

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

**From Wim Wenders' Lisbon to Fatih Akin's Istanbul: Producing
the Cool City in Film
Koksal, O.**

This text was published as Koksal, O. (2015) From Wim Wenders' Lisbon to Fatih Akin's Istanbul: Producing the Cool City in Film in: Ozkan, D. (ed.) Cool Istanbul: Urban Enclosures and Resistances, transcript Verlag, pp. 81-101. The text is posted here by permission of transcript Verlag for personal use only, not for redistribution. It is available from the publisher at:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839427637.79>

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

Whilst further distribution of specific materials from within this archive is forbidden, you may freely distribute the URL of WestminsterResearch: (<http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/>).

In case of abuse or copyright appearing without permission e-mail repository@westminster.ac.uk

Table of Contents

Preface | 7

PART I: COOLNESS, VALUE, LABOR

**From the Black Atlantic to Cool İstanbul –
Why does coolness matter?**

Derya Özkan | 13

The Value of Art and the Political Economy of Cool

Aras Özgün | 35

**Reflections on the panel “Working Poor or Working
Deprived in Cool İstanbul?”**

An Attempt at Collective Thought

Aslı Odman | 61

PART II: VISUAL IMAGINATIONS OF COOL İSTANBUL

**From Wim Wender’s Lisbon to Fatih Akın’s İstanbul –
Producing the Cool City in Film**

Özlem Köksal | 83

**The City in Black and White –
Photographic Memories**

İpek Türeli | 107

**Mirror Mirror on the wall, Aysel is the coolest of them all ...
The Female Protagonist and the Television Series**

Kayıp Şehir

Berrin Yanıkkaya | xx

Index | xx

List of Authors | xx

HOT SUITES

No : 7



From Wim Wender's Lisbon to Fatih Akın's İstanbul

Producing the Cool City in Film¹

ÖZLEM KÖKSAL

In 1994, German filmmaker Wim Wenders made a film about Lisbon called *Lisbon Story*. The film was commissioned by the City of Lisbon to promote the city when it was selected as the Cultural Capital of Europe in 1994. The film looks at Lisbon through music in particular, and through the sounds of the city in general. Although not commissioned by any organization, in 2005 Fatih Akın made a similar film about İstanbul called *Crossing the Bridge*. The film coincided with rising tourist interest in İstanbul, as well as with its selection as the Cultural Capital of Europe for 2010, as announced in 2006. Akın's film took a similar approach to Wenders, and imagined the city as a multicultural place with diverse sounds. This chapter looks at these two films, and compares their approach to the city. It also examines their

¹ This article is based on a lecture I gave with Luis Trindade, the chair of the World Cinema MA program at Birkbeck College, University of London, as part of a course he taught in 2011. I would like to thank him for initiating the idea for the lecture, and for the discussions that took place prior to and during the lecture. I would also like to thank the organizers and the participants of the conference "Cool İstanbul: Urban Enclosures and Resistances." In particular, I thank İpek Türeli for her comments on an earlier version of this paper. İpek Çelik also read various versions of this text and provided me with comments and criticism for which I am grateful.

Photograph: Derya Özkan

potential impact on the imagination and perception of their respective cities, with particular focus on İstanbul.

The two films share many common elements. Having already directed several critically acclaimed films, Wenders had been awarded the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival before making *Lisbon Story*. Similarly, while making *Crossing the Bridge*, Fatih Akin was well on his way to becoming a star on the international festival circuit, as well as in Germany and Turkey, and had won the Golden Bear for his *Gegen Die Wand/Head-on* (2004). Both Wenders' *Lisbon Story* and Akin's *Crossing the Bridge* are about exploring their respective cities through music and sound, trying to find a portal into their supposedly secret/hidden soul. In other words, what we have are two award winning directors with their own distinctive styles, both critically acclaimed and sought after in festival circuits, and both dealing with two "cool cities."

Although elusive, "cool" is a word used in relation to both cities in the media. A recent piece on CNN International's website designated Lisbon as "probably the coolest city in Europe."² Similarly, as Derya Özkan outlines in her chapter in this volume, global media within the last decade has high-highlighted İstanbul as a cool city with a vibrant culture and nightlife. This conceptualization undeniably creates attraction by presenting the city as a source of numerous opportunities for visitors and investors alike. Hence, the concept of cool, although loaded and simultaneously empty, or perhaps because it is loaded and empty at the same time, brings to mind the image of its referent. Films can contribute to the creation of that image by reciprocally creating and reproducing how a city is perceived. As I will argue below, both films produce a particular imagination of coolness in relation to these cities, and in so doing, dwell on nostalgic representations: Lisbon as a dreamy, historical city frozen in time, İstanbul as a buzzing and trendy city that bridges cultures.

Before examining these films closely, I would like to mention two other concepts that are as elusive as the concept of cool: world cinema and world music. Although the categories of "world music" and "world cinema" connote different things depending on the context of their use, there is an

2 Dunlop, Fiona, "7 reasons Lisbon could be Europe's coolest city," CNN International, 26 January 2014 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/01/25/travel/lisbon-coolest-city>, accessed 9 April 2014).

inevitable marketing effort interwoven with the coining and usage of these terms. Writing on world music, Martin Stokes notes that the term dates from 1987, when executives of a record company in London wanted to find ways to market the currently circulating commercial recordings to consumers in Britain.³ The term was picked up by the music press in the west and is often used in relation to music influenced by non-western musical traditions.

