countries. The classic political and economic approach for instance, attributes transnational movement to “push” and “pull” factors or causes and effects which explain the choices of migrants, notably in the case of Iranian refugees fleeing from the Islamic revolution. In addition, push and pull factors are also used to understand labour-driven economic migrants. Nadjmabadi (2010), for instance, evidently displayed how unskilled labour migrants from coastal regions of southern Iran were “pushed” to improve living conditions by seeking a job in neighbouring Arab states while being “pulled” by family networks that were utilised to decrease costs and risks in the process of migration.

In contrast to a micro level analysis of migration as a decision making process, a consideration of the wider structural factors is given by other approaches which take migration as a manifestation of capitalist exploitation and a footnote of

international inequality (Gardner 1995, 12). Although the extent to which these structural approaches effectively explain the causation of Iranian migration may remain questionable, structural factors do affect migration patterns in the context of Iran. Moghadam for instance (2016), analysed the commercial ties and movement of people between Iran and Armenia, which are partly dictated by the international sanction and geopolitical conditions that the Iranian and Armenian economies are under. Traders adapted commercial circulation to the constraints on trade between Iran and EU member states by engaging in cross-border trade. The movement of goods and people thus are engendered by overturning the obstacles imposed by the regime of sanctions regime. Although such analysis provides insights into the transforming global political-economic order, in relation to the movement of people, within the broader structural conditions, it also reduces the mobile Iranians' experience to the simplistic result of international politics, and reduces migrants to mute communities. Admittedly, there is a prevalent tendency and narrative among Iranians to leave Iran for "better" places, particularly the "first world" states. But whether this practice and narrative of mobility could be directly ascribed to the global system characterised by some as the periphery-centre model needs a nuanced examination. In fact, not only is the direction and scale of the movement of people more complex, more factors such as aspiration contribute to the narratives of migration to the first world.

Then what does it mean to be emplaced amid the streams flowing through the transnational movement of Iranian people, the flows that encompass not only long-distance currents of refugee migration but also the inter-Asia connections across the Iranian borders with its neighbouring countries? Responding to the discrepancy between "home" and "host" country, which has been used to account for both the motivations for migration and also for the diasporic experiences, Liisa Malkki, among others, critiqued such assumptions as the "sedentarist analytical scheme" in which "the movement from home to settlement is naturally

strange and alienating, while to go home is to go where one belongs” (Malkki 1995; cited in Chu 2010, 32). Following Malkki’s critique, Julie Chu provided an analysis of transnational mobility with a corrective approach to the overemphasis on displacement as a distanced experience, and turned to look at the uneven landscape of desire, aspiration and longing not to be left behind at ”home” and delineated how this geography of desire turned the quest for emigration into a project “expanding the possibilities of emplacement for some while contracting the terms of belonging for others” (Chu 2010, 35).

In a similar attempt to engage with mobility in relation to concepts such as imagination, longing and aspiration, Samuli Schielke (2012) positioned young Egyptians living in marginal and provincial villages in the existential and imaginary experiences of cosmopolitanism. Manifested in provincial and perhaps parochial contacts with the wider world are disparate topics such as youth fashion, consumer culture and global politics. Through this contrast, Schielke demonstrated how young Egyptians aspire to the wider array of paths ”out there” leading to possibilities, styles and the involvement in global modernity. In this sense, these young Egyptians and their mobile trajectories as contract labourers in Gulf states are conceived as a symptom of class, economic and political inequality. Nevertheless, far from being a neo-Marxist structural analysis, the focus on youth’s aspiration looks at the sensual presence endowed by aspiration which boasts material shape and form. Such desire and affect rather than concrete motivation of mobility direct young Egyptians to the possibilities of a First world amid their provincial villages.

Considering these debates revolving around mobility and motivation, I take the focus on aspiration as the vantage point from which to analyse stories of Iranians with different backgrounds embarking on journeys between Iran and Turkey. The following ethnographic examples of religious converts and garment traders thus emplace the actors and participants in transnational mobility understood in the

specific context of Iran and Turkey, where imagination, desire and aspiration are equally as important as rational motives in propelling the movement of people.

3.3 DEVISING DEPARTURE FROM IRAN

To present a longer trajectory of mobile Iranians from Iran to Turkey, it is necessary to approach mobility from the location of departure rather than arrival. I therefore, first trace the stories of the mobile Iranians back to contemporary Iranian society. Iranians I met during my fieldwork in Turkey have repeatedly used several similar metaphors and descriptions when talking about Iran. Iran, sometimes, was a prison (*zandān*), and at other times, it was a country of thieves (*keshvar-e dozd*). More harshly, it was referred to as hell (*jahanam*). Other times however, Iran could also be a good place, a beautiful country, most importantly, Iran was “our own country” or homeland (*vatan*). This divergence between different perceptions of Iran has also been reflected conceptually in the themes of scholarly works. Researches on contemporary Iran have often been framed through a set of dichotomised concepts, such as religiosity and secularity, spirituality and materiality as well as the economic and political isolation imposed by international politics and sanctions and the vernacular mobilisation of resources circumventing these isolation, which often involves illegal border-crossings. Embedded in these different fragments of Iran, a sense of frustration permeating disparate life worlds is shared by individual Iranians.

This sense of frustration is articulated in many different ways. On a tightly packed bus running through Tehran’s Valiasr street, which separates the city into east and west, once known for its elegant tree-lined street view and prosperous commercial activities during the Pahlavi period, an elderly passenger squeezed his body between two other passengers. A young man, next to the old man, stood up and gave his own seat to let him sit. The elderly man sat down, thanked him and grumbled

“I have been living in this city for more than forty years, and have witnessed how it has been deteriorating. Now this city is dead. I’m too old now and my wife has passed away, there is no point in me leaving. But for you young people, just listen to me, leave Tehran as soon as you can.”

On hearing the man’s rant, Asef leaned closer to me, curling his lips. “It’s hard to live in big cities.” Asef said. “In rural areas, life is easier.” Asef is from the rural area near Khoy, a small town adjacent to the Turkish border in the western part of Iran. Asef visits his sister who works and lives in Tehran from time to time. It is reasonable for Asef to say that life in the capital city of Iran is much harder than villages. But outside the big cities, it is even harder for young people to find opportunities. In fact, Asef himself just came back from a trip, through which he was trying to leave not only his home in Khoy but also Iran.

In the middle of my fieldwork in Istanbul, I traveled to Iran with the intention of forming a better understanding of the circulation, linkages and movement of different people, goods and narratives revolving around the transnational mobility between Iran and Turkey that I had come across during my stay in Turkey. Unlike what I had anticipated - a trip for discovering patterns and actors of transnational mobility, my trip to Iran turned out to help me translate my observations of stories that Iranians had delineated into the actual context, desire and affect emplaced in Iranian society that condition transnational mobility. These affective dimensions are far from ephemeral. On the contrary, they are materialised through various forms of media, through spaces constructed by fashionable garments, and through practices juxtaposing Iran against a global world.

It is under this complex set of circumstances that I met Asef on the international bus from Turkey to Iran. He is an Iranian, Azeri born, and grew up near the Turkish border next to the Turkish city Van. He finished university in Tabriz where he studied computer engineering. Before the trip back to Iran, Asef lived

in Turkey for a few months. He first went to Ankara from Iran and attempted to apply for a masters degree at Turkish universities, without any success. Then, he moved to Istanbul did a few paltry jobs, but still wanted to pursue his studies. Following these difficult attempts, he came back from Turkey to try to obtain more certificates from his university in Tabriz before applying for Master programmes in Turkey again. When Asef contacted me, he was in Tehran visiting his sister, and asked me if I wanted to meet with his friend and chat about experiences in Turkey.

Asef's friend, Homa, used to go to the same computer programming class with Asef. She is now enrolled in a university in Yazd studying computer science. When we met Homa, she was on her summer holiday. Although Homa likes what she is studying, she is not thrilled with her university life in the provincial town Yazd. She wants something more, not only in the form of financial and material conditions but also something more connected to the world, to Europe and America, where technology and computer science are studied, used and talked about in completely different ways from those in Iran. We met in a restaurant with Homa and her mother who works as a trainer in a gym in a small city - Rey - next to the southern edge of Tehran. Homa's parents are divorced, and she lives with her mother when she is not at university.

Before we had met with each other, Asef obscurely mentioned Homa's intention to move abroad, along with her mother - through informal channels - as their financial status would not have allowed them to migrate directly. After learning of the stories of Iranian refugees in Turkey, Homa and her mother took Turkey into consideration, and wanted to know more about Iranians' status in Turkey. She therefore arranged the meeting with Asef. From this limited information, I inferred that Homa had arranged the meeting to ask Asef to be her smuggler and direct herself and her mother on their migration journey. I felt vigilant and self-conscious before we met. But the situation was much less complicated than I had

thought. Homa and her mother asked Asef frankly about the ways to become a refugee and how to make a living in Turkey. Asef, who had just come back from Turkey, then slowly explained each step of the process and all the organisations - such as UNHCR and various churches in Ankara and Istanbul - from which they could ask for help. This was not an illegal plot of human trafficking, or a secretive plan to pretend to be refugees. Asef sketched out a clear picture of their potential trajectory around the table in a Tehran restaurant. It did not involve any talk of criminal practices or relate to the usual image of smuggling. The conversation was more about a friend and a “returned migrant” such as Asef himself using his own migratory experience in a positive way to help others get rid of the plight in life.

While Asef and Homa were discussing the ways to leave for Turkey and become a refugee, there are many other people utilising the connections between Iran and Turkey to change their lives by leaving. Some Iranians leave the country through trips organised by agencies. Many others find their ways through personal connections that are not carefully planned and executed by professionals, but rather, these arrangements of “moving abroad” take place in occasions like the one between Asef and Homa. Unlike the perceived conception of organised crime, the process of “smuggling” human beings from Iran, and perhaps many other countries, to the West, thus involves different types of social connection which mobilise and reify the aspiration, longing and affect specific to contexts that are rarely discussed. These emotions, desires and affect rather than other forms of concrete motives constitute the reasons for Iranians to move and are manifest not only in grumbly conversations on buses in Tehran, or through casual chats and meetings between acquaintances like Asef and Homa, but also in the process of transnational mobility, and appear again and again after the initial departure.

3.4 CONVERTING INTO REFUGEES

While many Iranians like Asef and Homa are trying to get out of Iran, many others have already reached Turkey. A considerable amount of the Iranians in Turkey have become asylum seekers. Against the background of the so-called Syrian refugee crisis, the Iranian asylum seekers and refugees seem paltry. Indeed, many Iranian asylum seekers and refugees themselves also admit that

“compared to the Syrians whose homes are destroyed and whose country is a war zone, we Iranians are lucky. We don’t have a war in Iran. We could find jobs at home easily. We have houses and are not starving. They are real refugees. We Iranians just want a good life, to stay away from difficulties and to have a free life. That’s why we left our country to come to this alien environment and live as foreigners.”

The Iranians who became refugees do not avoid talking about the identity of being a refugee nor comparing themselves with the Syrians. Refugee status is just one of the social resources among many others that could be utilised. This has led to an assumption, by other Iranians as well as scholars, that these Iranian refugees are unreliable due to such an opportunistic tendency. Consequently, the status of refugee among the Iranian community in Istanbul has been endowed with a particular connotation.

The Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey apply for refugee status for different reasons. There are political dissidents, minority groups in terms of gender and sexuality, as well as religious believers of other religions such as Christians and Baha’is. Almost all the Iranian religious refugees in Istanbul that I have come across on various occasions are converts from Islam, either in Iran or after arriving in Turkey, with a few exceptions of Iranian Baha’is. For some, Christianity is perceived by these Iranians as enlightenment and salvation, as opposed to the misfortune and frustration incurred by their old life. For others, it is an alternative to the doubts and unhappiness associated with Shiite beliefs. For others still, Christianity is an instrumental means leading to a different life, the West.

Pari is one of the Iranian asylum seekers converted to Christianity. In her mid-40's, Pari is a divorced woman who was born and grew up in Tehran. She has a sister who is married with two children living in Tehran. Pari herself had two marriages when she was living in Tehran. She has a daughter with her first husband, who is a relatively wealthy businessman. At the time of my fieldwork, her daughter, Leila, was writing her master's dissertation in biochemistry at Tehran University. Her second marriage was a little dramatic. She fell in love and got married to her second husband when he was a nobody with very little money. Pari thought she had found her one true love, although her life back then was difficult. Her husband, however, after a few years of working, went from rags to riches. Pari described it as "when people become rich overnight, they don't know how to behave". He started indulging in an extravagant lifestyle. At the same time, Pari found out he had been cheating on her since they had become rich. Her heart was broken, not only because of her husband's disloyalty but also because the years they had shared together did not mean anything or leave any trace in her husband's life. He got a divorce with Pari, as if their marriage had been frivolous, and fell into his new life easily. Yet Pari was left in tremendous sadness.

"It was a very difficult time for me. Wherever I went, it was full of the memories with him. I cried a lot and I did not have the courage to face my life there. I wanted to leave Tehran, and get away from the place where I only knew frustration. I thought that if I started a new life somewhere different, things would be easier."

Pari then decided to move and came to Turkey with the aim of continuing to Europe. At first, she arranged her trip through traffickers, like many other Iranians. However, they could not make it work.

"Most of those smugglers are tricksters (*kulāhbardār*¹¹). They do not do anything for you. But at least I got my money back, god bless me (*khodā rā shokr*)."

¹¹ Literally translated as someone who takes other peoples' cap off

Then she learnt about the Iranian refugee community and became a religious refugee herself by converting to Christianity. Since then, Pari has been living in Turkey for almost four years now. About two years ago, she was granted refugee status. Pari is expecting to leave Turkey soon. “Maybe one more year, or two years. I wish to leave Turkey very soon.” While Pari lives Istanbul on a day to day basis, her official record is registered in another city, Bolu. It takes five to six hours by bus to travel there from Istanbul. Every two weeks, Pari has to take the bus at midnight on Tuesday, and arrives in Bolu early in the morning to get her signature collected before travelling back to Istanbul again. Before she finally leaves Turkey, she will need to travel back and forth while doing petty jobs such as cooking in the refugee kitchen, housekeeping for the people she met at the church and other jobs referred by friends.

Pari thinks she is an independent woman, especially among Iranian women. She used to earn herself a life as a taxi driver when she was in Tehran. She enjoys the feeling of independence and has got used to not relying on other people, in particular men, due to her own life experiences. Once she joked with her friend, an Iranian man, about his new girlfriend.

“Men have to work hard to bring women travelling and stay in good hotels!” But then she added seriously, “Iranian women tend not to work. Most of them stay at home, polish their nails and put makeup on their face, busy being beautiful. They also go on holidays and stay in fancy hotels paid for by their husbands. But I don’t want to depend on others. I like to work and rely on myself. This is also why I think maybe America or Europe is more suitable for me. People have a different mentality and are used to independence.”

In the process of achieving the independence she aspires to, however, loneliness, estrangement from society, and an uncertain future have made her feel her life is not moving on but suspended in the air. In such a condition, a lot of the tasteful elements in life, such as family, have lost their meaning to the emptiness of her situation, which has also made her question her choice of staying in Turkey. She

told me there were many times when she went to the park near her home alone to think about her past as a means of avoiding the present. Luckily, with the support of family members who try to visit Pari in Istanbul, of friends she made in Turkey and of the spiritual connections she established with Christianity, Pari also learnt to strengthen and hold to her aspiration, which, although it does not help her to avoid the present, it helps to make it meaningful. One particularly important way to foster a cheerful spirit for Pari is to participate in the weekly prayers in her church.

Anthems of joy and hope

Pentecostalism as a Protestant variant has gained global momentum (Naomi, 2017) in recent decades and flourished in various parts of the world. One of the important features of the religious activities in Pentecostalism is the cheerful and engaging singing in prayers. In the context of Iranian Christianity in Istanbul, however, specific cultural values held by Iranian people, as well as the particular living conditions of refugees, are combined and infused into its religious teachings so that an engaging environment, which is not only religiously, but also spiritually and socially inviting, is created.

Within the Pentecostal congregation of the Aksaray Iranian church in Istanbul, terms and representations that are inherent to the literary tradition and culture of Iran such as *prosperous* (*farāvān*), *joyful* (*shādi*) and *victorious* (*piruzi*) are repeatedly articulated and emphasised through the Pentecostal teachings and sermons. These symbolic elements, which are familiar to the Iranians, are deployed to form an ethos of progression which corresponds with both the religious trip of the Pentecostals and the refugee believers' life trajectories, centred on mobility.

In practice, each weekend prayer is an occasion on which the congregation collectively creates a progressive ethos and a joyful sentiment, especially through

the enchanting sonic effects of songs. Prayers usually start with an hour-long session of rhythmic songs of praise. These are usually upbeat music with modern melodies that ignite excitement very easily. The texts of the songs resemble the forms of traditional Persian poetry and the melody reminds me of the lively and cheerful popular music. The Pentecostal congregation in the Aksaray Iranian church has assembled a quasi-professional band including a keyboard, a set of drums, a guitar and a bass, which seems more like the scene of a concert than a church setup. Accompanied by the band, there is also a small choir of three to six people, varying each time. All of the members of the music team are Iranian refugees and members of the congregation.

Singing the songs has become such a central element in the prayer that the action itself sometimes completes the process of worship. For many Iranian Christians the singing session is the sole reason why they come to the church. They often come to the church for this part of the prayer and leave right before the sermon, as no other place has such a good band, providing them with the stimulating power and ecstatic moments filled with lilting Iranian music and pure joy. The effect of the music is, on the one hand dependent on the acoustic elements of the songs and instruments, but on the other hand, is attributed to the key figure of the music band, the keyboard player, Siamak, who is also the lead singer of the choir.

Siamak is a charismatic figure who rouses the crowd and controls the sentiments of the room. He prepares and hosts the singing session every week. From the start, one could feel the charm of the music and also the collective energy formed by the collective concentration of a standing crowd. As songs continue, people's moods are entrained to the peaks and troughs of the melodies. They wave hands and let their bodies sway with the rhythm. After each song ends, Siamak would cheer everyone up by repetitively shouting "hallelujah" and asking people to clap their hands for god. Sometimes I felt he functioned more like a DJ

warming up the dance floor than a gospel choir singer. If his audience did not respond to his question with as he expected, Siamak always managed to control the atmosphere and cheer up everyone's spirit.

Are you ready for the next song?

Yes!

Are you tired? I can't hear any response from you, you must be tired!

No!

If you are not tired, let me hear your voice and claps for god again and let's sing the next song together!

When the little space of the Aksaray Iranian church is filled up with a cheerful and aspirational atmosphere, Siamak will then bring the excited audience back to normal with a slow song before the sermon starts. Sermons are hosted by the pastor who is also an Iranian who lived in America for a few years. He usually arranges his verbal session with an aspirational speech that is contextualised in the Iranian refugees' transnational life from Iran to Turkey and weaves into it themes such as dreams, hope, salvation and success, ornamented with biblical stories. The mobile life of the refugees, associated with difficulty and frustration, as well as the action of converting from Islam into a future filled with hope, fits well into the repertoire of tools used in the sermon. It will usually be a dichotomised narrative in which life in Iran, before conversion, is portrayed in terms of frustration, poverty, and sorrow whereas "now", a new temporal and spatial dimension connecting to the holy spirit represents happiness and success.

3.5 TABRIZ TRADERS

Since the beginning of my fieldwork, I also tried to probe into different communities of Iranian people while frequenting the weekly prayer at the church. Among the Iranians I met at the church, the name of a market selling clothing kept appearing in their conversations. Pari suggested visiting the garment shops

with me in order to help me get some contact with the traders. We arranged our trip on a weekday afternoon to the Merter region in West Istanbul, where we planned to visit the Iranian shops and cargo companies. We entered a random shop where we were warmly received. It was a small office, mainly operating as a cargo company transporting goods from Istanbul to Iran. Just like many other cargo companies in Merter and the adjacent Güngören district, the small office operating as a cargo company works closely with clothing shops in the same area, and all together, they facilitate the transnational clothing trade between Iran and Turkey. A closer examination of the garment market and trading activities will be discussed in chapter 5. In the rest of this chapter, I will switch my focus from Iranian asylum seekers to the distinct affect which conditions Iranian traders as a group of actors participating in the transnational mobility between Iran and Turkey.

Ehsan: a shuttle trader between Tabriz and Istanbul

Ehsan is a trader from the Azeri city Tabriz in the northwestern part of Iran, importing clothing and sneakers. We met and became friends in the garment shop of a mutual trader friend who is also from Tabriz. The large number of Iranian Azeri traders originating from the same city and now living in Istanbul, although it should not be taken as the remainder of the historical commercial connections between the two countries, could be taken as the mobility redux built on the long-standing tradition of the commercial connections. Their Azeri language is widely used among the Iranian traders in Istanbul, and ethnicity also works as the bond holding together the networks of traders. Ehsan's clear voice, as well as his bookish demeanour, made a deep impression on me when we first met in the garment shop, setting him apart from other Iranian traders. Unlike others, Ehsan does not work or live in Turkey. His shops are in Tabriz. Although living in Iran, Ehsan travels frequently between Tabriz and Istanbul to replenish his two shops with new wares each season. He has hired a salesman for his shops. While he is

away, his salesman, alongside his brother, who works in the field of interior renovation, will take over his position to take care of the shops. When he arrived in spring, he spent a month in Istanbul living with his old friend who has now moved to Istanbul to do trade.

After staying a month in Istanbul, Ehsan made quite a lot of purchases. The transportation of his goods became an issue. While most of the shuttle traders from Iran work with Iranian cargo companies, Ehsan, with the entitlement of being an experienced Tabriz trader being in the business for years, did not want to rely on the extra layer of transportation. With all the goods he bought, Ehsan traveled back to Iran by bus instead of an easier two-hour direct flight. The bus ticket costs one fifth of a plane ticket. Also, Ehsan did not want to take the risk of having his goods inspected at customs. The land border control is normally not as rigid as in the airport. Shuttle traders thus could arrange to take their commodities across the border through illicit connections more easily. The only downside of the bus trip is the thirty-hour journey time, sometimes in a very crowded bus carriage fraught with noise, smells and annoyance caused by police checks at the border and along the route. Yet, the bus connecting Tehran and Istanbul is still the main means of transportation used for transferring commodities between the two countries, sustaining the livelihoods of Iranian people across a wide range of professions.

Before Ehsan left for Iran in May, he suggested I visit him in Tabriz where I would be able to see his shops, urban developments in Tabriz and also his friends, some of whom are also, like him, constantly travelling between the two countries to purchase garments by various means, depending on the time, conditions and purposes of the trip. Two months later, when I visited Iran I indeed travelled from Istanbul to Tabriz first to visit Ehsan. I arrived in Iran at the end of the Ramadan period, when the clothing business in Turkey becomes sluggish as Iranian traders stopped coming to Istanbul, and not many people in

Iran visit shops during the daytime. During Ramadan, shopping, clothes consumption and house parties are all under constraints. My Iranian interlocutors had all suggested that I didn't go to Iran until the end of Ramadan as the social life would be in stagnation even apart from the fact that everyone would be fasting. However, I did not wait for the end of Ramadan and instead I embarked upon my trip.

Consuming Turk(ish)ness : imagination, ethnicity and value

My trip in Iran started from Tabriz, when it was still Ramadan. While I was in Tabriz, I stayed with Ehsan in his home. He lives with his mother. Ehsan is merely 30 years old, but he has been trading for about ten years, between Iran and Turkey. He said he entered the business at an early age without going to university, because it was a good job opportunity. But what really distinguishes Ehsan from other Iranian traders is his Islamic morality. Despite not drinking alcohol and praying everyday, he also told me he has been a devoted trader and does not appreciate some other Iranians' lifestyles. "I have worked a lot in my life and never been a playboy. I don't like that kind of life." But he did not disapprove of others' choice either. All the others' conducts are also elements of life, just not his life. He considers himself a Muslim, but being a Muslim defines him as a person in a more complex way than just being a religious believer. Relating this to his own mobile life between Iran and Turkey, Ehsan didn't find the two lifestyles at odds. After doing the transnational business for such a long time, he was also considering moving to Istanbul. Although he knew that his friends and their secular life patterns in Istanbul would probably not be associated to Islam in the way he would like them to be, and the ways he would be living his life would be very different and disconnected from his habits in Tabriz. But the secular world in Istanbul and other Iranians' lives do not conflict with his beliefs. Apart from secularity, which Istanbul and Turkey embody for a large number of Iranians, for Ehsan, Istanbul and Turkey is also the vantage point

to the wider world, which he has been familiar with through Turkish TV channels and soap operas since his childhood.

“Every family in Tabriz has Turkish television in their home. We watch a lot of Turkish programmes. We have also learnt Istanbul Turkish and learnt about Turkey just by watching TV. We feel close to that place. Tehran is probably further than Istanbul from us, or at least for me.”

As for living in Istanbul, Ehsan told me “One can enjoy good weather and a nice environment, all the while keeping his faith”.

Ehsan is also one of the few Iranian Muslims that I know who fasts rigidly during Ramadan. Fasting all day for the whole month of Ramadan is very difficult to balance with working, as he barely sleeps, quite apart from refraining from his appetite. He usually takes a nap before dawn, when he quickly eats some food and then takes a bit more rest. He has to get to work in the morning and make sure both of his shops are taken care of. Luckily, he has a car, so he can get around easily without getting a sunstroke under the summer heat. After finishing all the work, he returns home around nine and prepares to eat a proper meal. I tried, for a few days, to keep the same routine, but never made it to the evening. Ehsan will then buy some food from the restaurant he knows and hide me in his or his friend’s shops to let me finish my food.

The place where Ehsan’s shops are located is called *Ark Pasaj*, which means the citadel shopping centre, indicative of the historical citadel, situated next to the shopping centre. It is a historical arcade type of architecture in which around two hundred clothing and shoe shops are squeezed next to each other on two floors. Like the first arcade shopping centre in Tabriz, it is not difficult to see its glorious history, just as it is easy to spot its antiquated equipment and decorations. But due to its central location, a good amount of customers visit the shops in *Ark Pasaj* to buy clothes, especially during the months before the Iranian new year. Yet the *Pasaj* is quite empty over Ramadan, during which time people generally

do not get out until late night after dinner. Ehsan and his neighbours had sometimes only sold one or two shirts after a day of working. Because business was sluggish, Ehsan decided to close his shoe shop. In fact, the economic slump has cast a gloomy atmosphere on the shopping centre. During the few days I spent there, almost every shop owner that I spoke with complained about the economy and their difficult life. The only hope they had was the end of Ramadan when people would come out on to the streets and finally make some purchases.

