Chapter 3: Elmadağ as a “home” for immigrants

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1 The aftermath of the Second World War was a period of significant political, economic and social transformations for Turkey. A noteworthy consequence of these transformations was the demographic revitalization of Istanbul with the waves of migration flows from Anatolia. These macro changes resulted in the socio-spatial restructuring of the city and of its segments. In this section, we will try to analyze how various immigration waves influenced the socio-spatial texture of Elmadağ.

2 On the political sphere, the transition to a multi-party system, the international trend of political liberalism and the populist policies brought forth significant ramifications. In the economic domain, the postwar era witnessed the re-structuring and the boom of the Turkish economy in line with the new international economic order. Istanbul regained its primary status and became the main gate to the West as the national economy became more and more integrated with international markets. Correspondingly, significant transformations occurred in the rural areas of the country through the shift of the rural economy from self-subsistence to market-oriented production, the change of traditional land ownership and agricultural production patterns, the decline of the agricultural land size per family members and the rapid mechanization of agriculture.

3 In addition to these transformations, the worsening of employment opportunities in rural areas, and increasing economic and social attractiveness of the cities, such as better job opportunities, the presence of a wider range of goods and services, from the education to the cultural sphere, resulted in the massive immigration towards the big cities of the country by the late-1940s (Köymen, 1999; Baydar, 1994, 406410). Consequently, Istanbul became the most attractive destination for immigration in the 1950s and 1960s, as the center of opportunities for newcomers. In contrast to the long demographic stagnation of the early Republican years, the urban population in Istanbul soared at an unprecedented rate by the 1950s, owing to this massive rural-to-urban migration (Zaim, 1987, 321)\textsuperscript{10}. Accordingly, the population in the Istanbul metropolitan area jumped from 975,000 to 2,141,000 between 1950 and 1965, with an annual increase of 80,000 persons during these 15 years (Tekeli, 1992, 40-58).
Average annual increase of population in Istanbul between 1950-1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Increase (persons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-1965</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1970</td>
<td>140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1985</td>
<td>225,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Tekeli, 1992, 56)

Although the annual increase would be higher for Istanbul in subsequent decades, the rate of immigration never reached that of the years between 1950 and 1965 (İşik, 1996). According to Ferhunde Özbay, even though the first wave of immigration to Istanbul in the 1950s and early 1960s was enormous compared to the later ones, the first wave “did not really alter the main characteristics of the population in the city, simply because they comprised a lesser proportion of the total province population” (Özbay, 1997, 116).

She argues that, “the first wave migrants not only were dominated by the earlier inhabitants, but tended to become ‘urbanized’ as well” (ibid, 117).

Rapid urbanization continued after the 1960s although its pace slowed down by the 1980s. Thus Istanbul’s population rose from 3 million in 1970 to 4 million in 1975, 6 million in 1985 and 9 million in 1995 (Keyder, 2000, 174). Tekeli argues that both the international emigration in the 1970s and the populist policies (which improved the income levels in the agricultural sector through subsidies given to small producers) affected the gradual decrease of rural-urban immigration (Tekeli, 1998, 15).

The last massive internal immigration wave to Istanbul occurred after the mid-1980s. This recent flood was distinct from the earlier ones since it was predominantly Kurds emigrating from the southeastern Anatolian rural areas as a result of increasing political tension and insecurity. Lastly, in addition to these internal immigration flows, there have been international ones to Istanbul.

Elmadağ experienced a double-sided migration movement by the mid-20th century; it simultaneously witnessed the departure of its non-Muslim inhabitants and arrival of various immigrant groups. Consequently, this inner city neighborhood has acquired a heterogeneous character since the 1950s. In the following pages, we will present the journeys of these different migrant groups in Elmadağ by depicting their socio-economic characteristics and their presence in the neighborhood.

Exodus of non-Muslims

The picture depicting Elmadağ’s social makeup should take into account the absence of the former inhabitants of the neighborhood, namely the non-Muslims. This section is devoted to an analysis of the departure of non-Muslims from the neighborhood, which has had a gigantic impact in shaping the social texture of the district. Below, we first scrutinize the nation-state formation policies of the new Republic and the consequent decrease in the population of the non-Muslim community in general. Subsequently, we will present our observations based on the interviews conducted with the Armenians who
are still living in Elmadağ and the ones who left the neighborhood by moving either to a foreign country or to another district in Istanbul. We also try to substantiate this section through the interviews done with writers of some of the Armenian journals.

10 The new Turkish Republic inherited a multi-ethnic society from the Ottoman Empire. Even though the non-Muslim communities, namely the Greeks, Armenians and Jews, were in minority in terms of demographic proportions, they were influential actors of the social and economic life. Yet, the formation of the new “Turkish nation-state” necessitated the creation of a homogeneous population according to the Republican elites. This ideology, which was supported by nationalist policies, aimed to Turkify various spheres, including the economy and demographic composition. The ensuing situation has created negative consequences for non-Muslim minorities of the country.

11 The economic sector was one of the domains that Turkification policies used to promote Muslim-Turks against non-Muslims. An early instance of turkifying the capital and labor market was the Law no. 2007 that was ratified by the National Assembly on 4 June 1932. According to the law some arts and service sector jobs were allocated exclusively to Turks. This law seemed to promote low-skilled workers particularly since they included jobs that did not necessitate large amounts of capital or skill, such as street peddling, driving, door keeping, and so on (Aktar, 2000, 113-125).

12 In the early Republican era, there were also attempts to restructure the demographic composition of Anatolia through both official and unofficial ways. One can name either the population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey (1923-24) or the expulsion of Jews from Çanakkale, Kirkkale and Edirne during Trakya events (1934) as examples of Turkification of Anatolia (Aktar, 2000, 71-100). The forced migration of non-Muslim minorities from Anatolia to Istanbul continued with the “Law of Settlement” which led to the deportation of the Armenians from central Anatolian rural areas to Istanbul in 1934. Correspondingly, “minorities report” of the 9th bureau of the Republican People’s Party (1942) was characterized by a similar attitude towards non-Muslim minorities of the country. According to the report, minorities did not integrate and were not loyal to the primary group of the country. For instance, Armenians were establishing small communities in Anatolia and were trying to increase their population. The sentiment of the political elites of that period was that Anatolia should be “cleansed” of Armenians by deporting them to Istanbul. Their numbers would subsequently be decreased further through facilitation of their immigration to abroad or population exchange agreements (Akar, 2000, 185-186). As illustrated on the report, the official ideology was prioritizing the Turkish speaking groups over non-Muslims.

13 As a consequence of these Turkification efforts in Anatolia, Istanbul became a center for all minorities, namely Greeks, Armenians and Jews, during the mid-1930s. However, the spread of pro-Nazi and the anti-Semitic ideologies amongst the political elites and the mainstream media during the Second World War jeopardized the situation of minorities in Istanbul as well. New practices such as “20 kur’a ihtiyaçlar” (20 precautionary groups) intensified the discriminatory nationalist discourse, which in turn reinforced the fear of the non-Muslims.

14 The peak point of the nationalist atmosphere was the Wealth Tax. This new tax, imposed by the Ankara government in 1942 in the midst of the war, aimed to gather the war profits of the black market traders in the hands of the government. However, this served as a legitimizing ground to transfer the wealth of the minorities to Muslims. Indeed, non-
Muslims constituted 87% of the overall tax liables (müellef), whereas Muslims represented only 7% of them (Akar, 2000, 225). Likewise, the amount of the tax paid by the non-Muslim minorities constituted 53% of all the revenue collected, whereas Muslims paid 36.5% and settled foreigners 10.5% of the total amount in Turkey. The proportion of the tax collected in Istanbul was 70% of the amount amassed in the whole country. Correspondingly, non-Muslims (i.e. Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Levantines) paid 70% of the tax collected in Istanbul (Akar, 2000, 160-161).

Ayhan Aktar argues that the aim of the Wealth Tax of 1942-43 was to transfer wealth as well as jobs from non-Muslims to Muslims and contribute to the process of creating a Muslim bourgeoisie. Aktar’s analysis of title deed records of Beyoğlu-Şişli, Eminönü, Fatih, Kadıköy, and the Prince Islands districts during 1942-43 demonstrates the wealth transfer from non-Muslims to Muslims, which was realized by real estate sales of non-Muslims (houses, shops and apartments in particular) (Aktar, 2000, 228-234).

Subsequent to the Wealth Tax, the 6th-7th September events in 1955 and deportation of Greeks of Istanbul by the 1964 decree fastened the decrease of the non-Muslim population in Istanbul (Aydın, 1996, 500). Besides, the foundation of the Israeli state resulted in the immigration of 30,000 Jews to Israel during 1948-49. In brief, the “insecure” atmosphere and the magnitude of the destruction caused by these events gave rise to a massive immigration of minorities, as demonstrated in the tables below.

Demographic structure of Istanbul based on the spoken language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>692,460</td>
<td>827,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>79,920</td>
<td>66,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>39,821</td>
<td>42,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>26,435</td>
<td>28,114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü (1959 and 1939) (cited by Akar, 2000, 203)
Photo 17 Harbiye İlköğretim Okulu, which is built on the land donated by an Armenian to the religious minority foundations (Ölçek Street).

