Workshop on 'Contested Social Spaces. Debating Postsecular Social Spaces in Italy and Turkey'
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Organized by *CSPS* & *Süleyman Şah University*

Program (provisionary)

19 November 2012, morning session

Introduction: Massimo Rosati (CSPS)

- Ugur Kömeçoğlu, Towards a Postsecular Turkey?
- Alper Bilgili, The Unwished-for Visitors: Post-secular Space and Baghdad Street
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- Discussion

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15,00-17,30 Tor Vergata

- P. Vereni, Spaces in-between. Sqauts and religious practice in Rome
- F. Sedda, New Bodies, new Rome
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10.30-13,00

- Cüneyt Dinç & Seda Ada, Post-secular Transformation of Old Dervish Lodges in İstanbul
- Logan Sparks, Hajji Bektash Veli Museum (Shrine) and the implicit Post-secularism of "Museumisation" Processes in Republican Party
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Lunch

Abstracts

Religious pluralism and the managing of spaces in prisons. The case of the Italian region of Lazio.

Valeria Fabretti

Prisons are exemplar areas of public and institutional life in modern societies. As for other institutions, prisons represent spaces in which one can recognize the mirroring of broader social phenomena. Religious pluralism in Italian prisons is a rising one, mostly due to the significant increase in the number of foreign prisoners during the last years. Though referring all to a common national jurisdiction, which provides for inmates the right to practice their own religion and for religious ministries the right to provide assistance , penal institutions normally adopts very different solutions in dealing with religious pluralism. The managing and the use of spaces represents a crucial element in answering to the co-presence of different traditions and beliefs in the common context of prison. It makes a significant difference to find in a prison: the presence of spaces and rooms specifically dedicated to (*mono/pluri*) religious practices and cults; or the use of the Catholic Chapel or of 'multifunctional' areas, in which religious activities and completely different ones (education, sports, laboratories, etc.) must coexist; or even the restriction of inmates religious practices to the perimeter of their cells. Moreover, in understanding these differences one cannot recognize the role of old and new meanings about religions that are spread in prisons sub-cultures.

In the frame of the postsecular and considering a sociological literature about social and sacred spaces, the paper use empirical data collected in prisons of the Italian region of Lazio to explore and discuss how in these institutions are conceiving, organizing and experienced religious spaces. Drawing first a picture about presence, dislocation, internal characteristics and rules of use of religious spaces, the paper mainly focuses on the processes involving prison actors (directors, staff, catholic chaplains and ministries of other religions, voluntaries and – though indirectly – inmates), their different (secular and religious) logics and meanings, and their relations and conflicts.

Memory and social space between past and future

Claudia Hassan

On 24 March 1944 the Nazis made a massacre of 335 civilians in reprisal for a partisan attack on Via Rasella where German soldiers has been killed.

Many believe that the responsibility for the massacre of 335 civilians is the responsibility of the Partisans and not of the Germans. The German reprisal was never announced, never the Partisans would have prevented the massacre, the massacre was directly announced.

Yet a popular myth took root and spread, the myth has become popular memory: the fault of the Partisans was considered as equivalent to the Nazis were responsible. This at best!

Via Rasella was not actually on a cause but an effect. Rome was a city devastated by raking minds, violence, deportation. Rome was considered occupied territory by war. The shootings also occurred before.

Memory is divided among the reasons of violence against the occupying Nazi and his refusal. The Ardeatine mass murder has become the symbol of the divided memory, the symbol of Italian memory of the war, the symbol of the confusion between individual and collective responsibility.

The process was a perfect example of this complexity. The paper aims to investigate this border area, these contradictions, the gray area of responsibility and the construction of the popular myth of the Partisan blame for the massacre committed by the Nazis. The paper also focuses on the Fosse Ardeatine memorial, which is also the place of contention, as the history it represents. The construction of the memory of it had an intent peacemaker lasted for a very short season. The same process became a symbol. Even now that we reread the events and the memory of those events we are still in that story and we are called to "ask and answer".