The shopping atmosphere in Tabriz is very different from other Iranian cities due to its Azeri population. The Azeri language is almost the lingua franca of the city. In *Ark Pasaj*, no one speaks Farsi with each other. When Ehsan's friends found out they had to use Farsi to talk to me, they all joked that they regretted not working hard on their Farsi in school. The disassociation from the mainstream Iranian culture in Tabriz was ubiquitous. But sentiments related to their ethnicity were not only a disassociation from the *Fars*¹². The Azeri identity was also under question. When I referred to their language and ethnicity as Azeri, everyone would instantly correct me they don't to call themselves Azeri. Instead of Azeri, they use the term Turk to refer to themselves and their ethnicity. Although the people from Republic Azerbaijan are also 'Turks', the differentiation is much needed because

“They are the upstarts who became rich overnight because of the oil. Their cultural register is quite low and their behaviour is uncivilised”.

Keeping a distance from both the Fars and Azerbaijani people, the Tabriz traders find themselves at ease in juxtaposition with Turkey. This ethnic, cultural and identity-based association is strongly manifested through Turkish commodities. Turkish products take up the dominant role in the *Ark Pasaj*. The traders always say

¹² Ethnic majority of Iran, originating from Fars province, which has been considered in Iran as one of the cultural centres of Iranian culture

“We Tabrizis like to use Turkish products. Even if Turkish products are more expensive, we would like to pay for them.”

Commodities, in particular, clothing, in Tabriz are thus ethnicised goods. Turkish clothes not only provide the value constructed by the public consensus of good design and better quality, they also connect directly to the quality of being ethnically Turk, a quality ensured by the long bus trips and efforts made to transport the goods. It is an authenticity produced jointly through the process of production, transportation and consumption. Laden with Turkish products and the various values that they imply, *Ark Pasaj* has also been transformed into an ethnicised space characterised by its symbolic and material meanings. Yet the *Pasaj* itself is, at the same time, the product of consumer culture. Shaped and reshaped by these contesting elements, the *Ark Pasaj* is a miniature of Iranian society, which, among many other fractions of the circulation of commodities between Iran and Turkey, sustains the transnational connections at this particular moment, but also perpetuates the historical processes of connectivity between Iran and Turkey. The production and pursuit of such authenticity therefore transforms the process of consumption into consuming the imagined qualities of Turk(ish)ness. Such qualities of Turk(ish)ness are constructed on the one hand, through imageries of Turkey on Turkish TV programmes or Turkish lifestyles, which are inherently different from the Iranian version shown in Turkish soap operas that are broadcast on the screens of televisions in Tabrizis' homes. On the other hand, these qualities of Turk(ish)ness are also constructed through the landscape of fashion and aesthetics piled up by styles, patterns and trends of garments in the ethnicised *Ark Pasaj*, and also through the hardship of the transportation practice from Turkey to Iran which, all together, reify the imagination of a global world.

3.6 CONCLUSION

By sketching out the trajectories of different actors and participants in the transnational connections between Iran and Turkey, mobility has been contextualised, not necessarily in relation to the concrete, solid and unified motives for Iranians to embark on their journeys to Turkey and elsewhere. Moving away from the pursuit of a motive reveals the affect such as Homa's aspiration for the possible opportunities out there, Pari's expectation for the ethos that speaks highly of independence and also Azeri traders and consumers' longing for Turkish products and Turkishness. Such efforts, echoing Joel Robbins' call to trace how "the good" is "imaginatively conceived, not simply perceived" (Robbins 2013), attend to the concept of mobility and how the mobile lives of Iranians come into being. In the process of conceiving the good and the desirable through transnational mobility, people with diverse backgrounds interact and interconnect with each other. Places such as the garment market and churches emerge as the hubs connecting various mobile trajectories within the networks. In the following chapter, I will switch my focus from mobile trajectories of individual actors to the networks and interactions among different Iranians. Through a delineation of the interwoven connections among people and spaces through a series of events, namely, collective celebration and a ferry trip which connects different loci and people, I try to discuss these events and scenarios in relation to the concept of conviviality. Building on the discussion on cosmopolitanism in the Middle East and beyond, I adopt conviviality as a conceptual tool to engage with the diverse life worlds of Iranians in Turkey as well as the evolving processes of establishing networks that are situated in the chaos of everyday interactions.

4. CONVIVIALITY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG THE IRANIANS IN ISTANBUL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the multiple inter-ethnic tensions in history that have profoundly reshaped Istanbul as a (post)cosmopolitan city (Mills 2008; Isin 2009; Humphrey et al. 2012; Bryant 2016), Istanbul remains a hub hosting a great number of ethnic groups¹³. When passing through the streets, wandering around shopping centres and travelling on public transport in today's Istanbul, it is difficult to ignore the diverse composition of its population. In recent years, however, a series of terrorist attacks in major Turkish cities, and the dynamic geopolitical environment within Turkey and across the region have altered the existing patterns of transnational mobility and inter-state interaction. In particular, the interactions between Turkey and the outside world have undergone a drastic transformation, resulting in a tightened connection between Turkey and its northern neighbour, Russia, as well as other regional powers such as Iran. On the other hand, however, the transformation is displayed through the estranged relationship between Turkey and European Union. Apart from the prolonged negotiation over Turkey potentially joining the EU, an obvious manifestation of dynamic geopolitics is the influx of visitors from neighbouring countries such as Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran. This population of visitors has replaced the western tourists, who once accounted for the majority of foreign visitors, keeping the city busy from day to night. While visitors from Arabic-

¹³ There is a large body of literature focusing on the inter-ethnic relations in Istanbul both in historical and contemporary times, see for instance Baer's study on the Dönme Jewish who converted into Islam while preserving the identity of Jewish in the Ottoman Salonica and Istanbul (Baer 2007; 2009) and also Duru's work on the multi-ethnic conviviality on the Princes' Islands of Istanbul (Duru 2013; 2015).

speaking countries are easy to find in Istanbul, Iranians constitute a considerably large portion of these “newcomers”.

Nowadays, Iranians can be found not only in Istanbul’s city centre but also in corners less frequented by tourists. For the local Turkish people, who are more or less familiar with the pronunciation of Arabic¹⁴, it is not difficult to distinguish the Farsi-speaking Iranians from their Arabic-speaking counterparts. These Iranians, observed on Istanbul’s pedestrian streets, at first sight might be intuitively perceived as sight-seeing tourists by the uninitiated. A great number of them are, indeed, visiting Turkey for touristic reasons. In their own words, they come to Turkey for the good climate (*āb-o havā*) and leisure (*tafrih*). Nevertheless, zooming into this seemingly generic group of visitors and probing into the texture of their mobility between Iranian cities and Istanbul, I have discovered a number of stories pointing to more complex categories, at once separating these Iranian visitors into diverse groups and connecting them together through entwined networks. This interconnected network illustrates the mobile trajectories, patterns of social interaction and living conditions of these Iranian people who have well exceeded the boundary of sightseeing. The network not only links mobile subjects and therefore Iran and Turkey together, but also reveals the diverse lifeworlds of different groups or categories of Iranian people, for instance, tourists, students, asylum seekers and refugees, transient migrants, settlers, migrant workers, as well as traders and businessmen in various forms. It is, however, necessary to note that these categories are not self-contained or static, as different people overlap with each other and their “roles” keep changing. The boundaries between these different groups of people are thus often blurred. With this taken into consideration, in this chapter, I will nonetheless continue using these categories out of analytical necessity.

¹⁴ Another foreign language that could be easily heard on the streets of Istanbul, due to a large number of visitors from neighbouring countries and the Syrian refugees settling in Turkey.

The focus of this chapter rests on the connections, networks and the concurrent sociality that have been shaped by the interactions between the different Iranian actors. The network, as has been conceived in many studies of social sciences (Scott 2012), is often used as a tool to structurally understand society, kinship, and class, etc. This approach, in particular social network analysis, has provided useful tools and models to explore into the interlocking structures of communities. It does not, however, effectively explicate the confluence of contrasting mobile trajectories described above, which is unsubstantial and unstructured. Nevertheless, such loosely structured networks have shaped the migratory worlds of Iranians in Turkey in various ways. From the lifeworlds of individual Iranians, namely migrant workers, religious refugees and traders, which I have explored in chapter 3, to the confluence of different mobile trajectories, this chapter attends to social interactions in both everyday life and on special occasions, such as the celebration of the Iranian new year, also known as *Nouruz* in Farsi. These social interactions among the Iranians with various backgrounds, help establish contacts in a foreign environment, maintain transnational connections with Iran and contribute to a large part of their migratory experiences. More importantly, such inter-personal interactions contextualise the entwined migratory worlds of Iranian people into tangible events and social contacts and translate the abstract notion of the network into culturally embedded terms that are specific to Iranian society. Through an ethnographic engagement with the social interactions among Iranian people, I try to display the events and scenarios mentioned above in a way that circumvents the structured understanding of the word “network”. This approach stresses on the importance of the status of living together with difference, which contributes to the evolving process of making and maintaining connections and networks that are situated in the interactions of people and their entwined lifeworlds. In this regard, I conceptually engage with the notion of conviviality, which acts to bridge the diverse social backgrounds of Iranian people, and displays how

coexistence is achieved through living with difference. Conviviality and convivial interactions could thus be taken as useful analytical lenses which adds nuance to the understanding of networks and explain the intricate connections in the process of migration and transnational mobility.

In the following sections, I will first conceptually engage with the notion of conviviality and explore its applicability to the Iranian communities in Turkey. This sets the scene for the ethnographic sections that follow. In the first ethnographic section, I will sketch out the outline of the interconnected population of Iranian people, in particular, through the case of Iranian Christian converts and the solidarity formed in the Christian social space. The Iranian Christian church, just like many other venues of interaction occupied by the Iranians in Turkey, is situated within connections to other sites of interaction. On a day-to-day basis, these sites of interaction function as the individual hubs directing various mobile trajectories, and therefore maintain networks formed by various Iranian people. Yet, on special occasions, these hubs also converge into one another through particular forms of interaction. Following the ethnographic accounts of the Christian converts, I will illustrate such convergence and social interaction by exploring the celebration of the Iranian new year. The ethnographic account of a collective gathering of Iranians in Istanbul on the thirteenth day (*sizdah be-dar*) after the Iranian new year displays the role convivial sociality plays in shaping and promoting the connectivity between the Iranian communities in Istanbul, and is therefore an ideal example for showcasing social connections and networks as an evolving process rather than a bounded structure. In the last section of this chapter, I move from the collective gathering back to the case of Christian converts. I look at the connections between different communities through a ferry trip connecting different loci and people. The ferry trip between Istanbul and the nearby city Yalova demonstrates the story of a Christian convert named Kave who is, at the same time, a salesman in the garment market where many Iranian traders conduct their business.

Through these interrelated ethnographic stories, I will display how convivial sociality contributes to the dynamic social networks among the Iranians in Istanbul.

4.2 FROM COSMOPOLITAN NETWORKS TO CONVIVIAL SOCIALITY

Networks among migrants have been studied in various contexts. Such networks crisscrossing borders and different geographical locations often take advantage of and overlap with other types of connection such as trading and religious networks. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000), for instance, have explored the ways in which Congolese migrants between Congo and Paris ramify transnational networks through the circulation of commodities and their attached cultural meanings. In some other contexts, mobility and networks have an even closer relationship with these pre-existing connections. Networks of mobility, for instance, would have been impossible without piety (Osella et al. 2009) and economic circulation (Marsden 2016). While trade and religion assist the spread of migrants' networks, mobility, in return, also strengthens religious and commercial ties. Cao (2013) for instance, presents an interesting case in which Chinese petty traders deploy Christianity as a non-market system of morality in their migration from China to Paris so as to legitimise their household economic activities in the context of market modernity. Networks thus are not only about the ways in which people connect to each other or the abstract construction of social organisation. On the contrary, networks are built on everyday life, social interaction and consequential elements defining the process of migration.

What I find particularly useful in articulating the interaction among the Iranians in relation to their transnational mobility, is Scheele's writing on trans-Saharan connectivity. Focusing on trans-regional commerce in the Sahara, Scheele explores various "places as nodes of particular density in overlapping networks of connectivity" (Scheele 2012). What's prominent in such a formulation of connectivity and networks is the emphasis on local conceptions of

regional connections, as well as the power relations that are decentralised and reshaped into particular forms of social networks radiating out from cities and commercial hubs. Taking local understandings of regional connectivity as the analytical departure point, I engage with the notion of convivial social interaction to probe into the development of networks among the various Iranians I come across in my fieldwork.

Conviviality as a conceptual term deals with the ways in which people foster modes of togetherness through considering the interrelatedness between individuals. Formulated as a part of the critique of the maximal rationality in industrial societies, Illich (1973) proposed the notion of conviviality by arguing that tools such as social institutions and education should be used to promote compatible living in complex societies. Without much specification of the tools of conviviality, Illich, however, has proposed a useful notion that has been picked up by researchers (Overing et al. 2002; Gilroy 2004; Rabo 2011) from various fields to describe communities that are democratic and interdependent. As such, conviviality is often conceptualised in relation to the notion of cosmopolitanism¹⁵ for its postulate of mutually respectful relationships which are, in fact, maintained by political prescription. An example of this prescribed “harmony” could be seen in the non-elite “coexistence” of multi-ethnic groups in the late Ottoman Empire (Freitag 2013), where religious and ethnic boundaries were put in place by regulations and systems such as the millet system.

Differing from the burdened term of cosmopolitanism, convivial sociality moves away from racial and ethnic divergences and considers other “ordinary” elements such as taste, lifestyle and leisure preferences, that mark differences and divide people (Gilroy 2004, 39). This, however, does not suggest convivial sociality is without its conflicts. Karner and Parker (2010), for instance, in their research

¹⁵ There are, however, a number of various approaches to the conceptualisation of the term cosmopolitanism, see (Hannerz 1990; Webner 1999; 2006; Ho 2002; Vertovec 2003; Delanty 2012)

among residents and entrepreneurs in the UK, suggest convivial interaction, at the local level, is ambivalent and involves boundary-crossing and therefore conflicts. But these conflicts could also be “offset” in other routine practices such as giving, talking and sharing. Such a position looking at ordinary life, differs from the inherent political stance of cosmopolitanism that aims to regulate relations between subjects that occupy fixed and unequal positions (Nowicka et al. 2013). Instead of capturing how people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds live side by side, this position looks at how the experience of living together is constructed. Such an apolitical and “ordinary” dimension echoes the envisioned peaceful coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain (Arizpe 2015). Nevertheless, this perspective also renders the notion of conviviality idealistic - something which does not exist in reality. Attempts at circumventing the limitations of the idealistic perspective are manifested in the anthropological investigations into the Amazonian societies where conviviality is not only a practice achieved and maintained by efforts and tools, but it is also an intrinsic ethical and aesthetic value which lies in the beliefs, concepts and behaviours that govern people from various social communities (Overing et al. 2002).

Building on these theoretical debates and conceptual engagements, I deploy the notion of conviviality to analyse interactions and connections across the various Iranian people in Istanbul. As the connecting point between Europe and Asia, Istanbul has often been conceived of as a cosmopolis and the melting pot of cultures from the West and East. Contrary to such conceptions, it is problematic to take for granted the idea of cosmopolitanism conventionally associated with the city, which implies the free movement of commodities, ideas and people. At the same time, today’s conception and discourse around such an idea of cosmopolitanism tends to relate the issue of mobility and transnational connectivity to globalisation. Yet, this association also lacks a thorough consideration of the scale of movement. With a focus on the ordinary interactions

between these Iranian people, subsequent ethnographic accounts explore the ways in which the experience of living together with difference is constructed in contexts where mobility is sometimes arrested. In particular, I examine the convivial social tools grounded in Iranian culture governing the diversified Iranian population. These social tools include beliefs in good and happiness (*nikoo, neshat*), concepts such as liveliness and hustle and bustle (*zende, por jonob-o jush*) and behaviours such as heartiness (*khun garm*). In so doing, I translate the conceptual scope of conviviality into ethnographic accounts and shed light on the unsubstantial connections and unstructured networks that undergird the migratory worlds of Iranian people.

4.3 HUBS OF CONNECTIVITY

Aksaray, a neighbourhood located not far from the Grand Bazaar, is a historical centre of migrants and probably also a notorious one due to the high degree of mobility among its population, and the illegal activities that go on there. As one of the oldest hubs of migrants, Aksaray, and in particular, Aksaray's Istanbul International Bus Station are the first stopping point for many international travellers visiting Turkey from neighbouring countries, such as Balkan countries, Iraq and Iran. For decades, Aksaray has been synonymous with contraband smuggling, underground prostitution and known as one of the least secure neighbourhoods in Istanbul - until the crackdown on illegal activities over a decade ago, made by the local government as a part of an urban development project. Thanks to Aksaray's central location, with easy access to Atatürk Airport, major touristic sites and Taksim Square across the Golden Horn inlet through the newly built infrastructure, Aksaray is, nowadays, a busy transit hub, connected to different parts of the city through the metro system, trams and roads and viaducts. Although the municipality of Istanbul has attempted to regulate the highly mobile population and local inhabitants, immigrants from Africa, central Asia and East Europe, as well as visitors from neighbouring countries have never

stopped coming to stay in Aksaray. The neighbourhood continues to be the centre of transient population in Istanbul and is therefore a hub of connectivity. While it is almost inevitable for tourists to pass through Aksaray when they visit the famous Grand Bazaar, traders from former Soviet states have been visiting the Laleli wholesale market for garments and textiles located in the southeast corner of Aksaray for decades (Yukseker 2004; 2007; Eder et al. 2010). At the same time, like many other locations in the old city of Istanbul, Aksaray has traditionally hosted a population of diverse religious backgrounds since the Ottoman period. A variety of religious establishments, therefore, can be found in and around Aksaray, such as the touristic Pertevniyal Valide Sultan mosque, the busy Laleli mosque as well as several Protestant and Orthodox churches due to a long-standing Armenian and Greek population that has historically settled in the nearby neighbourhood of Kumkapi.

To accommodate the needs of these various visitors, a great number of facilities such as hotels, ranging from five star international brands to shabby guest houses, restaurants, currency exchanges and numerous travel agencies have squeezed within the small neighbourhood from the main street spreading into the depths of the backstreets. Among these visitors in Aksaray, Iranians are one of the most prominent components. This small neighbourhood witnesses a very high density of Iranian population on a day-to-day basis, even in comparison to other hubs of Iranians in Istanbul, such as the touristic Taksim Square. The association between Iranians and these hubs of Iranian activities can be seen not only on the streets, but also heard in the daily conversations among Iranians. My Iranian interlocutors often unconsciously reflect on their presence in Turkey and relate it to historical connections between the two countries. When talking about Taksim, for instance, they associate the place with the Persian influence in the region through an etymological explanation of the square's name that, they consider, is derived from the Farsi word *taghsim* (meaning partition), denoting the square as a commanding point on top of the hill that separates different waterways nearby.

Such a plausible, yet anecdotal narrative, while it could not be verified, has often exuded a sense of entitlement and authenticity, which entertains Iranian people. Compared to these ambiguous associations, however, the connection between Iranians and Aksaray displays far more tangible bonds that link Turkey to Iran through miscellaneous Iranian people.

Similar to many other immigrants, Iranians came to Aksaray due to its location as the terminus of the international bus routes. It is still a part of the memory of many local Istanbulites that right after the Iranian revolution, refugees fleeing from Iran took the buses to Istanbul and arrived in Aksaray in large numbers. According to Turkish people who I had conversations with, for a few months, Iranians flooded the streets of Aksaray, homeless and only able to survive their first days there by relying on the help of local Turkish residents. Almost forty years after the revolution, Iranians have now set up a considerable amount of business in the same neighbourhood, operating mainly on the northeast side of the big crossroads at Aksaray. The offices are, for the most part, either cargo companies facilitating the transportation of transnational trade goods, or travel agencies providing Iranian tourists with Bosphorus cruise tours and day trips to the nearby Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmara. Travel agencies have occupied almost all the best shopfronts along the main Atatürk Boulevard. All of them have decorated their windows and glass doors with colourful adhesive paper with airline company logos printed on them, along with tour information and names of Iranian cities, denoting their business is connected to all parts of Iran. The insides of these offices are usually equipped with desks and computers along with scenic pictures of attractions in Turkey. They appear quite basic, but at the same time much more cheerful than the cargo companies next to them, which are usually filled with piles of parcels packed in plastic bags and sealed with tape, waiting to be sent to Iran. Apart from the cargo, these premises look pale and lifeless, with only a few colourful adhesive papers on the windows and glass doors denoting the destinations their business covers. On the far end of this "Iranian quarter" is

the office of a transportation company where buses for Iranian cities depart. Inside the bus company office is a small supermarket. Its business and stock of Iranian commodities and culinary ingredients are conveniently supported by the continuous operation of the buses linking Istanbul and Tehran. The supermarket itself is not big, a semi-basement room more accurately, but always packed with Iranian products, and hence very popular among local Iranians. Many Iranian people visit the shop each week to stock up on their daily supply of Iranian rice, lighter-taste (*kam rang*) black tea, compressed (*feshorde*) sugar cubes taken with black tea and other ingredients used to make Iranian foods such as the special noodles used in the Iranian noodle soup dish *āsh-e reshte*. While Iranians seeking to live abroad tend to consider themselves adaptable to new environments, when it comes to culinary habits, they do acknowledge there are a few things from Iran that cannot be substituted.

Over the four decades since the Islamic Revolution, Aksaray has been transformed from a place where Iranian people set off for a new life into a shared space connecting various lifeworlds, and a flourishing business hub. These offices and agencies not only sustain the transnational connections between Iran and Turkey, but also provide livelihoods for numerous Iranians staying in Istanbul. These people include short-term migrant workers seeking their fortune abroad, such as Asef, whose story was discussed in the previous chapter. Meanwhile, the businesses of Iranians in Aksaray also hire jobless Iranians who are staying in Turkey for the longer term, for instance, the large number of asylum seekers temporarily staying or “stuck” in Turkey for a few years, hoping to resettle in a third country in the West. When I was first brought to Aksaray by an Iranian interlocutor, he told me “when you cross to the other side of the street, you will arrive at the world of Iranians (*doniā-ye yirāniā*)”. As an enclave and thus an anchor point to which the diverse worlds of Iranians are connected, Aksaray has facilitated the lives of many Iranians in Istanbul, both tourists and longer-term traders and migrants. Yet, the undertone of the comment is not only

about Aksaray as a romanticised second home of Iranians abroad. Aksaray is, in fact, also a place packed with malice and cheats specifically targeting the ignorant “floaters” (Zhang 2002) far from home. In this sense, the backdrop of Aksaray is painted by the poignant experiences of departure and survival. This negative impression that Iranians attribute to some of their fellow countrymen in Aksaray is in juxtaposition to the qualities such as caringness, friendliness and sympathy that they consider Iranians at home to possess. When talking about Aksaray, my interlocutors often say “the Iranians in Turkey are worse than other places and the Iranians in Aksaray are the worst¹⁶ of all”. They claim that “bad Iranians” always come to Turkey, because they are cunning (*zerang*) enough to get out of Iran, but not smart (*bā hush*) enough to reach better destinations in the West. It would be of course naive to assume life in Iran is idyllic and the people there are more sincere. Yet, the process of migration and the experience of mobility do sometimes dilute goodness and amplify the hardship. This has contributed to a negative impression of Aksaray that is equally known among the Iranians and the Turkish people. The only difference between them, perhaps, is that while Turkish people can choose to steer clear of the place, Iranians have to keep going back to Aksaray again and again.

Aksaray’s status as a hub of dense connectivity, in addition to its composition of businesses operated by Iranians, serves as the footnote to the complex connections among the Iranians in Istanbul. Similar to the types of Iranian offices in Aksaray, there are several communities which appear to be of special significance across the diverse population of Iranian people in Istanbul. On the one hand, traders and Iranians working in cargo companies have played important roles in commercial settings. On the other hand, Iranians in catering services and leisure industries have supported Turkey as an accessible and attractive place for the continual visitors travelling for short trips. While these

ایرانیان در ترکیه بدتر از جای دیگر است، و ایرانیا در آکسارای بدترین ایرانیان است.¹⁶

two communities have been prominent actors in the social landscape of Istanbul, the other closely related communities, those of refugees and asylum seekers, although they do not directly join the business scenes in places like Aksaray, they are nonetheless important participants, facilitating the operation of others' businesses as employees. These three communities correspond to the "social scenes" that could be broadly categorised as trade, leisure and religious institutions, hosting a large number of religious asylum seekers from Iran. However, the three scenes do not perfectly fit into or correspond to the communities composed of traders, service staff and refugees as there exists an overlap and interpenetration between each community. Thus, hubs of interactions crisscrossing these communities have emerged as the nexuses of different actors and players within the networks of Iranian people. Scattered across various corners of Istanbul, these hubs such as Aksaray, Taksim and the traders' market, which will be explored in the next chapter, have constructed a shared space of diverse people, experiences and memories. The functions of these hubs are therefore flexible, as is manifested by the complex business structure of Aksaray, which facilitates more than just one community of Iranians. Similarly, individual Iranians crossing over these spatial points of connectivity, as well as boundaries of social category, do not only establish connections between different groups but also switch between different roles in different contexts. Office owners and employees working in cargo companies during the daytime could also be traders conducting their business with the online garment trade during the night. The identities of businessmen and migrant workers on weekdays could also be replaced by the status of refugees and asylum seekers at the weekends. In fact, Aksaray, apart from its business scene, is also home to a few historical churches and is thus regularly visited by a high number of religious refugees and asylum seekers from Iran. Some of these asylum seekers deftly switch between various social roles while moving across different locations in Istanbul. Together with the

various loci in Istanbul, people with multiple identities weave the networks of Iranians from their complex mobile trajectories.

The Kumkapi Armenian church was built in the Armenian neighbourhood Kumkapi next to the present day Aksaray in the early 19th century. Even in today's Istanbul, there is a large number of Armenian residents living in the area. Enduring the eventful inter-ethnic interactions in the contemporary history of Turkey, the church has been utilised by, and connected to, the Iranian population since a decade ago. The church is still an Armenian Protestant church most of the time, frequented by local Armenian inhabitants, but two days a week it is used by the Iranians. Most of these Iranian Christians used to be Muslims and lived in Iran. They have converted to Christianity at various points in time after coming to Turkey. For those who come to this particular church near Aksaray, it is Pentecostalism that they follow, as the religious gatherings in the church are organised and supported by Pentecostal organisations. Almost all of these Christian converts have become asylum seekers due to their conversion. While waiting for the UNHCR in Turkey to resettle them in other countries that grant asylum seekers refugee status, these Iranians are assigned residence in any one of a number of "satellite cities" across Turkey, by the Turkish government. Regardless of such official arrangements, some asylum seekers manage to move to big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara to find a job, earn money and also to stay in the crowds (*dar jarayān bāsh*) which allows them to engage with people.