The use of world cinema as a classification is also connected to the global marketing of cultures. Although the term is often used critically to contrast Hollywood with other national cinemas, and can be a useful conception in that sense, it is also, and more often, used as with world music, i.e. as “a tidy agglomeration that suits the marketing and governing principles of major multinational industrial concerns but deracinates the cultural histories and conflicts that makes possible its very components.”⁴ Hence the conception of both world cinema and world music is interwoven with the dynamics of the global economy.⁵ On the one hand, they both connote authenticity, positioned as differing from the dominant forms of western popular music or Hollywood cinema. On the other, they form a portmanteau concept where what is included or excluded is not fixed, instead changing not only in time but also according to the approach and location.

Both *Lisbon Story* and *Crossing the Bridge* are considered examples of world cinema outside of their countries of origin, and the music used in these films as world music. Wenders focuses on one particular genre of music, fado, performed by the modern fado band Madredeus. Fado emerged in the streets of Lisbon in the nineteenth century, and “became Portugal’s ‘national’ music in the twentieth.”⁶ Although Madredeus were

3 Stokes, Martin (2006), “Music and the Global Order,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, p. 52.

4 Miller, Toby (2005), “Preface,” in *Traditions in World Cinemas*, ed. Badley, Linda, Barton, R. Barton and Steven Jay Schneider, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, p. xi.

5 For a discussion of world music in relation to İstanbul’s music scene, see Değirmenci, Koray (2013), *Creating Global Music in Turkey*, Lanham: Lexington Books.

6 Elliot, Richard (2010), *Fado and the Place of Longing: Loss, Memory and the City*, Surrey: Ashgate, p. 128.

well known at the time, the film exposed them to an even wider audience. Richard Elliot writes that “outside of Portugal, the group became one of the first Portuguese acts – and certainly the first ‘non-traditional’ act – to be included in the newly formed ‘world music’ category, gaining them further exposure via the emerging world music media.”⁷

Akın’s film, on the other hand, includes numerous musicians and musical genres, opening with a composition by Mercan Dede who is known for his electronic take on Sufi music. The director then introduces other musical genres, and ends the film with an oriental version of Madonna’s “Music” as sung by Eurovision winner Sertap Erener. Unsurprisingly, the soundtrack for the film was released as a CD by the world music label Doublemoon, one of the two prominent world music labels in Turkey, whose intention is to manufacture an İstanbul sound that supposedly symbolizes the city. In addition, both directors deal with world cities en route to becoming European Cultural Capitals, hence the context for the films’ production and release are interwoven with preparations in these cities for that event. Nevertheless, these films are neither mere marketing products intended exclusively to market the city, nor can they be considered completely detached from the images these cities hold.⁸

Since films about cities contribute to the perception of those cities, it is inevitable that they should often be discussed in those terms as well. Wenders, for instance, in response to a question about whether he is aware of anyone wanting to visit Lisbon after seeing his film, says: “I don’t want to brag, but I know of hundreds of people over the years who said they went to see the city because of the film.”⁹ What is noteworthy here is the approach that sees the film’s success in connection to its contribution to the marketing of the city. In other words, while Wenders did not create the film with the aim of increasing the number of tourists visiting Lisbon, it became

7 Ibid, p.1.

8 Although Wenders’ film was commissioned by the City of Lisbon, Wenders had artistic freedom while making the film, and the film circulates as “a film by Wim Wenders.” As such the grounds for comparison are not contaminated by the fact that one of these films was commissioned.

9 Wenders, Wim (2003), “These Songs Were My Script – ‘Lisbon Story’ revisited,” (http://www.wim-wenders.com/news_reel/2003/sept-interview-lisbon.htm, accessed 9 April 2014).

one of the ways in which its success is measured. Although there is nothing wrong with a film generating tourist interest in a place, it is worth considering why the most immediate question is one about tourist interest, which then becomes an important parameter against which to measure the film's success. In contrast, much less is said about how locals engage with such films, which in return can be seen as an indication of the fact that these films are predominantly imagined for outsiders. "Outsiders" here does not necessarily mean foreigners, but a potential target audience whose knowledge of the city is limited and to whom the image will be sold.

Hence, there is an inescapable commodification of cities in and by films like *Lisbon Story* and *Crossing the Bridge*. Deniz Göktürk, writing on the subject, notes that "commodification of places relies on a recognizable uniqueness while, paradoxically, erasing specificity in the spread and expanse of tradable resemblances."¹⁰ This unique image must be recognizable enough to not alienate, yet different enough to attract. How, then, do these films take part in the commodification of their respective cities?

LISBON STORY: A FROZEN CITY

Wenders, at the time of making the *Lisbon Story*, was an established director, having already directed critically acclaimed films such as *Paris Texas* (1984) and *Wings of Desire* (1987). When he was approached by the City of Lisbon to make a film about Lisbon as part of the efforts to celebrate Lisbon's selection as the Cultural Capital of Europe in 1994, he opted to not make a documentary about the city, although he wanted to use it as the main character.¹¹ While he was preparing for the film, he met Madredeus and decided to include them as part of the story of Lisbon. The band at the time happened to have twelve unpublished songs about Lisbon, which Wenders used as his script.¹² The film begins with Philip Winter (Rudiger Vogler), a sound engineer, receiving a letter from his old friend

10 Göktürk, Deniz (2010), "Projecting Polyphony: Moving Images, Travelling Sounds," in *Orienteering İstanbul: Capital of Europe*, ed. Göktürk, Deniz, Soysal, Levent and Ipek Türeli, New York: Routledge, p. 180.

11 Wenders (2003), "These Songs Were My Script."

12 Ibid.

Friedrich, a film director, inviting Philip to Lisbon to make a film about/in the city. In Lisbon, while waiting for his friend to appear, Philip explores the city and starts recording the sounds of the city. Following his encounter with the members of the band Madredeus, who happen to reside in the same building, he starts visiting them often, listening to their rehearsals. It is through Philip's walks in the city and Madredeus' music that the audience discovers Lisbon.

