

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



**CONVERGENCE OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION
PRACTICES: THE CASE OF TWO GATED HOUSING
RESIDENCES IN ISTANBUL**

GRADUATE THESIS

MERVE AYGÜN

May, 2016

**CONVERGENCE OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION
PRACTICES: THE CASE OF TWO GATED HOUSING
RESIDENCES IN ISTANBUL**

MERVE AYGÜN

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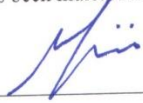
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“I, Merve Aygün, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this
has been indicated in the thesis.”



MERVE AYGÜN

ABSTRACT

CONVERGENCE OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION PRACTICES: THE CASE OF TWO GATED HOUSING RESIDENCES IN ISTANBUL

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Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Levent Soysal

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People and cities have been confronted by an unprecedented scale of global changes over the past couple of decades. In accordance with the new mechanisms of rising worldwide trends which are grounded on the commercial economy of consumption, Istanbul has also undergone an urban transformation concurrently with its counterparts. In a sense, world culture industry has transformed the city into a consumption catalogue that relies on a taken-for-granted context for everyday life, deriving from institutionalized discourses of world culture. Following Boli and Lechner (2008), I take world culture as an organizational form of consumption that underlies a shared frame of reference regarding everyday experiences of urban living. Based on a short-term ethnographic research undertaken in two different priced gated housing settlements in Istanbul, my argument in this thesis is two-fold. First, people in Istanbul from different socio-economic groups have increasingly been used, experience and live their everyday routines in a more familiar and predictable framework that is saturated by standardized experiences of the urban life. I argue that there is an ongoing level of convergence in life style practices and

cultural consumption preferences of people who are differentiated symbolically based on spatial choices of housing. Second, I argue that living in a gated housing settlement does not necessarily promote an isolated life style for its residents, because the global infrastructure of cities provides an ever-increasing range of more readily available consumption experiences and wider realm of everyday leisure to a larger section of society. Therefore, I suggest to understand the residents of gated housing settlements as individuals with extensive social interaction with the city through using the wide range of consumption representations of world culture industry. Using the analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with respondents from two gated housing residences, this thesis aims to provide an alternative perspective concerning how world culture industry, city, and the urban life constitutes a converged setting in cultural consumption practices of the individuals who have significantly different spatial choices for housing.

Keywords: world culture, convergence, cultural consumption, institutionalization, city, urban life, gated housing residences, Istanbul

ÖZET

KÜLTÜREL TÜKETİM BİÇİMLERİNİN BENZEŞMESİ: İSTANBULDA İKİ KAPALI SİTE ÖRNEĞİ

Merve Aygün

İletişim Bilimleri, Yüksek Lisans

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Son yıllarda şehirler ve insanlar, hızlanarak devam eden çok boyutlu küresel değişimler ve dönüşümlerle karşı karşıya kalmaktalar. Bu süreçte, dünya kenti İstanbul da diğer küresel paydaşları gibi tüketim ekonomisi üzerinde temellenmiş söylemler doğrultusunda gerçekleşen bir kentsel yeniden yapılanma ve dönüşüm geçirmekte. Başka bir deyişle, dünya kültür endüstrisi İstanbul şehrini, dünya kültürünün kurumsallaşmış söylemleri odağında gelişen, kent yaşamının gündelik doğasına her geçen gün daha fazla nüfuz eden ve sorgulanmaksızın eyleme dönüştürülen yaşam pratikleriyle örülü bir tüketim kataloğuna dönüştürmüş bulunuyor. Bu çalışmada, Boli ve Lechner'ın (2008) ortaya koyduğu kavramsal çerçeveden yola çıkarak dünya kültürünü, kent yaşamı içinde varlık gösteren tüketim eğilimlerinin altında yatan ve bireyler için ortak bir anlam haritası oluşturduğunu düşündüğüm biçimlendirici bir yapı olarak ele alıyorum. Bu bağlamda, İstanbul'un Anadolu Yakası'nda bulunan ve farklı fiyat aralıklarındaki iki kapalı sitede gerçekleştirdiğim, kısa süreli etnografik bir incelemeye dayanan bu tezde ikili bir argüman öne sürmekteyim. İlk olarak, İstanbul'daki farklı sosyo-ekonomik grupların, gündelik yaşam deneyimlerini oluşturan tüketim eylemlerinin ve yaşam tarzı pratiklerinin kaçınılmaz düzeyde benzerlik gösterdiğini iddia ediyorum. Başka bir

deyişle, gelir düzeyleri aısından deęişiklik gsteren bireylerin konut seimlerinde anlamlı derecede farklılıklar bulunmasına raęmen, aynı bireylerin sosyal hayattaki buluşma noktalarının ve kltrel tketim biimlerinin standartlaşmak sureti ile benzeştięini ne sryorum. İkinci olarak, dnya kltr endstrisinin poplerize ettięi tketim biimlerinin ve eęlence aktivitelerinin gndelik kent yařamıyla her geen gn daha fazla i ie getięi gnmz kořullarında, kapalı site alanlarında ikamet eden bireylerin dıř dnyadan izole bir hayat sr(-e)mediklerini ileri sryorum. Bu erevede, kapalı site yerleřkelerinde ikamet eden bireylerin, sosyal hayatın iinde yer alan ve řehrin sunduęu kltrel tketim etkinliklerini srekli olarak deneyimleyen kiřiler olarak deęerlendirilmesini neriyorum. Sz konusu iki farklı kapalı sitede ikamet eden katılımcılarla yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmıř grřmelerin sonularına dayanan bu alıřma, konut seimlerinde anlamlı derecede farklılıklar bulunan iki grubun kltrel tketim pratiklerindeki benzerlikleri gstermeyi hedeflerken; dnya kltr endstrisinin, kreselleřmiř kent yapısının ve řehir hayatının, farklı sosyo-ekonomik gruplardan bireylerin yařam tarzlarındaki ayrıřmaları nasıl ortadan kaldırdıęına dair alternatif bir bakıř aısı getirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dnya kltr, benzeřme, kltrel tketim, kurumsallařma, kent, kent yařamı, kapalı site yerleřkeleri, İstanbul

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1. Introduction

Not long before initiating this study -on the third Sunday of the June, it was a sunny day without a cloud in the sky. Not only for hanging around, but also for buying a present for my father, I decided to get out of my home and enjoy the day. After a couple of hours, I was on Bağdat Street, where known as Istanbul's one of the posh shopping and entertainment districts. I was watching people walking, shopping, chatting, and drinking something at fancy cafes. After a few steps, a delicious smell from one of the familiar coffee shops on the corner took me away. While I was looking to the direction the smell came from, a luxury car stopped there, two people got off the car, and entered that coffee shop. Meanwhile, I had a short look at the parking lot of the coffee shop and noticed that not only luxury cars, but also a variety of cars from different price ranges were parked there.

Then, I went on walking and decided to go in a Marks & Spencer store. Simultaneously, while I was entering the shop, I came across a TV celebrity, and he passed by me with his Marks & Spencer shopping bags in hand. But at that moment, I felt a little bit confused as he and I were at the same shop, although we have distinctly different financial statuses. Then, I went upstairs to have a look at the men's wear department and found a classy jacket for my father. I saw a salesman and went near him to ask about the size of the jacket. However, I was still thinking about the TV celebrity and myself shopping from the same store. I found it interesting that I could shop somewhere also a celebrity shops without facing much financial constraint.

When the salesman brought the right size of the jacket, I could not stop myself from asking about their customer profile. In respect to my question, he stated

that fifteen years ago, it was possible to estimate the male consumers' income level more or less by looking at their shoes and watches. However, he said, it is very difficult to answer the same question anymore, because it becomes too hard to make any categorization among them according to their appearances.

Thinking on it for a while, I have noticed that the salesman was right. I was looking around the spaces that I have been and it was relatively obvious that everything and everyone has becoming standardized in the most mainstream way possible in which there was nothing special and genuine. The physical environment of the city such as markets, cafes, restaurants, and streets were becoming also similar. Thus, the experiences of people's everyday routines were happening increasingly in more familiar settings. People were gathering in the same standardized landscape of the city, and they were becoming more familiar with one another's vocabularies, dress codes, consumption practices, speeches, daily stories, or meanings. In individuals' lifeworlds, there were a shared frame of reference that works as an underlying dynamic of standardized experiences about how to live, what to consume, and where to go. To me, it was not easy to predict what was happening at the first glance; however, I was almost clear on that socioeconomic characteristics of people were not adequately indicating their consumption preferences and life style practices anymore. Then, when I came to the stage of initiating this study, the anecdote with the salesman has become the main curiosity for me. Thus, as a starting point, I decided to investigate the similitudes between different groups of people based on their cultural consumption practices.

The global city now is providing more inclusive mode of a wide range of consumption activities than before, in which people could actively participate and possess regardless of their origins (Zukin 1995). In this landscape of the city,

globally distributed forms of commonalities are creating a continually interacting process in which populist discourses both reflect and transform individuals' behavior on the basis of consumption. In one sense of the word, public culture is being restructured by worldwide trends that can be displayed, viewed, bought, and sold in the global oasis of the city. IKEA is offering a new living room style, organic products are taking their place on the shelves of all supermarkets, or Starbucks coffeehouse chain is inviting people to enjoy a created trend of drinking vanilla mocha. There is a sushi restaurant in the corner or a bistro, which offers an international menu, boutiques, shops, festivals, concerts, or sport events that were associated with the only one particular group of consumers, which are now accessible to larger groups of people who have significantly different income.