Each Sunday afternoon, the Iranian converts gather together inside the historical church premises, surrounded by residential buildings which separate them from the thronging crowds of tourists. They come to pray to god, to listen to sermons and to greet each other. Some of them live around the area, and some others have to travel for two hours from their rented homes in cheap neighbourhoods such as Beylikdüzü, the western edge of Istanbul. For most of them, coming to the church is a long journey but also one not they can do without. Families come together with their kids, who are treated to specially designated areas and

sessions organised by the clergy, in order to get kids more involved with the church. Some of the Iranians working in the restaurant on Istiklal, or in the garment factories nearby have to arrange their days off or hours off with their bosses each week, so as to attend the ritual and get back to their work with joy, hope and contentment afterwards. Sometimes, these Iranians visiting churches on weekends are pictured by secular Turkish people as religiously conservative, identical to their Muslim counterparts, especially when they run across the streets of Aksaray in haste. But most of the time, the Iranians just wanted to save some time and catch the next bus leaving for work or home. For these Iranian Christians, the church provides a moment full of lilting pop-style songs of praise as well as some peaceful time to detach themselves from the hard life in Istanbul. They travel across the city so that spirits get connected, not only through the preaching, but also through solidarity and sociality. Individual lives are connected to each other through the shared space, through ritual and also through chats and a cup of tea afterwards.

It is difficult to thoroughly capture the connections among the Iranian Christians, as the population is highly mobile. But most of them are connected through the churches and different kinds of religious organisations within and outside of Turkey. Their networks are thus structured by the local and international religious institutions while growing in the form of spontaneously forged connections among the believers themselves. These Christian connections and networks have formed not only links revolving around Christianity, but also associations with the everyday lives of many other non-Christian Iranians. Such association is typically reified in the social gathering following religious ceremonies such as the weekly prayer in each church. In the Armenian church in Aksaray, Sunday prayers and the social gathering afterwards are important events for its associates and therefore are regularly attended by 70 to 100 people each week. Following the prayer, people get together in the church's small tearoom, adjacent to the main building. Compared to the nicely preserved wooden furniture and big

carpets of the main hall, the tearoom is decorated in a very simple fashion. The small space is covered by mono-colour tiles on the floor, packed with simple white tables and benches and equipped with pale day lamps on the ceiling. Contrast between the interior design of the tearoom and the church's main hall however, does not necessarily reflect its significance in the lives of these Iranian people.

On a Sunday in winter, I arrived at the prayer ceremony earlier than it was scheduled to start, and therefore I was able to have some chats with the Iranians sitting around me. After the prayer, I was invited to have some tea with them in the tearoom. The winter sky turned dark quite early and the air outside of the church was chilly in the evening. A cup of hot tea was eagerly anticipated by the congregation, having attended a long service. Iranians who did not have to leave immediately after a long preaching session filed into the tearoom very quickly. When they entered into the tearoom, everyone was greeted with a cup of black tea poured into disposable cups, accompanied by sugar cubes and a wooden stirrer, as well as some biscuits - all provided by the church. Soon the tearoom was packed with people and Farsi dialogue in rhythmic tones. The man sitting across from me, after updating me on his new job in a travel agency in Taksim, started talking about the coming referendum with the man next to him.

“I think, this election (*entekhābāt*) will be very difficult. Turkish people are not like us Iranians. They are not sheep (*mesl-e yirāniā gosfand nistand*).”

While some Iranians were very vocal about their experience of Turkish politics, and the transformation of Turkish political culture in recent years, other Iranians did not pay much attention to, or engage in conversations about the on-going political events¹⁷ in Turkey. On the other table, for instance, a young man was more concerned with securing his accommodation and asked around for any

¹⁷ Such as the 2017 constitutional referendum that transformed the political system of Turkey

leads on a room to stay in. Meanwhile an Iranian woman in her thirties, sitting next to me, was talking with another woman about their mutual friend's illness and how they should help her.

With various debates, enquiries and conversations going on, the tearoom, resembling its archaic counterparts in the region, including *chaykhana* - teahouses and *gahwa* - coffee houses (Zubaida 2011), has served as a location for relaxation and socialisation, while enjoying the complimentary treats from the church. Unlike the sometimes subversive version of teahouses in history, where debates, prohibitions and clandestine activities were elicited from the religious authorities (Hattox 1985), the teahouse in the church mainly functions as a social space of "storytelling" which is irreplaceable in the lives of these Iranian asylum seekers. At the same time, it is also a hub of connectivity and a "marketplace" for information exchange. While updating friends with recent anecdotes, people share political news, job information and the progress of each other's refugee cases. In such a social space, problems and difficulties in life are dealt with and handled through the help of the network embedded in the tearoom. Such a network is by no means only restricted to the Christian community, or Asylum seekers. Resembling the miscellany of the population in Aksaray, the network developed through the tearoom is connected to the various communities of Iranians in Istanbul, through the asylum seekers employed in travel agencies and garment shops. Along the evolution of this network is the fast transmission of useful information that can actually help people with their needs. More importantly, the tearoom or the network of sociality is not a simple replacement of tools such as modern technology, which is also aptly used by these people to communicate with each other. When the medium changes, transformations also occur, as human interaction generates a form of social connection which technological tools could hardly replace in the lifeworlds of these Iranians, in which subtle sociality has a tangible impact on the relationship between each other.

Job information, for instance, is widely shared between friends and families, not only through serious enquiries between pastors and these refugees and asylum seekers, but also through gossip, hearsay and casual chats between friends. This information and support is closely associated with the resources one can get access to, and also with the hierarchical structure within the Christian institution that requires skills and techniques to navigate through. The process of information transmission in the tearoom thus delineates a network of multiple social connectivities that are derived from the religious institution, but have evolved through the broader social connections of many other Iranian people who are not affiliated to the church. In other words, networks that have developed in the tearoom are inherently connected to and sustained by the otherwise unstructured network and intangible sociality of the diverse population of Iranians in Istanbul. Such interconnectedness and sociality is not only displayed in the everyday interactions between the religious converts, but is also manifest in festivals such as the celebration of the Iranian new year, also known as *Nouruz*.

4.4 CELEBRATING NOURUZ ON THE BOSPORUS

Following the snowstorm in January 2017 and the so-called coldest winter in 30 years, people in Istanbul were expecting the spring in 2017 to bring some warmth and long-awaited sunshine. As March sluggishly approached, Iranians in Istanbul were particularly ready to welcome the spring, when they would also get to celebrate the new year in the Iranian calendar. Except for the unpleasant cold and damp weather, there were good reasons for different Iranian people to look forward to the flourishing season. The time of spring, which promotes commercial activities, visits among acquaintances, and resolutions for the future, connotes thriving lives itself, not to mention its symbolic meaning, iterated in classic Persian poetry by Hafez, Ferdosi, Saadi, among others. Such an association between the spring and prosperity, epitomised by the Iranian New

Year has constituted an important part of Iranian culture and is embedded in the lives of Iranian people. Apart from the cultural meanings, it is also a special point of time for the reason that the Iranian New Year brings together the separate orbits of lives and sheds light on the entwined worlds and connectivity of various Iranian communities, which are otherwise disparate. The New Year in Iranian culture, also known as the *Eid-e Nouruz*, is on the first day of the *Farvardin* month in the Iranian calendar, corresponding to the 21st of March in the Gregorian calendar. It consists of a series of occasions and events over about a two-week period of time. The 13th day after the *Nouruz*, *Sizdah Bedar* in Farsi, marks the end of the celebration of *Nouruz*. In the final stage of the big festival, *Sizdah Bedar* honours life, rebirth and vitality. In hope of a promising year ahead, positive meanings are endowed with to the day which have also cultivated different forms of celebration. In Iran, people generally celebrate this special day by going into nature and having picnics in parks or forests. Thus, *Sizdah Bedar* is also known as ‘Nature’s Day’ (*ruz-e tabiat*).

On an exceptionally sunny Sunday afternoon, approaching the end of March, the already busy and congested Eminönü ferry port was packed with Iranians waiting to get on board a Bosphorus tour boat. They came from different corners of the city in small groups to celebrate Nature’s Day together by cruising the Bosphorus Strait, a scenic view that obliges every tourist in Istanbul to spend some of their time taking in. For people who live in the city, the renowned strait is very close, but at the same time far from their everyday life. Yet, occasions as such indulge them to enjoy the beauty of nature, which happens to correspond to the occasion. I was sweated out after a bit of struggle on my way to the boat. Upon my arrival, Farsi words started to fill the air, catching my attention - I was sure I had not gone to the wrong dock. Some of the Iranians were on their phones directing friends who had not arrived, so that they could find the right location in time, and some others were trying to dash on board so that they wouldn’t be too late finding a seat on the boat already packed with people. Everyone wanted to secure

a seat so they could feel at ease. It was just a perfect day to be on the Bosphorus - clear sky, bright sunshine, with a bit of a cooling breeze. The strait had regained its ultramarine that had previously disappeared under the cloudy winter sky. Houses, densely accumulated on the undulating terrain, sprawling to the edges of two continents, sketched out the skyline of the enormous city, left behind by the boat's departure. Standing on the deck was the event organiser, a middle-aged woman from a local protestant church, keen-witted and sleek, wearing no scarf or hijab just like the other people. She was welcoming everyone on board in Farsi "Welcome! Happy new year! (*Eid-e shomā mobārak*)". Occasionally, when she spotted someone she knew, she would call his name with an affectionate voice, hug him and kiss his cheeks three times, differing from the Turkish kisses which are only twice. It appears that she only knew a few of all the Iranian people that came. But, with a bright smile, she was well aware that she was going to have an enjoyable trip with a mixture of people.

At the beginning of the tour, everyone felt a little awkward, with so many strangers around, all from different places. People of various backgrounds were sitting next to each other. The Christian converts were more at ease, greeting those who they had not seen for a while. Some women with headscarfs were also sitting among the Christians, but were less talkative. Some other Iranians looked like tourists visiting Istanbul from Iran. With big shopping bags emblazoned with the local high street garment brands LC Wakiki and Koton still in hand, they seemed a bit disoriented, not knowing what the tour would be like, but were also thrilled to embark on a free boat tour after their harvest in the shops. Some tourists came with their local Iranian friends who were settled in Istanbul, doing various kinds of jobs, from tourism, catering to trade. Compared to ordinary days, the people that I knew also looked a bit tense. The source of such anxiety probably came from the diversity of the crowd who were very different from each other. The boundaries between these different groups of people that would not normally mingle with each other created a sense of tension permeating the

boat and restricting them from being as outspoken as they would be in their daily lives. People thus preferred sitting on the benches without exchanging too many words, only talking to friends that they already knew every now and then, all the while enjoying the view quietly. The “local” Iranians looked much more relaxed and used to such programmes.

Sightseeing, perhaps interesting for some, loses its charm for the Iranians living in Istanbul when considering the real life issues and business pressures they have to face in such a highly competitive city. Unlike the excited tourists and the Iranians settled in Istanbul who probably just came to the tour for some extra leisure time, my Iranian interlocutor Pari felt differently. It was at the Armenian protestant church where I first met Pari, whose story before arriving in Istanbul is explored in chapter 3. She is the one who had invited me to the event. The boat tour linked her to friends, Iranian people and perhaps also other parts of the world. Most importantly, it was a long-awaited moment in her life, when she finally met with her daughter, who had come to visit her for the first time in three years. For Pari, it was a time of reunion and connectivity. Apart from these connections, Pari was also connected to the event in special ways. As an Iranian asylum seeker, she discovered a sense of belonging in the church and Christian communities in Istanbul. When the church started organising the boat tour, Pari felt obliged to spread the word among friends, participate in the organisation and eventually be on board as one of the organisers. Having successfully put the event into shape, her obligation becomes achievement. Each year, during the *Nouruz*, many Iranians visit Istanbul to spend their holidays. As a convention for people visiting Istanbul, the Bosphorus tour has been one of the most popular activities among these cheerful Iranians. During the *Nouruz*, many boats filled only with Iranians could be seen on the Bosphorus, celebrating the new year. It thus has become something of a tradition for the church to organise such boat tours during the *Nouruz* for the converts to celebrate the important festival in the Iranian tradition, while also reaching out to other communities.

Although the boat we were on was full of Iranians with contrasting social backgrounds, it did not take too long for the atmosphere to become lively. After all, *Sizdah Bedar*, Nature's Day is the day that celebrates vitality, the active energy. Nothing could have been more appropriate than a sense of being alive (*zende*) and prosperous (*faravān*) on such a day. The concept of life, and the pursuit of being alive are animated through the character of Iranian people and the particular form of sociality displayed on the cruise celebrating *Sizdah Bedar*. Iranian people consider themselves as being *khun garm* (hot-blood meaning warm-hearted) and *mehmān navāz* (friendly) in contrast to the *khun sard* (cold-blood) westerners. This idea of "hot" is demonstrated in multiple ways. It is evident in the preferable quality of being *khun garm* (warm-hearted or heartiness) in a person. It can also be observed in the status of *sargarm* (head hot) which describes that a person is entertained or having fun. Furthermore, the concept is also pertinent to the celebrated *por jonob-o jush* (heated) form of sociality in which individual vital energy is transformed into a collective form of convivial sociality.

The celebration on *Sizdah Bedar* illustrates the association between nature and society which is grounded in Iranian culture and thus requires the understanding of particular cultural concepts of Iranian people. Such association between the environmental "heat" and the preferable form of sociality however, is not unique to the Iranians. Chu (2014), for instance, in her studies on infrastructure redevelopment projects in China proposed an examination of the relationship between humans and the environment through the Chinese notion of *renao*¹⁸ (heat and noise). Similar to the Iranians, Chinese consider heat as an important element in their interaction with the surrounding environment. A good, heated social atmosphere (*renao*) relies not only on the solidity of the built environment, but also on the "distribution of vital energies (*qi*) across the social landscape"

¹⁸ See (Weller 1994; Knapp 2005; Hatfield 2009; Choy 2011; Steinmüller 2011) for discussion of heat and sociality in Chinese society.

that is maintained by a bustling crowd of people (Chu 2014). While *renao* displays how the social heat is transmitted into the environment and thus constructs an inter-related connection between the two, conceptions of heat in Iranian culture involve dynamic interactions among personal qualities (*khun garm*), collective sociality (*por jonob-o jush*) and the well-being of the environment (*zende*). Such dynamics are further illustrated in the rest of my account of the boat tour.

When the boat sailed out of the Golden Horn, people had already started getting to know each other. After my friend Pari greeted all her friends from church and came back to me and her daughter, our slice of bench had been squeezed into a tiny space by others and was not big enough for her to sit down. Two middle aged men sitting next to us saw Pari and started to make space for her and talk to us. They were visiting Istanbul during the *Nouruz* holiday from Tabriz, where they work in garment shops in the historical Ark Pasaj¹⁹, a local version of the European arcade shopping centre - a *passage*, which was prevalent when there were no modern shopping malls. They had come to Istanbul for *tafrih* (leisure), but it was not their first time in the city. When we talked a bit more with each other, it became clear that they often travelled back and forth between Tabriz and Istanbul to restock their shops each season. This time they were not on a trading trip, rather they had just come to visit their friends who had moved to Istanbul a few years before and now lived and worked in Istanbul as a garment trader. After shooting a few photos with us, they were intrigued by the loud and celebratory Iranian music playing on the boat. Pari suggested we join the crowd in the centre of the deck and dance with the music. “Dance for the new year! (*bāyad beraghsi barāye Nouruz!*)” I was however, intimidated by the excitement that had swiftly gathered momentum. Pari had already pushed her daughter out to take the two *Tabrizi* (people from Tabriz) to meet her friends from church and dance together.

¹⁹ See chapter 3, Tabriz traders, for the meaning of the name

Overwhelmed by the “heated” and lively atmosphere of Iranian dance and festivity, I opted to talk to Mehran, the friend of the Tabrizis, who was sitting by himself on the other side of the bench. I asked him why he did not want to go with them as it is not very common to see an Iranian refrain from taking part into the festive celebration and dancing.

“Don’t you like dancing?”

“Housele’am nist”, he replied.

His words could be translated as I don’t have the patience, or I’m bored and not in the mood. His reaction made me more curious. It would be understandable if he had seen the Bosphorus before and it felt boring now. But he gazed into the distance as if he was contemplating something, on such a “heated” and chaotic day. I assumed his mind was occupied. With the contrast between him and the crowd, he seemed even a little melancholic, which did not fit in with the scenario at all. As we talked a little bit more, I got to know it was his work that was bothering him.

Mehran used to own a garment shop in the Ark Pasaj in Tabriz. That was how he and the other two Tabrizis became friends. He used to have a car, a flat and quite a decent job, according to the standards of Tabriz. But life is getting harder for traders like him, as the Iranian currency Rial has devalued rapidly over the past few years. He could not sustain his business, which relied on imports from Turkey. One year before, he sold his car and gathered some money before coming to Istanbul to work as a garment trader. It went ok until a few weeks before the Nouruz, when he lost a major investment in a transaction with his Iranian customers. The incident took its toll on Mehran and a year of hard work was now in vain. Although he was bothered by all this trouble, he still hosted his friends visiting Istanbul. When they came, he provided a place for them to stay and accompanied them to different places. Mehran himself is not Christian. But having lived in Istanbul for a while, he has made some Iranian friends who have

converted to Christianity. Not long ago, one of Mehran's Christian friends informed him about the boat tour and asked him to bring friends to come. Thus, there occurred the conversation above.

The more people I talked with on the boat, the clearer the picture of an interconnected world started to appear in my mind. It is a network of these diverse Iranian people who have constructed an elusive web of connections and social relationships. It seemed that everyone was operating in his own orbit, connecting with the past, the present and the future, stretching across various locations from Iran to Turkey, sometimes parallel to each other and sometimes converging together with each other. On occasions such as the boat tour, numerous orbits or life trajectories that were normally separate from each other eventually met at the harbour and set out on a journey celebrating the Iranian festival in a state of convivial sociality. Such conviviality transcends boundaries of differences between religious affiliations, ethnic groups and social communities, with the help of tools such as the belief in happiness (*neshat*), concepts such as liveliness and hustle and bustle (*zende, por jonob-o jush*) and behaviours such as heartiness (*khun garm*).

Convivial sociality is particularly evident when considering the efforts made by the organisers of the event. The boat tour was organised as a tradition among the converted Iranian Christians each year to celebrate the Iranian Nouruz. However, such events were not designed to be limited to the Iranian Christian communities. On one hand, most of the Iranian Christians have an ordinary life outside of their church. They come across other (non-converted) Iranians. They build up connections and friendships through day-to-day interactions. Therefore, not only Christians participate in events organised by the church. Christmas and *Nouruz* celebrations, as well as the Nature's Day tour, all attract a great number of Iranian people with various backgrounds to take part in them. Pari, for instance, had planned her daughter's visit for a long time, and the Christian boat tour was

one of the highlights with which she wanted to surprise her. Pari considered it so precisely not only because of the nice view but also because of the convivial sociability that makes one feel connected (*dar ertebāt*) and engaged (*sargarmi*). On the other hand, For the Christian community, as well as for others, such events are opportunities to get in touch with a wider population and to stretch out its own networks. Thus, it is to the churches' benefit to host a mixture of Iranian people. In fact, in the few weeks before *Nouruz*, the Iranian churches in Istanbul had already been broadcasting information about the programme on *Nature's day*, both through word of mouth and also carried out in the process of preaching gospel (*bashārat*), a routine activity organised by the church to spread their beliefs among Iranian visitors on the streets of Istanbul. The organisers aimed to attract as many people as possible. Most of the Iranian tourists who came by themselves received the information about the boat tour in the Taksim, Istiklal street or Aksaray areas, which are all hubs packed with Iranian people.

As a result of the organisation and efforts to reach out, on the day of the boat tour, there were around 400 people according to the organiser. It was not clear how they got that number, but the larger number of participants did cause some resentment. Indeed, just like Karner and Parker (2010) have argued, conviviality at the local level is ambivalent and also involves conflicts. Pari, for instance, told me her daughter was harassed on their way to Eminönü by some young Iranian boys, who were also coming to the boat tour. Pari sighed:

“I wish there were not so many people, only our friends from the church, perhaps that would be nicer. Now it's becoming very crowded and chaotic. There are all types of people. What happened on the way disturbed us.”

But Pari was still satisfied to take her daughter out to meet all her friends, who are usually busy with work in various sectors, and not able to get together very often. She was also happy that the weather was nice, allowing the celebration to have a good and festive atmosphere. In particular, Pari was happy to make

friends with the traders from Tabriz. Although they may not have contacted each other afterwards, Pari told me she was happy to meet new people, as long as they are nice people (*pesaran-e khubi*).



Figure 5 Bosporus cruise tour for the celebration of Iranian Nouruz

4.5 EMZA " TRIPS: THE OSCILLATION OF CONNECTIVITY

While the Bosphorus boat trip displays the confluence of various Iranian networks and the convivial sociality embedded in such confluence on a particular occasion, in this section, I zoom into the story of Kave, an Iranian asylum seeker working in a garment shop. Unlike the *Nouruz* celebration when multiple mobile trajectories crossed over in one location and thus made evident the interconnectedness among Iranian people, these stories reify a different type of connectivity. As an individual, Kave does not have the ability to weave together the various lifeworlds of Iranians. But his status as an asylum seeker and his job as a salesman in the Iranian trading community create links and connectivities between these groups on a day-to-day basis. In particular, this section looks into the regular ferry trips Kave embarks on between Istanbul and the nearby coastal city Yalova. Such movement across spatial boundaries metaphorically displays the process in which social networks are formed, and therefore, connections are established across social boundaries among the different Iranian communities in Turkey. While moving between different locations, travellers interact with each other, engage in conversations, and develop friendships. These mundane interactions (Hinchliffe et al. 2006) foster a sense of conviviality which differs from the “heated” form of convivial sociality illustrated in the *Nouruz* boat tour. Such conviviality embedded in everyday life, however, equally functions as an effective tool which gives shape to connections across social boundaries.

Kave is an Iranian asylum seeker who converted into Christianity in Turkey. Like many other Iranian Christians, he visits the church regularly. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Iranian Christians are connected to their network and use the connections to seek information. Conversations in the tearoom after the weekly prayer, for instance, are an example of people sharing information of various kinds. Job opportunities, among others, are particularly important and sought after. Through a few friends working in Istanbul’s garment sector, Kave got connected to the Iranian community at one of the garment markets and found

a job as a salesman in a garment shop whose owner is from Iran. He works in the garment shop on weekdays to facilitate the purchases made by customers from Iran. As a growing body of visitors to the garment and textile centres in Istanbul, Iranians are arguably the most conspicuous customers, both in terms of their shopping style and their numbers. The strong need to consume the high-quality and well-designed Turkish-made garments in Iran has resulted in a flourishing business catering to Iranian consumers and traders in Istanbul's garment markets. To facilitate the garment trade, Iranian salesmen, brokers, shop owners and cargo couriers work in a close relationship with each other and thus establish a system of trading connections. A considerable number of these jobs in the garment business, however, have been taken up not by traders or businessmen but by asylum seekers like Kave. Asylum seekers and refugees, as intermediaries, thus connect the two disparate worlds.

Although many Iranian asylum seekers orchestrate their lives between the two communities, they need to overcome the chasm between the two drastically different worlds. Most evidently, asylum seekers have to circumvent restrictions imposed on them by the regime of UNHCR and the bureaucracy of Turkish state. Turkey, in order to regulate the population of asylum seekers, has imposed a restriction on the freedom of movement of refugees and asylum seekers, which assigns them to any one of the satellite cities designated for their temporary residence. In addition, asylum seekers and refugees are required to update their registration records at the local police station every fortnight to ensure they stay in the city they are assigned to. More recently, this registration process has been replaced by a biometric procedure carried out through the collection of fingerprints. For the refugees and asylum seekers living in cities such as Eskisehir, Bolu, Yalova, etc., this is not a difficult task. But a lot of them, although assigned to live in these satellite cities, choose to stay in Istanbul. Employment, the urban life and most importantly connectivity and freedom, are attractive to refugees and asylum seekers. The benefits easily offset the onerous

effort of travelling back and forth every two weeks. Before the registration, which is usually on Wednesday, many Iranian refugees and asylum seekers who are normally embedded in the splendour of Istanbul's consumer world retreat into the cities they are officially associated to, embark on a ferry or a bus trip and have their *emzā* (signature) collected. The *emzā trip* is usually a time shared with other Iranians and therefore it also creates tangible connections between one another.

I met Kave in the Güngören garment market. At that point of my fieldwork I had already become friends with some of the Iranian shop owners in the market thanks to the contacts I made on the *Nouruz* boat trip. Kave happened to work for one of the Iranians I knew. On a Tuesday night in late spring, Kave got permission from his boss to leave early and also to have half the day off on Wednesday so that he could accomplish his "*emzā*" trip. I was also sitting in the shop when Kave asked if he could leave to take the ferry to Yalova before 6pm. He had just started working in Güngören, as a salesman. Only one month in, and still a bit timid. He had moved to Istanbul from Yalova not long ago, and was still sleeping in the cheap guesthouse in Aksaray every night. But unlike many other asylum seekers, Kave is not alone in Turkey. Some of his family were also living in Yalova as asylum seekers - a sister, a brother-in law, two brothers and his sister's two daughter. He is the youngest among his siblings, only 29 years old, but his face looks very young and does not show his age. Every two weeks, Kave had to go back to see them once or twice. He was excited when he took his gym bag and set out on his way. He showed me the gifts, two pairs of sunglasses and some accessories, gathered for his sister and nieces. He said he missed the two little girls and also the macaroni made by his sister. As I also needed to go to Yenikapı, where the ferry port is located, Kave invited me to take the tram with him. On the tram, He explained more about his family and background.

Kave grew up in the southern part of Iran. He left his small village and went to work in Shiraz, the largest city in southern Iran. He told me he had nothing when

he started, but gradually began earning a living by working in garment shops in big shopping centres. In a few years, he became a city boy with a very good knowledge of the garment business. Most importantly, he told me, he has the taste (*salighe*) for the work, which was something he thought his boss in Güngören lacked. After a few more years working hard, he owned²⁰ his own shop in Shiraz. But his sister's family had been subject to political issues in Iran by then. They had to leave Iran and eventually became asylum seekers in Turkey. After they came to Turkey, gradually the extended family was brought to Turkey. So was Kave. He converted to Christianity and became a religious asylum seeker but he did not care about what people would call him or even the status of being a refugee itself.

“It is not very important whether or not I go to America. I like Turkey too, but I don't want to stay in Yalova. I want to live by myself in Istanbul and make my life, just like what I did in Shiraz. My family say they don't want me to work here alone, but I will show them I can. I know it is very difficult and requires a lot of hard work. But I know that I can work hard.²¹”

Maybe because our conversation became so personal, Kave suggested I should also go to Yalova with him to meet his family and stay there for a night. Uncertain about if it was appropriate, I asked him if the invitation was a *taārof* and if it would be a problem for him, or an inconvenience for his family to host me. Kave reassured me that if it had been a *taārof*, he would just try to ask symbolically but not insist on it. I thanked Kave and agreed to go with him, as I had always wanted to visit Yalova since I learned there was an Iranian community there.