Postsecular Political Space? The Case of the (failed) Meditation Room in the Italian Parliament

Massimo Rosati

In 2006, the then President of the Chamber of the Italian Parliament, Fausto Bertinotti, presented the proposal to build of a 'meditation room' open to believers and non-believers, the latter mainly non-Catholics (given the already existing Catholic chapel of Parliamentarians) within the perimeter of the Parliament. The proposal was accepted, but the room never opened, although the project was basically ready. The paper aims at reconstructing the process that led to the definition of the project, stakeholders and their positions, the reasons for its failure, the main features of the planned meditation room, and especially the reasons for the importance of a case related to a highly meaningful space like a Parliament. In particular, the paper will focus on the symbolic value of the project in relation to ideas of laïcité proper to the main Italian political cultures, on the one hand, and to the characteristics of the envisioned meditation room. This empirical case will be discussed on the backdrop of the existing literature on 'unconventional' places of worship and meditation, and of debates on the postsecular understood as a condition of co-existence between reflective secular and religious visions of life in a pluralistic social environment.

New bodies, new Rome.

Franciscu Sedda

Which is the common and global factor that changes metropolitan spaces all around the planet and set in motion new urban practices and discourses? Our hypothesis is that the "world", conceived as an agent that deeply modify urban space, presents itself in the guise of migrant flows, that is to say through the stream and presence of multiple foreign "bodies" in a bounded and recognizable space.

Despite the fact that these bodies come from other localities they are perceived as they were the representatives of globalization. While they run away from war and poverty, mad climates or neglected dreams, these bodies appear to ordinary Roman citizens as the sign of a ruling and ungovernable, if not threatening and senseless, globalization. Moreover, with their arrival urban life has to face a plurization of point of views, a complexification of ethno-religious maps, a complex accumulation of apparently incommensurable practices and rituals.

We would like to analyze some aspects and levels of this condition, definible at the same time as "glocal" and "post-secular", focusing on Rome as a whole and on some districts where the presence of immigrated communities produces a tangible intercultural context (i.e. Pigneto and Tor Pignattara).

Firstly, we will explore the new geographies of the city. Does the position of Rome, "the center of Christianity", inside the global landscape change as a result of the arrival of immigrants of other religions? How does its inner geography changes? How does the relation centre/periphery is contested and modified by the arrival of new bodies and new everyday practices of life? What does it happen when ethnic, religious, linguistic communities usually spatially distant start to live side by side? So, what are the particular geographies of Rome considered as a world-city?

Secondly, we will consider questions of power and identity. Which are the strategies of "mangement of diversity" put in place by the political power? Which are the features of ethnic, religious, cultural identity that acquire or lose meaning in this pluralistic and contested situation? Which are the processes of denial or translation that the various communities put in place in order to define new borders, new spaces of encouter and confrontation?

Finally, we will focus on semiotic, social and spatial structures. How do social and structural positions change? Who are, nowadays in Rome, the "strangers", the "barbarians", the "outcasts", the "infidels"? And then who are the "citizens", the "locals", the "cosmopolitans"? How do the meanings and articulations of relations like majority/minority, dominat/dominated, included/exluded are changing under the pressure of the new cohabitation between Italians and immigrants? To sum up, how cultural heterogeneity and pluralism is structured in contemporary Rome?

Using the tools provided by an ethnosemiotic approach we would try to give answer to these complex questions.

Spaces in-between. Squats and religious practice in Rome

Piero Vereni

Being the final destination of many internal and now international migrants, Rome has always had a permanent "housing emergency" and high numbers of homeless and shanty people.

During the 1960s this brought about an alliance between left wing students, intellectuals and activists on the one side and workers and evicted families and individuals on the other. During the late years of the same decade and in the next one the so called "movement for housing" started a steady process of squatting empty buildings (mostly owned by public institutions) housing

thousands people outside (and often against) the regular system of home allocation. Thus those occupations had an unmistakable political load, and became at the same time a tool to cope from below with housing emergency and a clear sign of the political and ideological commitment of their leaders.