It is fair to say that many things have been changed until the contemporary society come to this stage since 1980's. First of all, we have witnessed large-scale global transformations in many areas of social life in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Subsequently and parallel to this process, the free market design in the world economy has emerged as a key social and economic institution which reconfigures society in a global setting (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Keyder 1999; Knox and Taylor 1995; Soysal 2010; Öncü and Weyland 1997). In this stage, the extension of the market into the various areas of social life has not only encouraged the mass consumption as a new way of interacting with globe, but also common forms of consumption have simultaneously become generalized around the world.

Alongside all these changes, as it is stated by Zukin and Maguire, "the quantitative growth of mass consumption also reflects qualitative changes in demographics, new trends of social and geographical mobility and the growing

appeal of standardized goods as badges of democratization of consumption” (2004: 177). It is in this sense that combination of growing disposable income¹ with the widening of education level as well as higher standards for living (Gans 1999) have provided to broader group of people more opportunity to experience a wide range of similar forms of cultural consumption practices such as going to concerts or festivals as a leisure activity, using of mass produced but original perfumes from globalized shops like Yves Rocher or Body Shop, buying luxury brands via installments provided by credit cards, having a chance to go abroad through last minute flight tickets, or cheap package tours. Furthermore, current phase of the oversupply of cultural forms by the world culture industries have led to proliferation of standardized products that are sold across feasibly priced categories (Featherstone 2014; Zukin and Maguire 2004). Hereby, consumption experiences have become more and more ubiquitous, available, and accessible in everyday life (Gans 1999; Holt 1998; Soysal 2009; 2010; Zukin and Maguire 2004; Zukin 1995; 1998). Therefore, consumption of similar materials has enabled different groups of people to construct commonalities in their everyday practices.

What is more important is that “a new urban form has emerged in response to this new economic logic and changing social structure” (Knox 2005: 3) that comprises an institutionalized setting for a social interaction as well as “repertory of codes” (Soysal 2010: 298) that structures the daily routines of people’s social lives as a globally connected whole. In addition, as it is stated by Soysal (2010), in this new urban form, commonalities among consumption sites, experiences of spectacular events, and physical settings of the city have become intensified.

¹ See more in Chapter III

In a more macro level, the crucial concept here is what Boli and Lechner (2008) call as “world culture” -a model premised upon the elemental components that constitute the institutionalized discourses of today’s world society. In this context, Boli and Lechner (2008) state that, world culture now provides a “symbolic reference system that enables more and more people to participate in a joint dance” (p: 35) that is guided by worldwide popularities and globally distributed similitudes. Particularly in the new millennium, world cultural trends are in vogue in framing the ways that define how people act and feel. Following Boli and Lechner (2008), I take world culture as an organizational form underlying consumption activities of the individuals. As generally applicable or meaningful components, “world cultural trends are woven into the taken for granted fabric of everyday life” (Boli 2005: 385) and occupy a place in people’s minds in the way of creating a continual reproduction to shape their actions in a similar organizational context such as consuming organic products, preferring boutique hotels, going to fitness centers to live healthier, using dermo-cosmetics or following world cuisines.

In this thesis, my claim is shaped by the assumption that the institutionalized elements of world culture in contemporary urban life provides a “universal toolkit” (Zukin and Maguire 2004: 189) to individuals in which there is a wider repertoire of instantly accessible symbolic goods and worldwide trends from the global showcase (Zukin and Maguire 2004; Featherstone 2007). In this context, the discussion and arguments in this thesis derive from my short-term ethnographic research undertaken in two different gated housing complexes located in Istanbul. Combining findings of my short-term ethnographic research with the theoretical concepts of Boli and Lechner (2008), Levent Soysal (2010) and Sharon Zukin (1998), I make a two-pronged argument in this thesis.

First, I suggest that the growing influence of global consumerism have transformed cultural consumption practices of individuals into a convergence phase by offering standardized life styles. Therefore, I argue that there is not so much difference in terms of cultural consumption practices of people even though they have relatively different choices for housing. In other words, the differentiation of individuals in the form of their residence complexes is not necessarily coherent with their cultural consumption practices. Although people are differentiated symbolically based on their spatial choices for housing, their everyday life experiences and consumption practices have been dramatically standardized by the above-stated conditions of recent decades.

Second, I argue that living in a gated housing complex does not necessarily promote an isolated urban life style for its residents. According to many of the literature, gated housing complexes are not only promoting social and cultural segregation between different income groups, but also they are depicted as isolated settlements from the sociality provided by the city. However, instead of characterizing these gated housing complexes as isolated and segregated settlements, I propose to recognize their residents as individuals who have extensive social interaction with the city through using a wide range of consumption representations provided by the world culture industry.

To substantiate my two-pronged argument, I undertake a short-term ethnographic research in two different priced gated housing complexes to explore whether there is a convergence in cultural consumption practices of the individuals based on their relatively differentiated spatial choices for housing. In this context, the gated housing complexes in this study are significantly differentiated from each other in terms of rents, maintenance fees, and type of the dwellings. Therefore, the

residence complexes in my sample are classified with different priced categories as higher level and lower level. The first gated housing complex in this research includes triplex luxury villas, while the second gated housing complex composed of low-rise apartment blocks. In this sense, the rents in villa housing complex are four times higher than the apartment housing complex. These two groups, as a result, are differentiated in terms of economic conditions since the income levels of their residents change significantly in between different scales.

In my field study, I use in depth semi-structured interviews to understand cultural consumption practices of respondents through a detailed conversation regarding their consuming activities and preferences. Five respondents participate in research process from each gated housing complex and the whole sample is composed of ten respondents ranging in age from 35 to 65. In the research process, an interview guide is used that includes variety of categories regarding cultural consumption activities such as food, clothing, home decoration and furnishing, music, movies, television, reading, entertainment, socializing, vacations, sports, going out and eating out, health expenditure, and hobbies to be able to elicit detailed descriptions of respondents' consumption practices.

The next section presents further information concerning research experience and design of the study. The sample and the interviewing processes that are elaborated as well as a detail description about both gated housing residences are presented in this section. In addition, the last part of this section explains the successful aspects and the limitations of the study.

In this thesis, a short-term ethnographic research has been undertaken in two different priced gated housing settlements located in Istanbul, Anatolian Shore, in a

comparative manner to find out similarities in cultural consumption practices of their residents. In this context, the research was conducted on the basis of qualitative methods that contains in depth semi-structured interviews to be able to explore individuals' experiences and explanations regarding their cultural consumption practices.

There are two groups in this research who live in two different gated housing complexes. Five respondents from each group participated in the research process. The sample was composed of 10 respondents² within the 35 to 60 age range. Despite my efforts, I largely failed to arrange interviews with men. Therefore, except for two, all respondents in the sample of the study are women.

Interviews were conducted from December 2015 to March 2016. Respondents were selected through the snowball sampling method. Interviews lasted an average of one hour and fifteen minutes and ranged from one to two hours. In this context, interviews were recorded and transcribed into around 350 pages. Moreover, the data was examined in an analysis that included observations made during the interviews (e.g., home and interior decoration, treated foods or drinks, hobby materials in home). In the research process, rather than asking many of direct questions, an interview guide was developed to allow for a more discovery oriented conversation in which respondents might feel more comfortable to tell more details about their cultural consumption practices.

At the beginning of interview process, respondents were informed about the context of the research. Regarding ethical concerns, respondents were clearly told that their identity would not be revealed, they were only given pseudonyms names.

² See Appendix-A for the demographics.

In addition, it was stated that the tape-record was only used according to their permissions and respondents were not obligated to answer every question.

Cultural consumption practices in this study were associated with all kinds of cultural forms which have potential exchange value in the market. Therefore, various type of activities that have exchange value were selected as a category to identify consumption practices of individuals³. In semi-structured interviews, there were sequence of themes to help analyze involvement of consumption activities including food, clothing, home decoration and furnishings, music, television, movies, reading, socializing, vacations, sports, going out and eating out, health expenditure and hobbies. Within each category, interview was interfered through open-ended questions such as “why?”, “how?” and “what?” to be able to elicit as much detail as possible (e.g., eating: in restaurants, at home or take out, type of culinary, going branch on weekends, celebration special days) on a variety of consumption practices. Furthermore, respondents were also asked some structured questions at the beginning in order to obtain various kind of (e.g. age, birth place, gender, marital status, educational level, occupation, income, parental background, past changes and predicted future changes in residence, perceptions of their neighborhood) socio-demographic and socio-economic details.

