The Ambivalent Role of National Landmarks in the Age of Globalization
The case of Atatürk’s mausoleum in Turkey

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It is argued that national landmarks play an increasingly ambivalent role in relation to the state project in the age of globalization, since states are less and less interested in architecture for the purpose of nation-building. Despite this phenomenon, daily visits to Anıtkabir, the last resting place of the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, located in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, have recently started to set all time high records. It is usually suspected that such development is due to the recent manipulation of the monument by secular and pro-republican political actors as a site of protest and dissent against globalization and the (trans-)formative policies of the secular nation-state structure of Turkey. Drawing upon the politics of performing memory observed during two field trips to the site and in-person individual interviews conducted with its visitors, I argue that such interpretation would be too simple a way out of the conundrum concerning Anıtkabir’s still privileged role in shaping collective memories in Turkey. I suggest instead that Anıtkabir, as one of the most important landmarks of the Republic of Turkey, continues, aesthetically, to arouse the public imagination in Turkey in the context of the ongoing nation building and re-building process.

I Introduction

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is considered as the most important hero of the Turkish Republican history. He was the commander-in-chief of the national liberation struggle (1919-1923) against the occupying European powers, the founder and the first president of the Republic of Turkey, and the leader of the Turkish nation-building process. With the proclamation of the new Turkish republic in 1923, Atatürk also
initiated Kemalism, a modernist state ideology aimed at forming a Turkish nation-state, based upon six fundamental principles: republicanism, secularism, statism, revolutionism, populism and nationalism.

Since its instigation, there have always been debates in Turkey about the appropriateness of Kemalism that replaces religion, traditionalism and multiculturalism with a modernist, secular and nationalist doctrine (Ökten 2007, p. 95). Moreover, since the mid-1980s, certain principles of Kemalism, such as populism, revolutionism and statism started to be undermined by IMF prescriptions and massive privatisation in the country (Akçalı & Perinçek 2009, p. 551). The rise of Kurdish ethnic separatism violently expressed through the PKK terror and political Islam have also started to seriously challenge the Kemalist ideology (2009, p. 551). Furthermore, the official candidature to the European Union (EU) in December 1999 has brought obligations to Turkey to (trans)form the firmness of its nation-state structure. Such developments have struck negative chords within the pro-Republican and secularist camp (generally labelled as Kemalist2), as well as among nationalist and certain socialist political factions in Turkish society.

In 2002, by securing a single party government, the pro-EU political Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP-Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) gave a breakthrough to the (trans-)formative economic and political policies in Turkey, by putting a special emphasis on challenging the secularist principle of the Turkish Republic. The liberals, along with certain left-wing and pro-Kurdish political forces have given their support to AKP policies, as they have also contested various other dimensions of the Turkish nation-state (Akçalı 2010). Such a political environment has led to a significant level of polarization within the Turkish society, between the Kemalists, nationalists and a segment of socialists on the one hand and the pro-AKP, pro-Kurdish and pro-EU forces on the other hand (2010).

During this time, Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Atatürk which literally means the memorial tomb and is located in the Turkish capital, Ankara, has started to play an increasingly important role as a protest site for the Kemalists, nationalists and a segment of the socialists, (trans-)forming into a socio-political shrine. On 14 April 2007, these groups organised a massive protest—one of the largest Turkey had seen in years—against the possible presidential candidacy of the AKP leader and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The slogan of the protest was ‘Claim Your Republic’ (Cumhuriyetine Sahip Çık) and the protestors were using the Turkish flag as a symbol of opposing the AKP policies. People travelled to Ankara from all over Turkey to participate in the protest, organized in Tandoğan Square, not far away from Anıtkabir. Then, the crowd marched to the mausoleum. According to the statistics held by the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces in charge of the security and the management of the monument, 370 000 people visited Anıtkabir on that day.
Additionally, daily visits to Anıtkabir have recently increased to the point that they have started to set all time high records. Only on 10 November 2007, the 69th anniversary of Atatürk’s decease, 546,620 people visited Anıtkabir, almost quadrupling the number of visits to the site the year before (‘Milyonlar Atatürk’e koştu’ 2007). Once again, according to the figures of the Chief of the General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces, the total number of Turkish citizens who visited Anıtkabir was around 12 million in 2007, 5.6 million in 2008 and 8.9 million in 2009—figures significantly higher than any annual number of visits in the previous decades. The recent increase in the number of visits to Anıtkabir may partially be due to the opening of an influential Turkish Liberation War museum, adjoined to the mausoleum in 2002. However, the fact that since the 1990s Turkish people have been organising trips to the mausoleum in massive groups to voice their complaints about the present state of affairs in the country and to express loyalty to the national leader (Navarro-Yashin 2002, p. 191), suggests that Anıtkabir has perhaps become a site of protest and dissent for certain socio-political identity groups, thus a side in the current socio-political polarization in Turkey. Such a possibility points to a degree of ambivalence concerning the original social function of Anıtkabir as a national landmark in the nation-building process of Turkish society.