Around mid-1908s, squatting system intertwined with the "social center" system, which was a way of occupying buildings where the political dimension would prevail on any housing needs, by creating new forms of public spaces in order to contest the mainstream view on the city.

To sum up, throughout its history the system of squatting in Rome was characterized by a highly secularized conception of social relations, often veined with anti-clericalism.

The new international immigration from the late 1980s has deeply altered this picture. Now squatters are only partially linked to traditional Roman underclass, while many are foreigners from Africa, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe. These new squatters often bring and want to keep with them specific religious beliefs (being Muslims from Northern Africa and Southern Asia, otherwise Christian Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants) and find difficult to integrate with ease into the traditional militant secularism of Roman squatting.

In this presentation there will be presented first data gathered on a fieldwork conducted on two squats lead and organized by "Comitato popolare di lotta per la casa" (Popular committee fighting for home) in the eastern sectors of the city. There the occupiers are intended to be half Italians and half foreigners, and have to find a way to live together in difficult conditions. How do they cope with religious difference in terms of beliefs and practices? How do the (often atheist and always secularist) political leaders of the occupations deal with "religious issues" that may arise from cohabitation?

Facing postsecularism in a highly contested space (contested from outside and from within) the research aims at highlighting some broader theoretical issues on the relation between new forms of identity and urban space.

Post-Secular Transformation of Old Dervish Lodges in İstanbul

Cüneyt Dinç & Seda Ada

In Ottoman Turkish urban history, the Dervish Lodges (*tekke*) of Sufi Brotherhoods played a significant role as sacral and semi-public places. While the central function of these lodges was mostly religious by nature, it had also "secular" functions, for example many of these lodges had housing complexes where people could not "only worship, but also lived and carried out the routines of everyday life" (Kia 2011: 166). With the secularist laws of the young Turkish Republic in 1924, the old Sufi brotherhoods were officially banned and their lodges were closed. In other words these buildings or social places lost their sacred function. The property rights of the old lodges were transferred from the former brotherhoods to the new nation state. So the secularization process in Turkey ripped the old dervish lodges from their old social meaning as a social space and changed them in a place without a new meaning, occupying only a specific location in urban geography (Löw 2008). Nonetheless the fate of these buildings has changed in the last decade. More and more civil societal organizations whose members or at least their founders have a religious conservative background buy or rent these old lodges from the state or the municipalities, and use them for cultural activities like performing workshops or other educational and recreational activities. Thereby we have chosen two cases in İstanbul, first the *Istanbul Tasarım Merkezi* (*Istanbul Design Center)* of the *Ensar Vakfı* (*Ensar Foundation*) in

Sultanahmet. *Istanbul Design Center* which is also known as *Ozbekler Tekkesi* (lodge), was built in the 17th century as an accommodation place for the candidate pilgrims and traveler dervishes who were the members of *Nakhshibendi* Sufi denomination – which is still impressive in Turkey with a high number of dervishes. However today, *Ozbekler Tekkesi* is used for training new designers, notably with the emphasis of Islamic culture. The second case is *The Meridyen Association*, a non-governmental organization chaired by women with the aim of gathering and supporting female academics. This civil societal association also works in the building of an old dervish lodge. The *Meridyen Association* is located in Üsküdar (one of the oldest districts in İstanbul with its famous historical mosques and lodges) and carries on its activities in the *Sandıkçılar Dervish Lodge* which was built in 1857 as affiliated with *Rufai* Sufi order.

It is clear that these new social spaces within a post-secular frame have the aim to bring religious and secular people together under the practiced tolerance of religious "new owners" towards the secular participants in these buildings. Therefore these buildings are good examples of post-secular social spaces in Turkey. The aim of this research is understanding and analyzing the transformation of these old places into new social spaces with specific meanings and functions, by using participant observation method and in depth interviews with the founders of these civil societal organizations and the attendants of the cultural services in these centers.