Demographic structure of Turkey based on the spoken language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>13.899.073</td>
<td>20.947.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>108.725</td>
<td>89.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>57.599</td>
<td>52.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>42.607</td>
<td>35.786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In spite of the considerable shrinkage of the overall non-Muslim population in Turkey, there was an exceptional increase in the number of Armenian and Jewish groups in Istanbul between 1935 and 1950. The forced migration of these communities from Anatolia to Istanbul provides an explanation for this atypical situation. Yervant Özuzun draws attention to another aspect of this population shift which resulted in the replacement of the educated bourgeoisie of Istanbul by an uneducated group coming from Anatolia:

“Armenian bourgeoisie which came into being in five hundred years and the intelligentsia class belonging to this bourgeoisie were demolished. A class whose members’ native language was Armenian, whose members were well-educated and speaking a few foreign languages and interested in every branch of the fine arts, was destroyed in every sense. This intelligentsia, this generation, were replaced by
people emigrated from Anatolia, who were deprived of educational opportunities as well as unaware of cultural values and belonging to a feudal structure”³⁴. (Agos, 13.11.1998, cited by Akar, 2000, 217)

Photo 18 An example of the houses whose ownership was transferred during the Wealth Tax era (Ölçek Street).

Tomurcuğ Bilge Erzik, August 2003

The interviews conducted in Elmadağ demonstrate a similar change in the composition of non-Muslim inhabitants of the neighborhood. As a consequence of a double-sided migration movement, while non-Muslim urbanites went abroad, Armenians of rural backgrounds came to Elmadağ. Thus, the neighborhood’s urbanite non-Muslim middle strata have been replaced by a new group of Armenians with rural Anatolian origin having lower socioeconomic status. As presented in the previous chapter, Elmadağ was initially inhabited by Levantines and non-Muslims. The most populated groups were the Armenians and Greeks, though there were also Jewish and a very small number of Turkish households³⁵. All of our elderly informants in the neighborhood confirmed that this population composition continued until the 1960s and 1970s, when the non-Muslim residents of the neighborhood left the country in large numbers³⁶. Before these massive departures, there were also families who had left the neighborhood in the early Republican era. These early leavers were mainly affluent non-Muslims who were more vulnerable to the nationalist economic policies, as explained above. Indeed, we learnt that during the years the Wealth Tax was extracted, there was a transfer of real estates from non-Muslims to Muslims in Elmadağ, too³⁷. When we asked about the Wealth Tax, one of our 75 years old Armenian interviewees mentioned sorrowfully “twenty groups of military service, Wealth Tax, 6th-7th September events... Don’t open these issues, don’t bleed our old wounds”³⁸.
After their departures abroad, a differentiation occurred among the non-Muslims who stayed. A significant part of Elmadağ’s non-Muslim inhabitants preferred to move to more “modern” districts of Istanbul, such as Kurtuluş, Pangaltı and Şişli. The motivation to move was both related to an aspiration for modernity and to the comforting preference to live in neighborhoods where the population was predominantly composed of non-Muslim groups. The movement from the old neighborhoods to the “modern and Western” districts indicates a social mobility too. One of our interviewees who lived in Çimen Street and moved to Pangaltı in the late 1970s expressed this candidly:

“the families on this street were not rich; there was a middle stratum. When [this neighborhood] began to degrade, the well off began to move. At the end of the 70s old acquaintances disappeared. [...] Those who had the possibility left, those without stayed. The well-to-do either went abroad or to a better neighborhood.”

As a consequence of these departures, non-Muslims who once constituted the majority of the neighborhood have become a minority. Although until the 1950s and 1960s a quite number of Armenians, Greeks and Jews were living in Elmadağ, today it seems that only lower-middle class old-aged Armenians live in the neighborhood among the minority groups. As one of our interviewees asserted:

“there are still Armenians in the neighborhood but the wealthy left, only the economically deprived stayed.”

Likewise a real estate agent in the neighborhood illustrated this transformation as such:

“Old minorities were goldsmiths in Kapalıçarşı, merchants and wholesalers in Sultanhamam, suppliers of auto spare parts in Perşembe Pazarı. Those who stayed have a lower income and are mostly tenants.”

The Armenians currently living in Elmadağ are either the economically deprived ones who are unable to move or the old inhabitants lacking the energy to move. As one of our interviewees put it very briefly: “many died, many went away.” Thus very few of them have stayed in the neighborhood.

The departure of the non-Muslim minorities resulted in the emergence of vacant buildings, which in the long term served to solve the accommodation problem of the early-comers from Anatolia. It seems that this has been one of the factors behind the economic success of these early rural immigrants. Due to the heavy tax burden and discriminatory policies, most of the non-Muslims were obliged to sell their houses below the actual value. Hence, the new Anatolian residents of Elmadağ obtained the opportunity to be house-owners for relatively lower prices. Indeed, almost all of our interviewees who emigrated from Anatolia in the early 1950s and 1960s told us that they bought their houses from non-Muslims. Consequently, as a real estate agent indicated,

“now property owners are mostly Muslims, though in the past they were non-Muslims.”

In addition to the non-Muslim inhabitants of Elmadağ, there were also non-Muslim artisans working in the streets of Elmadağ and Dolapdere until the 1960s-70s. One of our interviewees, one manager of a company importing technical spare parts asserted that:

“in the past, masters of crafts were usually non-Muslims. The majority of the artisans working in small handicrafts, such as hardware dealers, carpenters, auto-repairers were Armenians. There were a few Greek masters as well. They mostly lived in Kurtuluş. They were skilful, very honest masters. We had very good relations. These masters became old and then retired. They left for natural reasons, not because of external rea- sons.”
However, even though these masters left for ‘natural reasons’, it is obvious that their children did not take over their father’s job. The discontinuity of the father-to-son tradition among the non-Muslim artisans seems to be related to the demographic extinction of the religious minorities in Istanbul.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, there emerged a non-Muslim counter-migration wave to Istanbul. Both the policies aiming the Turkification of Anatolia and the general rural-to-urban migration resulted in a substantial flood of non-Muslims from Anatolia. A representative of an Armenian journalist informed us about the aid campaigns launched by the Armenian community that reinforced governmental policies on the emigration of Armenians from Anatolia in the 1940s and 1950s. He also pointed to the consequent social structure of the existing Armenian community in Istanbul shaped by the predominance of those having rural backgrounds.

The Armenian immigrants coming from Anatolia preferred to dwell in the locations where their community was living, such as Samatya, Kumkapı, Feriköy, şişli, Yeşilköy and Bakırköy. These residential choices were driven with a longing for living in a communal enclave where there were possibilities for schooling, going to church and neighborly relations with alike. Elmadağ has been one of these locations for the Armenian immigrants coming from Anatolia. Especially Catholic Armenians from Ankara and Sivas constitute a sizeable group among the ones who arrived to Elmadağ. Indeed, as a 54 year-old female interviewee from Sivas stated,

“in the 1970s, there were mainly Armenians of Anatolian origin in Elmadağ. Only a few families were Istanbul-born. There were families from Yozgat, Sivas, Kayseri who had been here for 20-30 years”.

A 76 year-old Catholic Armenian who emigrated from Ankara in the late 1920s remembered the migration of Armenians in the 1950s and 1960s as such:

“Anatolian Armenians poured out here. The Armenian school in şişli opened its doors to these newcomers. The children of these arrivers were taught there”.

It appears that the reasons of Armenian immigration were also related to the inadequacy of opportunities in provincial areas. A female interviewee born in 1928, who immigrated to Istanbul in the 1960s explained the reasons of immigration by emphasizing the deficiencies in her hometown:

“there was neither a church, nor a school in Elazığ. We immigrated to Istanbul because we wanted the children to be educated, not to stay [ignorant] like us”.

Most of the Armenians who emigrated from Anatolia in the 1940s-1960s continued their path by immigrating abroad (mainly to the USA, Canada or France). One of our female interviewees, who emigrated from Sivas to Kurtuluş in 1954 in her childhood, then lived in Çimen Street in the 1970s, and finally immigrated to the USA in 1990 after the death of her husband, provides an example for this group. The support of the relatives already abroad makes the immigration of Armenians easier. There are many similar examples of the chain migration among Armenians of Anatolian origins who first moved to Elmadağ and ended their migration route abroad. The incentive for immigrating abroad seems to be mostly economic since most of our non-Muslim interviewees affirmed that

“home is not where you are born, but where you earn your livelihood”.

The analysis of these multi-stranded migrations reveals the pattern of social stratification among Armenians. The main differentiation within the non-Muslim community in Elmadağ seems to be between the ones of Istanbulian and Anatolian origins. In these
terms the Armenian community seems to be fragmented on the basis of social background. An old Istanbulian Armenian interviewee illustrated the circumstances of rural Armenians as

“the newcomers do not speak Armenian well, in fact their language does not resemble Armenian spoken in Istanbul. [...] Their conditions were not good; they were the peasantry in their hometown. Here they worked in places like Park Otel, Pera Palas, as waiters, dishwashers”51.