In order to investigate such ambivalence, henceforth I shall first look at the theoretical question of the ambivalent role of national landmarks in the age of globalization. I shall then demonstrate, in the third section, the ways in which Anıtkabir, a true national landmark, has become an aesthetic element, in other words a cultural and artistic reflection of Ankara’s built environment in the 1950s. In the fourth section, I shall explore whether Anıtkabir has become a side in the current socio-political polarization in Turkey or whether the mausoleum continues to arouse the public imagination at a collective level. To be able to do that I will rely on the politics of performing memory observed during two field trips to the site and in-person individual interviews conducted with its visitors and keepers. As a result of this enquiry, I hope to offer some reflections about the significance of Anıtkabir within today’s Turkish society. It will also be the major aim of this article to show that the case of Anıtkabir reveals, to varying degrees, the continuing power of architecture for the nation-building and re-building process.

II The Ambivalent Role of National Landmarks in the Age of Globalization—A Theoretical Framework

The modern understanding has led nation-states to use landmark buildings to reflect the national identity and the historical narrative of memory, by adjusting universal architectural styles to specific, or particular, national contexts (Delanty & Jones 2002, p. 454). As a matter of fact, ‘nowhere is the project of modernity in all its creative ambivalence more evident than the case of architecture’ (2002, p. 453). The demarcated space of the modern nation as an imagined
Community (Anderson 1983) therefore is highlighted by symbolic architectural sites and landmarks (e.g. national monuments), repository of collective memories, myths, and traditions. (Edensor 1997, p. 175) According to Lynch, landmarks are physical elements which are external points of reference to the observers (Lynch 1960, p. 78). They are embedded materially in the daily lives of the individuals and one of their most important characteristics is their singularity, due to spatial prominence, location, associated activities or attributed meanings (Saritaş 2007, p. 5). Landmarks are thus not dispassionate, neutral or detached places. On the contrary, via their aesthetic forms and textual content, they are bound up with the politics of power and cultural identity (Johnson 1994, 1995; Peet 1996; Atkinson & Cosgrove 1998). However, they are not mere passive spaces patterned by power, either (Peet 1996, p. 23). By constituting materialised and visual ‘circuits of memory’, they serve to arouse the public imagination in the context of the ongoing task of nation-building (Johnson 1994; Atkinson & Cosgrove 1998) and re-building (Delanty & Jones 2002). In this sense, they are also able to recreate agents (Peet 1996, p. 23).

Today, architecture plays an increasingly ambivalent role in the state project (Delanty & Jones 2002, p. 454). This is mainly because globalization has raised the possibility that the two-century-old ‘modernity project’, at least in terms of its classic formulation, is exhausted and this has led to the deconstruction of many components of the classical models of modern nations and revolutionary states (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 3). The national identity must now co-exist with other collective identities, and as a result of this, ‘state-led architectural expressions of the nation are increasingly contested’ (Delanty & Jones 2002, p. 454). Such phenomena facilitates the contestation of once celebrated national monuments, altering at times their original social-functioning.

Monuments can in fact never be representative of everyone or everything they claim to symbolize, since they are products of historical context, representing generally the views and interpretations of the powerful (Baldassar 2006, p. 44). They are also vulnerable to alternative and even contradictory meanings (Atkinson & Cosgrove 1998, p. 30). Despite these facts, however, certain national monuments are increasingly popular in their respective societies.

The main reason behind the popularity of certain monuments is their continuing power in arising collective solidarity and eliciting a sense of pride, grief and awe by commemorating significant events for people such as victory, collective sufferings, war and death (Von Henneberg 2004, p. 60). Such a situation creates an intriguing case for researchers interested in the analysis of national monuments in the age of globalization. The main intrigue regards whether national landmarks continue to be influential in shaping socio-political, cultural and aesthetic identities for the purpose of nation-building in various societies or whether they have started carrying new temporal
connotations which cater for socio-political (trans-)formations and resistance.