The central purpose of the research is first to get clear cut cases and examples for the very vague term of post-secularism, and second to get a deep insight in how social space can be changed and re-constituted by specific social practices by its occupants.

The central interest is hereby to discover the social practices within these two centers, which are essential for the constitution of a new social space. How are the old functions of the buildings perceived by the new occupants of the lodges? How much of the old structure of the lodges can be seen? Why have the organizations chosen this building and how is it compatible with the aim of their activities? Do the new owners of the lodges perceive them in their traditional functions or in their new functions? How do people try to "space" the building - the spacing of specific goods and people - and how do they attribute meaning to the space by concrete synthetizing of the place, that is, how people try to build a connection to these elements through specific concrete perceptions and "remembering" processes (Löw 2001)? Also an interesting question, which can support our research, is the history of these buildings. What was the general function of lodges in Islamic Ottoman society? How and why secular people are ready to enter these buildings? What does the new owner do to create a more neutral environment? As a last and interesting point is the fact that maybe secular participants use the cultural offerings in these post secular spaces too, but that the primary target group of these organizations are first of all the members of these religious Sufi groups. Generally the websites of these civil societal centers communicate in a specific religious language, which differs from their secular counterparts, and people may be religious but may not be practicing actors (or semi practicing).

The Unwished-for Visitors: Post-Secular Space and Baghdad Street

Alper Bilgili

Baghdad Street (*Bağdat Caddesi*) is a famous neighborhood in the Asian side of Istanbul, resided mostly by upper-middle class citizens. It is well-known for the stores of world famous brands for shopping as well as its upscale cafés and restaurants. More importantly the street has the social reputation that might be best summarized as "pro-secularist". The people who reside in the apartments along the street are proud of this republican reputation and try to reinforce it through

"parades" on special days of celebration like the official Republican Day (October 29). The message of these parades is that the republic would remain secular forever. Especially since the allegedly Islamic AKP (The Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002, like other secularists the residents of Baghdad Street have been putting more emphasis on an inherent danger, a country that will be governed by *Sharia* law. In addition to this reaction, the emergence of new actors in this district, namely the religious conservative upper-middle class residents of the Baghdad Street, further complicated the existing picture. Especially with the neo-liberal policies that have been embraced by the governments (starting with the early 1980s), the conservative classes were able to confront the status-quo and tip the balance through increasing their "material capital" in virtually every field. This resulted in a change in the habitus of religious and conservative families and eventually they embraced the upper-middle class practices, attitudes, symbols and so forth. To live in the Baghdad Street has been one of these practicing symbols, which stands for being rich and educated.

These features of the Baghdad Street make it a valuable case-study through which it is possible to see how the "secularist" meets the "conservative/religious." The street has the symbolic power of being pro-secular. Secularist Turks, though quite ironically, perceive it as a semi-sacred place. Yet, the unwished-for visitors of the street challenged the status-quo and have started showing up in the street. They do not only have bought apartments there but also participated in ordinary activities of the secularist Turks such as shopping from the same chic and luxurious boutiques, going to the same cafés, restaurants, movie theaters, and fitness clubs. In a way the newcomers "borrow" the activities performed by the secularist residents of the street. In this research, those activities borrowed by the conservative newcomers as well as the way these practices were borrowed will be analyzed. Besides, the image of the newcomers in the secularist minds will be analyzed in order to see if they are really perceived as unwelcome visitors or not. Again, another question that should be concentrated on is whether the presence of newcomers in shops, cafés, movie theatres and fitness clubs, and their borrowing of certain attitudes from the secularists creates any sympathy towards newcomers. Last but not least, the possibility of describing Baghdad Street as a post-secular space will be re-evaluated. Do secularist and conservative-religious people live together and keep their differences or do the newcomers adopt the secularist worldview while borrowing the aforementioned practices? To achieve these goals, participant observation will be used as well as in-depth interviews conducted with secularist residents and conservative newcomers.