As it is stated at the beginning, there are two main survey groups in this study. The groups are constructed on the basis of the categorization of their gated housing complex in accordance with the sale prices, rents, maintenance fees and type of the dwelling. In this context, the first research sample “Best1st Villas” is the higher priced gated housing settlement than the second research sample “Bosphorus Istanbul” in terms of sale prices, rents and maintenance fees. With regard to physical

³ See Appendix-B for the categories used in interviews.

characteristics, the major difference in between two housing settlements is that while “Bosphorus Istanbul” is low-rise apartment blocks “Bestİst Villas” is composed of luxury villas. They are, one the one hand, surrounded by high walls, strict borders, and restricted access for the entrance. In addition, both gated housing settlements have private body of security and private provision of common services. On the other hand, each gated housing settlement is in close location of the same district and contains private leisure and sport facilities such as swimming pool, sauna, tennis, and basketball courts. However, there are some major differences in between two gated housing settlements in terms of physical construction of the leisure facilities. In this sense, each family resides in “Bestİst Villas” has its own private swimming pool and sport complex, while there is one swimming pool and sport center in “Bosphorus Istanbul” that is constructed for the common usage for all residents who live in this gated housing settlement.

Furthermore, dwelling rents start from ₺2000 in “Bosphorus Istanbul”, while rents in “Bestİst Villas” start from ₺8000. In parallel, maintenance fees in “Bestİst Villas” is ₺1380, whereas the same cost changes between ₺400 and ₺650 in “Bosphorus Istanbul”. It is because the price of the apartment in “Bosphorus Istanbul” rises according to sea view, size, and the location of the dwelling within the settlement.

What is more significant - and important for our purpose is that “Bestİst Villas” is populated by people whose income level is at least two times higher than residents of “Bosphorus Istanbul”. The majority of the residents of the “Bestist Villas” are mainly employers and businesses owners such as medium scale companies functioning in either domestic or international domains. However, in

“Bosphorus Istanbul”, residents are mostly managers or executives employed in international companies and self-employed white-collar professionals.

On the one hand, two groups do not differentiate from each other in terms of educational level. All of the residents interviewed, except for two, are university graduates. In both groups, there are also respondents graduated from prestigious universities abroad with a master degree. On the other hand, while respondents from “Bestİst Villas” all come from wealthy or educated families, the majority of the respondents of “Bosphorus Istanbul” have personal success stories since the financial background of their families are relatively weaker than the other group. Even though families of respondents in “Bosphorus Istanbul” also have at least high school education, they are mostly employed as government officials or blue-collar workers. However, parents of the respondents who live in “Bestİst Villas” are also business owners. Therefore, respondents from “Bestİst Villas” have a considerable level of inherited income which may positively affect the differences of their housing choices.

Apart from the differences in financial status, when we go into details of the household, it is true that the general life style and consumption practices of two groups are highly similar with each other. In this context, all respondents interviewed in “Bestİst Villas”, except one, had nannies or servants most of whom are foreigners from countries such as Moldavia, Ukraine, Georgia or Uzbekistan. Those, who work for domestic help, were staying with the respondents in their villas. However, respondents from “Bosphorus Istanbul” stated that they also have workers for the domestic help who comes to their homes every day of the week. Furthermore, one of the respondents from the “Bosphorus Istanbul” have said that there is a woman, who is from Moldavia, works as a stay-in nanny.

Moreover, several researchers have addressed that it is difficult to conduct a field work in a gated housing complex due to the limited access to these settlements. However, I did not have any difficulty about getting in contact with the administration and entrance to both settlements. After I took the official permissions from the administration for the entrance to the settlements, I initially contacted two residents from both gated housing complexes through a personal reference. Then, they introduced me to their friends. Hence, I could spend time together with them and have an opportunity to make participant observation regarding their everyday lives. Furthermore, respondents invited me to meet at their homes, where I conducted the interviews. That way, I could also gain a more detailed overview about characteristics of the settlement and daily routines of the respondents.

This research, therefore, is relatively successful in that it presents the findings of a field work that is undertaken in two different gated housing residences in Istanbul. However, there are also certain limitations in this study. First of all, it is important to note that the findings and assumptions of this study obviously differ from many of those who describe new trend gated housing settlements as examples of exclusionary and elitist representations that reinforce divergence based consumption. In this respect, it is important to know that this study does not have a claim to introduce a general model due to the specificity of every locale in question. It is in this context that this study is limited with only a sample composed of ten people from two gated housing settlements located in a particular district of Istanbul. Herein, this study can be regarded as a limited effort in introducing an alternative perspective concerning how global consumer culture, city life, and standardized life experiences converges people who have significantly different spatial choices for housing by rendering their cultural consumption practices similar.

As a final note, this study just examines practice - based consuming activities of individuals which have exchange value in the market, rather than investigating the determinants such as motivation, personal feeling, and perception which may be underlying factors that lead them to consume a specific product. In other words, this study does not look at the consuming characteristics of each group concerning how they produce their selves with the goods consumed, but instead focuses on what they consume rather than how they consume. As a result, there is a demonstration of emphasis about the cultural consumption practices of the individuals, rather than to question social positioning propensities of them in everyday life.

Before starting to the analysis of the interview data in chapter two and chapter three, the next section presents an overview about the structure of the study and content of the chapters.

There are four main chapters in this study. The next chapter starts with a brief overview of contemporary urban studies regarding “gated housing complexes” (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Blakely and Snyder 1997; Low 2003) to be able to present a general picture about these housing settlements. Then, I argue that living in a gated housing complex does not necessarily attach its residents to an isolated and segregated urban life style. Instead, I suggest that respondents from both gated housing complexes are in an extensive relation with the city, care to know, or perceive the city as a whole as well as show major similarities in terms of using public services that the city provides.

At this point, I characterize city as a container of institutionalized forms of world culture, the carrier of popular discourses and a potential for the construction of globally oriented consumption practices (Featherstone 1996; Knox and Taylor 1995;

King 1995; Low 1996). To show this, I indicate that respondents talk about their cities as a source of consumption which affords them new patterns of leisure activities, satisfaction of everyday needs and worldwide cultural trends. Therefore, I suggest to locate cities in a larger institutional framework that are associated with world culture to be able to understand the similarities between cultural consumption practices of the individuals as a collective reflection of urban life style.

The major assertion here is that world cultural trends constitute a “critical infrastructure for the city’s emerging symbolic economy” (Zukin 1998: 831). In this symbolic economy of the city, which is saturated by the commercialization of cultural compounds, many consumption practices related with the representation of urban life style become widespread. Thus, in the end, the city itself provides a commercialized social space where everyone has access to join and possibility to get into touch on the basis of standardized forms of consumption (Soysal 2010; Zukin 1998). At this point, Levent Soysal (2010) asserts that in the new terrains of publicness, cities lead its residents to a new mode of sociability which becomes increasingly “exogenous” (p: 395) and dependent on the growth of the urban market economy. According to his argument, the global infrastructure of cities offers people to spend more time in outside by offering them various genres of consumption representations and easy reach to enjoyment. With his words, in this environment, “sociability is being enacted in the terrain of globally distributed forms and similitudes which are gradually but surely resembling each other and becoming one and the same” (Soysal 2010: 389). Put it another way, Soysal (2010) argues that expanded access to commercialized urban public sphere fosters the “amplified sociality” which is a term based on the consumption of standardized life experiences that are available in the spirit of contemporary urban life.

In this context, following the theoretical discussions of Zukin (1998) and Soysal (2010), I conclude this section by presenting from the interview data in which respondents show a high degree of willingness to experience outside sociality by using leisure facilities of their city. They spend more time and money in popular spaces in the city through consuming a wide range of popularities that are imposed by the world culture discourses. Therefore, I propose that contemporary urban life brings together various groups by providing a standardized form of sociality and rationalized codes of consumption practices.

In chapter three, I discuss how the combination of market segmentation, increasing possibility of choice and purchasing power has led more people to consume cultural goods and services. In doing so, first of all, I take a stand against traditional understanding which delineates culture in the terrains of a separate realm with a purely elitist manner, and put it on the grounds of an enlarged field of material process of production and exchange. I suggest that culture is incorporated into the marketable images of the worldwide trends that can be experienced via consumption. In this context, I take the term “world culture” (Boli and Lechner 2008) as an organizational form of consumption that contains rationalized and institutionalized discourses of worldwide popularities. Accordingly, I propose that the market economy disseminates circulation of symbolic meanings in the form of cultural goods and experiences, not just exclusively for a particular group of people, but rather for a larger group of people who are able to exploit this situation by the way of consumption as long as resources are available to them.

Then, following Boli and Lechner (2008), I discuss that these worldwide trends expand to the rationalized realm of collective preferences that become ubiquitous as the priority of the individuals. In such circumstances, I argue, world

culture standardizes the life experiences and outlooks of the individuals and constitutes a common language of a collective life style. In doing so, I present some of the most explicit taken for granted preferences of the respondents from the interview data such as consumption of organic food, local and exotic commodities as well as genuine interest in the overall health and fitness, ethnic cuisines, dermo-cosmetics or accommodation in boutique hotels in order to show convergence of two groups, who have significantly different income levels, on the basis of the consumption of globally distributed trends of world culture.

In conclusion chapter, I present a basis to understand how individuals who are differentiated from each other based on their spatial choices for housing, have similar consumption practices that are saturated by institutionalized discourses and representational codes of world culture. In order to do so, I propose to summarize the general argumentation of my thesis by introducing the term what I call ‘consumption of urbanity’ as an organizational frame of reference that constitutes an ongoing process of convergence between individuals by the construction of same relations and structures in everyday living of the modern city.