Answers to these questions can perhaps best be sought through understanding national landmarks as sites of ‘collective and individual performances of ritual and pilgrimage’ (Edensor 1997, p. 175). After all, national monuments act as a stage for a wide range of performances such as public dramas, rituals, historical re-enactments, marches and protests, pageants, civic ceremonies, and festivals (Dwyer & Alderman 2008, p. 173; see also Daniels & Cosgrove 1993) and it is the bodily performances and display of collective memories of individuals or groups of people which constitute, shape and make important the national monuments (Dwyer & Alderman 2008, pp. 173-4). In fact, although they reflect the interests of their designers, national monuments are ‘rendered silent’ (Cresswell 1996) without an audience ‘to voice-or betray-its vision of the past into the future’ (Dwyer & Alderman 2008, p. 174). Power, authority and competition over whose conception of the past will predominate, in other words, politics involved in such performances and display of collective memories are equally necessary to investigate in order to understand the influence of national monuments. ‘The ability to commemorate the past is limited by competition and conflict among parties of social actors wishing to narrate the past differently’ (2002, p. 171), and while much of this past is interpreted by those in power, ‘it is also undertaken by everyday people seeking to turn the memorial landscape into a site for struggle and resistance…’ (2002, p. 167; Whelan 2002).

Following such a line of understanding, the following sections will now proceed to first demonstrate the ways in which Anıtkabir has become an aesthetic element of the built environment in the 1950s of Ankara as a part of the Turkish nation-building process. They will then investigate its increasingly intriguing role in the actual Turkish political scene by concentrating on the politics of performing memory on the actual monument site.

III Anıtkabir: The Aesthetics of a National Landmark in Urban Space

Atatürk did not decide on a burial site for himself. According to his memoirs, edited by one of his adopted daughters, the historian and sociologist Afet İnan, his only thought on this matter was, ‘My nation should bury me wherever they think it’s appropriate. However, the place where my memories will live will be Çankaya [the district of Ankara which hosts the presidential palace in Turkey]’ (İnan 1950, p. 186). There was no discussion among the governing elite about where Atatürk was going to be buried after his decease. Nevertheless, choosing Ankara as a new capital instead of Istanbul was one of the most ambitious projects of the new republican elite in trying to reinforce the Turkish nation-building process and the sovereignty of the new state (Sartaş 2007, p. 7). Ankara also became the symbol of
the War of Liberation and of the Kemalist republican ideals which Atatürk initiated. Thus when Atatürk died in 1938, at the age of 57, his coffin was brought from Istanbul to Ankara and placed in the Ethnography Museum, which had been selected as a temporary resting place until the construction of a mausoleum.

As the founding father of the new republic, Atatürk spent serious efforts in the urbanisation and forestation of Ankara. The main objective was that the new capital was to represent the young, independent republic that would start a fast modernization process which would be reflected on the capital more than in any other city in Turkey (Kılınç 2002, p. 21). One of the other features Atatürk wanted to give to Ankara was an embodiment of ancient civilisations that existed in Anatolia. The idea behind such a policy was the thesis that ancient Anatolian civilisations, notably Hittites, constituted the founding elements of the Turkish culture. The population of the young Turkish Republic was a remnant of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural empire, and consequently consisted of various ethnicities that were either autochthonous to Anatolia or had immigrated to Turkey from ex-Ottoman territories lost to the European colonial powers or the newly established independent states in the Balkans, the Middle-East and Caucasus. The Hittite thesis was developed by Atatürk and the Kemalist elite to create, among the new born Turkish nation, a sense of belonging and attachment to Anatolia, the territory of the new Turkish Republic. Instead of developing a sense of nostalgia for the Ottoman past, Atatürk wanted the members of the new nation to search for their roots in pre-Islamic Asia and Anatolia, and be proud of this past.