Wenders, in *Lisbon Story*, treats the city as a frozen temporality which inevitably forces the director to deal with a frozen city. With his camera seemingly wandering deep into the city, the director seeks to capture its essence. This essence, the "mythical uncontaminated space,"¹³ is found in Alfama, where most of the film takes place. Alfama is one of the oldest, and possibly the most touristy neighborhoods in Lisbon. Unlike other areas, it was fortunate to survive the famous earthquake of 1755. The area contains historic old buildings and narrow streets for the camera; it is a picturesque neighborhood where time seems to stand still. Wenders' decision to limit his representation of Lisbon predominantly to Alfama produces a nostalgic representation of the city.

It is hard to tell how much of Wenders' own experience and preconceptions of the city influenced the representation of Lisbon in the film, and how much of this representation was dictated by the city itself. Lisbon, according to the director, appeared to be a "dreamy" city in disbelief "that it was actually part of Europe. Somehow it had turned its back to the continent and was looking over the ocean as if it had hopes to find its long lost splendor there again."¹⁴ In other words, although Wenders does not clarify whether he is referring to the Portuguese colonial past when he mentions a "long lost splendour," this assumed loss is the dominant feeling in the film. It is more than likely that Wenders' belief that he found something recognizably unique in Alfama shaped his vision of the city.

This feeling of nostalgia produced about the city in the image track is further enhanced with the use of fado as the soundtrack, since fado is

13 Chambers, Iain (2002), *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, London: Routledge, p. 72.

14 Wenders (2003), "These Songs Were My Script."

“known for its strong emphasis on loss, memory and nostalgia within its song texts.”¹⁵ According to Elliot:

One of the main lyrical themes of fado is the city itself, particularly those areas most associated with the music’s origin such as Alfama [...] A mythology of place is summed up in fado song texts that attempts to trace the remembered and imagined city of the past via the poetics of haunting. At the same time, certain locales of the physical city present themselves as stages in a museum of song, offering up haunted melodies of a sonic past that serve to assert the city’s identity. City and song, bear witness to each other.¹⁶

What is more, one of the qualities associated with fado is *saudade*, a Portuguese word often considered untranslatable to other languages. In his book on fado, Richard Elliot gives a detailed account of what the word means and the story behind its untranslatable status.¹⁷ Loosely referring to sorrow and loss (or sorrow of loss) the discussion on *saudade* is very much reminiscent of Orhan Pamuk’s discussion of the Turkish word *hüzün* as the dominant feeling in İstanbul. Pamuk also claims that the word has no corresponding term in other languages, hence the Turkish word *hüzün* is used in the English translation.¹⁸ However, as Elliot also quotes in his book in relation to the untranslatable status of *saudade*, Svetlana Boym points out that there is a “grammar of nostalgia” in these discussions of untranslatability. According to Boym,

while each term preserves the specific rhythms of the language, one is struck by the fact that all these untranslatable words are in fact synonyms; and all share the desire for untranslatability, the longing for uniqueness. While the details and flavors differ, the grammar of romantic nostalgias all over the world is quite similar. “I long therefore I am” became the romantic motto.¹⁹

15 Elliot (2010), *Fado and the Place of Longing*, p. 1.

16 Ibid, p. 1-2.

17 For a discussion of the concept and its place in fado see Elliot (2010), *Fado and the Place of Longing*, pp. 27-32.

18 Pamuk, Orhan. (2005), *İstanbul: Memories of a City*, London: Faber & Faber, p. 116.

19 Boym, Svetlana (2001), *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, p. 13.

Wenders nevertheless gives a glimpse of the expanding city of Lisbon towards the end of the film, albeit briefly. The camera goes outside of Alfama and shows modern buildings. Rather than embracing the relatively new part of the city and perhaps seeing its older and newer parts, Wenders makes the modern buildings look like a disease that the city is battling.

Furthermore, Wenders captures only the locals in Alfama, and excludes the crowds of tourists who would normally populate the neighborhood. This then helps the director to create the Lisbon he has in mind: a dreamy city “looking over the ocean as if it had hopes to find its long lost splendor there again.” Wenders’ imagination and the representation of the place are triggered by a feeling of loss, in Christine Boyer’s words a loss of “continuum of traditional experience and remembrance in spatial forms.”²⁰ Boyer, in reference to Walter Benjamin and his discussion of the loss of real experiences in modern city life, argues that because of this lack, this lack of continuity, we turn to synthetic and unnatural representations of “frozen city landscapes where memory had fallen asleep.”²¹

Benjamin, in his writings, talks about the changes modern life, particularly city life, has brought with it. According to Benjamin, the modern world bombards us with information and images that subjects us to a series of shocks. This is unlike the experience Benjamin values (*Erfahrung*), best exemplified in the practice of old storytellers who “tell from experience.”²² As they pass on a given experience, the activity of storytelling creates continuity between the past and the present. In the modern world, storytelling has been replaced by information, creating an isolated experience (*Erlebnis*) not emerging within a continuum. The shocks that modern life creates are registered as isolated experiences. Boyer writes: “Consequently the continuum of traditional experience and remembrance embedded in spatial forms, once thought to be the ordering structure of the

20 Boyer, Christine (1994), *The City of Collective Memory*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p. 23.

21 Ibid., p. 24.

22 Benjamin, Walter (2007 [1969]), *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, p. 87.

city and the generating device for memory was impoverished beyond recognition.”²³