He continued his words by emphasizing differences of educational level between these two groups:

“people here [natives of Istanbul] were mostly noble, civilized and educated persons. People who came later, after the 48’-50’ period were uneducated, underdeveloped, ignorant persons. They went to Armenian schools here. Of course not all of them were the same, but most of them were like that”52.

Social stratification of the non-Muslim groups was symbolized in the spatial segregation of the neighborhood as well. The most affluent groups lived in the luxurious apartments of the Cumhuriyet Street before they immigrated abroad or moved to higher status districts, such as şişli, Etiler. Likewise, middle class Armenian urbanites lived in Ölçek and Babil Streets, whereas the non-Muslim immigrants from Anatolia dwelled geographically at the lower parts of the hill, such as Çimen and Küçük Bayır streets. This spatial segregation also points at a cultural differentiation among non-Muslims, since during the interviews each group narrated the history of the neighborhood from their own life-space without talking in detail about other non-Muslim groups.

A common theme expressed by Armenians of Elmadağ during the interviews was the nostalgia for old days. In Elmadağ, mourning for the ‘loss of the old golden days’ signifies a yearning for a period when non-Muslim households were both economically and culturally privileged over other groups, such as immigrants from Anatolia. Lamenting for past better days indicates the efforts of a déclassé middle-class to maintain their old status and distinction from “others”. The emphases on urban origins, the adoption of an urban lifestyle and deep-rooted Istanbulian origins were the themes that we heard repeatedly during the interviews. Surprisingly enough, the early Anatolian immigrants complained about similar issues concerning social deterioration in Elmadağ and in Istanbul. The similarity of nostalgic discourse about the degradation of the neighborhood will be discussed in more detail in the end of the fourth chapter.

As a final remark, we suggest that although Elmadağ seems to be an affluent non-Muslim neighborhood in the past, it seems that today the non-Muslims who live here are the ones who are lacking social and economic upward mobility possibilities. As some of the members of the Armenian community “have promoted themselves to better neighborhoods” such as şişli, Elmadağ has become “the place of abortive Armenians” that moved down the socio-economic ladder, as an Armenian journalist asserted53. However, we claim that this downward movement on the social hierarchy is related more to their conditions of being an ethnic minority rather than to their individual incapability. One of our observations supporting this argument is the prevalence of their efforts being invisible in social life in Elmadağ. Both nationalist governmental policies and micro-level discriminations toward non-Muslims seem to be influential in the intensification of political fear and the spread of a submissive behavior among them. Hence, they give the impression of being less enthusiastic and ambitious for economic success, unlike their Turkish counterparts who
immigrated in the 1950s and 1960s and became the ‘winners of massive migration’, as will be discussed in the next section.

**Pioneer immigrants of 1950s-1960s: the winners of massive migration in Elmadağ**

The fieldwork in Elmadağ reveals that the immigrants of the first massive wave constitute a significant group in the neighborhood. They are “the pioneer immigrants” because they arrived in Istanbul before than their co-locals and other members of their family. We prefer to call these pioneer immigrants the “winners of the massive migration” since today they seem to have achieved significant upward mobility after long years of fierce struggle for success in the city.

In Elmadağ, the majority of the early immigrants coming from Anatolia between the late 1940s and 1960s seem to immigrate voluntarily, compared to the ones who arrived after the 1980s. Indeed, these early-comers to Elmadağ were the young single male members of their family (they were between the ages of 15 and 19) who were attracted by the opportunities that the big city promised. During the interviews, these pioneers stated that they came to Istanbul because there were no possibilities of economic progress and education in their homeland, whereas “Istanbul was paved with gold”. Unlike the large immigrant group from the Black Sea Region in Istanbul (Özbay, 1992), most of the pioneer immigrants in Elmadağ originated from Erzincan and Sivas.

Elmadağ was not the first destination in Istanbul for all the pioneer immigrants who arrived after the late 1940s. The first stopover was the bachelor rooms in Feridiye (the area lying between Taksim and Tarlabası) for the single young men who arrived in Istanbul without any assets such as education, skill or money. They moved later to Elmadağ as they accumulated some money to rent or buy a house in a better neighborhood. These early-comers came to Elmadağ after re-uniting their families in Istanbul or after getting married to “a girl from the homeland”. For this group, the movement to Elmadağ signifies a first step in the upward mobility, both in terms of capital accumulation and status differentiation. There is a close parallel between the residential and social mobility for the members of this group since most of them would continue their journey in Istanbul by moving to higher status neighborhoods, such as Şişli and Gayrettepe, as they moved up the socio-economic ladder in the following years.

Unlike the subsequent shantytown settlement trend that became almost the sole option for rural-to-urban immigrants in later years, the early immigrants settled in disintegrating inner city areas, such as the neighborhoods on the historical peninsula or the ones that began to be emptied by the departure of the non-Muslims, such as Elmadağ, Tarlabası and Cihangir. In the 1960s, Elmadağ was still a predominantly non-Muslim neighborhood where only a few Turkish families lived. As the neighborhood headman asserted:

“When we arrived in 1964, there were very few Turks [here]. Turks were here as shopkeepers. There were Greeks and Armenians, also Jews constituting around 4050 households. The population in 1965 was 13,000-14,000. Now the registered population is around 4,000. It can be 5,000 including ones who do not have a record. Neighborly relations were very lively. There was no exclusion, but they were not renting houses (to Turks), they were renting only to their loved ones.”

He also affirmed that
“people who come from Sivas or Erzincan are mostly running coffeehouses or working as doorman. They are deeply rooted wherever they start to live. In their first arrival, they lived in houses worse than shanty houses. When they became better off, they bought houses, then they called their relatives to take their places.”

As mentioned above, we prefer to call these pioneer immigrants the “winners of the massive migration”, since they are today the wealthiest group in Elmadağ. A significant differentiation among the pioneer immigrants lies between the ones who came with no assets (such as education or capital) and the ones who brought some economic resources from their homeland. The uneducated poor immigrants, especially the ones who arrived before the 1950s seem to experience a tough period, since they arrived in Istanbul without any monetary and social capital. As the pioneers of their family’s chain migration process, they did not have any social or communal networks to exploit. Accordingly they earned their livelihood by working as waiters, porters, watchmen, water-sellers, doormen or shop assistants, i.e. in jobs that did not necessitate any education or capital.

It should also be noted that these early comers benefited from the economic nationalism of the early Republican era. For instance, the 1932 law mentioned above allocated some low-skill jobs exclusively to Turks in order to Turkify the labor market. Thus, in consequence of this law uneducated newcomers began to substitute non-Muslims in low-skilled jobs. During these early years, the newcomers stayed either in coffee houses, bachelor rooms, or in the shops and warehouses where they were working. “Hemşehrilik”, i.e. communal networks (Erder, 2000) seemed to be useful for some in finding a job, especially low-status ones, such as waiters or doormen. However, despite the role of communal networks in finding employment and housing, it seems that as a densely populated inner-city neighborhood, Elmadağ inhabitants were less depended on such
relationships compared to shantytown dwellers, due to the loose and more atomistic character of social relationships in inner-city areas.

A very common profession among these early comers was “driving”. It provided the opportunity for rapid upward mobility, especially for the early immigrants who had no assets. One of our interviewees, who came from Sivas in 1946 and became the owner of several houses in Elmadağ in a few decades, confirmed this:

“(When we first arrived) we worked as drivers of taxis, trucks and buses. We could not do anything else, since we were uneducated”.

Taxi driving seemed to be the most rewarding job for the early Anatolian immigrants in Elmadağ. In particular during the Menderes era, the transportation sector grew up as new roads were opened and automobiles were introduced to inner-city transportation. The young industrious immigrants were not too late to profit from the postwar economic boom. Most of them owned their own cars after a few years of working as drivers and continued to improve their economic standing after purchasing the first car. While some of them continued their career in the transport sector, others shifted to the business of construction of buildings.

In brief, the leading occupations for the early immigrants in Elmadağ in the 1950s and 1960s varied between jobs that did not necessitate any capital or education (e.g. waiter, water-seller, watchman) and the ones that required some money or skill (e.g. driver, butcher, restaurant-owner). Subsequently, in the 1970s, as the massive migration continued and the need for housing increased, construction of buildings became the favorite economic activity for the pioneer immigrants who had already accumulated the necessary economic capital and established the social network.
Elmadağ presented a good opportunity for local small-scale contractors until the mid-1980s. Three story buildings of 40-60 square meters designed for single families dominated the original physical landscape of Elmadağ. For that reason, contractors were obliged to buy at least two of them to build an inhabitable dwelling. The build-and-sell business, which was a common mode of house production between the 1960s and 1980s, is a system of exchange where contractors undertake the responsibility of construction in return for the urban land of property owners (Tanyeli, 1998, 111). İşik and Pınarcıoğlu argue that this is a system that is of advantage to middle-class landowners since the contractor obtains the land suitable for house construction in return of flats in the new buildings (2001, 104-110). Yet this general trend of build-and-sell activities favoring landowners, functions in reverse in Elmadağ, given that the property owners were predominantly non-Muslims. Building high-rise apartments by demolishing older, low-rises was highly profitable for small contractors in Elmadağ, as most of the property-owners were compelled to sell their properties for very low values. During the interviews we observed that Anatolian origin landlords bought the houses from non-Muslims who fled the country, or moved to community rest homes or to their relatives’ places due to old age. It is possible to suggest that non-Muslims sold their properties for very low prices and thus contributed to the enrichment of new Muslim inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The build-and-sell activities lost their significance by the mid-1980s for the contractors working locally in Elmadağ due to the unrealized PIYA project. During 1980s and early 1990s, all kinds of construction activities in the neighborhood were prohibited because of the PIYA project which was planned to transform Dolapdere and Piyalepaşa Boulevards into high-rise office areas. Small-scale construction became unprofitable for local contractors of Elmadağ also because of the increasing significance of the large-scale construction companies and cooperatives in the housing sector. Seeing that the building contracting was becoming less lucrative, the pioneer immigrants shifted to another sector, namely real estate agency. Today, most of the notable real estate agencies of Elmadağ are the early-immigrants of the 1950s and 60s who were involved in the construction of the buildings in the neighborhood.