Postsecular Social Spaces and New Forms of Sociability: A Case based Analysis of Gated Communities in Istanbul

Habibe İlhan

The goal of this case study is to gain a deeper understanding of the social practices of post secular spaces as observed in newly formed "gated communities" in Istanbul. Post secular space in this context connotes a space where secular and religious worldviews practice their different lifestyles together and somehow harmoniously. When analyzing these formed life spaces I will pay attention to following markers: Does a contradiction or conflict among social actors of those communities exist? Does competition and negotiation between lifestyles occur in these gated communities? If competition exists, what is its nature; are some actors excluded in this process? And finally do

lifestyles borrow from each other?

Gated communities in Istanbul (GCs from now on) emerged during the 1990's as part of a spatial segregation trend of urban elites in big cities worldwide. A growing body of literature is emerging on gated communities in Turkey, in Istanbul in particular. While many focus on urban and land use issues of these projects some analyze these spaces from a "social encounter" perspective focusing on socio economic disparities between these developments and their immediate surroundings.

A gated community is understood to be an urban development project that is demarcated by walls with surveillance and entrance guarding systems setting it apart from the remaining neighborhood. They are managed by elected representatives of homeowners, and financially maintained through dues or fees that each home monthly pays.

Access to such an urban project or becoming a homeowner depends on the purchasing power of individuals. While some GCs require an admission process where the project's management has the right to select potential inhabitants based on previously established criteria, I will not consider those as part of this study as they do mostly discriminate against applicants of non-secular backgrounds. This selectivity creates an artificial homogeneity making it impossible to observe post secular practices. Therefore my case will be drawn from middle to upper level urban development projects where access is granted only through affordability, and where the encounters between secularist and religious families can be observed.

The methodology of this research consists of a multiple case study, where observations and semi structured interviews will be conducted. There will be two stages of the research; first the analysis of publicly available information of the selected GC's, such as brochures, web sites and advertorials. In the second stage the author will conduct interviews with i) management, and ii) homeowners and renters in the GC. Interviewees from the pool of inhabitants will be selected following the "snowballing" technique. The two GCs selected as the urban project cases are "İdealistkent" and a "KİPTAŞ" project in Istanbul. What makes "Idealistkent" particularly interesting is that the author has in depth knowledge of the dynamics among communities of social actors within this GC. These communities are made up of individuals from different lifestyles, "secular" as well as "non-secular". Within those two groups there is variety of subgroups, for example among the non-secular community there is a variety of religious group affiliations. While hosting "families and individuals" from different walks of life, it has no formal structural means of accommodating different lifestyles. However a level of peaceful coexistence has been reached after numerous difficult encounters that will be detailed in this research. A second case under observation is the "Kiptaş Maltepe" GC. What sets this GC apart is that certain aspects of social community life such as usage of recreational facilities are being regulated by the management staff to accommodate different lifestyles.

Hajji Bektash Veli Museum (Shrine) and the Implicit Post-Secularism of "Museumisation" Processes in Republican Turkey

Logan Sparks

Using the binary of religion and secularism 'as a lighter' (Knott 2005) I similarly propose to look at public ritual and religiosity (in a Turkish context) to shed some light on the issue of the debated subject of post-secularism through a lens that is at the same time abstract/discursive and grounded in a spatial analysis informed by the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) that holds the tension of the "real and imagined" (Soja 1996) in mind and the play between those who construct, perceive and live the space. The approach here is towards an appreciation of the inevitable mutual

implication and therefore imbrication of secularism and religion as inseparable, which is in itself a post-secular insight.

The shrine/museum of Hajji Bektash Veli in Central Anatolia (in the city of Nevşehir) is a particular theatre for the outplaying of secular, religious, post-secular and perhaps proto-secular discourses via spatial action, memorialisaton and, most importantly, "museumisation". This location has a particularly long and interesting history in Anatolia that lends itself to a unique encounter with modernity and secularism, a seeming proto-secular discourse that makes its emergence into a post-secular Turkey both problematic and fruitfully ambiguous.