The feeling of loss produced by Wenders’ film about the city is coupled with the self-reflexive but nostalgic take on early cinema: the idea that contingency can be captured. The discussions on cinema and contingency evolve from the complicated relationship between cinema and the concept of time, particularly with the modern conception of time: the structured, rationalized and standardized concept of time as opposed to cinema’s ability to represent time. “The rationalization of time ruptures the continuum par excellence,”²⁴ writes Mary Ann Doane, a discussion that is also related to Benjamin’s discussion of experience and modern life. Doane adds that contingency “emerges as a form of resistance to rationalization which is saturated with ambivalence [...] Time becomes heterogeneous and unpredictable, [...] accident and chance become productive.”²⁵ Early cinema, according to Doane “gives the spectator the opportunity of witnessing the ceaseless production of meaning *out of* contingency.”²⁶ Hence contingency becomes a way to resist the rationalization of time that breaks the continuum of experience. Cinema as born into modernity, with no past, unlike most other art forms, permits resistance to the rationalization of time, yet more than that, because it is also time’s product, it is bound to produce shocks. Wenders’ solution to making up for this loss of continuum is to have his characters make a film-within-the-film, reproducing the aesthetics of early cinema. They mount a camera on vehicles and allow it to record randomly in an effort to capture the unstructured, unexpected meaning that the city harbors. Paradoxically, Wenders is only able to do this with the technologies available to him at the time, in this case, small cameras. What is more, his aesthetic references to early cinema in the film-within-the-film, as well as the direct references to perhaps the most famous city film, i.e. *A Man With a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929), maintain the audience’s relation to the past, to the nostalgic image on screen. The overall effect is an image of the city on screen that is unaffected by change, and yet is also a

23 Boyer (1994), *The City of Collective Memory*, pp. 23-24.

24 Doane, Mary Ann (2002), *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 9

25 Ibid, p.11.

26 Ibid, p. 181.

city that offers opportunities for chance encounters unique to cities, and unavailable elsewhere. This is a modern city, where anxieties turn into productive surprises through the use of the cinematic medium, a city where vastness is reduced to the manageable and unchanging neighborhood of Al-fama using the grammar of nostalgia.

CROSSING THE BRIDGE **İSTANBUL AS A CITY OF DIVERSE SOUNDS**

How do these elements, namely producing familiar uniqueness and nostalgia play into Akın's film? How does Akın deal with the task of representing the city? As a director, Akın was discovered by world cinema enthusiasts outside of Germany after his critically acclaimed *Head-on* (2004), a film that takes place partly in Hamburg, and partly in İstanbul. He made *Crossing the Bridge* following the international success of *Head-on*. As Göktürk notes,

Fatih Akın's discovery of İstanbul occurred at a time when İstanbul was on its way to becoming the third most visited city in Europe after London and Paris (7th most visited in the world with over 7 million visitors per year) and in the wake of İstanbul's selection as a European Capital of Culture. Initiatives to promote İstanbul's candidacy took shape in July 2000, and on 13 November 2006 İstanbul was officially announced a European Capital of Culture for 2010.²⁷

Crossing the Bridge opens with a member of the Siya Siyabend, a band consisting of street musicians, quoting Confucius: "If you want to understand a place you need to look at the music in that place." The director then cuts to the title of the film, written in the shape of the bridge over the Bosphorus. We hear one of the band members saying that İstanbul is a bridge that is "crossed by seventy-two nations,"²⁸ which Akın complements by cutting to a shot of the bridge from above. During this sequence, Akın cuts back and forth between his interviewees and shots of İstanbul, mostly aerial shots, briefly introducing the musicians as well as the city.

27 Göktürk (2010), "Projecting Polyphony," p. 181.

28 This is a phrase used in Turkish to refer to the multicultural make up of İstanbul.

As discussed in more detail below, aerial shots do not always serve the same purpose. Their meaning and effect on the audience can change depending on the context in which they are used. However, aerial shots often create the sense of a spatially unified city: the modern metropolis is unmanageably large and aerial shots often give us manageable views. The aerial shots Akin uses in this opening sequence give the audience a sense of the city, in agreement with Akin's vision. They often include Bosphorus within the frame, at times directly as the subject of the shot, at other times Bosphorus serves as the background for the shot. The sequence also includes two shots of the bridge itself. It should be noted here that there are two bridges over the Bosphorus connecting the European and the Asian sides of the city. However, the film creates the illusion that there is only one bridge, which then becomes *the* bridge, emphasizing singularity, enhancing the metaphoric meaning of this overused visual element.

Once Alexandre Hacke, our guide in our journey into İstanbul's music scene, is in his hotel, he opens the window and the sound of a call for prayer fills his room. We are now three minutes into the film and almost all the clichés about İstanbul have been reproduced, albeit stylishly: Bosphorus dividing Europe and Asia, the bridge connecting them, which also highlights İstanbul's geographic and historic position. This is then used to emphasize its cultural diversity. The most disseminated, and the most recognizable image of İstanbul is saved for later though: the sunset over Bosphorus behind the minarets of the mosques.

Akin represents both the city as well as the music scene in the city as diverse and lively. Although the popular music scene in Turkey is excluded to a large extent, the director nevertheless creates a balanced combination of old and new approaches, mainstream and alternative sounds, known and unknown musicians. The choice of musicians, a mixture of iconic stars such as Orhan Gencebay and Sezen Aksu, along with street musicians unknown to even most of the locals, as well as his choice of a guide, Alexander Hacke, a member of the influential German industrial music band Einstürzende Neubauten, well-known in the global electronic/industrial music scene, give the audience a sense of the colorful and buzzing music scene in İstanbul. With Hacke himself sometimes participating in the live sessions, we listen to diverse musical sounds in diverse places. For example, Baba Zula's music, a band that combines the psychedelic with traditional musical instruments (i.e. *saz*, *darbuka*, spoons)

is heard on a boat over the Bosphorus, the iconic arabesque musician Orhan Gencebay in his office/studio, the street band Siya Siyabend on the streets of İstanbul, the Kurdish singer Aynur in a hammam, the rock-band Duman in a night club. These are just some of the locations where musicians in the film perform.