In addition to the initial economic difficulties, the early-comers seem to have experienced cultural alienation too. The prevailing cultural superiority of “urbanites” over “villagers” in the discursive realm (Öncü, 1999) and the predominance of non-Muslims in Elmadağ intensified the difficulties that these early comers experienced. All the pioneer immigrants stated that there were only a few Turkish families in the neighborhood when they first arrived. During the interviews, the informants explicitly expressed the uneasiness and alienation they felt in their early years in Elmadağ. They seemed to feel like they arrived in an alien world where they were total strangers:

“We were living in a mansion in Kemaliye, but when we came here we inhabited an old ruined house. (Non-Muslims) did not give us a house for rent. They did not greet us for 18 years. They did after many years.”

The cultural exclusion the early-comers experienced in Elmadağ fueled their ambition for economic success. They tried to succeed economically and thus make money to compensate their cultural alienation. One of our interviewees, who has become a remarkably wealthy person at the end of tough years he experienced after his emigration from Rize at the age of 12, expressed his fervor as such:
“my goal was always to earn money and to reach somewhere: to earn money, to run
my own business.”

This ambitious attitude gave rise to a fierce struggle and tough competition to “conquer
the city”, which has always been viewed as something alien. For the rural immigrants, the
city and its (“rea”) dwellers resisted accommodating them, so they tried to be one of
them by the power of money. As one of them suggested during the interview:
“here, the money holder has the power”.

Remarkably enough, almost all of the early comers from Anatolia told us astonishing
success stories, which can be regarded as the economic achievements of ambitious
entrepreneurs.

In short, we can conclude that early arrivers to Elmadağ became the winners of the
massive migration, thanks to their economic achievements, mostly as small
entrepreneurs in activities such as building contracting and real estate. However, despite
all these bright stories of wealth accumulation, most of them implicitly expressed their
uneasiness about “being uneducated”. The great attention paid to the education of their
children seems to be an endeavor to compensate this feeling of inferiority. In fact, almost
all the second-generation immigrants are either university students or graduates.

Besides the importance given to the education of children, moving to better neighbor-
hoods is another means for a higher status attainment, as one of our interviewee
suggested:
“during that period [when we lived here] middle strata families were living in this
neighborhood. [Elmadağ] later became impoverished. [...] We moved to Sıracevizler
in ’77. If I rank there as nine out of ten, here [Elmadağ] gets a minus.”

This indicates a correspondence between residential and socio-economic mobility. Most
of the pioneer immigrants left Elmadağ and bought new houses in higher status
neighborhoods, such as şişli, Mecidiyeköy, Gayrettepe, as soon as they accumulated the
required capital.

During the interviews, the economically successful immigrants who arrived earlier in
Elmadağ sought to differentiate themselves by expressing adamantly their cultural
superiority over the latecomers. For them,
“in the past there was respect in Beyoğlu, now there is no respect. In the past they
put hats when they went out. Newcomers are uneducated like us. They have 20-30
children [...] After Kurds moved in, the neighborhood was messed up. They do not
evén know how to walk in the street.”

The pioneer immigrants from Anatolia, who have already adopted urban middle class
attitudes, articulate their grievance about newcomers by complaining about the
abundance of Kurds, coffeehouses and unemployed youth hanging out on the streets of
the neighborhood. In this context, the new means of status achievement for the
Anatolian-originated immigrants have become the claims about lifestyle, i.e. cultural
capital. In the field of status competition, wives of the early immigrants seem to play an
important role in the acquisition of cultural capital. It is interesting to observe that most
of the men stated that their wife “is very cultured”.

In the 1980s and 1990s there occurred a new wave of massive migration to Istanbul and
thus to Elmadağ, which differed in character from the one in the 1960s. While the
previous one was more driven by voluntary immigration of people allured by the better
economic opportunities that Istanbul promised, the recent one was typified by the semi-
obligatory immigration of Kurds. In the next section, we will elaborate on the characteristics of this wave.

Kurdish immigrants in Elmadağ

58 In this section of the project, we discuss the situation of Kurdish immigrants who have settled down in Elmadağ after mid-1980s. In order to shed light on this issue, first of all we evaluate the Kurdish migration flows in Turkey. Afterwards, we cite our interpretations and explanations derived from the in-depth interviews that we conducted with Kurdish immigrants in Elmadağ.

59 The Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey where most Kurds are currently living are the least developed parts of the country. The high unemployment rates and prevailing economic difficulties within the region after the 1950’s have led many Kurdish people to immigrate to either provincial cities or the cities in the Western region. Though Kurdish immigration to the metropolises has been a long-term process, it is important to make a distinction between two different periods of internal immigration in Turkey. The first migration flow during 1950-1960’s is different in its nature in comparison to the mass flux of Kurds to other cities after mid-1980s. During this period, huge numbers of Kurds moved out of the

“[S]outheast to cities like Istanbul, often resulting in a process of ‘natural’ assimilation into the Turkish mass” (Poulton, 1997, 208).

60 While the reasons behind this first migration flow were mostly economic, the recent migration flows of Kurds have not only economic but also political and social characteristics.

61 The escalation of the war between the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) and the Turkish Armed Forces since 1984 has immensely increased the magnitude of the Kurdish immigration. There is no exact number of civilian, PKK and Security forces causalities. Depending on the figures from Yeni Yüzyıl and Turkish Daily News, Kırcı and Winrow suggest that as a result of clashes between PKK and Turkish security forces 20,181 people, including 5,014 civilians, have been killed between 1984 and the end of 1995 (1997, 126). On the other hand, Östen Wahlbeck depending on figures cited by Cumhuriyet, puts forward an alternative design by referring to both Kurdish and Turkish sources, which are considerably different from each other. According to official Turkish sources, 9,595 persons lost their lives in the conflict, of which 3,028 were civilians. On the other hand, Kurdish sources estimated in August 1994 that 34,000 persons died during the civil war, of which 5,000 were civilians (1999, 47).

62 The state of emergency (OHAL) in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey issued in July 1987 gave civilian governors the right to exercise

“certain quasi-martial law powers, including restrictions on the press and the removal from the area of persons whose activities are believed inimical to public order” (Kırcı and Winrow, 1997, 128).

63 Under the emergency rule the government steadily increased its military presence in the provinces. The Anti-Terror Law of April 1991 which defined a terrorist act in a broad and ambiguous way led to many detentions and human rights abuses with the ban on any declaration of ideas. Difficulty in provision of safety, livelihood, health, education and other services for people in their village, or lands were only some of the reasons that forced villagers to abandon their settlements.
The village-guard system [koruculuk], which was introduced in April 1985, intended to enable villages to defend themselves from the PKK. In addition to security concerns, it was also believed that the village-guard system would provide income to areas that were economically depressed. However, over the years the village guard system has become a source of serious complaint. The situation is particularly difficult for the Kurdish villagers who find themselves in the middle of the conflict since if they do not participate in this system they will face repression from the army and their villages might be destroyed; and if they do participate they will find themselves in conflict with the PKK (Wahlbeck, 1999, 47).

Especially the villages rejecting the village-guard system have likely been evacuated and at times burned by the security forces due to an anxiety either from the difficulty of provision of security or for their possible assistance to PKK. Kirişiçi and Winrow suggest that also the PKK, in accordance with its “Decree on Village Raids” has attacked and burned “non-revolutionary” villages that do not support “the national struggle for liberation” (1997, 133). Consequently, several villagers have chosen to immigrate to urban centers in order to avoid coming under either the government or PKK pressure.

Today there are 20 to 30 million “internally displaced persons” in the world (UNHCR cited in TAV, 2001, 14). According to the data provided by UNHCR, Turkey is placed the fifth on the list of countries with highest internally displaced persons population. At least 3,500 villages and cultivable fields have been partially or totally evacuated and approximately 3 million people were displaced in Turkey in the violent atmosphere created by the Kurdish problem within the last 10 years (TAV, 2001, 15; Oberdiek, 2001, 111; Wahlbeck, 1999, 47; İçduygú, Romano and Sirkeci, 1999, 9). As a result of the policy concerning evacuation of villages, the Kurdish population had to move to the regional centers like Van and Diyarbakır. In the 1990 census, the population of the central town of Van was calculated as 155,623 and Diyarbakır as 373,810. The populations of two cities in 2000 were found to be as 284,464 and 551,046 with an increase of 60,9 percent and 38,8 percent respectively. Along with the cities such as Diyarbakır and Van where the Kurdish population is dense, cities like Istanbul and İzmir in the West, as well as cities such as Antalya, Adana and Mersin have accommodated intensive migration flows. Some of the Kurdish immigrants have sought for asylum in European countries.