The Bektashi religious tradition bases itself on the teachings of Hajji Bektash (1281-1338) [himself a student of one of the most pivotal teachers in Central Asian and Turkish Sufism, Ahmet Yesevi] and his successors, who served an important role in the Ottoman state as the spiritual leadership of the Jannissary corps, itself a key martial movement in Ottoman history. Today at the district named as Hajji Bektash in the city of Nevşehir, the population patronizing the shrine *cum* museum is largely made of the sister body of believers known as "Alevis" who, while sharing a great deal in common with the Bektashi order, are in fact historically connected to the eastern Anatolian groups known in different historical periods as "Kizilbash" or Turcoman communities. By contrast, these groups had an adversarial relationship with the Ottoman state and, via their own Shia identity, at times identified with the rival Persian empire. In the republican period, what remained of the Bektashi order since the suppression of the Janissaries in the 19th century went further underground. However, "Alevi identity" came to tie itself closely to the secular republican values of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk even giving his image a significant place next to the portraits of Alevism's key figures such as the family of the Prophet Muhammed, often portrayed in Alevi places of worship (*cemevi*).

Like the more internationally known tomb of Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi in Konya, today Hajji Bektash Shrine is officially a museum in which spatial compromise between its roots and its veneration by local Alevis, with its museum status and the influx of tourists and others seeking historical value in an apparently sacred environment.

Where (one could ask) can we see the post-secular and the allegedly proto-secular at play in the polyphony of spatial action and discourse, particularly considering that, according to the museum staff, there is a renewed interest in the site amongst "religious" people in Turkey and an apparently sustained interest from the established Alevi community, historically, despite the closing of the shrine in 1925 as an active dervish lodge and its very late reopening in 1964 as a "museumised shrine" and dervish lodge complex. In the interim, according to official museum sources (http://www.hbektasveli.gazi.edu.tr/site/ingilizce/hbektasing.htm) the dervish lodge was used as an Agricultural School, while the important contents of the building were stored in the Ankara citadel and the Ankara Ethnography Museum until its reopening almost 4 decades later (increasingly post-secular?), with yet another set of restorations as recently as 2008-2010.

After some initial field work experiences I am struck by the analytical potential of the site as one of the lesser known **museumised religious spaces** in Turkey. It is post-secular in the sense that, despite its overt religiosity, it has slowly returned from the ashes of several decades of official total secularisation (to whatever degree such a thing is possible) to re-emerge as a more ritually relevant site, albeit under the auspices of a governmentally approved museumization/heritage project. That draws on a discourse of the proto-secular and humanist classical Turkish sources.

Main Questions, Query Points

The first line of inquiry is undertaken to see (a) in what way Hajji Bektash museum is a physical, ritual, narrative and discursive part of a postsecular social wave. Simultaneously, while addressing this, it behooves us to ask whether (b) this is a largely elite issue between the forces of secularism and religion at a more official level (the recent restoration took place as part of a national

renovation of Islamic heritage sites under the current religiously inclined AK Party) while perhaps little has changed for the "Alevi and Bektashi" third parties that have held this site in reverence for many centuries and continue to do so, raising questions about the subaltern voice. Finally, it is noteworthy that the official bodies in charge of the site consistently point out, both in person and in the discourse used within the signage of the site, that modern Kemalist values are a contemporary version and fulfillment, if you will, of the 13th century teachings of Hajji Bektash himself which, encapsulated in his 10 principals, encouraged what seem to be Enlightenment and Modernist values such as the equality and education of women and the importance of reason and science as a counterbalance to religiosity.

On this basis and that of the Bektashi principals of work and equality, Hajji Bektash has been described as a proto-secularist and a proto-socialist by residents of the village, and a sort of early secularist by the museum officials. It is therefore useful to query the ways in which Secularism and Post-Secularism may both draw on, be legitimised by and perform tradition as of the official discourse and spatial at Hajji Bektash, a site associated with an alternative Islam for eight centuries.