The shots of İstanbul's streets, where we get a glimpse of the night-life, are supposed to make us feel the eclectic nature of the diverse life styles in the city, juxtaposing shots of transsexuals, drunks, the middle class, the homeless, the youth of the city, in general its inhabitants, all serving to create a vibrant image of the city. But what makes all this special? Are they not scenes one can encounter almost anywhere in the world? Could this not be London, Berlin, Mexico City or indeed Lisbon? Do these scenes serve any other purpose than reproducing an image of a diverse world city? In Akin's film, while the image track produces the familiarity, the difference is produced by the sound. The familiar images include both stereotypical representations of İstanbul, such as the shot of the bridge and sunset over Bosphorus, as well as images present in any global city. The difference produced by the soundtrack includes distinct musical traditions and instruments, such as Selim Sesler's clarinet and Orhan Gencebay's *saz*, as well as the fusion of western and eastern musical traditions thought to reflect İstanbul as the unique meeting point for east and west. The music used is complemented by the sound of the streets: car alarms, streets vendors, calls for a prayer, screaming seagulls, and the sound of ferries all complete the sound of İstanbul.

The question here would be "images familiar to whom" and "sounds unique to whom." I argue that the familiarity, and therefore the difference is created with the western subject in mind. It should also be noted that although the image of İstanbul as vibrant and buzzing is the opposite of that produced in *Lisbon Story* for Lisbon as serene, traditional and frozen in time, both culminate in a similar effect: both films commodify their respective cities to a degree, creating recognizable uniqueness while erasing specificity. Their approaches to these cities contribute to the existing strategies deployed to market the two cities as attractive tourist destinations offering unique experiences. However, although both films dwell on nostalgic representations, Akin's relationship to the city he is representing, his idea of what is lost and the type of nostalgia he produces, are different from Wenders'.

According to Deniz Göktürk, Akın offers a “counter perspective to those nostalgic projects” about İstanbul, such as Orhan Pamuk’s book.²⁹ Nobel Prize winner Pamuk’s book, *İstanbul: Memories of a City*, is an autobiographical text offering the novelist’s experiences of the city, and is dominated by a feeling of loss, particularly the loss of the city’s multicultural make-up. As Pamuk writes what he remembers of the city of his childhood, he focuses on the changes the city undergoes, and contends that the best word to describe İstanbul is *hüzün*, which can be translated as melancholia. Left untranslated in the English version of the book, *hüzün* is, according to Pamuk, a “feeling that is unique to İstanbul and that binds its people together.”³⁰

Göktürk, in her article, mentions another book published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism in collaboration with the Turkish Foundation of Cinema and Audiovisual Culture (TÜRSAK). According to Göktürk, the book, which was published to market İstanbul to the likes of international production companies, emphasizes “diversity in relation to the coexistence and mutual tolerance of three faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).” Comparing this particular book’s approach to Akın’s İstanbul, Göktürk says that while the book’s take on İstanbul is nostalgic, Akın’s film “offers a different vision of life” promoting “a less nostalgic take on diversity by featuring Kurdish and Romani performers and putting travel-travelling mediators on stage.”³¹

Two things are worthy of mention in Göktürk’s approach. The first one is the ways in which Göktürk compares the book to the film. While this specific book is intended for marketing purposes, the film is a cultural artifact about the same material. This comparison reveals the assumption that films like *Crossing the Bridge* inherently contribute to marketing the cities they represent. The second point is about producing nostalgia. Contrary to the author’s statement that the film offers a counter perspective to nostalgic projects such as Orhan Pamuk’s book on İstanbul, it could be argued that Akın’s take on the city and its diversity is also nostalgic since he too creates a feeling of loss. What is mourned is the disappearance of the harmonious coexistence of different cultures. This is very much felt as the

29 Göktürk (2010), “Projecting Polyphony,” pp.185.

30 Pamuk (2005), *İstanbul*, p. 115.

31 Ibid, p.193

rhythm of the film slows down towards the end when the situation of the Kurds within the Turkish Republic, and their struggle for cultural and human rights, is mentioned in the film. The problem here is not the mourned loss, but the assumption that such harmony actually existed at some point.

There are a number of visual and narrative elements in which Akin's nostalgic approach become visible. One of these is the chosen title, both in English and Turkish, as well as the form in which the titles are written in the posters, and in the accompanying merchandise for the film, such as the music CD. The Turkish title of the film *İstanbul Hatırası / Memento of İstanbul*, is taken from a well-known, nostalgic song by Sezen Aksu, which she also performs in the film.³² The song is performed in the singer's home, in a room overlooking the Bosphorus. The large windows of the room are veiled slightly by transparent curtains, creating a blurry nostalgic image of Bosphorus, as it serves as the background. As Aksu sings, Akin cuts to black-and-white photographs. These were taken by the prominent photographer Ara Güler, and are an equally well-known and nostalgic representations of the city.³³

What is more, the title reminds the audience of an old street photographer practice. Now out of fashion, it involved taking pictures of people on demand in front of a curtain that was inscribed with the words "İstanbul Hatırası," with the letter "r" reversed, as in a mirror-image. The image immediately triggers nostalgic feelings, as is often the case with black-and-white photographs and old films.³⁴ Akin duplicates this practice in the Turkish poster by using a reversed "r."

