

**Preliminary Report
Global Partners in Turkey
Faculty Travel and Research Grant**

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Date: July 14, 2005

The dates of my travel and research in Turkey were from May 27 to June 27, 2005. The purpose of my travel was to explore the impact of social and economic change in Western Turkey. This is the area of the country where economic investment, industrialization, population growth and concentration, and Western influence on culture is occurring most rapidly. My work focused on the Izmir region. The nature of my work was exploratory. This was my first visit to Turkey, and I hoped to conduct extended interviews with people who would be in positions to understand and describe what they saw as the impact of change, of global economic, political, and cultural influences. I was fortunate in finding an able collaborator, Professor Nese Ozgen, a sociologist at Ege University in Izmir. She facilitated many of the interviews that I conducted. My very limited Turkish language skills made her collaboration vital to what I was able to achieve. Other native Turkish friends performed the same function in establishing contacts for me and assisting me during the interviews. Given the fact that this was my first visit to Turkey, and that I was only there for a month, I am very pleased with the results of my brief stay. In addition to the more formal features of my work, my understanding of Turkish society was enhanced by the fact that I stayed in Turkish homes, became involved in the lives of various families, stayed for over a week in one working-class urban neighborhood and for another week on the edge of a small village. I toured four university campuses, visited five cities (including Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara), was guided through Capadocia by a local expert on the region's antiquities, guided through the thirteenth century architectural features of the city of Kayseri by a professor of history, was given a tour of a military base, and shopped for food in various bazaars of different cities with a woman keenly skilled in the art of bargaining. I experienced a degree of immersion in Turkish society that surprised and pleased me. I am still sorting out what I learned, and the annotated list of interviews that follows represents only some fraction of what I discovered in a very full month of living in the country.

Interviews

Suleyman Demirci, Associate Professor of History, Erciyes University, Kayseri

He is wary of the terms of entry of Turkey into the European Union. Reflecting a theme I heard often during my visit, there is a concern that Turkey not lose too much of its cultural distinctiveness as the price of entry. Kayseri has a somewhat conservative nature among the various large cities, and the importance of Turkish values, regarding family and religion particularly, was a key theme for Professor Demirci.

Yaşar Balta, President of the Fishermen's Cooperative, Foça

The fishing stocks have declined precipitously since the late 1980s. He believes that local fishermen are partly to blame. They harvested recklessly when he began fishing 27 years ago. But more recently it is the large stern trawlers that fish the open Mediterranean and leave nothing in their wake but a desert floor that have the greatest impact on what's left for local people in the coastal fisheries. Today, few local fishermen depend totally on fishing for their income, and they and their family members typically fish the tourist trade for additional income. Fishermen and ecologists have joined forces to bring back the productivity of the fisheries. Yalçın Savaş and Emine Kuzuturk, both staff members with the government ecology organization (SAD-AFAG), joined the interview.

Kadir Yildirim, former Mayor of the town of Menemen

The prospects of this town have declined sharply in the past twenty years. It has experienced substantial population growth during this time, and that has strained municipal resources. Much of the growth has come in the form of migration from the eastern Kurdish regions of the country. There has been a certain amount of friction between the Menemen natives and Kurdish in-movers. The Kurds established a new town, Asarlik, nearby. Additional in-movers include more affluent commuters from Izmir and those who

work in surrounding towns. Industries have grown in the region, but no new industry has located in Menemen for years. The town, which was widely known for the quality of its produce in the past, has suffered ecological deterioration including water pollution that has made its produce suspect. There was no positive consequence of growth for Menemen.

Huseyn Demir, Kurdish migrant to Menemen

He has built up a substantial furniture business from very humble beginnings. He considers his home Menemen, does not like to be thought of as a migrant, says he is simply a Turk, and has good relations with the people of the town.

Ismael Geldi, Asarlik town official

People have stopped coming to Asarlik from Eastern Turkey. Everyone in Asarlik works somewhere else, many in Menemen. The place has a bad name, but when people come here they find they are treated well, just like anywhere else. It is hard to find work if you are from the East, a Kurd. Asarlik has very few resources. Goats were more in evidence than people on the hot and dusty streets. The educational system is very bad. They can't keep teachers. Without a good education there is little hope for the next generation, and there are lots of problems in immigrant families. Outside of Asarlik people complain that the people from the East don't know how to live, they want to keep animals close to them in town. An official later asked why I went to Asarlik: he said that saboteurs and terrorists lived there.