Resonating from the eastern hand of the case, the western counterpart, especially Istanbul, exhibits peculiar complimentary features on this issue, notwithstanding that there is no reliable data on the number of Kurds who have immigrated to Istanbul since the 1980s. However, Kirişiçi and Winrow identify Istanbul as the city which has the highest Kurdish population in Turkey (1997). A detailed poll of Istanbul residents was published over five days in Milliyet, in February/March 1993. Poulton suggests that despite possible sampling errors, the figures given in this poll appear realistic. Given the Kurds are probably 15-20 percent of Turkey’s total population, the number of Kurds is estimated as some 8 per cent of Istanbul’s population. According to the poll, the Kurds are low on the social scale, since they are the most numerous among the unemployed and having the lowest educational qualifications. Those who declare themselves as Turks have the highest average wages followed by those who declare themselves as “Muslim Turks or Muslims”, then those who consider themselves as Turks but from Kurdish parents and finally those who declare themselves as Kurds. According to a recent report (conducted in Diyarbakır, Batman, Istanbul, Van, İzmir and Mersin) by Göç-Der, 52.7 per cent of the interviewed Kurdish immigrants earn less than 100 million ($71) Turkish liras in a month.
while the rest has a monthly income of 100-200 million Turkish liras (Radikal, 13 April, 2002). 93.7 per cent of the Kurds wanted to return to their home villages due to homesickness, having adaptation problems and feeling like strangers in the cities they are living.

The governmental program called “return to the villages” has been discussed since 1997. According to IHD, one of the most serious obstacles for a return is the state of emergency in the region (Salman, 2001, 28). A second problem arises from the fact that village guards who stay in the evacuated villages have occupied the lands of the people who have immigrated. The migrants’ association Göç-Der stated that they forwarded 17,914 petitions for a return to the villages to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Salman, 2001, 28).

Like many Kurds in the western cities of Turkey, the ones we interviewed in Elmadağ immigrated to Istanbul mostly because of political reasons. They explained that though the economic conditions in their villages were not very bad, they had to immigrate to the Western cities since they were under oppression in their villages. Two of the Kurdish interviewees expressed their discontent about being in the middle of the conflict between Turkish armed forces and PKK:

“either we would give in to the Turkish state or we would go to the mountains. Although there were many people who have chosen the latter, this is not the solution. With the emergence of Hezbollah, the slaughters started. Therefore, we were obliged to immigrate”.

Another interviewee explained that she was compelled to immigrate to Istanbul since she was under oppression in Muş because of her political ideas.

The Kurds in Elmadağ mostly immigrated from the cities of Batman, Diyarbakır, Siirt and Tunceli to Istanbul after 1990. They usually followed a chain migration process. A relative sent as a pioneer-immigrant to the city prepared the appropriate conditions for the other members of the family, such as finding a job and a shelter. After her/his position was better off, the other members of the family in the hometown joined her/him. The network among the Kurds is stronger than any other ethnic groups in Elmadağ. Throughout this network, they find jobs, housing and new friends. A Turkish interviewee who observed the solidarity among Kurds suggested that:

“The Kurds really watch over each other [...] They shop from their [Kurds’] groceries. They are very respectful and very hardworking. They help each other when the others are setting up their businesses”.

However, this solidarity does not mean that the Kurds in Elmadağ constitute a homogenous ethnic group in which each of them shares the same political ideas with the others. For example, the Kurds we interviewed in Elmadağ are highly politicized and very critical of others who have different political opinions or who are not actively involved in politics. They despise some other Kurds by labeling them ‘assimilated’ to the Turkish society. Rather than unconditionally supporting each other through an ethnic bound, they are close to other Kurds who have adopted the same political perspectives. In brief, the basic criterion for solidarity is the shared political views rather than merely an ethnic identity.

The interviewees suggested that the communication language at their homes is Kurdish. Speaking and teaching Kurdish to their children has a special importance for them in terms of preserving and perpetuating their Kurdish identity and culture.
“My mother does not know how to speak Turkish. At home we speak Kurdish. The children, even the ones who were born in Istanbul, speak Kurdish. In fact, they speak Kurdish better than the ones in Diyarbakır.”

The question of speaking Kurdish plays a pivotal role in the construction of Kurdish identity by enabling them to fantasize themselves as members of an imagined Kurdish community.

When asked if they are planning to return back to their villages, nearly all of them said “yes”. One of our interviewees expressed his homesickness as such:

“In my dreams I still see my village. I am playing football with my friends. We are running in the clouds of dust. The dreams about here are always troubled.”

However, keeping the dreams of returning back to their villages does not mean that it will come true. This desire of returning back to the home village seems an impossible dream, which can neither be realized nor given up. One of our interviewees said that he has never liked living in Istanbul. Though he has his own future plans about returning to his hometown, his six children from different age groups do not share their fathers’ opinion. Especially the Kurdish children born in Istanbul appear more oriented to the life in Istanbul.

It is striking that in Elmadağ the Kurds are mostly running groceries, which they define as one of the most difficult jobs. According to them, only the Kurds can achieve this job because they have no social life and they are accustomed to difficult conditions. As one of the Kurdish interviewees argued:

“The ones coming from the [East] work very hard. Since they have suffered a lot there, they work hard here for the sake of their emancipation [...]. They have already been familiar to every difficulty there such as starvation, torture [...]. We do not expect any thing for ourselves now. But our children will see good days [...]. When you believe in something you should not give up your hopes and keep on saying that I will achieve this.”

Their ambition, along with their hope, is the only asset they have for establishing a good future for their children.

During our study, we came to meet Armenian people who had immigrated from the Eastern side of Turkey to Elmadağ after mid-1980s, along with the Kurds. For example, an Armenian shopkeeper suggested that his twenty relatives dwelling in Elmadağ right now immigrated to Istanbul in 1986 from a village near Siirt, which was recognized as an Armenian village in the past. With the passage of time, many Kurds started to settle in the village, whose settlement did not give rise to any conflict between different ethnic groups. After the 1980s, the rising insecurity in the region due to the acceleration of clashes and the emergence of Hezbollah made them leave their villages altogether. What is striking in this story is that some of the relatives of our interviewee, his uncle and grandfather, call themselves Kurds and at home usually speak Kurdish and thus they are known as Kurds in Elmadağ. Far from being eternally fixed in an essentialised past, identity is something constructed in cultural representations, as this example shows. Becoming, rather than being is the right verb in defining the formation of an identity which in fact is a never ending process.

Consequently, we think that defining and restricting the immigration flow from the Eastern side to the West after the mid-1980s just with the Kurdish immigration is misleading. Although the Kurdish people have been the most vulnerable group who were severely influenced by the policies of the Turkish state in the region and thus who mostly...
were subjected to forced immigration to the other sides of the country, the other ethnic
groups had to immigrate as a consequence of restless situation or implemented policies in
the region. Another significant point in this story is the young generation’s endeavor for
redefining and reconstructing their Armenian identity in Istanbul where the emergence
and the experience of different ethnic identities are more tolerated than it was in their
hometown. For example, though the members of new generation do not know Armenian
language, they think that their children should learn their language, culture and religion
in order to be “real” Armenians. In other words, the reconstruction of their ‘authentic’
identity seems to gain an enormous power as a means of constituting a re-imagined
community for their survival in the city.

Most of the Kurds in Elmadağ get along better with these Armenians and also Iraqi
people, than with the other residents. Not only being from the East but also having
similar experiences becomes the basic reasons for their proximity. Being oppressed by
the government and then forced to immigrate in various ways are the shared experiences
uniting these communities with each other.

When we asked if they were subject to any kind of discrimination in Elmadağ, they gave
us some examples of cultural discrimination, such as being labeled “rustic/redneck”[82]. In
fact, the Kurds in Elmadağ were mostly complaining about the policies of the Turkish
government rather than the manners of inhabitants living in the neighborhood. For
them, the Turkish state

“does not consider the Kurds as human beings. It does not treat them with respect”
[83].

On the other hand, some of the inhabitants in Elmadağ, though they do not reveal their
feelings directly to the Kurds, are not very glad to live side by side with them. It was
interesting to see a man who had immigrated to Istanbul from Sivas in the late 1940s
proposing that

“the ones who demolished the profile of Istanbul were in fact the ones coming from
Siirt, Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakır and Hakkari. When these people rushed here, they
spoiled the atmosphere”[84].

The pioneer immigrants who “first come-first win” in Istanbul think that they have the
right to claim more rights over this city than the latecomer immigrants. With the
presence of new comers in Istanbul, the old immigrants have reconstructed an identity
for themselves as the real owners of the city/neighborhood, which is equipped with the
forces of domination and superiority. Likewise, another interviewee offered that

“Kurds, vagabonds and Gypsies have emigrated here from Anatolia. Cultured people
were living here, who knew how to call out to a grocer or doorman. The life was so
different here!”[85].