2. Gated Housing Residences and the Urban Life

Saturday morning, mid-December. I am in a district to undertake my fieldwork, located in one of the largest and densely populated municipality of Istanbul, on the Anatolian Shore of the Bosphorus. This district of Istanbul is one of the oldest-established residential area in the northeastern periphery of the city. This area can be described as a quiet waterfront neighborhood offering gorgeous views of the Bosphorus, in addition, it is where you have easy access to various parts of the commercial centers of the city. To transport across the Bosphorus is easy by boat and it is in a close location to both Fatih Sultan Mehmet and Bosphorus Bridges. During the rush-hour, the waterfront is crowded with people running from ferryboats and motorboats onto buses and minibuses. Not surprisingly, there are always queues of traffic through the coastline during the day. Moreover, this coastline is lined with various shops, bakeries, waterfront cafes, seafood restaurants, and number of grand seaside villas (*yali*). On nice days, people gather on the shore to fish, sit, and enjoy being out with a beautiful view of the sea. Though densely populated, the area has many greenery places and high concentration of historic buildings. There are a number of historical Ottoman mosques, churches, and classic old-fashioned wooden houses that have been undertaken restoration near the coastline.

In that Saturday morning, at 11:30 a.m. - I am standing in a corner of a street and waiting for a phone call from my first interviewee who is to give me directions about the route to find the way to the settlement in which I will conduct my first interview. The call comes in a few minutes, then, I am starting to walk along the seaside with a beautiful view of Bosphorus by following in my mind the description of the way that has been told me on the phone. Walking through the street near the

sea, I see a Burger King and a fitness center, an open exhibition area for art works, and a historical mosque next to it from the time of an Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid. Nearby, there are an espresso bar, a sushi restaurant, an organic store that sells local products, and a boutique hotel in a grand building looking directly to the Bosphorus view. There are various cafes and boutiques which are soon followed by a gift-shop and a globally-known cosmetics store. A kebab restaurant is in the next to it, ATMs are coming side by side, a convenience store on the corner, and a pharmacy that offers dermo-cosmetics with a slogan stating “It’s becoming hip to be environmentally conscious. Catch it!”. A mini cooper stops in front of the kebab restaurant, three women of various ages enter the place, two middle-aged men read newspapers in a cafe with a beautiful view of the sea, two young women who are probably students spread papers over the table studying with a laptop, a stray dog with a little cat are sleeping in front of the sushi restaurant and a tourist eats a take-out lunch next to the bus stop. There is a diversity in the air as a standardized scenery of the contemporary urban form that is derived from the routinized structure of the representational practices.

Walking through this street, I feel like various spheres of social life are intimately connected and entangled in the everyday practice of the present-day city. When I go on walking two blocks from the corner of the street, this perception continues and gives me a strong sense of familiarity in addition to what I feel about the social life of common spaces in the city. This sense of familiarity is something like I have spent a lifetime within the same landscape of this street; therefore, if I got lost somewhere in here, it would not be difficult to find my way to get back home. At this moment, I realize that consumption discourses, goods, gathering places, and cultural events are more diversified in this urban fabric, but ultimately, more

standardized and appeal to wider consumer groups than before (Soysal 2010; Zukin 1998).

These displays in this landscape of the city are exactly complementary elements that create the today's new urban legibility. In this new urban catalogue, commercial spaces that cater to consumption needs of social life depend on variety, the density of crowds, but also incorporation of cultural components (Zukin 2011). What is obvious while looking to anywhere in this area is an incorporation of various types of world culture discourses, symbols, and institutionalized practices of consumption into a public fantasy of an urban dream. In this environment, it seems that anyone can perform the consuming symbols of any other one within the confines of free market opportunities that make everything available. Here, the boundaries of various types of distinctions seem collapsed, separate dimensions of social categories penetrated each other and consumption practices become to lose their distinctive features to signify differences (Abrahamson 2004; Soysal 2009, Öncü 1997; Zukin 1998).

Meanwhile, at the end of the long street is the resource of my above-stated observations - I am staring at the steepest hill I have ever seen that is waiting for me to climb over to be able to arrive the gated housing settlement in which my interviewee resides. At this moment, without so much hesitation, I am starting to climb the hill and continue to make my observations regarding the description of my fieldwork area. While climbing over the hill that is located behind the coast, I see a residential periphery which has dominantly a seedy image composed by mostly squatter (*gecekondü*) housing and poverty. This is a rundown neighborhood on the hillside with a plenty of trees and walk-up flats. However, when I finally completed climbing the hill and arrived at the area of my fieldwork, what I see is a large-scale

urban renewal, residential conversion of the squatters as a great transformation, and an appreciation of architecture into various gated housing residences that have different characteristics.

It is fair to say that, over the past couple of decades, the regeneration and transformation process in the city has not been confined only with new housing developments on this hillsides, but rather there have been numerous changes in Istanbul that accelerate its moving pace towards becoming a global metropolitan city. Since the 1980's – “the imaginary timeline of Turkey” (Soysal 2010: 302) that signifies integration of globally oriented neoliberal restructuring policies into the country, the landscape of Istanbul has been changed increasingly by enormous investments into its physical, economic, cultural, and social fabrics (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Göktürk, Soysal and Türeli 2010; Keyder 2010; Soysal 2010; Öncü 1997). Gradually but surely, the metropolitan area of Istanbul has been enlarged in accordance with the new mechanisms of neoliberal production and consumption. Therefore, Istanbul began to turn into a global city through the new urban transformation projects (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Keyder 2010; Soysal 2010). Istanbul's urban landscape has been crowded by shopping malls, modern office buildings, residences, five-star hotels, gated housing settlements, plazas, and various types of consumption sites that offer world famous brands, fancy restaurants and cafes over the past two decades as the city has undergone an ongoing and planned socio-spatial transforming (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu; Soysal 2010).

What is more important is that the growths of such transformations are representatives of the new phase in the evolution of the city associated with the globalization (Bowers and Manzi 2005). In this sense, two gated housing settlements in this study in which a short – term ethnographic study is undertaken can be seen

among most visible examples of Istanbul's transformation that is propelled by globally oriented urban policies. The first gated housing complex in this study, "*The Bestİst Villas*" has been built in the second half of the 1990's and it is one of the earliest example of gated housing settlements in Istanbul. Despite their close location in the same district, two gated housing residences in this study have major differences in their characteristics in terms of sizes, sale prices, and types of the dwellings. "*The Bestİst Villas*" is composed of triplex luxury villas which have swimming pools and sport facilities that are constructed privately for each villa. The other gated housing complex, "*The Bosphorus Istanbul*" is recently constructed and composed of low-rise apartment blocks. In addition, the rents in "*The Bestİst Villas*" is four times higher than "*The Bosphorus Istanbul*". Moreover, "*The Bosphorus Istanbul*" has common usage leisure complexes such as a common swimming pool and a gym unlike the leisure facilities of "*The Bestİst Villas*" that are constructed for private usage of each family. However, they both have strict surveillance and controls at the gates, in addition to the private security personnel inside the settlements.

This type of residential development is now a feature of the urban landscape in most cities around the world (Bartu Candan and Kolluođlu 2008; Bowers and Manzi 2005; Low 2003). Therefore, there is a considerable level of interest concerning gated housing residences in recent years. In this sense, several definitions have been used to characterize the phenomenon of gated housing residences in literature. Particularly, in this regard, the literature on urban studies emphasizes mainly the idea that they are socially and spatially segregated as well as isolated housing areas which are constructed in accordance with exclusive life style imaginations of the upper-income groups (Ayata 2002; Bartu Candan and Kolluođlu

2008; Butler 1997; Blakely and Snyder 1997; Geniş 2007; Kurtuluş 2011; Low 2003; Öncü 1997). Moreover, a brief overview of contemporary urban studies suggests that these housing areas are alienating constructions which give rise to social distances between different groups in the city (Ayata 2002; Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Kurtuluş 2011; Low 2003). In this context, residents of these housing complexes are considered as having a set of characteristics that render them a culturally, socially, and economically distinct groups who have voluntarily limited relation with the outside world.

This is the reason why researchers consider these types of residential developments as ‘communities’ that involves symbolic barriers between their residents and non-residents. In response to this, they are conceptualized as “gated communities” in many of the literature. This thesis, however, uses the concept of “gated housing residences” rather than “gated communities” considering that these type of residential developments may not always encourage a sense of community and a sense of very hard lines between the inside and the outside (Amin and Graham 1999; Roitman 2010).

Moreover, a critical analysis about gated housing residences brings to the fore a number of questions concerning two issues. First, to what extent can gated housing settlements really be isolated from the outside society while the global infrastructure of cities includes a composition of various genres, easy reach to enjoyment, a wider realm of everyday leisure and suggests people to spend more time and money in outside? Second, to what extent can their residents be segregated from others in an urban fabric that provides an ever-increasing range of more readily available goods and consumption experiences to a larger section of society? From another perspective, how the residents of these housing settlements can segregate themselves

in an exclusive and elitist manner while everyday experiences of urban life are being shaped within the familiar contours of cityscapes for everybody? Now, let me turn to this discussion on the findings of my interviews that I have conducted under the scope of my fieldwork with the residents of two gated housing settlements.