32 The song mourns the past, a memory of İstanbul and perhaps a lover, mentioning old sepia photographs as well as the Markiz Patisserie, which was once a famous meeting point in the Beyoğlu district. After closing down, the patisserie kept its doors locked. The unchanged interior was visible through its windows to passers-by. In 2003 it reopened, however, unable to regain its past success, the location is now occupied by a coffee shop chain.

33 For a discussion of these photographs in relation to collective memory, see İpek Türeli in this volume.

34 The capacity of black-and-white images to trigger nostalgia, and their affiliation to the past is not self-evident but was instead constructed in the last few decades. Although I refer in particular to the lost practice of street photographers,

Akın's generous use of the bridge, both as a visual element and as a metaphor, can also be read as way of creating a nostalgic idea of the city, the city as the act of bridging cultures. However, the conception of the bridge itself is problematic. The term always implies a gap, a gap to be bridged, and hence carries a complicated relationship. Although Akın allows the opinions of those who ridicule the idea of bridging cultures to be heard in the film, he nevertheless ends up emphasizing the idea, hence reproducing it. In addition to the emphasis placed on the bridge in the title, there are also repeated points made about Turkey's position between the east and the west, and Turkey's position as a bridge between cultures in the actual film itself.

Although the bridge over the Bosphorous is the most used site, and perhaps the most loaded visual element, it is not the only location. There are a number of other recognizable places often used in films. However, the choice of location as representative of İstanbul differs not so much according to the genre but according to who is making the film. For filmmakers in Turkey, one of these iconic images is the entry point to the city long provided by Haydarpaşa train station. However, this has not been the choice location for western filmmakers. Instead, they have often used the Galata Bridge, which spans not the Bosphorus but the Golden Horn. Galata Bridge still provides the image of *the* bridge but is more manageable in size and includes the historic silhouette of İstanbul as a background. According to Ahmet Gürata, "despite the differences in their origin and genre, the similarities [between the foreign films that take place in İstanbul] are striking. They often use the same landmarks, starting with the Galata Bridge and ending at the Grand Bazaar via the Blue Mosque."³⁵

Nevertheless, the bridge over the Bosphorus is, without a doubt, the most circulated image of İstanbul. In fact, the bridge as a visual element representing İstanbul, is used so often in almost everything from books to films that one wonders what was used before the first bridge was built in 1973. In

and their image in old Turkish films, the relationship between black-and-white and the past is complicated. İpek Türeli in this volume touches upon the subject. For a detailed discussion see: Misak, Richard (2010), *Chromatic Cinema: A History of Screen Color*, London: Blackwell.

35 Gürata, Ahmet (2011), "City of Intrigues: İstanbul as an Exotic Attraction," *World Film Locations: İstanbul*, ed. Ozlem Koksall, London: Intellect. pp. 25.

fact, it seems that the bridge was used as a metaphor for Turkey's position before it was even built. Derek Williams, a British documentary director, for instance, made a short film in 1967 entitled *Turkey: The Bridge*. The film was part of a series commissioned by British Petroleum (BP) and was nominated for an Oscar that same year. According to the British Film Institute, the film is about "Turkey's place through history as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and between antiquity and the present day."³⁶ The film was made six years before the first bridge opened and three years before construction began.³⁷ Hence although at that point the metaphor lacked its ultimate signifier, it was nevertheless used when referring to Turkey.

OTHER APPROACHES TO THE BRIDGE AND NOSTALGIA

Among the countless films that use the image and metaphor of the bridge exhaustively, I will mention two here by way of illustration: Yılmaz Erdoğan's *Organize İşler/Magic Carpet Ride* (2005) and Aslı Özge's *Men On the Bridge* (2009).

The male protagonist of the *Magic Carpet Ride* is the leader of a petty-crime gang that engages in various types of criminal activities, ranging from stealing cars to fraud. The female protagonist, on the other hand, is a well-educated woman whose father recently won a cash-prize for a book he wrote about Turkey and the European Union. Between these worlds is another character, a failed comedian in a Superman costume, who becomes involved with the gang and falls in love with the girl. What makes the film stand out, despite the predictable plot line based on tension between two different worlds (that of the gang and the upper middle class family), is its excessive use of aerial imagery. In total, nearly ten minutes of the film con-

36 BFI, "Turkey - The Bridge (1966)" (<http://explore.bfi.org.uk/4ce2b6c7eb4d5>, accessed 9 April 2014).

37 There is very little available on the film and its content. The British Film Institute's national archive holds a copy of the film, but upon request to view it responded that the copy was kept for preservation purposes only, and is not available for viewing as it is the only copy. However, they noted, it may become accessible in the future when/if a viewing copy is made.

sists of aerial shots of İstanbul, done with a heli-cam flying continuously over the city. Most do not serve the narrative, and are there only to fascinate the audience, making a spectacle of İstanbul. According to Deniz Bayrakdar and Elif Akçalı, in *Magic Carpet Ride* İstanbul appears as “a marketing and sales product” and “your ticket to the film also buys you a ride over the city”.³⁸

Aerial vision has long fascinated humankind, and mechanical reproductions of aerial images have been discussed since they first became available, in particular their use in architecture and urban planning. They were famously praised by Le Corbusier, and opposed by the developing theory of urbanism.³⁹ Although they provide information that our view from the ground cannot register, they do so at its expense. The fascination with aerial vision may lead to fetishizing views of cities and structures.⁴⁰ The use of areal images in film is different from that provided by the still images of aerial photographs, mainly because the movement available to cinematic reproduction makes a very important addition: the ability to move with the camera allows the image to juxtapose both ground and aerial views. The camera can provide aerial and ground views in isolation, as well as in relation to each other. It can even merge them when moving from one to the other. Aerial shots can serve various narrative purposes depending on how they are used. They can be used as establishing shots, or they can provide a view to spectators, a view that is not available to the diegetic characters. As was discussed above, in *Crossing the Bridge*, the purpose of the aerial shots is mainly limited to establishing the totalizing view of the city, hence providing a better grip of the geography to the audience. In *Magic Carpet Ride*, however, this fascination is taken to an extreme, reminiscent of the fascination with movement itself in early cinema.