²⁰ In Kave's words: “to have my own shop” which means he could afford to pay the rent of the shop.

²¹ خیلی مهم نیست بتونم برم آمریکا یا نه. من ترکیه را دوست دارم. ولی نمی خوام در یالوا بمانم. می خوام در استانبول تنها باشم و یک زندگی خودم داشته باشم مثل شیراز. آنا دوست ندارن من اینجا تنها باشم. ولی گفتم بذار امتحان کنم. من باید نشان بدم که بتونم این کار را انجام بدم. می دانم خیلی سخت خواهد باشد و باید سخت بکشم. ولی من می تونم کار سخت انجام بدم.

I listened to his story and looked at him, quietly feeling the congestion both outside and inside the tram. Istanbul's peak-hour traffic is appalling. The tram was packed with people going home. There were also many other Iranians on the tram returning from the garment market to their hotels in Aksaray. They looked at us curiously and perhaps also attempted to listen to what we were talking about in Farsi. Stuck in traffic, we started to feel impatient. He told me we might be late for the next ferry. It was scheduled to leave in just 10 minutes. It seemed impossible we would catch it. Kave then suggested we should take a taxi, as there would be no ferry in one and a half hours. We had to get off the tram, walk through the traffic and find an empty taxi. I started to regret that I agreed to go to Yalova with Kave. Everything was getting chaotic, Kave got a bit angry and asked the taxi driver to go faster in his broken Turkish. The driver probably did not understand anything and shouted that it is impossible to arrive amid such traffic. Shouting, complaining, horn sound, petrol fumes and the sweltering heat in the car all together contributed to my mounting fidgetiness. When the ferry left, we were still some distance away. "We left Güngören too late. We should have come earlier²²." Kave said disappointedly.

We had nowhere to go before the next ferry. Luckily, one of Kave's friends from Iran, a salesman working in a garment shop in Shiraz, was in Istanbul, restocking for the shop he works at in Shiraz. His hotel was in Aksaray, not far from the port. Kave took me to meet his friend in a Turkish lokantası (food stall) in Aksaray. Kave's friend came with an Iranian woman and her daughter, who were visiting Istanbul, purchasing garments for their own shop in Iran. They were all connected through common friends in the garment business. While eating, they started gossiping about their friends in Shiraz as if they were having food in Iran. We did not stay too long before leaving for the port again. The night was already dark by 8, and the waiting room was empty. Only a few people were there. Kave

خیلی دیر حرکت کردیم. باید زودتر بیایم²²

called his sister and told her to make some macaroni. Outside the waiting room, a modern double-decker ferry was sitting at the dock, much bigger than those used by Istanbul commuters. It had huge windows on its upper deck, ideal for a sea view. When we finally went on board, its bilingual broadcast and neat interior space all made it an enjoyable experience to travel on. It is not difficult to imagine travelling on the ferry during the day would be a very enjoyable experience.

The Iranians in Istanbul who have to go back to Yalova from time to time normally take the early boat on Wednesday. The boats on Wednesday are usually filled with Iranian Asylum seekers gathering in small groups around the tables having conversations in Farsi. They travel back and forth between the two cities to have their signatures and fingerprints collected in the local police station. They choose to travel to Yalova in the morning, imprint their fingers there and then return to Istanbul before noon so that they could start the work of the day if they can't arrange a day off. Wednesday is therefore usually a busy time when ferry tickets could even sell out. Travelling on a regular basis, most of the Iranians, however, do not see the trips as an errand. On the contrary, they enjoy going to Yalova. The trip is not only for the trivial fingerprint collection, it is also fun (*lezat*), especially in summer.

When the Iranians get on board, they greet their friends who were made on the regular trips between the two cities. They chat with each other and treat the trips as a pleasant holiday excursion on a nice summer day, when the weather is nice, the sea is beautiful and people can take their time to chill a bit on the beach with friends after getting tired of the crowds in Istanbul. They like to get together, socialise with each other and talk although they may not know who they are talking to. Yet, not knowing the person or not being able to maintain the relationship will not jeopardise their intent to enjoy their time with each other on the particular day. They get close, only to the extent that they could still keep a distance. They do not ask too many personal questions. Everyone seems to have

reached a tacit understanding to just socialise with each other within a safe distance. They meet, enjoy the time together and then get out of each others' life. Boundaries of appropriateness are carefully maintained and not crossed. Interactions carried out with such an awareness of the the social boundary construct a sense of subtle togetherness on which conviviality is built. For the Iranian asylum seekers engaging in these *emzā* trips, this is probably the most appropriate form of sociability that could be developed in the space and temporality of the ferry. By demonstrating the consideration and respect of individuality and difference, such interactions illustrate a convivial social space in which people handle the contradictions and diversities (Glick Schiller et al. 2017) inherent in the Iranian population in Turkey. While there is not much mutual trust or friendship (Silver 1990) established through more substantial forms of interaction, the Iranian asylum seekers are not entirely engaging with each other through formulaic politeness such as the widely performed etiquette *taārof* in Iranian culture (Beeman 2003) or the Chinese *guanxi* (Yang 2016), the deferential acts deployed by Chinese people which constantly negotiate the boundary between civility and and hypocrisy. Rather, while being *diplomatic* (Marsden 2018), the asylum seekers are trying to show that they are compassionate and sympathetic to others living in the same situation. Such compassion is not only manifest on the ferry trips, but also in the everyday lives of the Iranians in Yalova.

When we arrived in Yalova, it was almost 10 at night. The streets of the small city were already quiet and empty. We had to take another minibus to get to the place where Kave's family stays. Compared to my usual routine, it had been a very long day and I was very tired. But before going to see his family, Kave decided to take me to visit his friends' restaurant hidden between residential buildings near His family's house. In contrast to the empty streets we saw, in the remote conner of the city, the atmosphere was much more lively. A group of Iranian people including the owner's wife and son were sitting around a table on

the balcony of the restaurant, chatting over tea, nuts and snacks. It felt like a family gathering, a movie night among old friends, a tea party on a sunny afternoon. The atmosphere was perhaps not as “heated” as the *Nouruz* boat tour. But the quality of heartiness (*khun garm*) is elicited from banal interactions (Hinchliffe et al. 2006) such as engaging in conversation, exchanging information, sharing food and spending time in a common space. This form of togetherness establishes a convivial sociality, enabling people to cross social boundaries in everyday life.

Kave introduced me as a doctoral student to each of them. “He speaks several languages (*chand tā zabān balade*)” he added. “Good job! (*Bārک Allah!*)” The Iranians started to greet me and shake my hands with cordial smiles. After a few moments, I realised there were several families, some with children, some only couples, who already knew each other quite well. Most of them were asylum seekers living in Yalova, waiting to be resettled while having a relaxed life in the seaside city, but some of them were not. The restaurant owner, for example, still travels back and forth between Iran and Turkey. He was going to fly back to Tehran the next morning for some business, while his wife and son had to stay in Turkey as asylum seekers and take care of the restaurant. The owner was very happy to see Kave. He kept asking if there were any garment parcels from Güngören he could bring to Tehran as a courier (*bārbar*). Due to the short notice, Kave could not think of anyone who needed couriers, but guaranteed he would bring some parcels next time. Kave then began to tell others what he was doing in Istanbul and how many Iranians had come to buy clothes in the shop where he worked. When they heard Kave talking about garments, some of the women at the table became excited. As the conversation went on, they suggested to each other that they should open a small shop in their homes in Yalova, selling to Iranian people there. Kave showed some photos of the garments and exchanged numbers with them. Before taking me to the seaside to show me the beach, Kave was stopped by the teenage son of the restaurant owner. He wanted to go to

Istanbul to buy some sneakers and he asked Kave to help him and direct him to the right places. Kave gave his promise to the boy with no hesitation. It seemed to me that he quite enjoyed handling all the requests made by his fellow Iranians. Although it was getting late, they seemed to have no intention of going home. Kave and I talked to some other young asylum seekers from Iran on the beach, and went back to the home of Kave's family. Kave's brothers were already sleeping, as they needed to get up early to work on local construction sites. His sister opened the door for us, complaining like a mother when her child comes home late. His nieces also came out from their room to hug and kiss their uncle. They smiled with satisfaction when receiving the necklaces from Kave. The smiling faces displayed all the touching and intimate emotions among family members, which is particularly precious in the life of an asylum seeker. It is a life distinctly separate from other Iranians in Turkey, but at the same time it is also the one that is intricately linked to others. Just as Kave orchestrated his life worlds between the traders in Güngören and the asylum seekers in Yalova, many other asylum seekers coordinate lives among different communities through trips on ferry boats and perhaps also in buses. Such trips connect various locations and the worlds of Iranian people inhabiting them. The process of bridging these diverse worlds of Iranians is also the process in which networks and connectivities are formed.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the connections and networks among Iranians in Turkey. Shifting the focus on the mobile trajectories of individual Iranian actors, which have been explored in chapter 3, this chapter zooms into the processes in which sociality is formed, developed and sustained by transnational mobility. In particular, with a focus on three disparate but inter-related ethnographic scenes, I have outlined the overlapping mobile trajectories of Iranians in hubs of connectivity, such as Aksaray. Delving into Aksaray, a historically saturated

location of connectivity between Turkey and Iran, I continued the exploration into the formation of solidarity and networks among the Iranian Christians. Such connectivity has led to my ethnographic accounts of the *Nouruz* celebration, which has demonstrated the formation of a form of convivial sociality established on the notion of “heat” or “hot”. Through the concept of “hot” I extended my discussion from Iranian's preference of “hot” personality to the lively collective conviviality and thus use the notion of conviviality to both delineate and account for the formation of networks among Iranians in Turkey. Based on this conceptualisation of conviviality, I used the notion to examine the everyday interactions among religious converts in the process of *emzā* trips. Conviviality, I propose, provides the appropriate range of social distance for different people to negotiate between forms of social relationship. Building on these connections among Iranians in Turkey, in the next chapter, I turn to the trading networks and explore the ways in which social connections are related to trading activities and spatial interactions.

5. MARKET, "CARGO" AND INTERNATIONAL BUSES: LANDSCAPES OF ILLICIT GARMENT TRADE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The tranquil water of Golden Horn converges into the Bosphorus under the Galata bridge. With the help of the renovated tram system, crowds of passersby crossing the once busiest bridge in Istanbul are now joined by a great number of tourists who have come to catch a glimpse of the skyline delineated by the mosques on top of the hills aside the water. Masoud, an Iranian trader in Istanbul, is among those taking advantage of this delightful location. He often comes to visit the lower level of the bridge where a row of restaurants and their tours line up to cater for customers from neighbouring countries, just like Masoud himself. Despite the fact that these places are often despised by the middle class Istanbulites for not being sufficiently “sophisticated”, these spots, in particular a nightclub named “Maxigala”, are frequented by Masoud, along with his friends, customers of his garment shop or family visitors from Iran. They find such venues a good mixture of the historical Istanbul, adjacent sea views, catchy music and alcoholic drinks: for many Iranians, these are all critical aspects of urban life and leisure in Istanbul. Just like many other locations, places and settings associated with Masoud’s life world of the garment trade between Iran and Turkey, the nightclub exemplifies a set of miscellaneous spaces allowing for diverse range of social fabrics to confront, mingle and interact with each other.

On different occasions, I was brought to Maxigala by Masoud and his friends. For me, Maxigala constituted a specific type of field site through which to observe layers in the lives of these Iranian garment traders. It was Masoud’s wife (Ziba) who showed me the subtle relationship between people and the spaces in which they are situated, and how specific usage, strategies and practices associated with spaces are made meaningful and thus important. “Every place

has its purpose. And we need to wear the appropriate clothes for each one.” Ziba once told me as she chose her outfit before heading to Maxigala. Although I had always been aware of these nightclubs and restaurants under the Galata bridge, I hadn’t linked them to questions of appropriate behaviour and clothing. My casual student appearance might well have appeared strange to those with whom I attended such events, but I did not register this as being an issue at this point in my fieldwork. It was only later, when I had gained a better understanding of the spatial dimension of my field site, that I realised the rationale behind the importance of choosing appropriate clothes. Yet, on the first occasion I went to Maxigala with Masoud, my attention was drawn to the diverse range of customers gathered at the venue and the complex atmosphere they were co-involved in fashioning. The red and black interior decoration is made dappled by the glitter ball lights. Big tables paired with worn-out sofas are scattered around, leaving an empty oval dance floor in the centre. Although not upscale, the modern aesthetic style of the nightclub is appealing for Iranian people and also fairly upmarket as compared to its counterparts, such as those on the touristic Istiklal street and in the predominantly Kurdish city of Van located on the eastern border of Turkey a city that Iranian people tend to visit for both its renowned commercial and recreational scenes. In addition to the interior decoration, the striking sea views that appear outside the big glass windows also attracts Masoud to come when he needs to demonstrate his hospitality. Masoud’s standard formula for conveying hospitality to his guests, mainly customers coming from Iran, includes alcoholic drinks, cheerful music and dance, and also devoted company such as hearty conversations and endless taarof, which could all at once be effortlessly achieved at Maxigala.

While the Maxigala is regarded by Iranian traders as a prestigious space to offer hospitality, a juxtaposition of disparate figures in the nightclub also creates a palpable sense of mismatch. Among them, male patients of cosmetic surgery for instance, are the most easily spotted at the venue because of their patched heads,

which indicate they having recently endured hair transplant surgery. They are often medical tourists, predominantly coming from Arab and Mediterranean countries for the low costs of surgery in Turkey. Aside from them, Turkish women in conservative apparel and headscarves who are not concerned with searching for more sophisticated amusement venues, are also found in Maxigala, intoxicated by the rhythmic music. Iranians are internally differentiated according to visible markers of clothing and bodily comportment: wealth is displayed through the wearing of richly attired outfits, and also by their dancing gestures which demonstrate a learned ability to adeptly move their bodies. Class and status of Iranian people could be demonstrated through the dancing gestures and the choice of music. Bazaari dance for instance, is often regarded as of lower social status. The heterogeneous customers and the various ways in which they enjoy their time at Maxigala are distinctive in comparison to the nightclubs attended by local Istanbulites. At Maxigala, the discrepancies between a variety of registers such as ethnicity, religious and political affiliations, as well as the ways in which these discrepancies are iterated, are integrated and submerged in the noisy music and glittering neon are visibly on display.

Masoud and his Iranian friends, nevertheless, hardly find such complex and multi-dimensional environments peculiar. For Masoud and his friends, who live their lives in motion, constantly travelling between Iran and Turkey, getting connected to the disparate groups of people and the spaces that shift from place to place is already an acquired habit. And as for Masoud, he finds himself perfectly comfortable to mingle with the environment. It is simply the right place to be and the suitable spatial arrangement to have. But how is the particular interaction between space and people created? In a theorisation of space Lefebvre (1992, 286) suggests “space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations”. In a similar vein, Low (1996) dissects space through two different processes. First of all, space is socially produced, denoting the physical creation

of the material setting. This materialist dimension places emphasis on the historical emergence and economic formation of space. Space and place, of course, should not be understood only with regard to their material conditions and intangible forms. Despite the ostensible physical dimension, manifested in metaphors such as the “staging ground” and “container” of social life, space is also socially constructed through mediated social processes which put an emphasis on the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space. Yet, just as the way in which Maxigala relates to Masoud conveys symbolic meaning through the specific modes that people inhabit a material setting, both the production and construction of space are contested notions which have made actors invoking meaning through social practice, the centre of analytical focus (Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984; Ingold 2010). Such a theorisation of space and the meaning-making processes provides a basis for ethnographically engaging with spaces such as Maxigala to understand how social and political notions of relationships are informed, and thus the conditions and ways in which the lives of traders like Masoud are facilitated and negotiated (Deeb et al. 2009). Maxigala is neither a typical Istanbul nightclub frequented by affluent local people, nor is it a one-off tourist spot like those notorious options on Istiklal street. Rather, it is the “ground of negotiation” with regard to the diversity of customers, *their* backgrounds, the clothing (*pushāk*) they wear and the different manners (*raftār*) they have. Maxigala resembles the everyday dynamics in the garment market in which Masoud works. Building on a theoretical engagement with the notion of space, this chapter explores spaces such as Maxigala, among others, to address the ways in which spatial practice, arising from particular settings associated with the trade in garment contraband between Iran and Turkey, traverse, challenge and subvert social boundaries as well as national borders.

The ability to move has often been associated with ramifying networks and establishing connections. Although it, in various contexts, has also been conceived as “ambiguous” (Wilson 2017) or “arrested” (Yildiz 2014), most of the

Iranians that I met in my fieldwork consider the ability to move has a generative dimension. This is not limited to the effect imposed on the individual's life, but it also has ramifications of a larger scale. Taking the association between space and sociality into consideration, the ethnography below goes into how mobility and mobile experiences associated with the transnational garment trade forge commercial ties, social relations and transnational connections. It suggests that such trading activities and practices, in the course of facilitating the movement of goods, create a spatial archipelago (Le Renard 2014) traversing national borders and challenging social boundaries by which the everyday lives of the Iranian actors at stake are organised, structured and constrained. The metaphoric use of the term archipelago here a) indicates a sense of space and place on a large scale and in plural form; b) displays an amalgamation of spatially disconnected locations and points; c) foregrounds the connectivity constituted by practices, activities and experiences manoeuvring through discontinuum on a transnational level. To better illustrate the notion of "spatial archipelago", my ethnographic accounts of space unfold in this and the following chapter from two interconnected perspectives: trade and gender. Both trade and gender in the Middle East have been conceptualised in relation to space in various forms. The compartmentalised and structurally demarcated space has been a recurrent theme in anthropological writings (Bourdieu 1970; N. Chu 2016; Gilsenan 1982; Marcus 1992; Zubaida 2011). The association between space and the structural analogues such as male-female and public-private has been deployed to understand gender and subsequently gendered spaces in which trade and commerce are often carried out (vomBruck 2005; Keshavarzian 2007; Borneman 2007). In spite of the fact that spatial demarcations are prevalent, spaces and places constituted by the everyday practices of the Iranian traders in Turkey do not fit into the classic construction of a public-private model. The stories recounting Iranian traders below display other complex relations specific to the garment trade between Iran and Turkey that are pertinent to understanding the

gendered trading spaces. Aside from the public-private model, the illicitness and aesthetics of garment trade, among other factors also complicate the understanding of trading and gendered spaces. How does illicitness interact with gender in the shaping of the marketplace and how are aesthetic commodities and practices translated into the formation of a transnational space? To engage with these relationships, I draw on anthropological research on space, trade, gender and the aesthetics of illicit practices, which considers the multi-faceted attribute of space and spatial practices (Moore 1986; Can 2012), and, in turn, shapes the social world in which the traders and other stakeholders dwell in.

The ethnography of the chapter relates the stories of the Iranian garment traders to consider the process by which different types of space are formed and the role played by space in the transnational context of West Asia. To display the dynamic relationship between the social dispositions of space and commercial practices, I first present a contextualised and spatial understanding of a particular garment market in Istanbul in which Iranian traders conduct business. Departing from the market, I delineate the illicit garment trade between Iran and Turkey by locating some of the spatial points through which the production, transportation and consumption processes of the commercial practice are carried out.

Shaped by the illicit nature of the transnational trade (MacGaffey et al. 2000; Milgram 2008; Marsden 2016), a set of spaces, namely the shops and marketplace (Yukseker 2007) in Istanbul, transit points along the transnational bus routes (Yildiz 2014) including restaurants, petrol stations (Bozçali 2011) and buses, the transportation itself, and eventually the underground boutique shops in Tehran, is imbued with pluralised regulatory authorities (Roitman 2005). Tracing these processes to everyday practices such as transaction, consumption and transportation allows for a practice-based understanding of space. At the same time, such a scope also links human agents to space, the spatialisation of everyday behaviour and the socio-spatial order within bodily experiences and

practices (Bourdieu 1977; Low 2016). As such, trading and commercial space could be taken as the vantage point from which to view how space and notions of social and political relations are mutually impinged upon and therefore contested (Low 1996; Birenbaum-Carmeli 2004). This position thus allows us to move away from a structural and static analysis of trading space, towards a conception of commercial space in relation to the particularity of commercial practice. More specifically, by connecting spatial practices to illicit conducts in the garment trade, I bring attentions to realms rarely considered important in the conventional literature on “informal trade” or “second economy”.

5.2 GÜNGÖREN GARMENT MARKET

“Iranians come to Istanbul for relaxation (*tafrih*), for the good weather (*āb-o havā*) and also for shopping (*kharidan*). For Iranian people, Istanbul is near and cheap. If you want to know more about business, just walk along the street, go to LC Wakiki and stay there for a few minutes. All of the people are Iranians.” While distributing leaflets of an Iranian restaurant on Istiklal street, a man from Tehran explained to me why there has been an influx of Iranian tourists in Istanbul. At that point in my fieldwork, his description did not resonate much with me. Yet, the further my fieldwork proceeded and the deeper I engaged with the Iranian people in Istanbul, the more I came to understand what he meant. The Iranian consumers who were busy buying clothes on Istiklal street turned out just to be the microcosm of a larger movement of commodities between Iran and Turkey. Apart from the numerous retail stores on the commercial streets, which mainly cater for tourists, Iranian traders also come to Istanbul to buy clothes in bulk. Garments purchased in large quantities usually arrive in Iran having been transported using illicit routes and practices. They are transported to the domestic wholesale markets in Iran (such as Tehran’s Istanbul Cross in the north of the Grand Bazaar), where hundreds of garment shops squeeze together in old, shabby

buildings waiting to redistribute the goods in which they deal to shops across the country.

One of Istanbul's garment markets which Iranian traders frequent is often referred to by Iranians as the "Güngören market" as it is located in the working class neighbourhood within the municipality of Güngören in the western suburb area of Istanbul. An inland municipality, Güngören is known among Turkish people as a conservative stronghold whose inhabitants predominantly support the ruling ²³. Most female residents in Güngören, for instance, dress themselves with headscarves and long gowns. Their attitude distinguishes them from other parts of Istanbul that are better known to tourists. Local garment traders recall that it was not until approximately five years ago that garment shops started to appear on the residential streets of Güngören. Most of these shops shifted there from the more established Merter market close to Güngören due to an increase in rent. People living on the ground floor of the residential buildings in Güngören then started to renovate their homes and converted them into small shops. Walls facing the streets were knocked down and replaced by glass doors while colourful shopfronts started hanging under the windows of the families who continued to live on the first floors of these buildings. Güngören was thereafter transformed rapidly. Central Güngören has now become a bustling garment market with shops lining up next to each other in the labyrinthian web of lanes, streets and passages. Although the garment business has intruded into local people's life and changed the neighbourhood at a fast pace, the business itself is still very much embedded in the fabric of local patterns of family life. Such a locally embedded business is very much impinged on by local residents just like many other parts of Istanbul and thus should be contextualised within contemporary Turkish society and the history of Istanbul more specifically, where internal migrants from central and eastern Anatolia have flooded into the

²³ For a comparative literature on urban geography and politics, see Henkel (2008)

metropolitan area over the course of a few decades, and contributed to the particular form of urbanisation in Turkey that is defined by the dynamic relationship between secularism and religious life²⁴

In stark contrast, however, the numerous garment shops hidden in the alleys and streets of Güngören continue to attract an international population of traders arriving from neighbouring countries that neighbour Turkey, both to the North and West (the Balkans, Ukraine and Russia) but also to the South and East. Yet, these international traders do not come for the same type of traditional women's long gowns. Shops in Güngören are full of fashionable apparel, ranging from ornate night dresses covered in glittery sequins to tight-fitting sportswear, probably counterfeits of the latest styles from Zara and other major international design companies. Against such a background of juxtaposition, streets in Güngören are thus a venue for the clash between different ethnicities, life styles and behaviours. In the process of shaping Güngören into the confluence of diverse groups, Iranian people in particular have contributed a strong presence. Although it is statistically difficult to estimate the percentage or number of Iranian traders in Güngören, considering the informal and mobile nature of the garment trade, spatial arrangements in such commercial settings are indicative of their involvement in the construction of a variegated trading landscape.

STORY OF MASOUD

Masoud is one of the Iranian garment traders working in Güngören. Unlike many other Iranians, he does not work for others or on his own. Instead, he has opened his own shop and also hired an apprentice (*shāgerd*) to help him maintain the business. When I first got to know him through our common friend, he was just about to move his shop from the periphery to a new location. Much like the stalls in traditional carvansarais, Masoud's new shop, although on the semi-basement

²⁴ See White (2004) and Biehl (2014)

level, is facing a courtyard surrounded by buildings on three sides, leaving one side open to the main street. Shops converted from residential buildings are organised around the empty courtyard that is used as a shared space for trade, packaging, discussion and socialisation. A striking similarity between the organisation of markets in the historic Islamic world and the spontaneously emerging and self-organised Güngören market thus presents an obvious spatial analogue. Scharabi (1985) among others, has characterised three categorical trading spaces within the markets of the Middle East, namely the *sūq*, the *qaysariyya* and the *khān*. Each of the three trading spaces is not only distinct in terms of the way in which space is arranged, but also in terms of the type of trade being conducted. *Sūq* is usually the retail market and *qaysariyya* indicates street stalls and vendors whereas *khāns* are places for wholesale. These historic Islamic trading spaces are known for being seamlessly integrated into the urban space (Geertz 1978). Such typological framework for spatial organisation corresponding to Güngören garment market is replicated in the form of street shops, street traders and courtyard shops in Güngören which have all been integrated into the urban residential space. In addition to the correspondence in spatial forms and structures, the logic of trade in which operational roles are embedded, although with great variation, is to some extent reproduced in Güngören. Although the boundary between retail and wholesale is not completely clear-cut, spaces associated with street shops and courtyard shops are occupied and arranged according to different trading dynamics. Masoud, for instance, often exchanges information and jokes with other shop owners and traders who spend time in the space provided by the courtyard. Through such types of everyday interaction, deals and cooperation are achieved in the courtyard while packages of goods in bulk are also manually sealed and distributed to cities across Turkey and abroad. In comparison, street shops are more accessible to the passage of customers. The immediate contact with customers promotes the flow of people, and, at the same time, limits the formation of courtyard sociality. The

function of the courtyard is so important that even when Masoud stays inside the shop, the empty space in front of the shops still serves as the front line of the shop which Masoud observes from time to time through the front door. The location and its spatial form enables Masoud to anticipate potential customers; he stay vigilant throughout the day and get good access to other places.