The same man later on implied that the Kurds have many children because of political
reasons. For him, having many children is a way to get into the government. On the other
hand, he suggested that as long as the Turks think that

“one child is too little and two children are too many’ the equilibrium between the
populations of Turkish and Kurdish people would be unbalanced”[86].

The perception of the increasing Kurdish population seems to increase the sensitivity to
preserve the integrity of the Turkish identity and culture. In some cases this idea can
provoke intensified and extremist nationalist reactions, which fortunately have not been
experienced frequently in Elmadağ.
Tarlabaşı and Elmadağ are the two neighborhoods in which high numbers of Kurdish immigrants are living. It is possible to make a distinction between these two neighborhoods in regard to the economic conditions of Kurds dwelling there. The Kurds who immigrated to Istanbul and settled in Tarlabaşı are the poorest ones living in very difficult conditions. However, the Kurds dwelling in Elmadağ have better economic conditions since most of them came from their villages with a certain amount of money. When the well-being of Kurds in Tarlabaşı improved, they moved to Elmadağ: One Kurdish interviewee dwelling in Elmadağ remembered his stay in Tarlabaşı with bad memories:

"My big brothers came to Tarlabaşı in 1982. In those years, Gypsies were living there. Robbery was common. This was not a conducive environment for families. The neighborhood was dirty and vagrants were dwelling there. However, we were obliged to live there because of our economic conditions." 83.

Likewise, with the improvement in their economic conditions, the Kurds dwelling in the lower side of Elmadağ, move into the upper side of the neighborhood. An interviewee speculated that many politicized Kurds prefer to dwell in Elmadağ, instead of the neighborhoods known as Kurdish enclaves such as Gazi. By this way, the interviewee argued that the place of the politicized Kurds could not be easily pinned down in Elmadağ, which is a more heterogeneously populated neighborhood.

In this next part of our study, we examine the situation of international immigrants in Turkey with a special focus on the legal applications of the Turkish government in the last five decades in order to gain a better understanding of the experiences of international immigrants in Elmadağ. Therefore, after highlighting the limitations of Turkish laws concerning the international immigrants, we put forward our observations that have come out of several in-depth interviews done with international immigrants living in Elmadağ who actually regard their stay in Turkey as ‘temporary’.

### International Immigrants in Elmadağ

Turkey, which had been recognized as a “sending” country in terms of international immigration flows, is claimed to be a “receiving” country since the early 1980s (IOM, 1995, 1). It is estimated that nearly 2.5 million foreign citizens have entered Turkey in the last two decades (İçduygü and Keyman, 2000, 390). 84.

The reasons for moving into Turkey are varied; while some immigrants are fleeing war, persecution or ethnic tensions in their home countries, some others are immigrating for economic reasons and searching for a better education and future for their children. According to Sema Erder, international immigrants who come to Turkey can be categorized into three main groups due to their reasons of immigration (2000, 257). The first group is comprised of political refugees who seek asylum in a third country for reasons of armed conflict or war in their home countries. In this group, the immigrants move into Turkey in the form of mass immigration flows, such as in the case of Iraqi Kurds in 1991. Secondly, there are immigrants who use Turkey as a transit zone on their way to other Western countries. In comparison to the first group, these people are illegal transit immigrants who come to Turkey with small groups or family members with the intention of moving to a developed country with better economic opportunities, higher standards of living, and the chance for a better life. Unlike these two categories, there are suitcase traders who seek economic opportunities by coming to Turkey. They do not want
to establish themselves permanently in Turkey but rather they look forward to making
enough money in order to live at home comfortably and support their families. The
movements of the three different immigrant groups are neither continuous, nor
permanent. These irregular movements targeting temporary stay in the country indicate
the fact that Turkey is a “waiting room” rather than a real “receiving country” (Erder, 2000,
257).

Of the millions of the international immigrants coming to Turkey, only a small number
stayed in the country⁹³. Immigrants are being confronted with special difficulties in
Turkey, such as the lack of an unequivocal administration of laws concerning immigrants,
the exclusion from democratic participation, economic destitution and violation of
human rights. In addition to these, the restrictive immigrant and refugee policies of
Turkey play an important role behind immigrants’ decision to leave Turkey. The Turkish
government ratified the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating the status of
refugees. However, it accepted the Convention with a “geographical limitation”; i.e. a
restriction on its asylum commitment to applicants from European countries⁹⁶. In other
words, legal obligations would be applied only to persons who would ask asylum as a
result of events in Europe, and there would be no obligation with regard to non-European
refugees.

However, since the late 1970s, Turkey has become one of the most commonly used transit
routes through which immigrants from Africa and Asia pass on their way to their
preferred destinations, such as European countries, United States, Canada and Australia.
The mass influxes of people, especially from the Middle East, pushed Turkey to
implement a new regulation on asylum seekers in November 1994⁹⁷.

Recently, in the context of its candidacy for EU membership, the Government of Turkey
issued in March 2001 a National Plan of Action for the Adoption of the European Union
Acquisition (NPAAA). This document states that Turkey aims to lift the geographical
limitation on refugees, provided that EU countries show necessary sensitivity in burden
sharing and this situation does not encourage a mass influx of immigrants.

As a consequence of the temporary nature of the asylum available to non-European
refugees, their local integration in Turkey is not feasible. Almost all these refugees must
be resettled in a third country. During their stay in Turkey, refugees are largely
dependent on UNHCR’s assistance and services in terms of sustaining their needs of food,
shelter, basic health care, schooling, as well as social and legal counseling⁹⁸.

The difficulty of processing asylum claims within a reasonably brief period, given the
procedural rules, has many impacts in Turkey, such as exacerbating economic and social
problems, particularly in Van and the other border cities. The stay in the transit country
takes a long period of time. This became evident in research performed among 159
migrants, including refugees, passing through Turkey. Many of the respondents
“planned their move to Turkey for about one year, have been living in Turkey for
almost two years, and are planning to leave for the country of destination in other
year” (IOM, 1995, 2).

Considering the many instances of deportation and refoulement rumored amongst the
asylum seekers coming to Turkey, it is not surprising that many are afraid to attempt to
register an application with the authorities. Some of them manage to gain access to the
asylum procedure. Upon registration, most of the non-European immigrants, mainly
Iranians and Iraqis, have been assigned by the Government to one of 25 provincial cities.
The ones, who are denied registration either remain in Turkey illegally, attempt to go on
to Europe or pursue alternate ways to seeking asylum or immigrating to a third country. Currently it is estimated that there are approximately 1 million foreigners who are working in Turkey illegally (Kirişçi, 2001, 22). In the UNHCR 2001 Global Appeal, the UNHCR Turkey Office listed the number of non-European refugees and asylum-seekers of concern as 7,000.

Northern Iraqi people have the highest population among the international immigrant groups dwelling in Elmadağ. Though we do not know the exact number of Iraqi immigrants in Elmadağ, an officer working in Caritas organization estimated that approximately 50 families are living in Elmadağ, which is a considerably high number.

We interviewed with four Iraqi families in Elmadağ, who are all Catholic Chaldeans. They have been living in Turkey minimum for one year and maximum for two and a half years. They explained their reasons of immigration mostly by economic factors which have been deteriorated because of warfare conditions in their country. However, neither of them have an intention of staying permanently in Turkey. Having made their legal applications to the UNHCR office in Turkey, they are all waiting for the results for their applications to immigrate to a third country. The countries they want to settle into are Australia, Canada and Switzerland where their relatives already live. In this regard, the Iraqi families we interviewed could be placed in the “transit immigrants” category within the framework of Sema Erder’s groups distinguished in regard to reasons of immigration. Yet, most of the people in this group claimed strongly that they made their official applications in Turkey to seek an asylum in a third country lawfully. In brief, if our interviewees told us the truth, their situation in Elmadağ could neither be explained with Erder’s first group who decide to immigrate massively to Turkey with merely political reasons nor with the second group who seek illegal ways to pass through a third country. Accepting the fact that there might be many illegal Iraqi immigrants in Elmadağ though not admitted, we should also acknowledge the presence of some type of migration that is “transit” in its nature but neither utterly illegal nor massive.

The Iraqi immigrants demonstrate a typical chain migration process by following the path that their relatives have gone through from Iraq to Istanbul and then lastly to a third country. The majority of the Iraqis are living in the Tarlabası, Kurtuluş and Elmadağ with regard to their economic conditions. As the economic state of the ones dwelling in Tarlabası improves, they prefer to move to Elmadağ or Kurtuluş. Their choice of these three neighborhoods does not seem coincidental. The presence of Caritas in Elmadağ is the essential pulling force for their settlement in these neighborhoods, which are closer to this organization.

Caritas provides assistance to Catholic Iraqi immigrants spending a shorter or longer time of transit stay in Istanbul. In many cases, Caritas serves as a link between the refugees and UNHCR and foreign embassies by following up on the cases of the refugees. During the year 2000, Caritas organization in Turkey followed up on 745 Iraqi refugee cases. In addition to legal assistance, Caritas provides food, cloth and medicine aid to the needy immigrants. It also organizes basic schooling mainly English courses, for refugee children nine to fourteen years old, taught by teachers from the refugee group itself.