The most striking and foremost condition is that, while Istanbul has been restructured geographically and demographically in response to new transformation projects, global discourses have simultaneously led profound effects on urban social fabric and the city life (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Roitman 2010). The symbolic economy of the city increasingly concentrated on the circulation of symbols and consumption images that are rooted in the commercial culture of the global trends (Zukin 1995). In this consumption-oriented economy of the city, global icons and visions have resulted in the construction of more diversified but increasingly more standardized urban landscape. Moreover, mass produced products, cultural symbols, services have been bundled together and marketed as everyday routines of urban living (Leeman and Modan 2010). In this context, the city landscape of Istanbul has been enclosed and depended on new consumption spaces that respond to changing imagination of contemporary urban life. As consumption activities have become to shape the public life of the modern city, consumption spaces such as restaurants, trendy cafes, entertainment centers, art and music festivals, museums and shopping centers have become intensified (Soysal 2010). Put differently, the physical fabric of the city has constantly changed around the new imagination of urban life style as a universal rhetoric that is propelled by consumption tastes and global desires.

In this new topography of the city, it became easier to organize one of the routine family outside going to a nearby urban leisure zone - that is fully designed to

promote consuming of taken-for-granted practices of urban life, or having a dinner in an ethnic restaurant as an exotic experience. In modern city, venues offering zesty and artisan world cuisine prepared by world-class chefs are almost at each corner. In addition, you can easily indulge in Chinese cuisine at Cevahir Shopping mall, or enjoy your daily roasted coffee at a New York skyline logoed third-wave coffee shop at Karaköy.

What is more significant - and consequential is that the daily routines of individuals have become to happen in a more similar and predictable framework that is saturated by consumption performances of a standardized urban form (Soysal 2010; Zukin 1998). People in Istanbul from different socio-economic groups have increasingly been using, experiencing, and living their everyday routines in an ever-shrinking institutional framework of the city life. In this context, they began to experience common forms of urban consumption as generalized reflections of a global vision, shop in the same places of the city, eat in the same restaurants, go to the similar hospitals, see movies in the same theaters, go to same art festivals, or sport events and spend their weekends engaged in similar activities.

Moreover, in this new urban form, the global discourse of consumerism that is embedded in city life, has brought a shared structural logic that is actively constructing an image of what life should be about (Miles 1998). In other words, a social imaginary of an urban dream including the great extent of referential dictation about how to live, what to consume and where to go became to shape the living experiences of modern citizen. “I do not know why, but we are going to a shopping mall every weekend. When we go there, I do not leave without buying anything. I really do not care about their prices if I like them” (*Eylül, Bosphorus Istanbul*), says a 35-year-old English teacher. Another respondent, a 47-year-old director in a private

bank, states that “My husband loves Starbucks coffees. We are not coming home without drinking a coffee in Starbucks. He claims that the only thing he cares is the taste of the coffee, but I am not sure. It comes to me something like- everybody is drinking coffee at Starbucks. Thus, if there is such a thing we are acting as if we must also try it.” (*Zuhal, Bosphorus Istanbul*).

This new consumer group’s perception of the urban life and their place in it is best captured by what Soysal states “our social worlds are crowded and enriched by more of the same things” (2010: 389). In reference to Soysal, it is not inaccurate to say that, consumption practices of city life have been standardized and rationalized in a world where the global pervasiveness of worldwide trends have been absorbed into the urban market in an extraordinary degree. This is how a 43-year-old sales manager respondent explained the way that his city is shaping his everyday experiences within the similar structure with those whose earnings are higher than him: “City is giving you an opportunity to see and experience a particular type of life style. It is not important how much money you earn because, you are also living in the same urban form. You go out, you meet with someone for lunch at Istinye Park. Then it becomes so normal to eat something at Istinye Park. On a weekend, you have breakfast in Big Chefs like others. It becomes normal for you as well. You enter Şutte Market while walking in Etiler. You see imported goods on the shelves, then you become familiarized with them” (*Ozan, Bosphorus Istanbul*).

As it is inferred from the quotation cited above, it is possible to say that what is enacted by a particular group of people is already available, accessible, and within easy reach in their similar forms for a much wider group of consumers. Consequently, as consumption of commercialized trends become more available and accessible, the symbolic distinctions that are marker of categorical differences

between individuals, are becoming invisible in contemporary scripts of urban life. In other words, widespread availability in urban spaces transforms consumer experiences, which have been previously restricted to the rich, into a more readily accessible phase for a larger section of society (Featherstone 1983). In this regard, there is an example, a 35-year-old PhD student, Belçim from *Bestist Villas*, confirmed how eating sushi has become one of the widespread everyday practice in contemporary conditions of the modern city: “Today, eating sushi is not something different than eating meatball. You can even order it from the nearest restaurant to your home.” Another 35-year-old English teacher respondent said that “I love avocado. Ten years ago, it was quite expensive and hard to find it in Istanbul. However, it is possible to find it in almost all Migros markets today” (*Eylül, Bosphorus Istanbul*).

Sharon Zukin asserts that “for each ideal type of modern city, there are correspondences between the built environment, forms of sociality, and urban life styles” (1998: 827). This is similar to what Levent Soysal (2010) describes with the term “amplified sociality”. With his term, Soysal points out that shared, discursive, and performative spaces of urban consumption constitute intimate connections between individuals. Accordingly, the outside is the new inside for people from various socio-economic backgrounds as the city provides a wide variety of popular consuming activities ever than before (Soysal 2010). In today’s metropolitan cities, which are governed by globally distributed similitudes, individuals enact sociality within the context of same vocabularies and similar forms of urban life style (Soysal 2010). Put differently, Soysal (2010) states that sociality in today’s cities becomes increasingly connected with the extensive circulation of standardized experiences.

It is in this sense that people spend more time and money in outside places as the city has become more inclusive for everybody by incorporating new forms of consumption representations in a standardized urban scene where everyone have access to join and opportunity to consume (Zukin 1995; Zukin and Maguire 2004). In this context, all of the respondents explained that they use outside spaces of the city for eating, drinking, shopping, or entertainment more frequently than before as one of their routine activities. Here is an illustration in the words of a 59-year-old retired business owner to show how eating out have become a daily routine rather than a luxurious activity today: “Of course, we are eating out. When we go out for shopping or walking two or three times a week, we also sit and eat something in a nice restaurant or in a cafe. But it is not something special. It is something like a need. We cannot make shopping while we feel hungry, right? ” (*Berrin, Bestİst Villas*). The 47-year-old director expressed the attitude of her husband towards eating at a shopping center in the following sentences: “We are eating out very often. But first of all, we should clarify what do we mean with the term eating out, because for example my husband do not give any special meaning to our meals in a shopping center, even though we eat in a restaurant. If we are eating in a shopping complex, this does not make any sense to him. According to him, it is something like snack. It is something we do very quickly and go on with our daily activities. To him, we should leave our child to the nanny and go to eat a special cuisine at a restaurant or have a drink while eating seafood to be able to call it as- eating out” (*Zuhal, Bosphorus Istanbul*).

At one level, enactment of similar forms of urban consumption creates a shared frame of reference that leads to the routinization of social practices. In another sense, there is a considerable level of similarities in life style practices of the respondents that became manifest in the usage of same public spaces. For instance,

when respondents are asked their most frequently visited venues in the city, they gave similar restaurant and cafe names located in Nişantaşı, Etiler, Karaköy, Arnavutköy, Bebek, Çengelköy, Anadolu Hisarı, and Beylerbeyi in almost all of the interviews. Restaurants and cafes in Karaköy are the most preferred spaces for all respondents from both housing settlements on Friday or Saturday evenings. Arnavutköy is another popular place for eating seafood and having breakfast at the weekends. Etiler and Nişantaşı are also popular districts of the city among respondents, especially for daily activities such as sitting in a cafe or meeting with friends. Fish restaurants and cafes for drinking tea in Çengelköy and Beylerbeyi are other most frequently cited places in almost all interviews. Surprisingly, some of the respondents from *Bestİst Villas* mentioned that Eminönü is also a good place for hanging around, chatting with people who work in the local bazaar, and enjoying the cityscape to feel the soul of the Istanbul. In addition, cultural events such as Istanbul Film Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival, Biennial Istanbul, Rumeli Hisari Concerts, or Harbiye Açık hava Concerts are widely attended popular activities among respondents, creating a social space to get more social interaction. In terms of shopping as a leisure activity, AkMerkez in Etiler, Istinye Park in Sarıyer, Palladium in Ataşehir, and Buyaka in Ümraniye are the most preferred malls among all of the respondents. Furthermore, the majority of them said that they go to a shopping mall every weekend for strolling, window-shopping, eating and drinking, even though they do not purchase anything.

In contemporary urban form, people are in the shopping malls, restaurants cafes, concerts or at gyms. They are bonded in amplified sociality, familiarity, and new forms of visibility that the modern city makes possible. Daily practices and activities are performed within the public and available forms of urban living. What

comes to the fore in this imaginary of urbanity is people from different socio-economic groups experience the common forms of consumption activities in an increasingly shared physical environment of the modern city. In these circumstances, the role of urban consumption reaches beyond the limited areas of categorical differences; thus, points to a changed model relies on a universal system of urban living. In this sense, the generalized expansion of urban life style, exogenous structure of the city, and penetration of new icons of the globalizing desires into the everyday arena constitute a shared frame of reference among people as well as limit social disparities between them.