Concealed between the labyrinthine passages, stairs and levels of uneven buildings, courtyards between residential buildings have become integral spatial components and structures of the Güngören garment market. Zooming out from the specific locales, the integration of a commercial enclave into the working-class residential neighbourhood, however, differentiates Güngören from other examples of transnational trading spaces such as the market spaces in Tajikistan through which Afghan traders stretch their trading networks throughout Central Asia and beyond. Regardless of being an animate constituent of urban living, as Marsden (2016, 53) depicts, walls and tall perimeter fences in Dushanbe separate markets that are deemed as spaces of moral and economic hazards from the rest of the post-Soviet city, which is still bogged down with the reminiscence of ideology from the former Soviet Union. In contrast to the highly controlled and bounded markets in Tajikistan, the easy accessibility in Güngören implies the informal nature of the garment trade that is hardly monitored and loosely controlled. Such informality and illicitness (Roy et al. 2004; van Schendel et al. 2005; Mathews et al. 2012) inherently create and are reproduced by multiple regulatory author(Guyer 2004; Roitman 2005). Manifest in the everyday practice of garment trade in Güngören, the multi-regulatory authorities are not only iterated through the negotiation of legitimacy between the state and the society, but also through the competition over the control of market, of trade, and more directly, of the amount of goods transported on a daily basis.

In practice, the competitive relationships between traders and between different actors in the garment business are reified as hierarchical relationships, which, in

return, construct multi-layered trading spaces. The right to space is thus highly contested. Courtyards surrounded by shops in Güngören, for instance, are not scarce, but not all of them enjoy the same spatial benefits. In order to sign the lease for the new shop at the exact location, Masoud had to wait for months. But the semi-basement he secured access to was still a compromise. It has a restricted view and is also a little difficult to get access to. Nevertheless, ever since settling in, along with conducting his business, Masoud has spent all his attention on improving the spatial arrangements of the shop. “If every day we do something new to our shop, then every day we will make some progress (*pishraft*) in our life.” Once Masoud told me so when he was fixing the mirror on the pillar. Indeed, over the following several months, Masoud added a LED billboard above the shopfront rotating his shop’s name, remittance²⁵ (*havāle*) and manteau²⁶ (*māntou*) written in red Farsi letters on a screen to continually attract Iranian customers’ attention. Every time a new customer came to the shop, Masoud would tell them the story of how he came to Güngören when there were no other Iranian traders there. “I was the first Iranian here, there were no other people (Iranians). Now just walk around, you can see for yourself how many “telephone-players” (*telefon-bāz*) there are.” The title for Iranian brokers who work on the streets by receiving orders via smartphone is an invention of Masoud himself, which he uses to indicate their lack of any facilities or capital. In contrast, “my shop is here and everyone knows my name in this neighbourhood, you can go out and ask who the Masoud from Iran is!” He enjoys making the same speech as a part of self-introduction which he delivers fluently without any redundant words. It displays his authority while helping him to win the customers’ trust in himself.

²⁵ A part of the shop’s business involves financial settlements by means of a transfer between accounts, for details see “circulation of money” section.

²⁶ A long, loose coat or overshirt worn predominantly by urban Iranian women and other Muslim women.

Space is thus never only about the facilities in the shop or interior decoration. Masoud's shop is the embodiment of capital and thus implies and spatialises complex forms of hierarchy. In contrast to Masoud, the large group of "telephone-players" in Güngören are usually without sufficient capital. Constituting the main body of the Iranian traders in Güngören, they are often referred to as the middle man (*vāsete*) or brokers between the garment manufacturer in Turkey and the consumer in Iran. Without a large amount of financial capital or experience in the business, most of these middle men cannot afford an anchored space (*jāyi nadāre*) in the market where they could stay and take a rest. Instead, it is their task on a day-to-day basis to walk from shop to shop to purchase, to carry the goods around on foot and to wander in and out of the tea stall, garment shops and alleys for pastime. The status of being a "wanderer" of the street brokers seems, at first, to endow the traders with freedom of movement, but in fact, it constrains their ability to move freely out of the trading blocks in Güngören and the capacity to devise other modes of transaction apart from the uniform pattern of garment brokerage. The more established traders, nevertheless, are exempted from the obligation of wandering. They tend to move, with vehicles, to a wider area, thus expanding the modalities of their business model and possibilities of cooperation.

While shuttling between different spots, brokers have devised many forms of usage of the commercial space provided by shops. They frequently visit Iranian garment shops to have a chat, to make some jokes in Farsi, to have a cup of tea, to rest and also to use the shop as a temporary storehouse. Masoud's shop, because of its location, has been the stopping point for many traders. One of the street brokers, Amir, visits the shop every day to leave the garments he has bought for customers for a while, before packing and sending them to the cargo company. He usually comes in the afternoon with a few plastic bags of garments. When he arrives at the shop, he finds an empty corner, piles his bags carefully and has some casual chats with Iranians around. Once, he came with only a pack

of blouses and complained “the market is in a slump (*bāzār kharābe*)”. But Masoud was busy keeping his own accounts. Amir then figured out that he should probably not continue bothering him and strolled out to have a cigarette. Another time, Amir came with a few bags packed with clothes. He arrived with excitement and said “I’m so tired, I haven’t stopped walking since early morning.” Masoud replied with some *taārof* and offered him some black tea. Normally, Masoud likes friends visiting the shop, keeping it busy. He thinks an empty shop looks bleak. He is accepting of Amir leaving his stuff in the shop for a while, or a few days sometimes. But when the shop gets busy and clothing is scattered everywhere on the ground, Masoud will become weary of the clutter. Once, Masoud kicked Amir’s plastic bags and said, right in front of his face, “Don’t put here (*injā nazār*)!” His words could be understood either as “move them to another corner” or “don’t put your stuff in my shop”. Of course, no one felt obliged to clarify it. Although, Masoud’s wife later explained to Amir “he just has a very bad character²⁷ (*akhlāgh*)”, and asked Amir to continue coming to the shop to have a tea and leave his stuff. But Amir seemed upset (*nārāhat*) because of the incident. He still shows up sometimes but never put his stuff in the shop since then. When I met Amir again on the street, I asked why he had stopped coming to the area. He said “they don’t want me to come. I’ll find myself a place to leave my stuff in the Iranian shops at Merter near the garment shops where I bought them. The space there is very big, they always have an empty desk for me. I’m just like the boss myself there.”

The story of Masoud and his interaction with Amir demonstrates the production and construction processes of trading space that is at once material in the most concrete sense and symbolic enough to represent elusive power relationships. Nevertheless, these trading spaces are more than just physical structure or symbolic representations. Through the everyday contestations over the usage of

²⁷ The word *akhlāgh* literally means morality or virtuous conduct. Masoud’s wife explains a personal disgraceful behaviour in relationship to social norms.

space, the garment shop itself mediates the trading activities and becomes a site of competition for the control of customers and the activities of regulatory authorities. Masoud always reassures his wife , regarding the high rent of the shop, “to have a shop makes a big difference”, as to have a shop usually means a better stance within the competition over market control. The turnover of Iranian shop owners is indeed much higher than individual traders. Yet, the vicissitudes and risk of the market also destabilise the hierarchical structure of Iranian garment traders. Competition swiftly shifts the balance between stories of success and failure. Thus, traders, shops, and customers, in different combinations, keep searching for the right partner to make ends meet. This continuous reconfiguration of the structure of the trading community, in essence, illustrates the process by which multiple authorities of the market are formed and reshuffled. In practice, the process of reconfiguration materialises through the fierce competition for garment transportation.



Figure 6 A courtyard in G ng ren garment market

5.3 MULTI-LAYERED TRADING SPACES

The contested usage and occupation of garment shops in Güngören embodies the stiff competition over Iranian consumers. It is a continuous fight, not only among the Iranian traders, but also in the much larger community of local Turkish traders. As garments are locally produced and consumed, it is impossible to maintain an insular trading space which avoids confrontation with the predominant Turkish shops. Thus, the Iranian garment shops and trading spaces in Güngören are to be understood and discussed in relation to the lived experience, and in the context of, as some have framed it, “the trade diaspora” (MacGaffey et al. 2000; Diouf 2000; Marsden 2016). Yet, transgressing the localised Iranian community, many complex and multi-layered trading spaces exist along with the heterogeneous composition of the garment traders between Iran and Turkey. The high degree of mobility in the transnational trading activity creates social dynamics and spatial configurations brought by specific participants in the garment transactions such as the shuttle trader (Yukseker 2007; Eder et al. 2010; Piart 2013).

Unlike the consumption of garments itself, the transportation of garments from Turkey to Iran is a business solely controlled by Iranian themselves. In fact, most of the Iranian traders are involved, to some extent, in the transportation business, also known as “cargo” (*kargo*) companies (Şaul 2014). As the movement of commodities, which makes up a considerable proportion of the garment trade, connects and traverses various localities, these localities of transportation thus constitute an important component of the trading spaces in Güngören and beyond. In Güngören, Iranians who have settled in Istanbul open their own cargo companies to facilitate the transportation of goods purchased locally. In a wider context, traders and consumers also cooperate with bigger companies elsewhere in Istanbul, who only focus on the transportation business. As bulk quantities of garment from different markets in Istanbul are all transported to Iran through

these agents (apart from shuttle traders who carry the goods themselves), cargo companies can be found in more central areas of Istanbul such as Aksaray and Taksim.

This section thus presents an attempt to emplace these threads of trading activities amid the various spatial streams flowing across the vast city of Istanbul, as well as my field site. These flows include both a great number of transnational shuttle traders between Iran and Turkey, and also the locally enmeshed trading connectivity crisscrossing different trading spaces, exquisitely carving out the linkages of the garment trade. These unsettled boundaries and experiences within transnational encounters, (Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997; Ong et al. 2003; J. Y. Chu 2010) in this case the garment traders, who are differentially connected, are best illustrated through an ethnographic account of the cargo company. Situated within a mixture of various types of visitors, cargo companies function as nodes leading to various passages between Iran and Turkey. The spatial dimension of cargo companies are foremost manifest through colourful signs on windows and glass doors indicating the reach of the logistics web across West Asia. Airline logos and Iranian city names, together with the company's title, either written as "kargo", "cargo" or in Farsi (*haml-o-naghl*), on the shop windows provide an immediate sense of locality and connectivity. The interiors of cargo companies' premises are usually equipped with just a simple pairing of desk and chair, making room for the piles of parcels packed in plastic bags and sealed with tapes, which are to be sent to Iran. Compared to the barren storehouse-style offices themselves, the rest of the work of cargo companies exudes much more vitality through connection and being in motion.

Cargo companies facilitate the passage of garments through cooperation with garment shops and other smaller or individual cargo agents operating in each market, such as Masoud's shop in Güngören. They also handle the transportation business through direct contact with shuttle traders and consumers from Iran.

Some of the cargo offices are also transformed and used as garment showrooms or even as garment shops depending on the circumstances. The flexible yet essential role of cargo companies creates a dynamism among participants in the garment trade.

The story of Mehran, who works mainly as a cargo agent in Güngören while dealing with some garment trade, provides a sense of the dynamics of the commercial rivalry, the social relations and the multi-layered spatial connections between the participants of the garment trade. Mehran is an old friend of Masoud. He introduced me to the trading community in Güngören after we met each other on the Bosphorus tour boat. Growing up in a well-to-do family, Mehran had lived a satisfactory life with his own house and car in Tabriz before moving to Istanbul. He had managed an apparel shop in the most renowned local shopping centre for years. Mehran has travelled between Iran and Turkey for years as a shuttle trader to maintain the business of his shop. The deteriorating economic conditions in Iran, however, pushed him to abandon his life at home. He wrapped up his shop, sold his car, took the money he had put aside and came to Turkey. Having worked in the field of clothing for year, Mehran knows the market well. And being a Tabrizi also provides him ethnic and location-based connections with Iranian people, in particular those from the same city (*hamshahri*). When Mehran decided to come to Istanbul in 2016, he first sought out Masoud, who had been working in Istanbul for a few years. Being old friends (*dust-e ghadimi*), who are connected by shared life experience, adolescent memory (*khāterāt-e moshtarek*) and a common ethnic background (Iranian Turk), has made them well suited to work together in Istanbul.

Mehran joined the business as a partner (*sharik*). Masoud however, took the dominant role in the shop. Masoud believes that a good trader should be bold so as to be able to seize opportunities when they come along, whereas Mehran makes his decisions with prudence and always acts with caution. In the summer

of 2016, they decided to produce a light manteau with English words printed on the back, which was very popular at that time. Masoud persuaded Mehran to make a large number of this product. But shortly after that, the Iranian government posted a ban on such types of manteau with print on the back. Most of their stock remained unsold and suddenly turned into outdated stock. They had no money to produce new clothes and had no other option but to work as brokers to take orders from Iran as much as they could. Right before the Iranian Nouruz in 2017, however, the cargo company they were working with disappeared (*farār kard*)²⁸ with their goods, which were worth more than ten thousand dollars. Their business was in crisis and the friend-partner dynamics also changed. Masoud then decided to rent a better shop and continue to be a shop owner. Mehran, however, has made up his mind to split up with his friend. He then became a “street wanderer” (a street broker), or in Masoud’s word “telephone-player”, taking orders and sending goods to Iranian customers by himself via mobile phones. He started to gather photos of new garments from different shops and post them on his Instagram and Telegram channel on a daily basis. After browsing through the photos, Iranian customers would get in contact with Mehran in Instagram and ask him to purchase certain items and send them to Iran. All of these processes are achieved via smart phones and the apps.

Through this “division of labour”, however, Masoud and Mehran found a way to continue their mutual dependence, which differs from partnership. Masoud provides Mehran with the space of the shop as a warehouse to pack the parcels. Mehran in return, works as the cargo agent making sure the transportation of goods is reliable and efficient. In order to function as a cargo company, it is essential to have the means to facilitate transportation. How goods could be delivered across the border on a day-to-day basis for traders living in Istanbul is a

²⁸ The cargo companies along with many other agent companies and services run by Iranians are well known among the Iranian community to have the tendency to commit fraud and flee with money.

pressing problem to consider. As cargo companies usually operate through illicit channels, acquaintances, connections and networks on the border are thus vital. Mehran, after splitting up with Masoud, realised the importance of a reliable cargo company. He went to the border town Doğubayazıt²⁹ through which transnational buses and cargo trucks pass on their way between Iran and Turkey. It is also a place where many Iranian porters (*bārbar*) live and work to facilitate illicit border crossing without payment of customs. They work with cargo companies in Istanbul to help transfer goods at the border. Mehran said he managed to find the best porter in Doğubayazıt, someone who will support his business and make sure no accidents will happen during the delivery process. Mehran and Masoud, thereafter, formed a relationship described by Iranians as rival friendship (*ham reghabat ham refaghat*). *Refigh* in Farsi is a friend, a companion or a comrade. Derived from the word *refigh*, *refaghat*, understood in the context of the marketplace in Güngören, is often articulated through the combination of the intimacy of friendship and the pragmatism of partnership. Displayed in the story between Masoud and Mehran, the rival friendship of traders is built up upon both their friendship in the past and their roles as garment traders in the present that is rival but also complimentary.

Based on this rival friendship, Mehran introduced the spatial dimension of cargo office to Masoud's shop. Conversely, Masoud provides Mehran a space that other Iranians do not have. The businesses of cargo transportation and garment trade take place at different times. Late afternoon, when the number of garment consumers decreases, usually demarcates the space between a shop and a "cargo warehouse". Mehran and Masoud work together to manually seal the goods with tape. They always try to persuade their customers to let themselves deliver all the garments purchased rather than using other options. When they are successful, and take on the responsibility for freight, garments will be transported directly

²⁹ A Turkish town on the Turkish-Iranian border

from Masoud's shop to Iran, through Mehran's connections on the border. When customers choose other freight options, garments will be sent from Güngören to the cargo companies, usually located within the historically established suitcase-trade hubs, Laleli and Aksaray. From there they will enter into illicit passage from Istanbul to Iran. Garment transactions therefore involve multiple players including consumers, shops, and cargo companies; it also involves multiple processes of brokerage and outsourcing of both consumption, urban transportation between markets and cargo companies as well as transnational transportation. Thus, the paths and various diversions of garments form processes of movement crisscrossing different layers of trading spaces with unsettled boundaries, and experiences embedded in the everyday lives of traders like Masoud and Mehran, often giving rise to friction and conflict.

A few times, Masoud was exasperated with Mehran as he discovered his customers had turned to other brokers. Once I met him on the streets of Güngören, walking fast. He saw me and took me to another shop. We sneaked under the window and took a glimpse of the plastic bags on the ground and left quickly. When we returned to Masoud's shop, he told his wife, who had been helping at the shop at the time that he saw all the bags filled with stuffs purchased in his shop not long before. They then started to curse Mehran very angrily. They assumed that he had poached the customer because Masoud had seen them discussing something in front of his shop. "You have to talk to him, Masoud." "Such a disgrace (*nāmardi*)!" Tell him not to do such kinds of work." "I will tell him, if he ever does it again, he doesn't need to show up here again." Masoud asserted. Of course, he did not straightforwardly express his discontent to Mehran in the end, instead he just mentioned the fact that it is difficult to manage a shop with all the extra rent and pressure on top of supporting a family³⁰. It would be good to just continue working like before without sabotaging each

³⁰ Mehran is a single man living by himself.

other. Every now and then, however, Masoud picks up the topic in a rather playful way. In particular, he deliberately talks towards Mehran in front of new customers and says not to take the customers who have come to do business with Masoud himself. These frictions and conflicts over trade eventually go back to and are negotiated in everyday life as a manifestation of rivalry, but also a testimony of friendship. These confluent and disjunct movements of garments and people propelled by the trade, on one hand link together actors such as consumers, traders, cargo men and porters, and on the other hand, however, it also perforate categories such as shop, cargo company, transportation, city and border. These passages transgress spatial boundaries and situate different notions of space in the specific contexts of the multi-layered composition of the garment trade process.



Figure 7 Signs of a cargo office written in Persian

5.4 A DIFFERENT SHUTTLE TRADE

The term *Shuttle trader*, dating back to the early 1990s, in Turkey is most commonly used to refer to female traders from the former Soviet republics. Yukseker (2004) has explored the ways in which sex and intimacy between Turkish suppliers and Russian female shuttle traders (*chelnoki*) in Istanbul's Laleli market are strategically manipulated to construct a makeshift notion of trust and therefore to achieve economic ends. For the Iranians, however, such a makeshift notion of trust is of less importance. It is necessary to mention that the notions of trust, (*e'temād*), hospitality (*mehmān parasti*) and friendship (*dusti*) (Marsden 2015) are still very pertinent to the garment trade and to the Iranian Bazaar culture itself, as one of the garment shuttle traders told me in Tabriz that "the secret to a successful business is capital, and the most important capital is trust³¹". Trust helps the traders build up connections, establish affinity and therefore forge a trading life. Nevertheless, technological advancement, in particular smartphones and instant telecommunication applications such as telegram, WeChat and Instagram, has enabled garment traders to decrease the frequency of direct contact and face-to-face transaction. Iranian consumers now place orders in Iran through Instagram private messages and telegram channels which are all updated on a daily basis and then rely on the already existing means and networks of cargo companies to fulfil the rest of the transaction. Makeshift trust, as is observed between Turkish male traders and Russian female shuttle traders, is now partly substituted by a set of constituents of credibility specific to the garment trade between Iran and Turkey.

As direct contact between sellers and buyers are increasingly replaced by more diverse forms of transaction, the importance of the facilitation of trade, especially the transportation networks, renders personal and mutual trust supplementary to a more professionalised discourse. This professionalism is constructed not only by

³¹ In Farsi: رمز موفقیت در تجارت سرمایه است و اعتماد مهمترین سرمایه است

know-how and efficiency, but also by the dominance of resource and information as well as reliable connections with authority, all of which are indispensable to illicit trade like the garment trade itself. In a nuanced conceptualisation of legitimacy, Abraham and Van Schendel proposed the theoretical distinction between the illegal and the illicit that steer clear of the state as the departure point. Instead of a dichotomised conceptualisation, they acknowledged a nexus of practices bridging the legal and illicit. What differentiates the illicit and the illegal is partly but not limited to the demarcation between the state and the society. The subtle divergence is based on the ‘distinction between what states consider to be legitimate (legal) and what people (society) involved in transnational networks consider to be legitimate (licit)’ (van Schendel et al. 2005, 4). In the case of the transnational garment trade, developed illicit trading networks have been envisaged and developed. By rescaling the origin of regulatory authority, garment traders have maintained a transnational circulation which defies the norms of political authority (illegal) on one hand, and is accepted in the eyes of participants (licit) on the other. The multi-layered trading spaces arising from the crisscrossed networks of garment traders exemplifies the spatial conceptualisation of Abraham and Van Schendel, between the illegal and the licit dimensions which they call “the (il)licit third space: (that is) legally banned but socially protected” (2005, 23).

An important point raised by Abraham and Van Schendel is the distinguished political and social origin of regulatory authority, which facilitates the exploration into the imagination and production of illicit flows in transnational trade. In a similar vein, Guyer (2004) proposed the plural form of value systems as the regulatory authorities in global economy. Through different monetary systems operating in Nigeria and America, Guyer interpreted the coexistence of the classical African economic practice and capitalist institutional order in a single configuration, which facilitates a transnational economic order through the

dynamic interactions between convention and modernity and also through the plurality of regulatory authority. Similarly, Roitman (2005, 18) depicted the pluralised regulatory authorities in the Chad Basin, where different sources of authority compete with each other. From state bureaucracy to merchant elites and non-state militia groups, various figures of authority vying for dominance establish autonomous fiscal bases. The coexisting regulatory authorities conjunctly form the nexus supporting the livelihood for people in the region. As such, the discrepancy in regulatory authority is related to the disintegration between the state-level legislation and the local-level conventional practice. This discrepancy, in practice, is reified as well as amplified by the transnational trajectories of mobile subjects and the illicit life circles of commodity.

More importantly, building on the discussion of the discrepancy in regulatory authorities, an argument could be made to go beyond the demarcation between the state and the society and to examine the interpenetration of the legal and the illegal. Transnational networks and connections composed of the various authorities in trade are not only unilaterally exploited by the mobile subjects, or the garment traders in this case. It sometimes functions to compensate the incapability of the state-level operation and renders the state in a more preferable position (Bayat 1997; Keshavarzian 2007). To understand the process of transnational illicit flows and how illicit economy is conducted to overcome the inefficacy of formal coordination between regulatory authorities, it requires a closer examination on the configuration of how legality is implicated to illicitness.

In places like today's Iran where international sanctions have been imposed for decades, while the state tends to criminalise the illicit, it also allows for and sometimes promotes the informal manoeuvre as efforts to transfer and evade its own responsibility. As Bayat (1997,12) put it in the Third World countries such as Iran, state-society interaction is characterised by "a combined and continuous

process of informalisation, integration and reinformalisation”. Legality thus interacts, shapes and is reshaped by illicitness and vice versa. This the plural and symbiotic configuration of the two dimensions is perfectly illustrated by the famous transnational illicit trade, facilitated by Rera Zarrab (Yolacan 2017).

The facilitation of plural regulatory authority, in many cases, is embodied by mobile subjects. Engaging with the mobile subjects allows for an understanding of the liminal stages where, when and how the ‘illicit’ and the ‘legal’ interact with each other and therefore, are an important aspect in the comprehension of illicit activities. Therefore, by attending to trading and transportation practices for both obscuring and demarcating the trading space and relations, forms of contestation and negotiation over the ordering of economic and political authority are evident, for instance, through everyday engagement between Mehran and Masoud. For the facilitation of garment trade, the constituents of credibility in addition to mutual trust have, together, constituted the authority of some of the cargo companies, agents and traders over others. Such authoritative status within the garment trade is manifested, in spatial forms, as different layers of trading spaces spreading from garment shops, cocooning one another and connecting the trading networks between Iran and Turkey.

5.5 CONCLUSION

As the end of my fieldwork approached, Masoud moved to another shop with a better location and upgraded his business to manufacturing garments. The shop is still in the same courtyard, overlooking the main street of Güngören, which is always full of consumers coming from different countries. Masoud sublet the old shop to a Turkish trader who was married to an Iranian wife. Still, when Masoud passed by in front of his old shop, it would remind him of the old days when he worked hard furnishing the shop and striving for his own better life. “It’s a shame I have to give the shop up to other people. We have done so much to the place. We made it such a nice space.” Masoud once told me. Indeed, although all our

decoration and renovation were still there, the shop was never the same space. Mehran on the other hand, continued to cultivate his cargo business and was a little marginalised from the life of Masoud, considering their close cooperation in the past. But Mehran also started engaging with other street brokers and shuttle traders and constructing his own trading space. To some extent, both of them are now relocated to a new space and therefore a new trading network. Nevertheless, as their stories in the past have shown, embedded within the transnational connections between Iran and Turkey, the unsettled boundaries and experiences propelled by the passages of garments and traders have never set a clear-cut demarcation between either group of traders nor the trading spaces.

As Lefebvre (1992) suggests “space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations”. The ways in which Iranian traders construct their trading spaces such as the courtyard and shops in Güngören, and, in return, are shaped by the crisscrossed spatial connections between localities across the process of garment transaction are a precise illustration of the understanding of space as playing a constituent role in the meaning-making process. The trading practices, as elaborated, in particular, through the operation of cargo companies, showcase the complexity as well as the fluidity of space. Contextualising these aspects of trading spaces in relation to the transnational garment trade allows for an examination of the specific conditions in which illicit activities underpin and construct a multi-layered spatial structure, which takes its form from the plural forms of regulatory authority of the illicit garment trade.

Building on the dynamism of the space-trade relationship, the next chapter continues the focus on the garment trade from Istanbul to Iran to explore the aesthetically imbued commercial practices and spaces. I display in the ethnographic material the ways in which garments have been consumed and manipulated as an aesthetic object by Iranian consumers to construct and

reconstruct spatial boundaries and gender demarcation in Tehran's underground garment shops, as well as in the everyday conversation that animate Istanbul's marketplaces.

6. TRANSLATING TRADE INTO AESTHETICS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Situated in Istanbul's local garment markets, Iranian traders are, however, also embedded in the transnational commercial practices that connect Turkey and Iran through the object, clothing. Clothing, as one of the most immediate forms of mediation between the bodily self and the external world, has long been a focus in anthropological studies. While the colours, patterns and materials of clothing are among the analytical scopes of some, semiotic analysis on clothing projects stylistic differences onto social factors such as class, ethnicity and religion. In the Middle East, discussions on clothing and its symbolic meanings manifest most evidently in the role of the veil and other garments complying with religious beliefs. The veil, among other types of clothing, not only demarcates male from female, and the public from the private, but also demonstrates identities and beliefs through the body governed by authority.

A number of examples of the symbolic utilisation of clothing can be observed in the specific context of Turkey and Iran. Navaro-Yashin's (Navaro-Yashin 2002a) writing on the fashion shows in Istanbul, which promote the Islamic form of chic, illustrates the interactive dynamism in Turkish society impacted both by secularity and religiosity. Mahdavi's book on the evolving sexual practices in contemporary Tehran, on the other hand, delineates that fashionable clothing and appearance are important parts of the lives of young Tehranis because they symbolise identity and serve as markers demonstrating the defiant urban dwellers' sense of agency and citizenship, which challenges the existing religious order (Mahdavi 2009, 122). Clothing is, nevertheless, not only symbolic of the characters, dispositions and identities of people. It is also a site in which power relations are negotiated, and the means by which social boundaries are

constructed. While forms of Western clothing point to an identity differentiated from the Islamic one, they also show a degree of rebellion. Indeed, as Mahdavi observed, urban Iranians use appearances, clothing and styles “not only to express identities but also to signal one other” (Mahdavi2009, 126). Clothing as an identity-related code helps define and identify like-minded people to express and defy imposition.