Caritas organization has a significant place in the daily lives of the Iraqi immigrants. As a Catholic organization, Caritas constitutes a meeting spot for many Iraqis along with the Saint-Esprit and Saint-Antoine Churches where they attend Sunday prays. In fact, religion comprises a significant component in the daily lives of the Iraqi immigrants. They
regularly attend ceremonial activities, which are essential in binding the members of their group. By this way, a sense of group solidarity is affirmed and social cohesion in their groups is promoted. Iraqi immigrants constitute an isolated enclave within Elmadağ whose members just have an interaction with each other. As a result of their isolation from the neighborhood but their strong connection within their community, we can suggest that the only strong neighborly relations in Elmadağ are established among the Iraqis.

As we mentioned above, some of the Iraqis wait for a very long time in Turkey to be accepted by a third country. During this period, the members of Iraqi families work illegally in the unskilled and uninsured jobs with very long working hours but earning very little money. Among our interviewees, at least one of the members of the family is working in jobs such as baby-sitting, cleaning or dishwashing in a restaurant. They told us some stories about how they are exploited and cheated by their employers but can not claim any right before the laws since they are working illegally.

The Iraqi women outnumber the Iraqi men in Elmadağ. In the apartments we were invited, we met many women living alone with their children. Mostly it is the men whose applications are first accepted and who are sent to a third county. Therefore, the women left behind in Turkey are waiting for the results of their application, while living with their children, with a very limited amount of money. Sometimes two or three families live together in the same apartment in difficult conditions. When asked if they are assisted financially by their relatives in Iraq or by their husbands in another Western country, most of them answered negatively. The indefiniteness of the period to be spent in Turkey has enslaved them to a feeling of temporariness. However, with a very subjective observation, we can assert that they have learned to manage this feeling of a transitory state after several years of immigration experience. Their hopes for the future and their comparatively better conditions in Istanbul than in hometowns comprise the ways of coping with the difficulties they are facing.

Along with the Iraqi people, immigrants from different African countries are dwelling in Elmadağ. Actually it is difficult to determine the countries of the African immigrants since most of the people in Turkey totalize them under the headings such as “Negro”, “African” or “Black”. The fact that some of them are illegal immigrants and therefore not registered by any authorities in Turkey is the reason for the lack of considerable data about their population and nationalities. Another reason put forward by the headman of İnönü Neighborhood is their constant flow to other countries as soon as it is possible: “African immigrants do not stay long [in the neighborhood]. They stay almost one week or ten days and then another group comes.”

In this regard, Sema Erder’s explanation of the category of ‘transit immigrant’ fits very well to this group who actually decide to immigrate mainly for reasons of attainment of higher standards of life in a third country and to arrive at this country through illegal ways.

However, it is possible to assert that in comparison to the population of the Iraqi immigrants, the number of Africans dwelling in Elmadağ is considerably low. All the interviewees are in consensus on the issue that today the number of Africans is lower than it was in the past. Most of the interviewees suggested that three or four years ago there were more Africans especially in the lower side of Elmadağ, who left the neighborhood after the continuous police raids to deport the illegal immigrants. Today many Africans live in Tarlabası and increasingly in Kurtuluş neighborhoods.  

Elmadağ
The African immigrants in Elmadağ usually rent full-furnished apartments with a price varying between 300-350 million Turkish Liras (200-250$). Many inhabitants of Elmadağ explicitly put forward their uneasiness about the presence of African immigrants in the neighborhood and blame the landlords for renting their apartments to them in order to earn money. Moreover, the inhabitants often criticize the living conditions of these immigrants as expressed by one of the interviewees, “twenty of them living together in the same apartment”.

In order to share the rents of their apartments, the African immigrants generally live together in barely survivable conditions.

Unlike the Iraqi immigrants who have neither encountered any kind of discrimination, nor been pleased about in the neighborhood, the Africans are frequently despised by the other inhabitants of Elmadağ. A high number of interviewees showed the presence of Africans in Elmadağ as a factor decreasing the value of Elmadağ without making any explanations. Having uncanny feelings toward the Africans, the inhabitants regard them as people threatening their security and comfort in the neighborhood. As one of the interviewees put forward:

“they are frequently wandering here. We do not know what they are doing. We do not know if they are involved in illicit dealings, such as drugs, hashish”.

While referring to Africans, the interviewees often blame them as the drug sellers, swindlers or thieves, although they have not witnessed the commitment of these crimes by the African immigrants.

In brief, it seems that African immigrants are one of the most ostracized people in this neighborhood. Though the inhabitants have not encountered any dreadful behavior emanating from them, their prejudice seems so strong that it cannot be altered easily.

NOTES

30. According to census reports, the proportion of urban population jumped from 25.0% to 43.9% between 1950 and 1980 (Zaim, 1987, 321).
31. Kemalist nationalism defines the criteria of membership to the Turkish nation on the basis of ethnic and religious identity. So, the nation-state building project led to dramatic changes in the social and demographic composition of Turkey (Aktar, 2000, 131-134).
32. In the midst of the World War II, in 1941, 20 groups of non-Muslims (born between 1894-1913) were called for military service as a precaution. For Rıdvan Akar this obligatory service was an example illustrating the attitude of political and military elites who did not trust non-Muslims and saw them as “collaborator of the enemy” (Akar, 2000, 174-176).
33. With the Cyprus Conflict, the Turkish government abolished the 1930 agreement signed between two countries and afterwards approximately 30,000-40,000 Greeks left Turkey. This number was higher than that of other immigration flows, which occurred due to the Wealth Tax and 6th-7th Events. The number of Greeks leaving the country increased after 1974 Operation and the coup d’état in 1980. Accordingly, the number of Greeks in Turkey had fallen to about 10,000 in 1983 (Aydın, 1996, 501).
34. “Beş yüz yolda meydana gelen Ermeni burjuvazisi ve bu burjuvazinin bir parçası olan aydın sınıfları yok olmuştu. Anadolu’luların, yılda eğitim görmüş, birkaç yabancı dil bilen, güzel sanatların her dalında ilgili bir sınıf her seyide oldukça edilmişti. Bu aydınların, bu kaşafın yerini Anadolu’dan geçen, eğitim alamamış, kültür değerlerinden habersiz, feodal yapılan gelen insanlarımız almıştır.”

35. Elmadag was also known as “Altunbakkal” (golden grocery) because of the grocery shop of an Armenian called Leon Altınyan. His shop was located by theSPAN Tiyatrosu.

36. During this immigration process, the destinations were mainly Greece for the Greeks; France, USA and Canada for the Armenians; and Israel for the Jews.

37. In addition to transfers during Wealth Tax, there occurred confiscations due to ‘1936 Wealth Tax Law’ which handed over minority foundations’ properties to the state. For instance, the land of today’s Harbiye primary school which was actually a donation of a non-Muslim, was appropriated by the government because of deficiency in the documentation (see photo 17).

38. “Yüreğim karda askerlik, varlık vergisi, 6-7 Eylül. Hiç açma o konular, deşmeyelim yararlanımız.”

39. Kastoryano presents a striking account of this event for the Jewish community of Istanbul. She points at the importance of timing of the movement to another neighborhood in attaining a higher status in the social rank: One would be denoted as “traditional” if s/he could not move to Şişhane-Kuledibi in 1920s, to Pera-Taksim in 1940s and to şişli- Nişantaşı in 1950s. This mobility continued with Etler and Bosphorus shores later on (Kastoryano, 1991).

40. “Çok zengin aileler yoktu bu sokakta, orta kesim vardı. Burası boşlukta hali vakti yerinde olanlar taşınmaya başladular. 70’lerin sonunda eski tanıklar yok oldu. [...] İmkanları olanlar gitti, olamayanlar gidemedi. İyi olanlar ya yurtlaştıra ya da daha iyi bir mubahitte gittiler.”

41. “Ermeniler hala var, ama kadı durumu köti olanlar kaldı, ileri gelenleri gitti.”

42. “Eski ekmek tapınıplat, Sultanhamam’dan tüccar, toptancı, Perşembe Pazarı nda yedek parçacıklar. Bugün kalanlar dar gelirler, çoğu kirada oturuyor.”

43. “Olenler çok oldu, gidenler çok oldu.”

44. “Müllük sahipleri artık çoğulukla Müslüman, eskiden gayrimüslimdi.”


46. One example of these campaigns is the opening of an Armenian boarding school in Üsküdar in 1948-1950. This can be seen as related to the education of newly emigrated poor children from Anatolia.


49. “Elazığ’a kılıse, okul yoku. Çocuklar okusun, bizim gibi kalmasın diye isteyerek İstanbul’a gőç ettik.”

50. “Memelet, doğduğuşun değil, doyduğunu yerdir.”


56. We conceived of this term while contemplating the notion of “elites of massive migration” proposed by Sema Köksal and Nihal Kara. They define “the elites of massive migration” in terms of their familial backgrounds, economic and social position and leading roles in the massive migration coming from their hometown. They also distinguish these elites by their father’s occupation, birthplace, level of education and their own occupation (Köksal S. & Kara N., 1990). Although the pioneer migrants of Elmadağ did not have a familial, educational or economic superiority during the migration, they are today the elites of the neighborhood. These early-comers are more successful in economic terms; today they are property-owners of most of the houses inhabited by the immigrants who arrived later. The economic boom era of the 1950s and early 60s was an important factor in the fast upward mobility of these provincial entrepreneurs. Correspondingly, they name Menderes along with Özal as the most important figures of Turkish history.