Moreover, the new urban form of the city provides an extended model of cultural consumption that “emphasizes enjoyment, spectacle, ease of entry, and crossing of genres in the wider realm of everyday life that is underpinned by a general participation in sociability” (Wynne and Justin 1998: 859). In this new urban form, it is not easy to associate spatial choices for housing as a sign of segregation and isolation. To put it differently, in these circumstances, the relational ties and connections of gated housing settlements’ residents with the rest of the city seem to get increasingly stronger. What it means is that the walls of the gated housing settlements, which are considered as symbolic and physical barriers that prevent interaction between inside and outside, may not weaken and reduce the ties that constitute the social contact of their residents with the city.

On the contrary to most of the literature, the desire for exclusion from the outside world does not seem equally desirable by the majority of the respondents. In almost all of the interviews, respondents not only expressed a positive relation with the city, but also they showed major similarities in terms of using public services that the city provides. This is how a 59-year-old retired business owner respondent

explained the way in which her familiarity with the city is increasing by using public services of the city: “I am walking from here to pier to take the ferry. Taking the ferry and watching the sea make me feel better. I feel myself in Istanbul, I feel the soul of the city better this way” (*Berrin, Bestİst Villas*). Another respondent, 49-year-old retired woman from the public sector says: “We do not have any financial problems. If I ask my husband to buy a car for me, he can do it easily, but I do not like to live an isolated life from the outside world. I take a bus when I need to go somewhere. It is quite okay” (*Nihan, Bestİst Villas*). Furthermore, six women respondents out of eight of them -aged between 35 to 59, stated that they go to the same hair dresser, shop from the same bazaar every week, and go to same fitness center located in their neighborhood as well.

Accordingly, it seems that a physically bounded so-called community cannot completely detach itself from the city which surrounds it (Amin and Graham 1999). It is in this sense that majority of respondents in this research do not have a propensity to draw strong lines inside and outside of their residence settlements. The 47-year-old director confirmed the description stated above: “The profile of our neighborhood is highly heterogeneous, but I like it. This is one of the reasons for me that affects my decision to live in this gated housing complex, because this place is not isolated from the outside world” (*Zuhal, Bosphorus Istanbul*). What is more significant, a 35-year-old PhD student from *Bestİst Villas* exhibits any concern about the presentation of herself with the name and the image of her gated housing complex. “We are living in a cosmopolitan neighborhood. I cannot even say that our gated housing complex, which is known as one of the exclusive settlements in Istanbul, has a homogeneous profile, but I do not care about it. We live in the same

city. You cannot exclude yourself from the habitat you live in. It is ridiculous” (*Belçim, Bestİst Villas*).

At this point, it is important to note that the voluntary aspect of living in a gated housing residence does not seem related with a desire of closure from the outside, a desire for a social homogeneity, or a desire for a sense of exclusiveness. Rather, living in a gated housing settlement appears as part of a spatial response to the generalized frame of reference about modern urban living. Accordingly, a 47-year-old business owner respondent explained that living in a gated housing complex has become ubiquitous, since these settlements now target a broader group of people in many areas of the city. She says: “If you had asked whether I feel exclusive living in this settlement fifteen years ago, I could have said yes. However, today, most of housing areas are routinely built as gated settlements. Everybody is living in a gated housing complex now, since it is a feature of the modern city” (*Aslı, Bestİst Villas*). It is true that there is now a considerable growth in the number of recently constructed gated housing settlements not only in Istanbul, but also around the world (Morgan 2013; Roitman 2010; Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008). Herein, what is significant and consequential is that gated areas are now becoming commonplace parts of everyday living in the city rather than signifying an intensification of segregation and isolation from the outside.

In the light of this research data, it is now clear that “there are less strong neighborhood identifications and less fixed habitus” in which people are framed (Featherstone 2007: 88). It is because consumption of urbanity now creates a social space and allows more social interaction. In this urban form, commonalities among places and people are intensifying. Thus, the social construction of the city is responding to this shift. In this context, same structure of living and similar forms of

urban imaginary draws the new setting of urban sociality, underlying the new dynamics of urban activity and codifies routine practices of the consumption of urbanity. This is an ongoing process of convergence that consists of people from various groups and places from world culture industry. Then, the modern city is an open floor for everybody and more convergent at the end.

In the next chapter, the term world culture is conceptualized as an organizational form of consumption. In this context, a detailed discussion regarding the similarity of people in their consumption practices is undertaken by presenting some specific examples of respondents' preferences that are institutionalized by the world culture industry.

3. World Culture as an Organizational Form of Consumption

On an afternoon, at secondary public school building located in Istanbul. As a teacher with a degree in psychology, I am in my office to work with children regarding any issues they have.

During typical working hours, there is a knock on the door, “Come in please” I say. One of my colleagues is at the door tells me with a desperate stare, “I do not know what to do with a child. Please come and see.” I go to the class with him and when I enter his class, a 10-year-old child is eating yogurt while other students are writing an exam. Meanwhile, she really does not care about the exam and just concentrates on eating her yogurt with care and delicacy, which made my colleague angry. On the other hand, I am thinking how cute the child looks - but I do not know exactly what to say at that moment and simultaneously having difficulty to keep myself from laughing. My colleague kindly asks me whether I can remind the child that this is not our lunch time and that they are having an exam. However, the child is quick enough to answer, “Please, I have to finish eating my organic yogurt! Don’t you hear anything about WHO (World Health Organization)?”

This child, who is only her ten, is talking about how important is consuming organic. She, at the same time, refers to a universally recognized and meaningful structure— namely the WHO which is a global organization whose procedures are constituted by world cultural constructs (Boli 2005). Moreover, the crucial concept here is not only for consuming organic, but also for an array of possible actions, now there is a behavioral road map available to people everywhere providing ideas, symbols, concepts, codes, and models integrated into everyday practices of people’s experiences (Abrahamson 2004; Lechner and Boli 2008). People who never ran or

exercised before now at least are considering about trying to do physical fitness, eating healthy, using dermo-cosmetics, consuming organic, or interested in ethnic world cuisines. It is because the world culture is now a global reality, that contains official myths of rationality and a pool of shared meanings (Lechner and Boli 2008). World culture is in a variety of settings to purchase, in a variety of social conversation to perform, and in a variety of free-floating discourse to consume. World culture is “universally shared and applicable”, often “unstated” and taken for granted, “adds a layer to people’s practices” in everyday life (Lechner and Boli 2008: 36-47).

In this context, what is more significant for the purpose of this chapter is that people now increasingly relate to each other through commonly held consumption practices of world cultural trends such as their preferences in restaurants, sports, vacations, everyday leisure, and modes of shopping (Gottdiener 2000). This is about rationalization of world culture that can be displayed, interpreted, reproduced, and shared in a universal repertoire of consumption (Zukin 1995). To put differently, world culture consists of people and places directly involved as producers and consumers in a global industry that transcend the limits of space and distinct social networks. In these circumstances, it is not inaccurate to say that consumption of a wide range of instantly accessible and available popular practices appears to be undermining the existing boundaries between different groups of people on an unprecedented global scale. The arena of world culture, therefore, is a depthless sphere in which certain boundaries in everyday experiences of people have collapsed.

When the concept of consumption comes into scene, it is also important to note that with the changes in the economy of contemporary society, “there are more

people who are able to engage in a high level of consumption” by having access to credit cards and the presence of a large disposable income (Gottdiener 2000: 22). Focusing particularly on the Turkish example, disposable household income in Turkey⁴ rose from \$13,011 in 2000 to \$18,869 in 2014. Furthermore, according to BKM’s data (The Interbank Card Center), there are 58,215,318 credit card in the last quarter of 2015 in general of the country, while the total population number is 78,741,053 in the whole (see in TUIK). What is more significant is that there is a constant increase in credit cards’ transaction rates in amount and transaction volumes over the past decades in Turkey (Özkan 2014). Accordingly, as it is demonstrated in Özkan’s study (2014) in the light of data provided by TCMB (Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey) and BKM (The Interbank Card Center), the credit card transaction amount in 2012 is approximately ₺12,000 for per person in Turkey. When such developments are taken into consideration, this data clearly shows how people from different socio-economic groups enjoy having access to increasing levels of consumption in response to above-stated changes in contemporary society.

In this sense, a 43-year-old sales manager expressed how increasing accessibility to new consumption activities through credit cards and payment opportunities provided by the market economy have converged different socio-economic groups that are differentiated from each other in terms of their income levels: “I earn ₺7500 and my wife is not working. I pay ₺2000 for the rent of the flat, but I can do whatever I want in this city as long as I have a credit card. The price is not a matter for me. I just want to have something and I buy it. As a result, it does not make any sense to live in accordance with how much money you earn, because as I

⁴ [http://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/gdp_per_capita_\(ppp\).html](http://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/gdp_per_capita_(ppp).html)

said, as long as you have a credit card in your wallet, you already live much more than you earn.” (*Ozan, Bosphorus Istanbul*)

While the experience of purchasing has been transformed into a more readily accessible phase by the changes in the consumption-oriented economy, the enormous popularity of world cultural discourses has also diffused into consumer behaviors from diverse groups as a common denominator in shaping their consumption experiences. In other words, there is a consumption catalogue for everybody relying on increasing standardization that derives from shared meanings of institutionalized discourses of world culture. This is what constitutes an ongoing process of convergence in life style practices and consumption behaviors in social life between various groups who have relatively different socio-economic levels.