Yet, the conceptualisation of clothing in the Middle East seems to follow a paradigm that adopts a dichotomised categorisation, that is, the traditional and pious as opposed to the secular and deviant. While the literature on the relationship between religion and fashion has focused on the emerging trend of Islamic Fashion since the 1990s (White 1999; Navaro-Yashin 2002b; Mahmood 2005; Moors 2009), the ways in which Muslims engage with non-Islamic Western fashion has often been interpreted into an adaptation to the West, a secular backlash to the religious dominance or a form of everyday resistance (Mahdavi 2009; Moaveni 2007). In spite of an evident distinction between the religious and the secular, clothing, the garment trade and commercial practices of the Iranian traders in Turkey do not fit into the perceived dichotomy. The ethnographic stories below, recounting Iranian traders’ involvement in transnational commerce, display complex relations specific to the garment trade between Iran and Turkey that are pertinent to the understanding of clothing, its usage and different ways in which people relate elements of their lives to the ostensible Western world - which needs an closer examination.

Following the analysis of trading space in previous chapter, this chapter looks at clothing and the garment trade as aesthetic practices. Trading spaces are often gendered (Ngai 2005; Leshkovich 2014; Thiel et al. 2017). The formation of these spaces, however, is not only limited by sexual difference. It is also a process mediated by other elements such as politics and religion (vom Bruck 2005). Recent anthropological research has attempted to understand space, in its

various forms, in relation to aesthetic practices, such as music, fashion and literary expression (Ivanov 2012; Eisenberg 2012; Olszewska 2015; Verne 2018). Following this line of exploration, this chapter delves into the narratives of garment traders from Istanbul to Iran to explore aesthetically imbued commercial practices, and deals with the gendered dimension of the garment trade. I display through the ethnographic material how garments have been consumed and manipulated as aesthetic objects by Iranian consumers to construct and reconstruct spatial boundaries and gender demarcation in Tehran's underground garment shops as well as in Istanbul's marketplace. The trend of purchasing and possessing Turkish garments, a transnationally produced aesthetic object, I suggest, is essential to the enactment of the desirable imagination of a cultural other and a concomitant embodied social space, a process, in Friedman's term, which encompasses "a potent and significant global otherness" (Friedman 1990, 321). Understood in such a context, aesthetic commodities and "shuttle traders" in Istanbul exceed the parameters of a mere backlash against the homogeneous conception of globalisation. Rather, they serve as the media of the aesthetic formation of a gendered space which actively shapes the moral negotiation of the Iranian traders and consumers.

An analysis of the formation and practices of aesthetic space, rather than a strengthened dichotomy between the Western identity and Islamic beliefs, shifts the focus away from the over-discussed chasm and antagonism between the two, to the construction of selfhood in aesthetic forms through everyday practices. The everyday negotiation by garment traders between "demonised" Western fashion and the authoritative Islam is reified in individual styles that shape various forms of selfhood. This process of selfhood formation, or rediscovering of the self, illustrates the ways in which Iranian people relate to society in contemporary Iran. In the following sections, I recount the gendered dimension of the garment trade by showing the different ways in which female traders engage in transnational commercial practice and continue the discussion by showing how

aesthetics as a productive dimension influences gendered trade. Arising from the transnational garment trade, a particular underground trading space, namely *maison*, a residential house converted to a boutique, will be used as an illustration of how gender, aesthetics and trade intertwine with each other to construct understandings of the self, as well as traverse the conventional social boundaries between male and female, as well as different classes.



Figure 8 Neon lights of the shopfronts in Göngüren garment market

6.2 FEMALE TRADERS OF THE GARMENT TRADE

Women from different backgrounds, who may never remember or even come across each other, adopt different lives characterised by divergent forms of access to the transnational garment trade. They all, nevertheless, through their access to the garment trade, inevitably take part in a process of boundary making, a process that strengthens the prevalent demarcation and produces emerging forms of categorisations of identity that have been inherently embedded in the trade. 28-year-old Mariam grew up in the southern city Shiraz, but used to live in Tehran, working as an office secretary. She was never a part of the trading community. After marrying Bijan, Mariam came to Istanbul, and for a while she worked in Bijan's shop to help him with some accounting work. Being far from home and living among the Iranian traders was challenging for her in many ways. Every now and then Mariam would tell me how different the southern Iranians are especially compared to the Turkā (the Iranian Azeris who are ethnic Turks)

“I'm a southerner. The climate in the South (of Iran) is different from the North. We have different habits, we eat different food and our bodies (*badan*) are different. They are resistant to the cold, but we are used to the heat. So in Shiraz, people can't wear too many clothes because of the hot weather. For example, women wear slippers without socks on the street, but for the northerners (Tabrizi) this is unimaginable.”

She will then start to complain about the food her husband likes “He will be happy as long as there is meat, no matter how it is cooked. Just meat is enough.” and continue to talk about how different they are. Bijan is also aware that his wife is alienated from their life in Güngören. When Mariam offered to help him in the shop, rather than insisting Mariam should stay at home, Bijan thought it was a good idea. He also tried to help Mariam create new friendships with other women in Güngören who speak Farsi. He introduced both Masoud's wife (Ziba) and Mehran's girlfriend (Sadaf) to Mariam, and organised gatherings both at

home and outside. While Ziba got pregnant before long and stopped going out so often, Mehran's girlfriend met with Mariam from time to time.

Sadaf is both Mehran's girlfriend and his cargo agent. They met each other on the Iranian-Turkish border town Doğubayazıt when Mehran went there to find a reliable cargo connection³². He was told the best porter (*bārbar*) there was Sadaf. He then started to work with Sadaf and Sadaf's porter friends to maintain regular transportation of his clothes from Turkey to Iran. Sadaf and Mehran then started dating. She sometimes came to Istanbul to visit Mehran, check the cargo and organise their transportation. While Bijan and Mehran treasured this opportunity for their partners to socialise with one another, Mariam and Sadaf found themselves at odds. Bijan once took them to smoke shisha together. While Mariam enjoyed her shisha along with Bijan and Mehran, Sadaf criticised Mariam, saying that it is inappropriate (*monāseb nist*) for a Muslim woman to smoke, particularly in public space with other men. Mariam was infuriated by the comment and later expressed her anger to me

“How on earth could she say something like that? Maybe other people can criticise me, but Mehran's girlfriend, a single woman working on the border and travelling between countries to earn a living, is not in the position to make such judgement. It is not a woman's job, but she does this kind of work. Who knows what's happening there.”

Mariam never mentioned her resentment in front of Mehran and Sadaf, perhaps because it was more gossip, or an emotional accusation as revenge for Sadaf's criticism on smoking, than a comment on the gendered role in the trading business based on concrete facts. One may contend Mariam's idea of a gendered job or whether 'a job which a woman should do' really exists. Nevertheless, the subtle dimension characterised by gender difference in the transnational garment trade is still distinctively evident in Güngören. Most discernibly, the roles of garment traders, especially the shuttle traders, are taken on by women. These

³² See chapter 4, Multi-layered trading spaces

female shuttle traders resemble the former Soviet republics's *chelnokis* (female shuttle traders) but are also extraordinary in the context of transnational trade between Iran and Turkey. Considering the longstanding dominant role of male traders in the traditional guilds and Bazaar economy in Iran, as well as in the historical commercial links between Iran and Turkey, female traders from Iran are a new phenomenon. Also differing from the *chelnokis*, female Iranian traders in Güngören encompass a heterogeneous group of women, involved in the garment trade in disparate capacities. To illustrate the differences, it is useful to contextualise the different practices and connotations of trading conduct undertaken by these female traders.

One of Masoud's regular customers, a female trader, Fara, who is in her mid 30s, comes to Istanbul to buy clothes every two or three months. While her husband maintains an underwear shop in the Tehran Bazaar, she started her business as a "hobby" at home over a year ago. Fara initially wanted to add something to her simple life as a housewife. She collected clothes from different shops that fit with her taste and sold them from home. After starting the business, she converted one of the rooms in her house into a shop and started to import garments from Turkey. She started to visit Istanbul, accompanied by her husband, to select and transport clothes when more customers came to her home to make purchases. Every time she came into Masoud's shop, she would start talking to everybody in the room warmly, but not overly fervently. She has the ability to give attention to everybody and quickly pick up a topic of conversation. Even in the late afternoon when the shop is empty and people are getting tired, Fara could always draw people's attention to herself and make them listen to her stories of how she has spent all her life fighting against the low quality Chinese counterfeit products in Iranian markets, while giving me a significant glance. Masoud's wife Ziba once summarised her characteristic as 'very good interpersonal skills' (*ravābet-e umumi ghavist*), which speaks of her ability and perhaps experience in the garment trade. Although Fara was good at dealing with people and has been quite

familiar with all the whereabouts of hotels and shops in Istanbul, her husband still accompanied her all the time to help her, to be supportive, to make sure Fara was not deceived by the traders in the garment business in Turkey and also to seek the opportunity to grow her business. When I talked to Fara's husband, he was considering investing more money into his wife's Maison business, as it was starting to make more profit than his own shop at the Bazaar. It, however, will still be Fara's business as the private aspect of the Maison determines that the operation has to rely on Fara's female network.

Similar to Fara, another customer of Masoud, Parvin, a Maison owner in her late twenties from Iran's third largest city Isfahan, travels to Istanbul regularly to replenish her stock with the company of her mother. Compared to Fara, Parvin has successfully developed her business into a one of a considerably larger scale. She has rented an entire flat with multiple rooms (*chand tā sālon*) in central Isfahan. Parvin and her mother used to come to Turkey every month to make purchases as business was very good just a year ago. But as the Iranian Rial continues to devalue, they only get to come to Turkey once in a season now. While Parvin's mother would spend a long time talking with me in the courtyard in front of Masoud's shop, Parvin visited the surrounding shops one by one and made her deals on her own. Even though Parvin could already be considered a savvy trader in the garment business, capable and experienced in handling all sorts of negotiations, her mother still travels with her every time she comes. "I used to help her quite a lot, but I'm getting old now and can't even carry a thing. But still she is a girl, so I have to come and be here with her" said Parvin's mother.

In contrast to Fara, Parvin, and other female Iranians visiting Güngören, who are accompanied by husbands, family members, perhaps even wearing hijabs, single unmarried Iranian women are also a significant component of the Iranian traders visiting Güngören. Regardless of Turkey's relatively liberal and secular social

atmosphere when compared to that of Iran, the single Iranian women who come to Güngören are, nevertheless, much more likely to be scrutinised by the gaze not only from men but also from other Iranian women. Nadia is one of the well-known traders among the Iranians in Güngören, who has her own Maison in the more upscale north-central Tehran's Vanak square. She is in her mid-twenties, younger than both Fara and Parvin. Her name is known by the Iranian traders in Güngören, partly because of her successful business, reflected by the high number of orders she takes. She is also admired because of her exquisite tastes, both manifested in the garments she chooses to purchase and also in her self-presentation as a finely dressed-up young woman. Nadia never wore the headscarf when she came to Güngören. She is usually dressed in short and tight apparel in bright colours on her upper body and a pair of loose trousers (shalvār goshād) popular in Iran. On warm days, Nadia wears skimpy clothes, and shorter trousers or skirts revealing her waist and leaving the ankles uncovered. The traders and salesmen working in the Iranian shops pay close attention to Nadia. When they notice her coming from a distance, through a shop window, the salesman in Masoud's shop and Mehran sometimes say "look, the beautiful girl (khoshgele) is coming". Sometimes, they also include me in their conversation. They once asked me which type of girlfriend I wanted to find and had me choose between Nadia and other girls, then mocked me for being a dokhtar bāzi (libertine) which literally means girl-playing in Farsi and started to laugh. Nadia, however, presents herself in an uptight way, contrasting to Fara. The different interactive approaches adopted by Nadia creates a distance between herself and other traders. Those comments from traders and salesmen were all made behind Nadia's back. Nadia has her own style (tip), she uses brand-name bags and clothes much more expensive than those sold in Güngören, but also wears the fashionable clothes she purchased in Güngören as part of her outfit. Ziba said it is not difficult for a girl like Nadia to achieve success in the Maison business.

“Nadia is beautiful. People seeing Nadia dressed in those clothes she sells will go to her shop to buy them. She herself is an advertisement.”

In this regard, women have the advantage of better understanding it, which is indispensable for someone in the garment business.

Although young urban women emancipate themselves from certain constraints, and project themselves in new imaginings through the lifestyles that they adopt, they nonetheless submit themselves to other constraints. New practices revolving around consumerism create new boundaries between who is acceptable and unacceptable, which coexist with old boundaries between what is appropriate and inappropriate. The changing boundaries of social demarcation are indicative of the destabilising negotiation with, resistance to, and transgression against public order within the Iranian community, where members are categorised according not only to ethnicity, income level, social status and gender roles, but also to contested spaces mediated by aesthetic values and consumerism.

6.3 FORMING AESTHETIC SPACE

Although female traders are not uncommon, and in fact they have played a predominant role in some of the commercial settings worldwide (Yukseker 2004; Ngai 2005; Leshkovich 2014), the traditional Bazaar economy in Iran has been dominated by male traders (Keshavarzian 2007; Erami 2009). To have a better understanding of the strong presence of female traders in Güngören, I once brought up my observation and curiosity to Mariam. Iranian women, according to common perceptions, are most of the time expected to be socially dependent on the male family members and constrained to domestic space, at least within Iran. It was somewhat unusual for me to observe their strong presence on the long trip between Iran and Turkey. Mariam ascribed the phenomenon to the aesthetic nature of the garment business.

“We sell clothes. Women are better informed of (*behtar midonan*) garments (*pushāk*) and style/fashion (*tip*). Appearance (*zāher*) is

important for us.” She then added “it’s not that men do not care about appearance, but men and women have different tastes (*salighe*)”.

In conformity with Mariam’s opinion, one of her Iranian customers, a male trader in his twenties from Tehran, also testified to the importance of *salighe* from his perspective. Being a male, he told me, his secret to success in the business is his understanding of women and girls’ minds. He has had a lot of girlfriends and is used to mingling with different types of women.

“Girls’ and boys’ tastes are different. I understand what they think and what they want. You have to be informed of the trends (*dar jarayān bāshid*) to know which model they like.”

Rather than a tool to mark distinctive preferences and social indicators in Bourdieu’s sense, *salighe* is used as an aesthetic means to cultivate common ground which transcends differences between classes, spaces and genders.

On an occasion outside of the garment market’s commercial setting, an entirely different group of Iranians also reflected on the ways in which Iranian people relate *salighe* to their lives. It was in a cafe where I was sitting with some Iranian asylum seekers. An elegant waitress in her thirtieth, who, we came to know later, was seeking asylum in Turkey, served us tea. When she left the table my Iranian friend immediately told me she must be an Iranian. I asked my refugee friend how he thought about the waitress, whose appearance was nicely maintained with glowing brown hair, felicitous makeup, a well-cut jumper and jeans.

“She looks like some kind of wealthy middle-class house wife, not a refugee” I said.

“*Gorgeous attire with empty pockets (jib khāli va poz āli).*”

My friend replied with an Iranian proverb describing people who invest all their money in the maintenance of a good appearance. Then he continued to explain

“Iranians like to look good, especially in front of others. For Iranians, what others think about us is very important. A great number of Iranians spend a lot on appearance. Even as a refugee, they may need money and

have to work, Iranians still want to appear to have good taste (*bā salighe*)” he added.

This tremendous attention Iranians pay to their appearance and style is perhaps best manifested in the garment trade and garment shops. Güngören market itself is an aesthetic island, demarcated by the streets, from the rest of the neighbourhood. Colourful shopfronts, showrooms and plastic mannequins in all the latest designs arranged into various postures, standing on the pedestrian area, all invite customers into the shops to appreciate the collection attuned to a particular style. Like many Turkish shops, Bijan’s business is established on speciality rather than inclusiveness. His shop is known for formal night dresses (*majlesi*) made from lustrous velvet and bright textiles embellished with imbricated beads and sequins. In contrast, Masoud has opted for an heterogenous collection of garments to cater to a diverse source of customers. For the majority of his stock, Masoud has gathered, from shops nearby, a number of manteau, a word borrowed from French also referred to by its Farsi name *roopoosh* denoting a dark overcoat worn by Iranian women on top of other clothing. To add some variation from the prevalent Iranian styles, Masoud also sells *manteaus* that are bright-coloured and lightweight. Apart from the *manteaus* targeted primarily to Iranians, Masoud also sells everyday apparel composed of a great variety of designs, usually trendy urban styles that are popular among the Turkish. A small section of his shop is filled with opulent night dresses, forming the most luxurious corner of the shop.

He hired one of his countrymen, (*hamvatan*) Kave, to help with the shop’s running, as he understands the undertones and needs of Iranian customers’s tastes associated with the regional and social backgrounds that are often manifested through the customers’ own appearance, as in the case of Nadia. The tentative Iranian customers, attempting to probe into the colourful array of garments hanging on the racks will at once loosen up, becoming animated on hearing the familiar greetings in Farsi “*Khosh amadid, befarmaeed!* (Welcome, help yourself

please!)” The vigour expressed in Masoud's engaging voice easily creates a lively ambience in the shop and makes people feel like participating in consumerism. When Masoud is not at the shop, Kave seamlessly takes over the responsibility of orienting the customers. *Taārof* works perfectly as an icebreaker. The hospitable connotation expressed through *Taārof* changes a silent encounter between strangers into the warmth that one may feel familiar with at corner shops on the streets of Tehran, where banter and greetings accompany the whole process of purchasing. If customers are wearing fashionable apparel, after greetings, Kave usually asks “do you have a *maison*?” to try to locate their interest in the right section of Masoud's shop. He has made a lot of good judgement calls, but sometimes customers reply “no, we are buying for our shop.” “We have just launched our new models of manteau.” Kave will then direct them to the conservative overcoats, as *maison* owners in Iran usually cater for a secular population in private spaces, whereas shops are aiming at the general public. He also asks which region in Iran they are from so that he can make the right recommendations. People from small towns do not necessarily equate to unsophisticated and backward taste. Traders from towns along the Caspian Sea, for instance, could be more relaxed than Tehran shop owners. And people from Mashhad, famous for the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza and its religious pilgrimage, could demand the same provocative styles as the *maison* owners from northern Tehran. Essentialising the population of a particular region does not work every time, but, as an Iranian, his geographical knowledge and understanding of Iranian society in terms of ethnic and religious groups has helped him to connect with the customers.

Taste (*salighe*), is an important quality that needs continual nurture throughout time. To have a sense of good taste (*bā salighe*) requires the devotion of time to cultivate it, to trace and to adapt oneself to the development of trend. Wilson (1985), for instance, highlights the importance of temporality, as it is the factor that turns a dress into fashion. But, at the same time, having good taste requires

something more than nurture and the devotion of time. Taste is also about the subtle understanding of appropriacy, varying from place to place as is manifested in Ziba's words "every place has a meaning, we have to wear appropriate clothes according to it".

Salighe also implies the notion of *savād* (literacy), an idea linked to being cultivated, which may not necessarily indicate someone's level of education, but is often expressed in relation to the socially recognised status of civilisedness, and more specifically, with a reference to the position of the Iranian civilisation (*tamadon*) in contact with other cultures such as the Arabs and Turkish, which are considered less civilised by some of the Iranians. An Iranian tourist from Tehran I met in the Turkish border town, Van, for instance, expressed that "the Turkish are not that civilised (compared to Iranians)" (*savādesh kheili bālā nist*). The reason for him and other Iranians coming to the small Turkish city is for the shopping, and for the freedom (to drink, party and dress liberally). De la Fuente pointed out in his analysis of the aestheticisation of everyday life (de la Fuente 2000) that in the absence of shared values, communities have emerged around taste, with the aesthetic taking on the function of sociality. Notions of aesthetics vary for different people. For Masoud, aesthetics lies in his late-night visit to garment workshops in Caylayan, and in his shop, where he sells beauty. It is in his striving for a place in the garment trade between the production factory and the Iranian customer. For consumers like Susan, aesthetics is about the imaginary in Turkey, in flamboyant colours and the sophisticated atmosphere in shops, but it's also embedded in hardship. For some others, aesthetics is the imagined future, which is good, but always yet to come. No matter what notion aesthetics constitutes, it enables the encompassment of the global other, and connects these different living worlds together.

You want to leave and become a memory yet your heart hurts.

You pretend to love me and play the game every day.

Don't be afraid, everyone gets anxious upon leaving.

You will get over these feelings very soon.

I promise you it is not difficult, at least for you.

Relax, I'm far away from you and your world.

Relax, no one will replace you.

Recounting the love story of separation, the song I promise you (*Behet ghol midam*) by the Iranian singer Mohsen Yeghaneh was a real hit in 2017. During my fieldwork with the Iranians in Istanbul, I would hear it played almost every single day, and sometimes multiple times a day. It might just be a catchy melody that is popular among the Iranians, but its lyrics fit perfectly into the reality of the lives that are elsewhere, that are abroad. For the Iranians in Istanbul, however, it was not only the poetic lyrics of the song that resonated with their lives abroad, being detached and being foreign (*gharib*). Rather it was the restive emotions of longing and belonging that could not be soothed by anything else but the rhythm and the mood of Farsi. The Iranian Azeris in Turkey who seamlessly switch between Turkish and Farsi may be in the best position to capture the elusive feelings that languages or lyrics in different languages could invoke. “Farsi is sweet, Turkish is artistic (*Fārsi shirin-e, Torki honar-e*).” An Iranian Azeri trader once explained to me the difference between the two languages. Proudly proclaiming himself an “Iranian Turk”, he speaks highly of the inherent logic of Turkish and the meticulous use of prefixes, suffixes and linguistic cases which characterise Turkic languages, all contributing to making Turkish into a craft that requires skill and precision. Farsi, on the other hand, doesn't get trapped in precision. It is a soft touch on the heart and the sweetness that nourishes the soul. “Farsi is a very sweet language.” Many Iranians have told me so. For the Iranians

in Turkey, perhaps such sweetness is particularly indispensable. Those Iranians in Istanbul who do not work or live in places where a majority of Iranian people is not present, regularly visit places such as Aksaray, Merter and Güngören. Seeing and wandering around an environment in which Farsi words are ubiquitous on the streets just makes them feel happy, comfortable and at home. And sometimes, when emotions arise, they just need to talk in Farsi with its flow and cadence, comprised of its particular combination of vowels, consonants and stress.

These artistic features of Farsi, conveying the most immediate emotions and sensory experiences, do not only manifest in trivial ways. For the Iranians living between Iran and Turkey, they also shape everyday life, amplify divergence and ignite conflicts. The Iranian traders in Güngören for instance, would often add some vibrancy to the space by playing music, especially at lunch time when there would not be many customers. Bijan also loves to play music while balancing his accounts, or simply over lunch. However the choice of music could sometimes be a problem. One day, when Bijan was playing some music on his computer, as per usual, Bijan's wife (Mariam) started to complain about the music. "Next one, Bijan", she said carelessly, while a mellow female voice was singing sorrowfully in Turkish. Bijan then cut the song and continued to eat his lunch of salad and Iranian mashed potatoes prepared by his wife. As the lunch proceeded, the computer played another song. But Mariam once again asked to skip the song. She just didn't like the melody. Unlike Mariam, who is a Fars, Bijan is an Iranian Azeri. He understands and speaks Turkish very well and therefore felt imposed upon by Mariam while enjoying the Turkish music. Bijan yelled

"Cut every one of them, what's left to listen?"

Mariam was infuriated by this and said "but what's that"?

"It's music! Last week I played Mohsen Yeghaneh all the time. I never listened to any Turkish songs. Now I have to play some Turkish music!"

"But you know that I don't understand anything of it."

“If you don't understand, listen to it! Then you will understand! You live here now, you have to learn, that's how you will learn the language.”

“It's not like I don't want to learn. It's sad music. These Turkish songs all sound like cry and make people unhappy. Listen to it yourself! Why play these things in the shop?”

Eventually Bijan surrendered and cut the song again. A quicker and lilting melody started to play.

“This is good” Mariam commented.

“My dear, the last one was a sad song and this is also a sad song. They are the same thing. If you ask me to choose a good one, how can I choose from the two?”

“Well Iranian songs are not sad.”

Bijan smiled with resignation.

CONSUMER GEOGRAPHY

While the aesthetic space are contested and negotiated on a day-to-day basis in the Istanbul's garment market, some other forms of aesthetically imbued social space are more bounded within their social boundaries. Tehran's consumer geography, for instance are intrinsically demarcated by such aesthetic boundaries. Interwoven into the complex urban landscape of Tehran, commodities, marketplaces, and consumption are closely embedded in the spatial arrangements of the city in relation to different manifestations of identity, such as social classes, gender dynamics and religiosity, and therefore form a consumer geography. Due to its social embeddedness, the consumer geography has become an essential point of knowledge for the consumers living in the city to learn about, so as to maneuver through different places and types of marketplaces. The social implications behind these locations are also useful for them to know.

The question of where to go for shopping is complicated and makes a big difference. First of all, the Tehran Bazaar, which encompasses a vast area of the

city, still functions as the major arena for transactions and trading activities. It does not only cater for the needs of the residents in Tehran itself, but also supports economic circulation in various fields over the rest of Iran. Traders and businessmen come from other cities and towns to Tehran Bazaar to replenish their stock and get connected with traders from different places. Bazaar economy has its own complex ecology. One of the features of the Tehran Bazaar is the guild system, through which merchants and shops dealing with any one type of commodity are organised collectively. Yet, for the people living in Tehran, the Grand Bazaar has already lost its prominence compared to its heyday, although it still serves their miscellaneous needs, arising from everyday life. While many people still visit the bazaar, there are many other places and types of spaces that have replaced the bazaar as a marketplace.

Replicating the guilds within bazaar economy, there are particular locations scattered around the city for the consumption of different types of commodities. For instance, Ferdowsi avenue is known for its concentration of shops selling leather goods and South Valiasr street is packed with sportswear, whereas the Mofateh area is a hub for evening dresses, etc. Ranging from clothes to home appliances, a great number of commodities are sold and consumed in designated areas of the city. Therefore, as a local resident of Tehran it is very important to know and keep learning this mental consumer map. Its importance however, does not only lie with the particular information which helps with consumption, rather, consumer geography is deeply embedded in the social structure of urban life, through which social hierarchies, classes and identities manifest.