57. “[İlk geldiğimizde] taksiçilik, kamyonculuk, otobüsçülük yaptıkt. Eğitim olmadığı için biz de başka iş yapamazdik.”

58. One should also note that these build-and-sell activities demolished the picturesque physical texture of the neighborhood and led to the spreading of new unattractive buildings. This has also been one of the factors that prevents the gentrification of Elmadağ. (see photo 19)


60. “Hedefim hep para kazanıp bir yerlere varmak için para kazanmak, iş sahibi olmak.”

61. “Burada parasi olanın sözü geçer.”


64. A comparison between the western region and the eastern region of the country in the mid-1990’s reflects the significant socio-economic inequalities between the regions. The western region’s per-capita gross national product was $ 2,000, and the eastern region’s was $ 700. The western region’s total fertility rate was 2, the eastern region’s is over 4. The western region’s infant mortality rate was 43, the eastern region’s was 60. The western region’s illiteracy rate was 14, the eastern region’s was 26. The western region’s number of health personnel per 1,000 people was 3.2, the eastern region’s was 2. (Kılıç, Romano and Sirkeci, 1999, 9).

65. According to a study conducted by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB) in 1996 in Diyarbakır, economic reasons constitute the ground for their migration such as hardship of livelihood, non-possession of territory, unemployment. On the other hand, after 1990s the reasons have shifted from economic to more political reasons, such as the evacuation of villages, burning down of the villages or the incidents in the region. Indeed, 73,7% of the interviewers who came to Diyarbakır after 1990 stated they immigrated due to "compulsory reasons" (TMMOB, 1999, 344-45)

66. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the normal level of Turkish troop deployments in the area was around 90,000. This number had risen to 160,000 by June 1994. By the end of 1994, taking into account also the number of police, Special Forces and village guards, there were 300,000 security forces deployed in eastern and southeastern Turkey. The size of the security forces in the areas remained roughly the same during 1995 (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997, 130).
67. Terrorist actions are defined as actions involving repression, violence and force, or the threat to use force, by one or several persons belonging to an organization with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Turkish Republic including its political, legal, social, secular and economic system (Article 1).

68. There is no consensus on the meaning of the concept Internally Displaced Person (IDP). However, people who are subjected to violence, armed conflict or pressure and are forced to leave their places and homes but have remained within the borders of their country are called IDPs (TAV, 2001, 14).

69. However, according to the report of Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1997, the number of villages and hamlets evacuated by the security forces were put as 3,428 and the number of people displaced were cited as 378,335.

70. The number of asylum applications by Turkish nationals between 1985 and 1994 is 330,121 (Böcker, 1996, 57). Although there is no source about the percentage of the Kurdish asylum seekers, it is estimated that they account for the majority of the asylum applications in the last two decades.


72. “Ya devlet tarafına göçecektik ya da dağa gidecektik. Dağa gidenler çok oldu ama dağa gitmek de cairo değil. Hizbullah da başlaymaca, katliamlar yaptlar, mebusur kaldık, geldi”.

73. Usually this pioneer-immigrant was the eldest son of the family.


78. In Turkish slang it is “kıro” which is generally used to refer in a pejorative way to the immigrants coming from Eastern Turkey.

79. “Kürtleri insan yerine, adam yerine koymuyor. Sayı göstermiyorlar”.

80. “Bu İstanbul’un esas biçimini bozan Suri, Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakır, Hakkari’den gelenler. Onların insanları buraya dolunca buranın tahi kaçı”.


82. “Kürtler ... çok çocuk yaparlar, amaçları hâkimete görmek. Bizim Türkler bir az, ikisi çok diyorlar, denge bozuluyor”.


84. After the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, about one and half million Iranians transited to a third country after a temporary stay in Turkey. In 1982, 4,000 refugees from Afghanistan living in camps in Pakistan were brought to Turkey. Between 1988 and 1995, approximately 650,000 Iraqi Kurds poured into Turkey, who were considered as “temporary guests” rather than asylum seekers by the Turkish government. In 1989, more than 310,000 Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks settled in Turkey. From 1992 to 1995, 30,000 Bosnians sought refuge in Turkey and in 1999 nearly 20,000 Albanians from Kosovo arrived in Turkey. Since the late 1980s, an estimated 30,000 immigrants from African and Asian countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Afghanistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have entered into Turkey (İçduyu and Keyman, 2000, 390).
Around 100,000 Iranians stayed in Turkey, while a large proportion resettled in a third country. Most of the Iraqis returned back to their home; only 10,000 Iraqis settled in Turkey. Many Bosnians obtained refugee status from the Western countries and just 3,000 stayed in Turkey. More than 150,000 Bulgarians returned to Bulgaria. Nearly 1,000 Albanian refugees from Kosovo settled in Turkey (İçduygũ and Keyman, 2000, 390-391).

Until the adoption of the 1951 Convention on Refugees, Turkey did not have legislation in regard to asylum to foreigners. According to the Law on Settlement adopted in 1934 (Law 2510), only individuals of “Turkish descent and culture” could obtain the refugee status. According to Article 4 of this law, “from the prospective settlers those who are not attached to Turkish culture, anarchists, spies, nomads and gypsies may not be accepted as refugees”. Kemal Kirişçi argues that even after the adoption of the 1951 Convention, Turkey continued to grant full refugee status to foreigners who have met the provisions of Law 2510. For a detailed explanation, see Kemal Kirişçi (2000).

It is entitled as “Regulation on the Procedures and the Principles Related to Mass Influx and the Foreigners Arriving in Turkey or Requesting Residence Permits with the Intention of Seeking Asylum from a Third Country”. Implementation of this regulation meant that Turkey recognized its changing status to that of a transit country and its need to go beyond the Geneva Convention to deal effectively with the non-European asylum seekers. Until the introduction of the 1994 Asylum regulation, Turkish national law had no provisions governing the status of asylum seekers and refugees coming from outside Europe. Yet, in the 1994 Regulation, the refugee definition of 1951 Geneva Convention is repeated by adding the phrase “As a result of events which have occurred in Europe” at the beginning of the sentence. This means that it is still not the international obligation of Turkey to confer the refugee status to people outside Europe and these people are defined as “asylum seekers”. The power of determination of asylum status was given to the control of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) without actually lifting the geographical limitation (Kirişçi, 2001, 11). Though the Regulation identifies MOI as the body responsible for status determination, MOI officials have come to rely increasingly on the judgment of the UNHCR.

UNHCR’s main office is in Ankara, with a presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. A total of nine international, nine JPOs and 60 national staff manage the country programme. Of the nine international staff, three are Regional Advisors (on gender, children and legal training) based in Ankara. The UNHCR Office in Turkey, which plays a leading operational role in the refugee status determination process, collaborates with seven NGOs (Association for Solidarity with Asylum-seekers and Migrants, Caritas, Human Resource Development Foundation, International Catholic Migration Commission, Inter-Parish Migration Programme, Migrants and Anatolian Development Foundation and Turkish Red Crescent Society). UNHCR also collaborates with intergovernmental organizations including IOM (for resettlement and voluntary repatriation) and UNICEF (for refugee women and children).

Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of 154 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations present in 198 countries and territories. The first Caritas organization was founded in Germany in 1896, and all the national Caritas organizations are united in a worldwide confederation, Caritas Internationalis, with its headquarters in Rome. The Caritas organization in Turkey was established in the 1950s by Domenico Caloyeris OP, the administrator of the Greek Catholic community in Istanbul. In 1985, Pierre Dubois, the Latin Apostolic Vicar in Istanbul inaugurated the present office of Caritas in Elmadağ (Booklet of Caritas Türkiye, 8).

In Elmadağ, they are mostly dwelling in the lower side of the neighborhood, such as Akkarga or Küçükbayır Streets where the rents are lower in comparison to that of upper side.

According to the Caritas officer their period of staying in Turkey sometimes extends to 5 years.
93. The African immigrants we interviewed in Elmadağ are from Nigeria. They suggested that they are legal immigrants who intend to settle in Canada and Italy.

94. “Onlar çok kalmaz. Bir hafif on gün kalırlar, sonra diğer posta gelir”.

95. In July 2001, the police gathered up over 200 African immigrants from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, Sudan and Eritrea in Istanbul and sent them to the Greek border. According to the declaration of IHD (Human Rights Association), the immigrants also rejected by the Greek authorities had to stay in the impartial region without having their basic necessities met. During this period, while three immigrants were drowned in the river, two of them claimed that they were raped. Unfortunately, other than IHD announcement and a few alternative newspapers, this event did not get reported in the mass media.

96. “Yirmi kişi aynı evde kalıyorlar”

97. “Buralarda çok dolaşıyorlar. Ne iş yapıyorlar bilmiyoruz, pis işlere mi bulaşıyorlar bilmiyoruz, hap, esrar falan”.

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