In this sense, the most striking and salient pattern in respondents’ consumption experiences is that their actions are likely to cover commercialized discourses of world cultural trends. Furthermore, it is possible to see in almost all of the interviews that, world cultural conceptions reflect in respondents’ consumption preferences. For instance, as a rising trend worldwide, boutique hotel preference is very popular among all respondents. Unsurprisingly, ten respondents stated that boutique hotels are their first choice to stay during their vacations. A 35-year-old English teacher respondent, Eylül from *Bosphorus Istanbul*, said that she has been married for eleven years and she would choose five-star hotels with her husband up until three years ago. However, she stated, they now prefer to go boutique hotels, since it is very popular all around the world and everybody does it.

According to Boli (2005) ‘everybody does it’ is one of the most prominent structural backbone of the social action that implies the omnipresent characteristics of world culture. It is because the rationalized core of world culture in everyday

arena shapes the structure of experiences in a dialectical frame of reference. Thus, the individual is acting in a structured meaning that is believed to be applicable in every condition in anywhere. Consumption of institutionalized discourses of world culture, therefore, reaches beyond the existing boundaries of certain groups and diffuses into everyday routines of various people. In this context, consuming organic to live healthier is another commonality of interest among respondents who rely on world cultural knowledge. Here is an illustration of this in the words of a 42-year-old housewife: “Organicist is my code name. I do not let anything inorganic enter our home. I go to the bazaar to buy organic eggs, fruits, vegetables, and fresh butter. I cook our meals using only olive oil and butter. We never buy salami and sausage. I never let my children eat them, because they are not healthy. Today, televisions, columnists, and everybody state that it is very important to consume organic products. I listen to them, I follow them.” (*Sema, Bosphorus Istanbul*).

Moreover, in all of the interviews, respondents stated that they all use olive oil and butter in their kitchen and prefer to consume organic foods in general. From both gated housing complexes, there are some respondents who buy organic chicken and egg from a farm located in the outskirts of the city. In addition, in our interviews, the majority of them from both settlements stated that they prefer to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at neighborhood bazaar every week. Therefore, through a shared reference system of codified practices, institutionalized discourse of consuming organic and living healthy creates a convergence process in consumption practices between people who are from significantly differentiated socio-economic levels.

Herein, it is important to note that consuming organic to live healthier includes principles of a social fact that is covered by increasingly standardized forms of world cultural knowledge. In other words, people are inspired and guided by a

globally recognized system of meaning that is created by the world cultural conceptions. As a “central unit of action and value” (Boli 2005: 389) this is what underlies the structure and everyday practices of the world society.

It is true that the extension of common sense routines can be seen to produce a degree of homogenization in everyday living. However, the fact is that world culture is a “context of integration” in a wide range of options (Boli and Lechner 2008 : 32). What is important to note here is that world culture repackages the single models of many forms which include multiple versions of standardized components. In this sense, the global pervasiveness of many forms is being absorbed into the world bazaar and become instantly accessible experiences (Morley and Robins 1995). Therefore, world culture presents a diversity of things such as world cuisine and music, tourism and fashion in a largely uniform way that is associated with a single social and cultural setting.

In this context, world culture industry has also introduced exotic or local materials for the tourist gaze and exploration as increasingly ubiquitous consuming experiences. When this happens, despite their significantly differentiated socio-economic situations, the result is that people experience a variety of touristic activities within the same collective and self-conscious structure of feeling. Here is one of these stories, told by a 35-year-old PhD student Belçim from *Bestİst Villas*, who mentioned a few times during the interview that one of her hobbies was buying local commodities from the places that she has been: “When I go somewhere, I am generally looking if there is something special about the place that I can buy. For example, I found local lacework in Brussels and handmade booties in Rize which are knitted by local women. I like to go these kind of places and buy something from there. I also like to buy candles or exotic stuff for home.” Another respondent

mentioned earlier, the 43-year-old sales manager whose monthly income is at least five times lower than Belçim, explained to me his interest to experience all local practices of new places that he has been: “When I go somewhere, I buy everything local and regional. Is Bozcaada famous for its wines? So I buy them. I normally do not like wine very much. However, I bought two boxes of wine from Bozcaada⁵ last time I was there. I tried one bottle, then put rest of it into the room” (*Ozan, Bosphorus Istanbul*). In the same context, a 65-year-old male respondent, who has his own business in freight shipping said, “The best food that you can eat in your destination is local tastes which are unique for the region. For example, when I go to Antep⁶, I cannot imagine eating pizza. The only thing comes to my mind is eating kaymaklı katmer⁷ or kebab which are the local tastes of Antep. I am very careful about it” (*Cihan, Bestİst Villas*).

As it is evident in interview quotations cited above, the authenticity of local is also commodified as one of the driving forces of world culture industry that can be even served across the table. The authenticity of local, therefore, is taken for granted as a pattern and shared imagination that can be experienced by people who are from different socio-economic groups. Herein, it is important to cite what Boli (2005) states: “if an individual invokes a framework of meaning as if it is globally valid, then world culture is in play” (p: 386). It is in this sense that, world cultural trends transcend the limits of different social networks and shapes routine encounters of various groups in an increasingly commonsense level. In almost all of the interviews, respondents from differentiated socio-economic situations are willing to consume same symbolic meanings from a much wider repertoire of instantly accessible experiences that are presented by world culture industry. In other words, it is not

⁵ The third largest island of Turkey in Aegean Sea that is famous for its grape wines

⁶ *Antep* is a city in the western part of Turkey’s Southeastern Anatolia Region

⁷ A dessert that is made in Antep

inaccurate to say that cultural consumption practices do not diversify in accordance with changing socio-economic levels of people. Regardless of their socio-economic differences, individuals are acting in a framework of meaning to be believed truly universal. Therefore, increasingly, their actions are very much the products of world culture industry, tied to global networks of institutionalization and indicate a high degree of standardization.

At this point, what is significant - and consequential, is that culture now is more and more buried into the marketable discourses of worldwide trends that can be experienced within the global grammar of the consumption. At one level, it is also important to explain how differences in cultural consumption practices have gone underground in our contemporary society. By the general expansion of popularized images of cultural trends that are associated with world culture industry, culture diffuses into everyday discourses and experiences as a mass market phenomenon (Lechner and Boli 2008; Soysal 2009). Therefore, under the pressures of the global market economy, usage of culture is “commonplace and unexciting” (Soysal 2009: 5) and its effect now beyond the traditional understandings regarding its specialty. In other words, world culture industry disseminates cultural meanings, symbols and images through the institutionalized discourses of consumption as standardized life experiences. In these circumstances, not surprisingly, a wide range of symbolic experiences of worldwide trends that are associated with various cultural symbols such as luxury, exotic, or beauty became easily accessible and available in everyday life of the modern society (Featherstone 2007).

According to the interview data, this situation is even evident by the fact that using original perfume as a luxury is not something special for people with higher socio-economic status only. In this context, ten respondents stated that they use

original perfumes in their everyday lives. What is more significant is that a few of them, who are relatively differentiated in terms of their socio-economic levels, mentioned the names of some globally famous cosmetics stores such as Yves Rocher⁸ and Body Shop⁹ to buy original flavored perfumes. For instance, a 35-year-old woman English teacher said: “I use original perfume. It is Chanel¹⁰. Every two months, I buy a new one. But sometimes, if I cannot afford to buy my Chanel regularly, I go to Yves Rocher or Body Shop. They also have a wide range of flavored perfumes. They are both original and cheaper” (*Eylül, Bosphorus Istanbul*). Another 35-year-old PhD student respondent mentioned earlier told me: “I buy my perfumes abroad, because it is much cheaper, but sometimes I also buy some sort of cosmetics from Yves Rocher or Body Shop in Istanbul. I like their aromas. They are almost like real flowers” (*Belçim, Bestişt Villas*). This situation is especially important to illustrate that various kinds of similar products are much more available and accessible in the market. Thus, many of the consumption practices which have been given luxurious meanings before became now everyday items through the proliferation of globalized store-chains of the world culture industry.

In this context, the oversupply of popularized experiences by the world culture industry gives more people more choices to consume similar practices in the same “look”, in the same “quality”, and in the same “aesthetics” with affordable prices. Accordingly, the combination of appearance and fashion is more important than originality in the logic of world culture industry. It is in this sense that accessibility to same fashion and availability of similar forms leads a high degree of overlap in consumer preferences across various socio-economic groups. In these

⁸ A French cosmetics store that has a global presence in many countries and offers natural products .

⁹ A British retail brand with an extensive and growing global presence in over 60 countries around the world.