The north-south demarcation of Tehran, for instance, is a miniature of the representation of differences. Different types of social classes and identities in Tehran indicate completely different forms of everyday lives which generate very contrasting consumer needs. Many of the Iranian tourists visiting Istanbul during the holidays are from middle class families living in northern Tehran. They go

abroad every now and then and are exposed to western lifestyles. Some of them say that their lives in the upscale neighbourhoods in the north such as Niavaran, Pasdaran, Kamraniye or Velenjak are not much different to those of their counterparts in Europe or America not to mention the neighbouring Turkey, and in particular the domestic life. They organise parties at home with different types of alcoholic drinks to accompany their extravagant lifestyles as well as prohibited entertainment. On the other hand, people from the southern part of Tehran are more likely to come from a working-class background or precarious conditions, striving only for food and basic living needs.

A woman from southern Tehran, Sara, who I met during my visit to Iran, told me she has to commute from the very south of the city to the northern neighbourhood Pasdaran to work as a kitchen assistant. Sara spends nearly two hours, both in the morning and in the afternoon, to travel back and forth to make a living, and to sustain not only her own family, but also another one, with whom they live. The family she is living with includes two nephews and their single mother. Their father, Sara's brother, died in the Iran-Iraq war. Since then, she has taken care of her nephews. A person like Sara is just one among many of the similar people representing living circumstances that is very common in southern Tehran. On one hand, they do not have the money or connections to exempt themselves from risks and burdens such as military conscription, which is often circumvented by rich Iranians by paying an extra fine. On the other hand, the high cost of urban life propels poor people to take up two and sometimes three jobs in order to survive. These disparate life patterns of Tehranis are demonstrated through consumption and where they consume commodities. The consumer geography, which divides Tehran's neighbourhoods, places and shopping centres, thus is also a representation of spatial demarcation that segregates people into different classes. Therefore, when I asked Sara if she goes to the north or to the private maison to do her shopping, she told me, those places are not intended for people like her (*barāye mardom mesl-e mā nist*).

The shopping centres in Niavaran, Velenjak or Pasdaran are not a part of Sara's daily life, in spite of the fact that she comes to Pasdaran every day to work. And the commodities sold in these places are not what she needs and uses. She does not waste her time pursuing the goods that are not connected to her own life. But she is still well aware of all the dynamics of the consumer geography, and even gets updated with more details of the consumer culture. Through mobile phones, not only garment traders connect to each other. Sellers also approach consumers through the very same channel - the chat groups on the instant messaging app Telegram. Sara, for instance, is a member of several maison chat groups. She sometimes takes a glance at clothes posted by the shop owners, but rarely buys them because of the price.

6.4 NASI MAISON: POLITICS OF AESTHETICS AND REVERSION OF GENDERED SPACE

Maison, a borrowed word from French, literally indicating a mansion or a flat, refers to the type of garment trade conducted in the underground boutiques converted from residential buildings. Some of the Maisons occupy an entire flat and some others only take up part of a flat, while the rest of the flat is still lived in. As a Maison is within the domestic space, which is not under the surveillance of the government, the range of garments that are sold in a Maison is more diverse and may not necessarily comply with the dress code observed in public spaces in Iran. The illicit nature of both the space and the commodities sold create both a compartmentalised spatial segment and also a generative locality for sociality which will be discussed through an ethnographic example in the later part of this chapter. A considerable number of the transactions taking place at Güngören, particularly in the shops of Iranian traders such as Masoud and Bijan, as well as the digital transactions through the telephone orders of the wandering traders, are facilitated by the owners of Maisons in Iran.

Although the price of products sold in *maisons* is relatively high, these underground boutiques are very popular in Iran. The *maison* emerged as a private commercial space that is complementary to the traditional bazaar, shopping centre and *pasaj*. It derives from the rift between consumer culture and the social order of Islamic rule in Iran, but has become a prevalent niche economy which provides customers with more than just privacy. The *maison* owners who go to Istanbul frequently and maintain a close connection with the garment traders there have already made their *maisons* the trendiest place to go for shopping. The continued updates to the goods in the *maison* also keep the people living in Tehran connected to the changing world.

Maison owners were among the most important buyers in the garment markets in Istanbul. They go to Istanbul and sometimes other places and countries such as Dubai and China to look for products for their private shops. Because of the private setting, a *maison* is a very gendered place, with a fairly strict segregation between male and female. Maisons intended for women do not allow male customers to enter. Although *maisons* are not only for women, as there are also some of them selling menswear, most of the *maison* owners that I saw in Istanbul are usually young women, sometimes accompanied by their mothers. Each of them has fostered a specific preference for the line of garments sold in their shop, and tries to maintain their specificity so that their *maison* customers develop a relationship with their selection of clothes.

Through the connections of the traders and shop owners I knew in the marketplaces in Istanbul, I was put into contact with one of the underground boutique owners, Nasi, whose shop was called Nasi Maison and located in Shahrak-e Gharb, a rich neighbourhood in northwestern Tehran. She agreed to meet me in her maison and let me have a look. When I called Nasi, she told me it was impossible for me to go there during working hours because all her

customers are female and I needed to wait until around 10pm when the shop would be empty.

I arrived at Shahrak-e Gharb much earlier than 10, in case I had trouble finding Nasi's place. It was my first time visiting that part of the city. It is a well-known neighbourhood in Tehran due to its liberal atmosphere and upscale architecture. Its streets are clean and empty. Many of the residential areas are composed of villas rather than apartment buildings which are more common in other neighbourhoods in northern Tehran. I was still early for my visit, so I found a small shopping mall and sat near the open-air square in front of it and waited for Nasi to send me her address. A group of young people were sitting not far from me chatting, smoking and playing music with their guitars, which I did not see in other parts of Tehran.

Before long, Nasi sent me the address, which was still quite far from the nearest public transport. I had to take a taxi to arrive there on time. It took the driver a while to find the place, a residential building along the main road, quite difficult to reach with public transport unless you were local to the area. Nasi Maison was on the second floor. It was converted from a spacious flat with several large rooms. One of the rooms was used as a nail salon. When I entered the *maison*, a few of Nasi's staff were in the nail salon. Beside the nail salon, another room was used as a solarium. The main room of the flat was the *maison* itself. It was designed differently from other parts of the room. The walls were all painted pink. In the middle of the room there was a very big red velvet sofa and the decoration on the walls was reminiscent of the luxury style in palaces. Surprisingly, the amount of clothing on sale was not very large. There were only three racks of clothes standing next to the wall. Most of the outfits would not cover up all of the female body and are therefore not compatible with the official requirements of clothing in Iran. They usually fall into two categories. The first type of clothing is evening dresses which are worn to parties, celebrations and

gatherings and cannot be seen in everyday life. The other type of clothing sold in the *maison* is the garments worn in everyday life in Turkey, some of which still cannot be worn without overcoats in public spaces in Iran but are widely worn at home. Around them is scattered a few boxes and packages of lingerie. Images of women with only underwear were used as decorations making the space a little bit erotic.

Nasi told me most of the garments were in her storage, the main room was used to display her collection. More importantly, women do not only come to her *maison* to buy clothes. They also visit Nasi Maison to pass the time. A lot of her customers have known her for many years. They have become friends over a long period. As customers, they come to the *maison* to choose the garments they like, but at the same time they linger for a much longer time in the *maison* to chat and socialise with each other, aside from the shopping. They gossip about the recent popular colour and style, and they also talk about each other's family lives and their relationships with husbands and mother-in-laws. It is a very gendered space, compared to other types of public shopping places. It is also a very personal space, as relationships between individuals are important for the *maison* economy, and therefore carefully cultivated. Nevertheless, it is also a very hierarchical sphere, excluding other women such as Sara who is not a part of the *maison*'s world.

Such gendered, personal and hierarchical features of the *maison* are constructed by the social background of contemporary Iran from which the *maison* arises. Meanwhile, however, these features, and also the *maison* economy, are also consciously reconstructed and sustained by the transnational movement of traders and *maison* owners, and by the simultaneous circulation of goods between Iran and the other exporting countries, in this case between Tehran and Istanbul. Nasi also acknowledges that the value attached to the clothes changes drastically during the process of transportation. A simple blouse sold in Güngören may cost

only 20 Turkish lira, but when it arrives in Iran the price will double or triple at the least. This process of transportation is also a process of transformation. The clothes sold in the Güngören wholesale market which are considered, in the markets of Istanbul, to be of low quality, badly manufactured, counterfeits, poorly designed, and so on, are, however, essential components of the high-end garment market in Tehran and many other places in Iran.

These commodities are reproduced in the Tehran maisons and consumed by middle class women to contribute to a particular lifestyle that is considered dubious under the Islamic regime. Interestingly, the legitimacy of these commodities as composite elements of both the maison economy and the lifestyle of middle class Iranians is constructed by the illicit process of transportation. The illicitness of the commodities smuggled into Iran and subsequently the markets in Tehran guarantees the authenticity of the products as foreign goods and as of good quality. When I asked Nasi about the cargo company and the illicit smuggling process, she curled her lips into a kind of smile and told me that it was never a problem for her customer. In fact, it was precisely because of the smuggling that her customers are sure they are real clothes produced in Turkey. Nasi continued explaining to me that, although the transportation did not make any logistical difference to her customers, it was very difficult for her herself to operate the maison smoothly.

She did not like to travel to Turkey every month to select and buy new garments. She instead chose to cooperate with the traders and shop owners in Istanbul, such as Mehran and Masoud. She was in several chat groups organised by Iranian traders and brokers in Istanbul. They would upload photos of new clothes every night and Nasi would select those she wanted to buy, send her orders to Masoud, and he would gather all of them from different shops before sending them to her maison in Tehran. But there were many times when she could not order what she wanted. Brokers and traders all work with certain shops. For instance, Masoud

had established a very close relationship with some of the shops. He would receive discounts if he bought clothes from them. When Nasi wanted to order clothing from other shops which were not staffed by acquaintances of Masoud, or too far from him, she was often refused by Masoud with many excuses. A maison does not require a huge variety of goods. The owners usually maintain regular business with a few shops in Istanbul, and keep their cooperation steady and continuous. Besides, it would cost Nasi even more resources to change her main supplier, which is Masoud, so both of them kept the tension to one side while managing to work with each other.

Compared to Nasi Maison, individual shops in public spaces display different dynamics between consumers and sellers. A huge variety of customers would visit shops rather than maisons, and therefore shop owners are usually obliged to gather a higher quantity of more varied clothing. The limited autonomy of Nasi in the business is also replaced by the dominance of individual shop owners. Most of the shop owners visit Istanbul regularly themselves, rather than relying on the local Iranian traders in Turkey. One of them, Nader, who travels to Istanbul every two or three weeks, gradually made friends with me, and when he learnt I was in Iran, he also invited me to visit his shop which happens to be in Shahrak-e Gharb as well.

6.5 CONCLUSION

As an aesthetic object, garments have served as the lens through which researchers examine the symbolic representation of class, ethnicity and religion (White 1999; Navaro-Yashin 2002a; Mahdavi 2009). The transnational garment trade thus offers a unique analytical point, through which the aesthetic objects demonstrate various forms of social relationships. In addition to this, the aesthetic spaces constructed by the traders, shop owners and couriers living in and moving between Iran and Turkey have also constructed various forms of connectivities linking both lifeworlds of different Iranian people as well as

locations along the routes of the garment trade between Iran and Turkey. Building on discussions on spatial interactions discussed in the previous chapter, the aesthetic dimension of mobility and the aesthetic spaces, when considered in relation to their mobile spatial dimension (Ho, 2017), could demonstrate transformative powers that challenges the conventional demarcation of the public space and the private spaces in traditional West Asian context (Vom Bruck 2005). *Maison*, for instance have served as the location in which such demarcations are challenged and subverted through transforming the domestic space into a semi/public space. This process of subversion however, is not only constrained within the scope of spatial construction. Rather, it entails renegotiations of the boundaries of a morally acceptable subject. These renegotiations are evidently displayed through the self-presentation and image management by Iranian people. The consumption of garments thus could be considered as the process of aesthetic formation of transnational space. Such transnational aesthetic spaces manifest how the notion of the self and subsequently the boundaries of diverse moral universes are linked to and shaped by transnational mobility.

7. CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the transnational lives of Iranian people, the reasons why, and the ways in which the lives of Iranians unfold on the transnational terrain between Iran and Turkey. Embedding the variegated population in the context of transnational mobility and interaction, the scope of this thesis differs from the dominant and sometimes normative analytical approaches in migration studies, which place the emphases on motivations, strategies and integration in a process labelled as “migration”. As discussed in the introduction, the scope of this thesis was shaped by the process and encounters in my fieldwork, during which I was driven by the mobile trajectories of a complex population of Iranian people. The fact that there were no simplified or clear-cut categories, communities, locations or migratory experiences the variegated population could be separated or generalised into has led me to explore the crisscrossing boundaries, forms of mediation and everyday interactions emerging from their experiences of transnational mobility. Considering the diversity of and intricate connections between the Iranian communities in Turkey, and thus in my ethnographic data, I have resorted to organising this thesis by dissecting my ethnographic materials in thematic order, rather than according to locations or communities. Such an approach not only brings together the current conceptual discussions in anthropology and beyond, to better address issues with regard to transnational mobility and connectivity, but also directly responds to the gaps in migration studies and Iranian diaspora. In the following sections, I summarise the arguments and analytical points provided in this thesis. In light of the relevant fields of research this thesis is situated in, I consider the contributions and limitations of this research.

In order to portray the Iranians in Turkey and their interactions, I have attended to different aspects of their lives, across both spatial and temporal boundaries. The arguments here are twofold. First, I contend that transnational mobility should be understood and situated in the historically saturated sensibilities of

connections and experiences. While migration and mobility have drawn an increasing amount of scholarly attention in recent years, they are, however, often conceptualised as synchronic phenomena and examined irrespective of longstanding historical connections. As the connections between Iran and Turkey have been discussed in this thesis, it transpires that actions, events and particular moments in time, on the one hand, are intricately connected to current patterns of mobility, and on the other hand, often shape the ways in which people reflect on their migratory experiences in relation to both rupture and continuity in the histories of transnational connection. Building on this proposition, this thesis further argues that, in spite of the transformation taking place on an individual level, migratory experiences and transnational mobility foster various forms of sociality. This social dimension of mobility not only demonstrates the process by which networks and connections are formed, but also contains power that could be mobilised to negotiate power relations. Seen in this light, the ethnography suggests that transnational mobility has been deftly utilised in the migratory experiences of Iranian people to cultivate networks among contrasting communities, to circumvent legal constraints imposed on trade and mobility and to renegotiate morally and aesthetically accepted boundaries of self-presentation.

To formulate the arguments, I have structured the discussion and analysis of the thesis into five distinct chapters. In chapter 2, I examined the connected histories between Iran and Turkey, in order to, on the one hand, place the research in its historical and contextual background, and, on the other hand, trace the changing patterns of transnational connectivity. In particular, mobility and connectivity were considered through connected histories (1997) with special focuses on the premodern, late Ottoman and post-imperial periods. Human interactions within these particular historical moments have shaped the evolving identities and roles adopted by Iranians in the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent Republic of Turkey, and thus provide a context to better understand the Iranian communities in today's Istanbul. Such historical connections, echoing Stuart Hall (1991),

challenge spatial metaphors, such as the conceptual demarcation between "home" and "settlement", that assumes people, places and cultures are territorialised and bounded. Instead, the Iranian communities in Turkey could be seen as accumulations of historical connectivities and the contemporary Iranians in Turkey are thus the "logical culmination of long-standing political and social ties" (Chu 2010). Such a culmination was well displayed in my ethnographic encounters, in which the locations of specific historical significance, such as the Valide Han mosque, have continued to shape relations and events that connect Iranians together.

Following the chapter on historical connections, the subsequent four chapters provided ethnographic accounts on the migratory experiences of Iranian people with the help of different conceptual tools. The ethnographic focus of chapter 3 was on the disparate Iranian actors and their lifeworlds between Iran and Turkey. The mobile trajectories of these different actors were explored through an examination of motivation. Building on the existing literature on the Iranian diaspora, which attributes the motivations of mobility to commercial ties and international sanctions imposed on Iran (Nadjmabadi 2010; Moghadam et al. 2016), I displayed the longings, aspirations and expectations of Iranians and how these affect (Ahmed 2015) and facilitate mobility. Through the discussion of existential and affective dimensions of mobile trajectories, I turned to the confluence of these migratory orbits in chapter 4. This chapter ethnographically examined the the connections and networks among the Iranian actors which had been investigated previously. Taking the lead from the ethnographic accounts in chapter 3, I approach the concept of networks through a conceptual analysis of convivial interactions among the Iranian people in Istanbul. While networks have been studied as a tool for structurally understanding society, kinship, and class, etc. (Scott 2012), I looked at networks among the Iranians as an evolving process which takes its form in the continual development of transnational mobility. Such a process was illustrated through particular forms of social events, such as

gatherings of Iranian Christians, celebrations of the traditional Iranian festival *Nouruz*, and ferry trips connecting trading communities and Iranian Christians. Common to these ethnographic accounts are the convivial quality of living together with difference (Gilroy 2004; Hinchliffe et al. 2006; Nowicka et al. 2013), which gives shape to the unsubstantial and unstructured connections linking different Iranians together.

From different perspectives, Chapters 5 and 6 examined the garment trade between Iran and Turkey, sustained by various Iranian communities both in Iran and Turkey. While chapter 5 engaged with the spatial composition of garment trade, chapter 6 attended to the aesthetic dimension of the commodities and trading activities. By deploying Lefebvre's (Lefebvre 1992; Low 2016) analysis of spatially embedded social interactions, I explored how social hierarchies among the traders can be understood in relation to their occupation and utilisation of the different forms of space in a garment marketplace. Moving forward from the market, I situated the association between space and social interactions among Iranian traders in the context of the transnational garment trade and considered the legal boundaries in transnational activities. By connecting spatial practices to illicit conduct (van Schendel et al. 2005) in the garment trade, I aimed at bringing attention to realms rarely considered important in the conventional literature on "informal trade" and thus considered how power mobility is mobilised and utilised to circumvent and renegotiate legal boundaries. This ethnographic focus eventually led to my last ethnographic chapter, which zoomed into other power relations displayed in the garment trade. The conceptual theme of the last chapter is ethics and aesthetics (Liebelt et al. 2018; Anderson 2019) in the garment trade. Taking female traders as my ethnographic focus, I delineated the ways in which garments have been consumed and manipulated as an aesthetic object by Iranian consumers to construct and reconstruct spatial boundaries and gender demarcation, in Tehran's underground garment shops as well as in everyday conversations in Istanbul's marketplaces. By exploring into

ethically and aesthetically formed objects, space and the self, I display how transnational mobility shapes power relations by contesting boundaries that are ethically and aesthetically accepted.

The ethnographic accounts in the thesis directly respond to the body of literature which focuses on the Iranian diaspora. The lifeworlds of Iranians in Turkey, on the one hand, resonate with the migratory experiences of Iranians in other parts of the world (Elahi et al. 2011), which contain cultural inbetweenness, as well as a distinct self negotiating between Iran and abroad. On the other hand, the transnational trajectories of Iranians in Turkey have also enriched the Iranian diaspora by revealing ethnographic accounts of mobile experiences in the inter-Asia context. While dominant approaches to the Iranian diaspora focus on the migrant communities of Iranians in the West, such as the US (Sullivan 2010), the UK (Harbottle 2000) and European countries (Koser 1998), only a few exceptions have focused on the connections between Iran and its neighbouring countries, for instance, Armenia (Moghadam et al. 2016). This unbalanced focus on one side of the Iranian diaspora ignores the historically saturated regional connectivities (Henig 2014; Marsden et al. 2018) and fails to capture the historicity of mobility. As Ho (Ho 2017) argued, the diasporic power of transnational mobility should be understood in relation to historical events. Looking at Iranian communities in Turkey and situating the transnational connections within the long-standing history between the two countries, thus, not only adds empirical case studies to research on the Iranian diaspora and migration studies more broadly, but also opens up analytical space and puts forward methodological opportunities.

While the ethnographic focus of the thesis has been on the diverse but entwined lifeworlds of Iranians in Turkey, the arguments around how transnational mobility is achieved and carried out have also contributed to conceptual discussions in anthropology and beyond in several ways. First, By engaging with regionally informed networks, this thesis promotes a holistic understanding of the

region crisscrossing Iran and Turkey. This holistic view of the formation of the region effectively challenges approaches taking the nation state as the analytical tool in our conception of societies in West Asia, and critically responds to methodological nationalism more generally. Such a stance, although taking root in the local and regional context of transnational connections between Iran and Turkey, evokes wider ramifications. It echoes back to the evolving literature on transnational connections such as maritime connectivities in the Indian Ocean (Ho 2006), the Black Sea (Humphrey et al. 2014) and the Mediterranean (Ben-Yehoyada 2017) on the one hand, and adds to the scholarship delineating overland connections (Scheele 2012; Marsden 2016; Green 2019) on the other. Building on this holistic view of connectivity, this thesis broadens understandings of transnational mobility by bringing the social dimension of mobility into discussion. Through ethnographic accounts of gatherings and social interactions, I have demonstrated that local forms of convivial sociality are established by the confluence of mobile trajectories of Iranian people. Such conviviality includes the festive and "heated" social atmosphere on the Nouruz boat tour, which takes its conceptual form from the Iranian notion of hot (*garm*). In addition, sociality in everyday life is also achieved through ferry trips that connect various groups of Iranian people. Such a social dimension of mobility not only delineates the contours of social connections and networks among mobile subjects, but also reveals the ability of mobility to circumvent and subvert power relations when it is mobilised and utilised. This brings attention to the second conceptual contribution of the thesis.

The ethnography of the thesis has engaged with the transnational garment trade between Iran and Turkey. By situating the garment trade in its spatial composition and examining how trade is conducted through spatial interactions, the ethnographic materials bring discussions to realms that have rarely been discussed. Demonstrated through the process of garment trade which is considered illegitimate by the state, while widely practiced in society, the

boundaries between the legal and the illicit have been under constant negotiation. Complex spatial interactions facilitated by the transnational mobilities of shuttle traders, cargo couriers and bus drivers have carved out routes crisscrossing national borders and spatial boundaries. In this process, networks of the state and the society are interpenetrated and boundaries of legitimacy are intricately linked to transnational mobility. Such negotiations however, do not only take place on borders, but also in everyday life.

Focusing on ethics and aesthetics, this research also explores into the constituent elements of aesthetic practices which are deployed, manipulated and facilitated by the transnational movement between Iran and Turkey. It therefore distinguishes, enriches and connects the anthropological understanding of aesthetics (Overing et al. 2002; Winegar 2006) to wider debates and concepts such as ethics, notions of the self and politics and power. Aesthetics, by no means, should be constrained as the trope for artefacts or artistic representation of the social world. Manifested in the ethnographic accounts of the relationships between traders, brokers and consumers, the notion of aesthetics is a powerful tool, for instance, in understanding spatial demarcations of urban Iranians, through which space is divided into the public and the private. By utilising aesthetically imbued commodities - garments, spatial boundaries between the private and public are renegotiated in *Maisons* operated by female shuttle traders in Tehran. Similar to the negotiation between the legal and the illicit, spatial demarcations in everyday life also demonstrate how transnational mobility participates in the construction of perceptions regarding what is acceptable and thus negotiates the boundaries between the good and the bad.

These contributions, conceptualised through various facets of the ethnographic materials, all point to questions such as: What is the experience of migrants? How is transnational mobility achieved? By attending to the contrasting lifeworlds of Iranians in Turkey and the social interactions among these different groups, this research adds a nuanced understanding of mobile experiences to

Migration studies. Nevertheless, due to various constraints, such as the limited amount of time, this research could not include other communities for instance the sarāfi (currency exchange) into its analysis. This could hopefully be addressed in future studies in which a more inclusive scope would be adopted. Other limitations include the analytical scopes of the thesis. Emotions and gender for instance, are issues that have not been conceptually engaged with. Although emotion and affect and gender and gendered space have been discussed as some of the ethnographic contexts in this thesis, and thus the issue has been indirectly dealt with, a substantial and more theoretical discussion of emotion and gender dynamics would have enriched the analysis. These analytical scopes are, however, highly contextualised and reliant on the ethnographic encounters. In the context of illicit garment trade and religious conversion, such intimate issues require more time to explore.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abaza, M. 2007. Shifting Landscapes of Fashion in Contemporary Egypt. *Fashion Theory* 11(2-3): 281–297.
- Adelkhah, F. 1999. *Being Modern in Iran*. London: Hurst.
- Adelkhah, F. 2009. Islamophobia and Malaise in Anthropology. In S. Najmabadi (ed) *Conceptualizing Iranian Anthropology: Past and Present Perspectives*, 207–224. New York: Berghahn
- Ahmed, S. 2015. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Akcasu, A.E. 2017. *Non-Ottomans of Hamidian Istanbul: Exiles and Expatriates*. PhD diss., SOAS, University of London.
- Alavi, S. 2015. *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Allworth, E. ed. 1994. *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Amirahmadi, H. 2012. *The Political Economy of Iran Under the Qajars: Society, Politics, Economics and Foreign Relations 1796-1926*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Amuzegar, J. 1997. Iran's Economy and the US Sanctions. *Middle East Journal* 51(2): 185–199.
- Anderson, P. 2019. Games of Civility: Ordinary Ethics in Aleppo's Bazaar. *Ethnos* 84(3): 380–397.
- Appadurai, A. 1990. Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Theory Culture Society* 7: 295–310.
- Appadurai, A. 1996. Global ethnoscares: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology. In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 48–65. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

- Arizpe, L. 2015. *Culture, Diversity and Heritage: Major Studies*. Cham: Springer.
- Aslanian, S.D. 2014. *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Auge, M. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso.
- Baer, M.D. 2007. Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the Dönme in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul. *Journal of World History* 18(2): 141–170.
- Baer, M.D. 2009. *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bayly, S. 2007. *Asian Voices in a Post-Colonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beeman, W.O. 2003. Iran and the United States: Postmodern Culture Conflict in Action. *Anthropological Quarterly* 76(4): 671–691.
- Ben-Yehoyada, N. 2017. *The Mediterranean Incarnate: Region Formation Between Sicily and Tunisia Since World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Biehl, K.S. 2014. Spatializing diversities, diversifying spaces: housing experiences and home space perceptions in a migrant hub of Istanbul. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38(4): 596–607.
- Biehl, K.S. 2015. Governing through Uncertainty: Experiences of Being a Refugee in Turkey as a Country for Temporary Asylum. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 59(1): 57–75.
- Birenbaum-Carmeli, D. 2004. Consumption and the Making of Neighborliness : A Tel-Aviv Case Study. In Y. S. Carmeli & K. Applbaum (eds) *Consumption and Market Society in Israel*, Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic
- Borneman, J. 2007. *Syrian Episodes: Sons, Fathers, and an Anthropologist in Aleppo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1970. The Berber house or the world reversed. *Social Science Information* 9(2): 151–170.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bozçali, F. 2011. The Illegal Oil Trade Along Turkey's Borders. *Middle East Report* (261): 24–29.
- Browne, E.G. 1926. *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia, Received During Twelve Months' Residence in that Country in the Years 1887-1888*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bryant, R. 2001. An Aesthetics of Self: Moral Remaking and Cypriot Education. *Comparative studies in society and history* 43(3): 583–614.
- Bryant, R. 2005. The Soul Danced into the Body: Nation and Improvisation in Istanbul. *American Ethnologist* 32(2): 222–238.
- Bryant, R. ed. 2016. *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Can, L. 2012. Connecting People: A Central Asian Sufi network in turn-of-the-century Istanbul. *Modern Asian Studies* 46(2): 373–401.
- Canfield, R.L. 2008. Continuing Issues in the New Central Asia: Addenda in Appreciation to Géopolitique De Lamouvelle Asie Centrale. In M.-R. Djalili, A. Monsutti, & A. Neubauer (eds) *Le Monde Turco-Iranien en Question: Définition, Confins, Spécificités*, 19–36. Geneva: L'Institut Universitaire d'études du Développement
- Canfield, R.L. ed. 1991. *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cao, N. 2013. Renegotiating Locality and Morality in a Chinese Religious Diaspora: Wenzhou Christian Merchants in Paris, France. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 14(1): 85–101.
- Chardin, J. 1988. *Travels in Persia, 1673-1677*. New York: Dover.
- Chatty, D. 2010. *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Choy, T. 2011. *Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Chu, J.Y. 2010. *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chu, J.Y. 2014. When infrastructures attack: The workings of disrepair in China. *American Ethnologist* 41(2): 351–367.