38 Bayrakdar, Deniz and Elif Akçalı (2010), “İstanbul Convertible: A Magic Carpet Ride through Genres,” in *Orienting İstanbul: Capital of Europe*, ed. Göktürk, Deniz, Soysal, Levent and Ipek Türeli, New York: Routledge, p. 169.

39 Vidler, Anthony (2003), “Photourbanism: Planning the City from Above and from Below,” in *A Companion to the City*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 35-45.

40 See: Hecker, Tim (2010), “The Slum Pastoral: Helicopter Visuality and Koolhaas’s Lagos,” *Space and Culture* 13 (3), pp. 256-269.

Cinema in its early days was predominantly interested with fascinating the audience. Writing on early cinema, Tom Gunning points out that early cinema was interested in attractions, which Gunning called “cinema of attractions.” One of these, in addition to film itself being the fascination itself, was capturing movement in surprising ways. There were countless shots from cameras recording inside moving vehicles, mostly trains. Early filmmakers also tried mounting their cameras on trains, capturing their surroundings in motion, thus rendering some of the earliest examples of the tracking shot. This was the dominant interest until 1906-1907, when narrative cinema became the dominant form. However, “the cinema of attraction does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative film.”⁴¹ The extensive use of aerial shots in a narrative film, then, can be seen as a similar fascination, as the cinema of attraction. In this way, the camera is able to capture motion in every possible direction, providing unfamiliar perspectives on familiar locations. *Magic Carpet Ride* uses aerial shots with a camera that flies over the city, not as a plane but as a bird: it goes up and down, starting from above, moving towards the ground, going from an overview image to a close up in one continuous shot. In other words, the camera in *Magic Carpet Ride* is not only an “omniscient eye” that “enabl[es] the spectator to master the city,” as Bayrakdar and Akçalı rightly point out, but it also works on the level of sheer attraction, similar to Tom Gunning’s argument in relation to early cinema.

What is more, a good proportion of the shots where the camera flies over İstanbul include the bridge, as well as the Bosphorus. Recently, and not surprisingly, the bridge was used in Turkey’s bid for the 2020 Olympic games. In addition to the heavy use of the bridge in commercial material, particularly in films prepared for commercial purposes, the slogan of the marketing effort “Bridge Together” also played on the concept of bridge, reflecting a certain nostalgic imagination of İstanbul as a bridge between cultures. Although nostalgia is generally conceived of as a longing for a specific place, it is in fact a yearning for a specific time, or perhaps a specific type of existence in that specific time which, according to Boym, is

41 Gunning, Tom (1986) “Cinema of Attractions, Early film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8 (3-4), p. 64.

the result of “a new understanding of time and space.”⁴² This is also the paradox of nostalgia: its object is somewhere in the past, or a lost opportunity in the future, but is achievable in neither case. It depends, like progress, on “the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time.”⁴³ As such, the bridge metaphor for Turkey’s geographical, political and cultural context projects this nostalgic idea about the country’s imagined role in the world as a bridge between cultures. As Meltem Ahıska notes:

Turkey, which has been labeled by both outsiders and insiders as a bridge between the East and the West, has an ambivalent relation not only to the geographical sites of the East and the West, but also to their temporal signification: namely, backward-backwardness and progress. Turkey has been trying to cross the bridge between the East and the West for more than a hundred years now, with a self-conscious anxiety that it is arrested in time and space by the bridge itself. In other words, the meaning of the present has a mythical core that has persisted over years and which remains as a source of frustration and threat, and as a symptom of internalized inferiority.⁴⁴

As Ahıska insightfully diagnoses, the bridge as a metaphor includes decades long anxieties arrested in time and space. One way to overcome this anxiety (albeit temporarily), as Boym suggests, is to produce nostalgic imaginations, an image that finds comfort somewhere in the past or in the future where uncertainties do not enter. A recent and almost literal illustration of such anxiety over what Turkey is and where it wants to be, took place when the famous golf player Tiger Woods came to Turkey in November 2013 for the opening ceremony of a Golf tournament in Antalya (southern Turkey). He hit the ball, the symbolic opening hit of the tournament, in İstanbul, over the Bosphorus Bridge, which was closed to traffic on the day of the event. The ball was reportedly hit from the east towards the

42 Boym (2001), *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp.11.

43 Ibid, p.13.

44 Ahıska, Meltem (2003), “Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2-3), pp. 351-379, p. 353.

west. According to the *Hürriyet Daily*, Woods “became the first golfer to hit balls from East to West on the bridge that separates the continents.”⁴⁵

However, this is not to say that there is a complete lack of critical approaches to the bridge metaphor. An example of this in cinema is Aslı Özge’s debut *Men On the Bridge* (2009). The film focuses on three young men living in the suburbs and struggling to make a living in İstanbul. The main connection between these otherwise unrelated people is that they all “work” on the bridge: a *dolmuş* (shared-taxi) driver who crosses the bridge dozens of times every day as part of his route, a traffic policeman who works on the bridge, and an unemployed teenager who takes temporary jobs, including selling flowers to the drivers in their cars stuck in traffic on the bridge. Except for the policeman, they all play themselves, and Özge follows them, documenting their lives.