Sema Serinken, Chief Engineer and General Manager, Safe Food Corporation, Menemen

She spoke quickly and left little room for questions. She was in a hurry and had only so much time for an interview: why had sociologists come to this town? What were we looking for? This was a modern packing plant producing many vacuum packed and packaged products. She said the factory employees worked under modern conditions and were paid a minimum wage but had steady work. That was a good thing in this region, and they seemed to appreciate it. She had no idea how they managed to make ends meet, but all of them had cell phones and seemed pleased with that – a status symbol. She had no knowledge of how migrants and natives got along in the town. She had no problem with the supply of wholesome foods: the company contracted with suppliers, looked at the conditions of production, and maintained a program of quality control. There were no problems either with suppliers or workers. In response to our request she said that we could interview a couple of her workers, but on their own time, if they agreed.

Two women workers at Safe Food Corporation

They were happy to talk to two of my women colleagues, Professor Ozgen and a Medical Doctor from Izmir who was working in the U.S. (I opted not to be present at the interview). The women were satisfied with their work, and happy for the income it provided. There were not a lot of opportunities in Menemen, where they lived. The Easterners, the migrants, made things more difficult. They had taken over the transportation jobs and would only hire others from their region. The older woman's husband had lost his bus driving job to an Easterner.

Dr. Sefik Mas, Private Clinic, Menemen

The private clinic was a vital service for the local population. It had expanded its services and personnel year after year, but could not keep up with the demand caused by the local population increases. The doctors' case loads had increased a great deal from earlier times. The Turkish government was making changes in medical delivery but had a long way to go before service in this area could be called adequate. The local population had no notion of preventive medicine.

Doctor Alp Ayan and Doctor Turkcan Baykal, Turkiye Human Rights Foundation, Izmir Division

This organization provides medical and psychiatric care to victims of government torture and serves as an advocacy group. As the group's surveillance of systematic mistreatment of prisoners has tightened, and as Turkey moves toward consideration for accession to the EU, the treatment of prisoners has not changed as much as one might hope. Prisoners of the government's various control and surveillance organizations continue to be subject to systematic torture, but methods have changed as medical investigation techniques become more sophisticated in a kind of stepwise parallel evolution. Executives with the organization said that the categories of detainees subject to torture have actually expanded beyond people detained for

suspicion of political crime. Dr. Ayan will be an invited visiting Research Fellow at Harvard University this year in recognition of his work in treating torture victims.

Life-long residents of Izmir

I arranged for several people to gather one evening to speak about how they saw Izmir changing in recent years. None were comfortable with the changes. The city's successes as a growing industrial center have come with the usual price: traffic congestion, soaring housing costs, environmental degradation, the reduction of green space, the expansion of squatter settlements and the issue of what to do about them, the increase in crime rates and security concerns. The group was critical of the lack of planning or government foresight.

I conducted several shorter interviews without electronic recording where recording seemed awkward or inopportune. Extensive handwritten notes from those interviews, and from observations and participations, have been transcribed.

Development of a final report

Professor Ozgen and I realize that this broad-based inquiry into the nature of change in Western Turkey was as much a sociological introduction to Turkey for me as it was a formal effort to explore issues in economic development and cultural influence. Still, it provided an outline that we expect will serve as a context for more focused collaboration. Despite her already extensive knowledge of Turkish society, Professor Ozgen commented that we had turned up many new insights for her into the costs of growth in the region.

For present purposes, I intend to develop a final report for this phase of my research in the form of an assessment of the benefits and costs of globalization in Turkey with particular emphasis on the Izmir metropolitan region. I have recently completed a series of investigations of Irish perceptions of rapid change in Ireland. I expect that that research will provide a point of comparison for the present study.

The final report will be based on the picture of change created by the extended tape-recorded interviews and other materials. Most of the interviews were conducted in Turkish and most of these tapes contain simultaneous English translation. I will work with the same translator who is perfectly fluent in both English and Turkish in creating partial transcriptions/summaries of the tapes. I hope that phase of the work will be completed by the end of August. An integrated essay featuring the words and impressions of interviewees will be constructed over the course of the academic year. I will return to Turkey next summer, at which point Professor Ozgen and I will review what we have achieved and discuss the future of our collaboration.

I would like to formally thank the Global Partners organization for establishing these grants. If the purpose is to give U.S. – based academics exposure to Turkish society, to enrich course materials related to Turkey, and to develop potential collaborative exchanges between U.S. and Turkish scholars, the grant has fulfilled its purpose in this case. I am grateful for the continuing opportunity this funding has afforded me.