- Chu, N. 2016. The Emergence of 'Craft' and Migrant Entrepreneurship along the Global Commodity Chains for Fast Fashion in Southern China. *The Journal of Modern Craft Institute of International Studies*(2): 43–59.
- Clifford, J. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Curtin, P.D. 1984. *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Çetinsaya, G. 2000. *Tanzimat'tan Birinci Dünya Savaşına Osmanlı-İran İlişkileri, KÖK Araştırmalar Osmanlı Özel Sayısı*. Ankara: KÖK Sosyal ve Stratejik Araştırmalar Vakfı.
- Dale, S.F. 2002. *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dale, S.F. 2009. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Groot, A.H. 1981. The Organization of Western European Trade in the Levant, 1500-1800. In L. Blussé & F. Gaastra (eds) *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Régime*, 231–244. The Hague: Leiden University Press
- Dedeoglu, S. 2011. Garment Ateliers and Women Workers in Istanbul: Wives, Daughters and Azerbaijani Immigrants. *Middle Eastern Studies* 47(4): 663–674.
- Deeb, L., & Harb, M. 2009. Politics, Culture, Religion: How Hizbullah is Constructing an Islamic Milieu in Lebanon. *Review of Middle East Studies* 43(2): 198–206.
- Delanty, G. 2012. *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Diouf, M. 2000. The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism. *Public Culture* 12(3): 679–702.
- Duru, D.N. 2013. *Coexistence and Conviviality in Multi-Faith, Multi-Ethnic Burgazadasi, the Princes' Islands of Istanbul*. PhD diss., University of Sussex.

- Duru, D.N. 2015. From Mosaic to Ebru: Conviviality in Multi-ethnic, Multi-faith Burgazadası, Istanbul. *South European Society and Politics* 20(2): 243–263.
- Dıġıroġlu, F. 2014. *Dersaadet'te Acem Bir Kitapçı: Kitap-fürüş Hacı Hüseyin Ağa*. Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayinlari.
- Eder, M., & Öz, Ö. 2010. From Cross-Border Exchange Networks to Transnational Trading Practices? The Case of Shuttle Traders in Laleli, Istanbul. In M.-L. Djelic & S. Quack (eds) *Transnational Communities: Shaping Global Economic Governance*, 82–104. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Eder, M., & Özkul, D. 2016. Editors' introduction: precarious lives and Syrian refugees in Turkey. *New Perspectives on Turkey* 54: 1–8.
- Edmonds, A. 2007. 'The Poor Have the Right To Be Beautiful': Cosmetic Surgery in Neoliberal Brazil. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(2): 363–381.
- Eisenberg, A.J. 2012. Hip-Hop and Cultural Citizenship on Kenya's "Swahili Coast". *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 82(4): 556–578.
- Elahi, B., & Karim, P.M. 2011. Introduction: Iranian Diaspora. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31(2): 381–387.
- Elitok, S.P. 2013. Turkish migration policy over the last decade: A gradual shift towards better management and good governance. *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12(1): 161–172.
- Erami, N. 2009. *The Soul of the Market: Knowledge, Authority and the Making of Expert Merchants in the Persian Rug Bazar*. PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Erami, N., & Keshavarzian, A. 2018. When ties don't bind: smuggling effects, bazaars and regulatory regimes in postrevolutionary Iran. *Economy and Society* 44(1): 110–139.
- Fadil, N. 2009. Managing affects and sensibilities: The case of not-handshaking and not-fasting. *Social Anthropology* 17(4): 439–454.
- Faroghi, S. 1979. Sixteenth Century Periodic Markets in Various Anatolian Sancaks: Icel, Hamid, Karahisar-i Sahib, Kutahya, Aydin, and Mentese. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 22(1): 32–80.
- Fathi, A. 1991. *Iranian Refugees and Exiles Since Khomeini*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers.

- Foucault, M. 1997. The Ethnics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom. In P. Rabinow (ed) *The essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 (Ethnics)*, 281–301. New York: The New Press
- Freitag, U. 2013. ‘Cosmopolitanism’ and “Conviviality”? Some conceptual considerations concerning the late Ottoman Empire:. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(4): 375–391.
- Freitag, U., & Oppen, Von, A. eds. 2009. *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*. Leiden: Brill.
- Friedman, J. 1990. Being in the World: Globalization and Localization. *Theory, Culture & Society* 7(2-3): p.311–328.
- Fudge, R. 2009. Sympathy, Beauty, and Sentiment: Adam Smith's Aesthetic Morality. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 7(2): p.
- Gardner, K. 1995. *Global Migrants, Local Lives : Travel and Transformation in Rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Geertz, C. 1978. The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing. *The American Economic Review* 68(2): 28–32.
- Gell, A. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gertrude, R.R.B. ed. 1932. *Florentine Merchants in the Age of the Medici: Letters and Documents From the Selfridge Collection of Medici Manuscripts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gheissari, A. 2008. Merchants without borders: trade, travel, and a revolution in late Qajar Iran (The memoirs of Hajj Mohammad-Taqi Jourabchi, 1906-1911). In *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present*, 183–212. London: Routledge
- Ghorashi, H. 2018. Challenges of Integration and Belonging: Iranians in the Netherlands. In *The Iranian Diaspora: Challenges, Negotiations, and Transformations*, Austin: University of Texas Press
- Gilroy, P. 1991. It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at...: the dialectics of diasporic identification. *Fashion Theory* 5(13): 3–16.
- Gilroy, P. 2004. *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* New York: Routledge.
- Gilsenan, M. 1982. *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Glick Schiller, N., & Irving, A. 2017. Introduction: What's in a Word, What's in a Question. In N. Glick Schiller & A. Irving (eds) *Whose Cosmopolitanism: Critical Perspectives, Relationalities and Discontents*, 1–26. New York: Berghahn Books
- Goffman, E. 1969. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Allen Lane: Penguin.
- Green, N. 2011. *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, N. 2012. *Sufism: A Global History*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Green, N. 2014. Rethinking the 'Middle East' after the Oceanic Turn. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34(3): 556–564.
- Green, N. 2016. The Demographics of Dystopia: The Muslim City in Asia's Future. *History and Anthropology* 27(3): 273–295.
- Green, N. 2019. *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*. Bekerley: University of California Press.
- Griswold, C.L. 1999. *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gurney, J. 1993. E.G. Browne and the Iranian Community in Istanbul. In T. Zarcone & F. Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds) *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul*, 149–175. Louvain: Peeters
- Guyer, J.I. 2004. *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, S. 1991. The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity. In A. D. King (ed) *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, 18–39. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Harbottle, L. 2000. *Food for Health, Food for Wealth: Ethnic and Gender Identities in British Iranian Communities*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Hannerz, U. 1990. Cosmopolitans and locals in world culture. *Theory Culture Society* 7(2): 237–261.
- Harper, Tim and Sunil S. Amrith. 2012. "Sites of Asian Interaction: an Introduction." *Modern Asian Studies* 46(02):249–57.

- Hatfield, D. 2009. *Taiwanese Pilgrimage to China: Ritual, Complicity, Community*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hattox, R.S. 1985. *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Haynes, N. 2017. *Moving by the Spirit: Pentecostal Social Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Henig, D. 2014. Tracing creative moments: The emergence of translocal dervish cults in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Focaal* 2014(69): 1–14.
- Henkel, H. 2008. The location of Islam: Inhabiting Istanbul in a Muslim way. *American Ethnologist* 34(1): p.57–70.
- Herzfeld, M. 1988. *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hinchliffe, S., & Whatmore, S. 2006. Living cities: Towards a politics of conviviality. *Science as Culture* 15(2): 123–138.
- Hirschkind, C. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ho, E. 2002. Names beyond Nations: The Making of Local Cosmopolitans. *Études rurales* (163/164): 215–231.
- Ho, E. 2006. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ho, E. 2017. Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 76(04): p.907–928.
- Holliday, R., Bell, D., Cheung, O., Jones, M., & Probyn, E. 2015. Brief encounters: Assembling cosmetic surgery tourism. *Social Science & Medicine* 124: 298–304.
- Hopkins, A.G. 2002. Introduction: Globalization—An Agenda for Historians. In A. G. Hopkins (ed) *Globalisation In World History*, 1–10. London: Random House
- Humphrey, C. 2017. A New Look at Favours: the Case of Post-Socialist Higher Education. In D. Henig & N. Makovicky (eds) *Economies of Favour After Socialism*, 50–72. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Humphrey, C., & Skvirskaja, V. 2014. Introduction: The Black Sea as region and horizon. *Focaal* 2014(70): 3–11.

- Humphrey, C., & Skvirskaja, V. eds. 2012. *Post-Cosmopolitan Cities: Explorations of Urban Coexistence*.
- Illich, I. 1973. *Tools for conviviality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Inalcik, H. 1969. Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire. *The Journal of Economic History* 29(1): p.97–140.
- Inan, M.U. 2019. Imperial Ambitions, Mystical Aspirations: Persian Learning in the Ottoman World. In *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, 75–92. Bekerley: University of California Press
- Ingold, T. 2010. Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16.
- Isin, E.F. 2009. Beneficence and Difference: Ottoman Awqaf and ‘Other’ Subjects. In S. Mayaram (ed) *The Other Global City*, 35–53. New York: Routledge
- Issawi, C.P. 1971. *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- Issawi, C.P. 1991. European Economic Penetration, 1872-1921. In P. Avery, G. R. G. Hambly, & C. Melville (eds) *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 590–607. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ivanov, P. 2012. Constructing translocal socioscapess: consumerism, aesthetics, and visibility in Zanzibar Town. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6(4): 631–654.
- Ivanov, P. 2017. The Aesthetic Constitution of Space. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37(2): 368–390.
- İçduygu, A. 2003. *Irregular migration in Turkey (No. 12)*. IOM International Organization for Migration.
- Jourabchi, H.M.-T. 1984. *Harfi az Hezaran Ke-andar Ebarat Amad: Vaqaye’-e Tabriz va Rasht, 1326–1330 AH (A Narrative of Events in Tabriz and Rasht, 1907–1911)* M. Ettehadiyeh & C. Sadvandian (eds). Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran.
- Kandiyoti, D., & Saktanber, A. eds. 2002. *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*. London: I.B.Tauris.

- Karim, P.M., & Khorrami, M.M. 1999. *A World Between: Poems, Short Stories, and Essays by Iranian-Americans*. George Braziller.
- Karner, C., & Parker, D. 2010. Conviviality and Conflict: Pluralism, Resilience and Hope in Inner-City Birmingham. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37(3): 355–372.
- Karpat, K.H. 1985. *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Kaur, R., & Dave-Mukherji, P. eds. 2015. *Arts and Aesthetics in a Globalizing World*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Keddie, N.R., & Richard, Y. 2006. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Keshavarzian, A. 2007. *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Khan-Malik, S. 1966. *Yadboud-ha-ye Sefarat-e Estandul (Memoirs of the [Iranian] Embassy in Istanbul)*. Tehran: Ferdowsi.
- Khazeni, A. 2014. *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Khosravi, S. 2011. *Young and Defiant in Tehran*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kiren, A. 2017. Internal Dynamics of the Iranian Opposition Against the Qajars in the Ottoman Territory. *Journal of International Social Research* 10(48): p.200–206.
- Knapp, R.G. 2005. Siting and Situating a Dwelling: Fengshui, Housebuilding Rituals and Amulets. In R. G. Knapp & K.-Y. Lo (eds) *House, Home, Family: Living and Being Chinese*, 99–138. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press
- Koser Akcapar, S. 2006. Conversion as a Migration Strategy in a Transit Country: Iranian Shiites Becoming Christians in Turkey. *International Migration Review* 40(4): 817–853.
- Koser Akcapar, S. 2010. Re-Thinking Migrants' Networks and Social Capital: A Case Study of Iranians in Turkey. *International Migration* 48(2): 161–196.
- Koser, K. 1998. Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire: A Case Study of Illegality amongst Asylum Seekers. In K. Koser & H. Lutz (eds) *The New Migration in Europe*, 185–198. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK

- Kuo, H.-Y. 2014. *Networks beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalism in the Hong Kong-Singapore Corridor, 1914-1941*. Leiden: BRILL.
- Laidlaw, J. 2002. For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8(2): 311–332.
- Lambek, M. 2010. *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*. New York: Fordham Univ Press.
- Lefebvre, H. 1992. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lenahan, S. 2011. Nose Aesthetics: Rhinoplasty and Identity in Tehran. *Anthropology of the Middle East* 6(1): 1–17.
- Leshkowich, A.M. 2014. *Essential Trade: Vietnamese Women in a Changing Marketplace*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Liebelt, C., Böllinger, S., & Vierke, U. eds. 2018. *Beauty and the Norm: Debating Standardization in Bodily Appearance*. Cham: Springer.
- Lord, C. 2018. *Religious Politics in Turkey: From the Birth of the Republic to the AKP*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Low, S. 2016. *Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place*. New York: Routledge.
- Low, S.M. 1996. Spatializing Culture: The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica. *American Ethnologist* 23(4): 861–879.
- Lyons, D. 1993. Adam Smith's aesthetic of conduct. *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies* 8(1): 41–60.
- MacGaffey, J., & Bazenguissa-Ganga, R. 2000. *Congo-Paris: Transnational Traders on the Margins of the Law*. Oxford: James Currey Limited.
- Mahdavi, P. 2009. *Passionate Uprisings*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mahmood, S. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Malkki, L.H. 1995. Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 495–523.
- Marashi, A. 2008. *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

- Marcus, J. 1992. *A world of difference: Islam and gender hierarchy in Turkey*. London: Zed Books.
- Marsden, M. 2015a. From Kabul to Kiev: Afghan trading networks across the former Soviet Union. *Modern Asian Studies* 49(4): 1010–1048.
- Marsden, M. 2015b. Crossing Eurasia: trans-regional Afghan trading networks in China and beyond. *Central Asian Survey* 35(1): 1–15.
- Marsden, M. 2016. *Trading Worlds: Afghan Merchants Across Modern Frontiers*. London: Hurst.
- Marsden, M. 2018. Civility and diplomacy: Trust and dissimulation in transnational Afghan trading networks. *Anthropological theory* 18(2-3): 175–197.
- Marsden, M., & Skvirskaja, V. 2018. Merchant identities, trading nodes, and globalization: Introduction to the Special Issue. *History and Anthropology* 29(1): 1–13.
- Marsden, M., Ibañez-Tirado, D., & Henig, D. 2016. Everyday Diplomacy: Introduction to Special Issue. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 34(2): 1–21.
- Masters, B. 1991. The treaties of Erzurum (1823 and 1848) and the changing status of Iranians in the Ottoman Empire. *Iranian Studies*.
- Mathews, G., Ribeiro, G.L., & Vega, C.A. 2012. *Globalization from Below: The World's Other Economy*. New York: Routledge.
- Matthee, R.P. 1999. *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mayaram, S. 2009. *The Other Global City*. New York: Routledge.
- Metin, C. 2011. *Emperyalist Çağda Modernleşme: Türk Modernleşmesi ve İran, 1800-1941*. Ankara: Phoenix.
- Milgram, B.L. 2008. Activating Frontier Livelihoods: Women And The Transnational Secondhand Clothing Trade Between Hong Kong And The Philippines. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 37(1): 5–47.
- Miller, L. 2006. *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Mills, A. 2008. The Place of Locality for Identity in the Nation: Minority Narratives of Cosmopolitan Istanbul. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40(03): 383–401.
- Minuchehr, P. 1998. *Homeland from Afar: The Iranian Diaspora and the Quest for Modernity, 1908-1909*. PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Moaveni, A. 2007. *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran*. Hachette UK.
- Mobasher, M.M. 2018. *The Iranian Diaspora: Challenges, Negotiations, and Transformations*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Moghadam, A., & Weber, S. 2016. Circulating by Default: Yerevan and Erbil, the Backyards of Iranian Mobility. In *The Transnational Middle East: People, Places, Borders*, New York: Taylor & Francis
- Moore, H. 1986. *Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moors, A. 2009. 'Islamic Fashion' in Europe: Religious Conviction, Aesthetic Style and Creative Consumption. In *Engaging Otherness*, 175–201. London: I.B. Tauris
- Nadjmabadi, S.R. 2010. Cross-Border Networks: Labour Migration from Iran to the Arab Countries of the Persian Gulf. *Anthropology of the Middle East* 5(1): 18–33.
- Navaro-Yashin, Y. 2002. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ngai, P. 2005. *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Norton, R.E. 1995. *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Nowicka, M., & Vertovec, S. 2013. Comparing convivialities: Dreams and realities of living-with-difference. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(4): 341–356.
- Olszewska, Z. 2015. *The Pearl of Dari: Poetry and Personhood among Young Afghans in Iran*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ong, A., & Collier, S.J. eds. 2005. *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Ong, A., & Nonini, D. 2003. *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Osella, F., & Osella, C. 2009. Muslim entrepreneurs in public life between India and the Gulf: making good and doing good. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15: S202–S221.
- Overing, J. 1989. The Aesthetics of Production: the Sense of Community Among the Cubeo and Piaroa. *Dialectical Anthropology* 14(3): 159–175.
- Overing, J., & Passes, A. 2002. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. London: Routledge.
- Özyeğin, G. 2002. The Doorkeeper, the Maid and the Tenant: Troubling Encounters in the Turkish Urban Landscape. In D. Kandiyoti & A. Saktanber (eds) *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, 43–72. London: I.B.Tauris
- Pesaran, M.H. 1992. The Iranian Foreign Exchange Policy And The Black Market for Dollars. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24(1): 101–125.
- Piart, L. 2013. Transition, Migration, Capitalism: Female Uzbek Shuttle Traders in Istanbul. In M. Laruelle (ed) *Migration and Social Upheaval as the Face of Globalization in Central Asia*, 333–354. Leiden
- Rabo, A. 2005. Aleppo Traders and the Syrian State. In A. Rabo & B. Utas (eds) *The Role of the State in West Asia*, 115–126. London: I.B.Tauris
- Rabo, A. 2011. Conviviality and Conflict in Contemporary Aleppo. In A. N. Longva & A. S. Roald (eds) *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, 123–147. Leiden: Brill
- Ratanapruck, P. 2007. Kinship and Religious Practices as Institutionalization of Trade Networks: Manangi Trade Communities in South and Southeast Asia. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50(2/3): 325–346.
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2011. “Staying Put? Towards a Relational Politics of Mobility at a Time of Migration.” *Central Asian Survey* 30 (3–4): 555–76.
- Robbins, J. 2013. Beyond the suffering subject: toward an anthropology of the good. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19(3): 447–462.
- Roitman, J.L. 2005. *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Rothman, E.N. 2012. *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Roy, A., & AlSayyad, N. 2004. *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Sahlins, M. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sarmadi, B. 2013. 'Bachelor' in the City: Urban Transformation and Matter Out of Place in Dubai. *Journal of Arabian Studies* 3(2): 196–214.
- Schapendonk, J. 2013. From Transit Migrants to Trading Migrants: Development Opportunities for Nigerians in the Transnational Trade Sector of Istanbul. *Sustainability* 5(12): 2856–2873.
- Scharabi, M. 1985. *Der Bazar: Das Traditionelle Stadtzentrum Im Nahen Osten Und Seine Handelseinrichtungen*. E. Wasmuth.
- Scheele, J. 2012. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schielke, S. 2012. Surfaces of Longing. Cosmopolitan Aspiration and Frustration in Egypt. *City & Society* 24(1): 29–37.
- Schielke, S. 2015. *Egypt in the Future Tense*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Scott, J. 2012. *Social Network Analysis*. London: SAGE.
- Sharp, L.A. 2000. The commodification of the body and its parts. *Annual Review of Anthropology*.
- Silver, A. 1990. Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology* 95(6): 1474–1504.
- Smith, A. 2002. *Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sood, G.D.S. 2016. *India and the Islamic Heartlands: An Eighteenth-Century World of Circulation and Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steinmüller, H. 2011. The moving boundaries of social heat: gambling in rural China. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(2): 263–280.

- Strathern, M. 1979. The Self in Self-Decoration. *Oceania* 49(4): p.241–257.
- Subrahmanyam, S. 1992. Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Elite Migration and Early Modern State Formation. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51(2): 340–363.
- Subrahmanyam, S. 1997. Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia. *Modern Asian Studies* 31(03): 735–762.
- Sullivan, Z. 2010. *Exiled Memories: Stories of Iranian Diaspora*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Şaul, M. 2014. A Different ‘Kargo’: Sub-Saharan Migrants In Istanbul And African Commerce. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 43(1/2/3): 143–203.
- Tapper, R. 2008. Local-Level Constructions of 'Turk' and 'Persian'. In M.-R. Djalili, A. Monsutti, & A. Neubauer (eds) *Le Monde Turco-Iranien en Question: Définition, Confins, Spécificités*, 69–81. Geneva: L’Institut Universitaire d’études du Développement
- Taussig, M. 2012. *Beauty and the Beast*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thiel, A., & Stasik, M. 2017. Market men and station women: changing significations of gendered space in Accra, Ghana. 34(4): 459–478.
- Um, N. 2011. *The Merchant Houses of Mocha*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- van Schendel, W., & Abraham, I. 2005. *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Varzi, R. 2006. *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Vasileva, D. 1992. Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return. *The International Migration Review* 26(2): 342–352.
- Verne, J. 2018. Contemporary Geographies of Zanzibari Fashion: Indian Ocean Trade Journeys in the Run-Up to Ramadhan Festivities. In P. Machado, S. Fee, & G. Campbell (eds) *Textile Trades, Consumer Cultures, and the Material Worlds of the Indian Ocean: An Ocean of Cloth*, 359–383. New York: Springer
- Vertovec, S., & Cohen, R. eds. 2003. *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- vom Bruck, G. 2005. *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weller, R.P. 1994. *Resistance, Chaos and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts and Tiananmen*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Wen, H. 2013. *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Werbner, P. 1999. Global pathways. Working class cosmopolitans and the creation of transnational ethnic worlds. *Social Anthropology* 7(1): 17–35.
- Werbner, P. 2006. Vernacular cosmopolitanism. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(2-3): 496–498.
- Werbner, P. 2014. *Political Aesthetics of Global Protest: The Arab Spring and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- White, J.B. 1999. Islamic Chic. In Ç. Keyder (ed) *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, 77–91. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield
- White, J.B. 2002. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- White, J.B. 2004. *Money makes us relatives: Women's labor in urban Turkey*. New York: Routledge.
- Wilson, Alice. 2017. “Ambivalences of Mobility: Rival State Authorities and Mobile Strategies in a Saharan Conflict.” *American Ethnologist* 44(1):77–90.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. 2002. Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation–state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global networks*.
- Winegar, J. 2006. *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Woźniak, U. 2018. The Mahalle as Margin of the State: Shifting Sensitivities in Two Neighbourhood Spaces of Istanbul. *Anthropology of the Middle East* 13(2): 79–94.
- Wright, S. 1998. The Politicization of ‘Culture’. *Anthropology Today* 14(1): 7–15.
- Wynn, L. 1997. *The romance of Tahliyya Street: youth culture, commodities and the use of public space in Jiddah*. Middle East Report.

- Xiang, B. 2013. Multi-Scalar Ethnography: an Approach for Critical Engagement with Migration and Social Change. *Ethnography* 14(3): 282–299.
- Yaghmaian, B. 2002. *Social Change in Iran: An Eyewitness Account of Dissent, Defiance, and New Movements for Rights*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Yang, M.M.-H. 2016. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Yildiz, E. 2013. Fugitive Markets and Arrested Mobilities: Gaziantep's Iranian Bazaar. Available at: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29807/Fugitive-Markets-and-Arrested-Mobilities-Gaziantep's-Iranian-Bazaar> [Accessed December 3, 2015].
- Yildiz, E. 2014. Fugitive Markets and Arrested Mobilities: Labor of Informality and Its Transgressions from Antep's Iranian Bazaar across the Syria/Turkey Border. *Toplum ve Bilim: Aylık Sosyalist Kültür Dergisi* 131: 186–207.
- Yolacan, Serkan. 2017. *Order Beyond Borders*. PhD diss., Duke University.
- Yolacan, S. 2019. Azeri networks through thick and thin: West Asian politics from a diasporic eye. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 10(1): 36–47.
- Yukseker, D. 2004. Trust and Gender in a Transnational Market: The Public Culture of Laleli, Istanbul. *Public Culture* 16(1): 47–65.
- Yukseker, D. 2007. Shuttling Goods, Weaving Consumer Tastes: Informal Trade between Turkey and Russia. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31(1): 60–72.
- Zarcone, T., & Zarinebaf-Shahr, F. eds. 1993. *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul*. Louvain: Peeters.
- Zarinebaf, F. 2008. From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28(1): 154–169.
- Zarinebaf-Shahr, F. 1993. The Iranian (Azeri) Merchant Community in the Ottoman Empire and the Constitutional Revolution. In T. Zarcone & F. Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds) *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul*, Louvain: Peeters
- Zarinebaf-Shahr, F. 1996. Diaspora in Ottoman Turkey. In E. Yarshater (ed) *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 373–375. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers

- Zhang, L. 2002. *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China's Floating Population*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zijlstra, J.E.J. 2014. Stuck on the Way to Europe? Iranian Transit Migration to Turkey. *Insight Turkey*.
- Zubaida, S. 2011. *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East*. London: I. B. Tauris.