¹⁰ A French brand that changes the prices of its perfumes in between \$72 and \$157 .

conditions, therefore, differences in consumption practices not only become disappeared, but also become to be not easily identified with the goods consumed. Here is another illustration, in the words of a 40-year-old music teacher respondent: “I love Victoria’s Secret¹¹. I follow them on social media to know all of their collections, but they are quite expensive. I cannot afford to buy their collections every time, but I follow them. Sometimes, I go and buy similar pieces from other stores” (*Didem, Bosphorus Istanbul*). Evidence suggests that expansion of consumption by adopting new fashions of luxury brands diffuses into the everyday living much more widely. In other words, even though people from lower income groups cannot afford to buy the original pieces of a luxurious brand, it becomes now possible to have the same “look” through having similar and cheaper items available in the market. In this sense, consumption practices lose their determiner features to signify categorical differences of various groups.

It is not inaccurate to say that people are more similar in their choices than in the past (Gans 1999). It is because world culture converges the ways of how people act, think, and feel as the major conveyor of ideas and meanings. In all around the world, same structure of living makes its way into everyday speeches of the individual. Hence, individuals share almost similar standards of living without so much related with their socio-economic levels, therefore, life style disparities between different groups are getting relatively smaller. Accordingly, when the respondents were asked about their holidays as a life style practice, the majority of them said that they have been abroad at least two times in their lifetime. “Of course, my wife and I have been abroad for some of our holidays. We went to Hawaii, Maldives, and Rio de Janeiro with my wife. Once, we have been in Tunisia. I have

¹¹ It is the largest American retailer of woman’s lingerie with 2012 sales of \$6.12 billion, offers womenswear and beauty products.

even gone to watch Survivor. It was very popular at that time. That is why I wanted to see it.” said 43 years old sales manager respondent, Ozan from *Bosphorus Istanbul*. When it is taken into consideration, the monthly income level of this respondent¹² and the ticket prices of these destinations, there is a considerable level of ambiguity in terms of financial feasibility of this case. However, following this situation, it is not inaccurate to suggest that, social categories associated with socio-economic dynamics are apparently not so much predictive about life style practices of individuals. To put differently, there is not a linear and certain type of correspondence between consumption practices and socio-economic situations of people who live in significantly differentiated housing settlements. As a result, this situation makes more difficult to draw certain lines between different groups of individuals based on their cultural consumption practices.

This is unsurprising, of course, when it is taken into consideration that people and places have been confronted with an increased pace of change on an unprecedented scale over the past couple of decades (Knox 2005). World culture and world culture industry have generated a world in which people are less able to retain a distinctive sense of being, and rather abler to seem alike. This is a world in which life style practices and consumption preferences indicate a new mode of collective consciousness and a strong sense of convergence. World culture is an organizational form of consumption that combines various types of popularized discourse into a similar complex of daily living. It is an institutionalized form that influences more and more people by the ever-increasing range of popularities and standardized experiences. As it is stated by Boli, “world culture is likely to continue to become further codified, institutionalized, and consequential in coming decades” (2005: 383).

¹² £7500

It will, therefore, have a further effect on in-depth formations of social life in which consumption of codified practices appears to be especially influential as the new legibility of the modern public life.

The next chapter summarizes the general argumentation of this thesis on the basis of the concept that I called “consumption of urbanity”. In the conclusion chapter, the city, urban living, and the term world culture are acknowledged together as an organizational framework that underlies the social construction of converged settings in everyday lives of individuals.



4. Conclusion

The story of convergence can best be interpreted and understood by locating the city in a larger institutional and structural framework that relies heavily on non-ending discourses of world culture. World culture industry transforms the city into a consumption catalogue for everybody, provides an “open access to an array of new goods and experiences” (Zukin and Maguire 2004: 180). At the same time, it constitutes the similar relations and structures for a wider group of people. Urban living, then, is very much a product of the universal diffusion of the standardized experiences that are the order of the day in a consumer society.

On one hand, within the context of world culture, the social construction of the urban living is premised upon the “consumption of urbanity”, a term that signifies the institutional and organizational framework of the social practices and a referential frame of the shared experiences of the modern individual. On the other hand, consumption of urbanity creates a real base in everyday arena to perform common-sense routines of the globalizing city and constitutes intimate engagements between individuals. Consumption of urbanity is a text and a context, a setting for social interaction, a pool of shared meanings, commonsense routines, and typifications of the urban life. In other words, consumption of urbanity is a behavioral road map of codes and routines that shape playful modes of sociality and standardized activities of the everyday living.

In this sense, I suggest that consumption of urbanity erodes the limits of social distances between individuals in their everyday life. Combining theoretical background and findings of my field study, I point out that there is a continually interacting process in outside spaces of the city in which newest forms of

consumption is inculcated to make people spend money. What is more important is that consumption of urbanity provides an organizational framework, which is shaped by a wide range of visual attractions, spectacular events, or leisure facilities of the city, to perform self-realization and expression of the individual. Therefore, individual performs her identity in an increasingly similar set of practices that are offered by the various genres of standardized consumption representations of the city.

Moreover, the findings of this study have shown that people conduct their everyday practices in increasingly more familiar settings with each other in response to qualitatively similar structures of the urban life. In this context, individuals not only spend more time and money for outside activities as daily routines of their lives, but also their choices in using city spaces for eating, drinking, shopping, or entertainment are increasingly becoming similar and commonplace. Therefore, I argue that there is a narrowing distance in social spaces of the city between different groups of people on the basis of the consumption of urbanity. Consumption of a wide range of popularities and symbolic experiences erode existing boundaries between different groups in a standardized urban landscape of the city. At the end, I suggest that even though people are differentiated spatially in the form of their residence complexes, there is no clear evidence that these differences in spatial choices correlates with their cultural consumption practices in everyday life.

Though some countervailing forces are evident, what we have at hand is an increasing shrinking in the city at large, enclosing taken for granted patterns of urban living and expanding phase of consumption of urbanity. In a day that world cultural discourses have become to be rooted in routinized day-to-day practices of the individuals, this ongoing process of convergence between various actions and the

actions of others are likely to continue to contribute particularly to the developments of fiery debates in urban studies and social analysis in general.



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Appendix A

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Education Level	Having Children	Name of Residence Complex	Type of Dwelling	Duration in Residence	Occupation	Approximately Respondent's Monthly Income	Approximately Household Monthly Income
Eylül	35	Female	Married	Graduate	1	Bosphorus İstanbul	Apartment/Gated Housing Complex	4 years	English Teacher	5.000	10.000
Ozan	43	Male	Married	Graduate	1	Bosphorus İstanbul	Apartment/Gated Housing Complex	3 years	Sales&Marketing Manager in a Private Company	7.500	7.500
Sema	42	Female	Married	High School	2	Bosphorus İstanbul	Apartment/Gated Housing Complex	3 years	Housewife	-	10.000-15.000
Didem	40	Female	Married	Graduate	2	Bosphorus İstanbul	Apartment/Gated Housing Complex	6 years	Music Teacher	4.000	10.000-15.000
Zuhal	47	Female	Married	Master	1	Bosphorus İstanbul	Apartment/Gated Housing Complex	4 years	Director in a Private Bank	12.000-15.000	Did not say
Nihan	49	Female	Married	High School	3	Bestİst Villas	Villa/Gated Housing Complex	10 years	Retired from Municipality	-	More than 20.000
Berrin	59	Female	Married	Graduate	2	Bestİst Villas	Villa/Gated Housing Complex	13 years	Owner of Private School Chains	Did not say	25.000-30.000
Cihan	65	Male	Married	Master	2	Bestİst Villas	Villa/Gated Housing Complex	13 years	Business Owner in Freight Shipping	Did not say	25.000-30.000
Belçim	35	Female	Married	PhD	-	Bestİst Villas	Villa/Gated Housing Complex	2 years	Not working-PhD Student	-	20.000-30.000
Ashl	47	Female	Married	Master	1	Bestİst Villas	Villa/Gated Housing Complex	16 years	Business Owner in International Trading	Did not say	200.000

Appendix B

Categories Used in Interviews

Consumption Practices	
Socializing	Going out and eating out, going branch on weekends, celebration of special days, preferred shopping malls, preferred parts of the city to spend time etc.
Entertainment	Attendance to any organized or institutionalized activities such as biennials, exhibits, festivals or concerts, type of leisure activities, going to the cinema, theater or any sport events etc.
Vacation	Ideal type of accommodation, preferred places (cities or countries) to visit etc.
Food / Cuisine	Eating in restaurants, at home or take-out, type of culinary, any special meal, consumed food materials in the kitchen at home etc.
Clothing	Preferred brands, special interest to any popular trend, kind of style to prefer, how important is appearance / brand name etc.
Reading	Reading newspapers or books, buying reading materials on a regular or irregular basis etc.
TV	Preferred channels, kind of programs followed etc.
Music	Type of music listened, going to concerts or festivals etc.
Film	Type of movies preferred, watching at home or in outside theaters - from DVD or internet, any electronic equipments at home etc.
Personal Care	Regularly used perfume and type of cosmetics, going to a beauty center, any aesthetic surgery etc.
Health Expenditures	Having a private health insurance, name of the preferred hospitals, health check-up routines etc.
Sports	Going to a fitness center, any special activity etc.
Hobbies	Any amateur or professional interest, special equipments, materials or room for it at home etc.
Home Decoration and Furnishing	Kind of decoration used at home, name of the store that furniture bought from, any criteria in choosing household goods and furniture etc.