Lacking the typically reproduced views of İstanbul and the bridge, Özge treats the bridge predominantly as what it is: a steel construction allowing transportation from one end to the other. In other words, the director not only does not reproduce breathtaking views of İstanbul, but she also does not necessarily dwell on the fact that what is being crossed is a bridge connecting two continents, as is often highlighted with regards to the bridge and İstanbul’s position. The bridge is the main character in Özge’s film. It is cast in a role that is different from those it was previously given. Like the other characters, it acts as itself, as a massive steel construction often hosting heavy traffic, and not as a metaphor for the country’s assumed historical position.

FAMILIAR OR UNIQUE? COOL CITIES AND GLOBAL ECONOMY

Cities and their representations cannot be conceived of as separate from the global economy. Cultural life inevitably goes hand in hand with the percep-

45 Hurriyet Daily News, “Woods hits balls from Asia to Europe on İstanbul’s Bosphorus Bridge”, 4 November 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/-Istanbuls-bosphorus-bridge-to-close-for-one-hour-today-for-woods-golf-show.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57380&NewsCatID=341> (accessed 9 April 2014).

tion of cities, and this includes cultural products produced in, and about them. This chapter, although focused on İstanbul and its imagination, compared two films, and through those films, representations of two cities: Lisbon and İstanbul. Despite the ten-year gap between the making of these films, neither the context in which they were made nor their approaches to these cities are fundamentally different. That is to say while both films focus on different aspects of their cities (*Lisbon Story* on Lisbon's place in European cultural heritage, *Crossing the Bridge* on İstanbul's eclectic culture that merges Europe and Asia) they end up highlighting similarities with the larger picture these cities are desired/imagined as belonging to, dwelling on nostalgic representations.

To reiterate the earlier discussion, although the commodification of places relies on reproducing unique aspects of those places, it also needs to foreground similarities to the larger picture these cities are imagined as belonging. In the context of these two cities and these particular films, the larger picture seems to be Europe. In Lisbon's case, what is unique is the cultural (in this specific case musical) and historical (Alfama) elements found in the city. In İstanbul's case, the unique element is the city's eclectic culture, exemplified in music thought of as representative of the city. From electronic sufi music to Anatolian rock, one leaves the movie theatre with the impression that İstanbul's geographical in-betweenness finds its reflection in its music as well. This in-betweenness is produced over and over in the image of the bridge used as a metaphor for the city's historic and cultural heritage.

Hence, although the bridge metaphor is used heavily in relation to İstanbul, the similarities between the approaches and imaginations of the two cities, coincidentally by directors coming from the German filmmaking tradition, might stem from an additional anxiety these cities produce, that of being in-between. Lisbon, although less so compared to İstanbul, is also often referred to as bridge between cultures, in this case between Africa and Europe.⁴⁶ This anxiety is often overcome by turning the physical non-place

46 Rosa Williams, for instance, gives a few examples of how the language of the cultural bridge circulates in relation to Lisbon. See Williams, Rosa (2013), "Luso-African Intimacies: Conceptions of National and Transnational Community," in *Imperial Migrations*, ed. Eric Mories-Genoud and Michael Cahen, New York: Palgrave, p.279-280.

(the bridge) into a political and social place. Such elusive, difficult-to-pin-down understanding of the position of these cities in the cultural map can also be connected to their image as cool cities. The meaning of the concept of cool can range from calmness to being in fashion, from restraint to attractiveness, and it seems to me that visual representation of these cities, one that plays on their in-between status, is not coincidental but one that fits well into the elusive quality of the word “cool.”

List of Authors

Özlem Köksal received her Ph.D. degree from University of London, Birkbeck College in 2011 with a dissertation examining the relation between collective memory, history and cinema in Turkey. She has published various articles and reviews both in English and in Turkish and she is the editor of *World Film Locations: İstanbul* (Intellect Publishing, 2012).

Ash Odman works as an Instructor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, İstanbul. She works on the concretization of labor practices and capital accumulation processes in urban spaces, in other words on “the production of space through human agency,” with a special historical focus on the interwar period. She currently does anthropological research in various labor geographies of İstanbul focusing on working people's health and precarity.

Aras Özgün is a media studies scholar and a media artist. He earned his Ph.D. degree in Sociology from the New School for Social Research, New York. He produces experimental media works and writes in scholarly journals on media, culture and politics. He is currently teaching at the Cinema and Digital Media Department of İzmir Economy University, İzmir, and at the Department of Media Studies and Film at the New School for Public Engagement, New York.

Derya Özkan received her Ph.D. degree in Visual and Cultural Studies from the University of Rochester in 2008, completing a dissertation titled “The Misuse Value of Space: Spatial Practices and the Production of Space in İstanbul.” She joined the Institute of European Ethnology at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich as a Postdoctoral Researcher in 2008.

Since November 2011, she has been holding a DFG Emmy Noether Fellowship and leading the Research Group “Changing Imaginations of İstanbul. From Oriental to the ‘Cool’ City.” Her research interests are situated at the intersection points of urban studies, cultural studies and migration studies.

İpek Türeli is Assistant Professor of Architecture at McGill University, Montreal. Her research focuses on visual culture, comparative urbanism and architectural history. She is the co-editor of *Oriental Capital of Europe?* (with Deniz Göktürk and Levent Soysal, Routledge, 2010; translated, revised and printed in Turkish as *İstanbul Nereye?* Metis, 2011), a book that explores how processes of creative production and exhibition are intertwined with neoliberal urban restructuring in İstanbul.

Berrin Yanıkkaya received her Ph.D. degree from the Sociology and Methodology Doctoral Program, Institute of Social Sciences, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, İstanbul. She became an Associate Professor in Communication Sciences in 2010, and has been working at the Department of Radio, Television and Cinema, School of Communications, Yeditepe University, İstanbul since 1997.