As a matter of fact, Atatürk discussed these matters with historians in Ankara even during the liberation war years (1919-1922), and encouraged the opening of the first Hittite research centre in Ankara, in 1921, while still under war conditions. Later, when he proclaimed the Republic in 1923, following a military victory won over the occupying Allied powers, he initiated the opening of the Faculty of Language, Geography and History in Ankara, where young people could study archaeology, Hittitology and Sumerology. Furthermore, he opened archaeological museums in various cities of Turkey which included also Hellenistic and Roman periods. The official historical discourses of the Kemalist revolution emphasised that the principles of modernity—Atatürk would probably have said ‘civilisation’ instead of ‘modernity’—such as secularity and equality between genders, did not come from imitation of the West, but rather from the non-written laws, töre, of the Turks of Central Asia and the Anatolian civilisation of the Hittites (Copeaux 1994, p. 174). In later periods of the Turkish Republican history, the veneration of Central Asian origins was abandoned by Kemalists because it was adopted by ultranationalists. The thesis of Hittite civilisation as a founding element of the Turkish culture, on the other hand, has not been seriously adopted by any of the Turkish political factions (1994, p. 174). Despite this fact, however, when Rasattepe, an ancient Anatolian tumulus where the Phrygians used to bury their important people, was chosen as an appropriate
site to build a mausoleum of Atatürk in Ankara, this was indeed a meaningful tribute to Atatürk’s ideals.

Soon after the site was chosen, a state commission organized a competition in 1941 to decide for the architecture of the mausoleum. The commission initially invited only western architects to participate to the competition. However, such decision was highly criticized by the Turkish architects on the grounds that this would in fact be disrespectful of Atatürk, who had spent almost all his life on trying to give a sense of pride to the Turkish people (Gülekli 1993, p. 23). Upon such criticism, the competition, which attracted a high level of participation despite the fact that it was opened during the hardest days of the Second World War, was extended to the Turkish architects as well.

In the end, the jury shortlisted three projects which belonged to the German Professor Johannes Kurger, who had designed Tannenberg Monument in Germany, the Italian Professor Arnoldo Foschini, who was one of the chief architects of the fascist regime in Italy, and the Turkish Professors Emin Onat and Orhan Arda from the Architectural Faculty of Istanbul University. After some more careful examination, the jury took its final decision in favour of the Turkish professors, announcing that their project expressed ‘the national matter’ more successfully than the others (Gülekli 1993, p. 25). Finally, on 20 November 1943, the Ministry of Public Works (Bayındırlık Bakanlığı) began the construction of the victorious project: a massive monument of symmetrical nature, combining modern architecture with that of ancient temples, and decorated with faceted stone to give a touch of antiquity.

Professors Emin Onat’s and Orhan Arda’s Anıtkabir project reflected the Second National Architectural Period in Turkish architecture, which lasted from 1940 until 1950. A national architectural movement started to develop in Turkey, as early as 1935, as a reaction against the hegemony of Western, especially German and Austrian architects who were commissioned to design the key buildings of the new Turkish state in Ankara (e.g., the Presidential Palace, the Central Bank, the National Assembly, various faculties of Ankara University, the Military School and the buildings of the Ministry of Defence and the Chief of General Staff). The German and Austrian architects, some of whom (Clemens Holzmeister, Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner) were in Turkey because of having fled the Nazi regime in their home countries, had a neo-classical inclination in their architectural designs and were strongly influenced by their cultural backgrounds. The national architectural movement initiated by Turkish architects first under the name of the National Architecture, and later called the Second National Architecture, aimed at finding and using domestic features in the architectural styles, instead. While the First National Movement emphasized a religious characterization, the latter preferred pre-Islamic antiquity, and gave importance to symmetry, stone-faced facades, and a monumental effect. Architects belonging
to the Second National Movement paid also close attention to the use of both domestic materials and labour and designed buildings in conformity with the climatic conditions of Turkey.

Anıtkabir was thus designed as an outstanding example of the Second National Architecture movement in Turkey, and of adjusting universal architectural styles to a specific and particular Turkish context. The materials used in Anıtkabir were brought from various geographical regions and cities in Turkey such as Polatlı, Çankırı, Çanakkale, Hatay, Afyon, Adana and Osmaniye. Porous travertines were used as exterior plating material over concrete and marble to give a touch of antiquity to the monument and to work out reliefs which depict scenes from the Turkish Liberation War. The park that surrounds the monument was given the name Peace Park, in honour of Atatürk’s famous expression ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’, containing trees and flowers donated from around 25 countries.

There were also ten towers built on the monument site in a symmetrical arrangement symbolizing events and principles that led to the foundation of the Turkish republic—e.g. independence, victory, peace, revolution and Misak-i Milli (the National Pact which laid out the frontiers of modern Turkey). The top of the roofs of the towers were decorated with bronze arrowheads like in traditional Turkish nomad tents, yurt. Their ceilings inside, on the other hand, were covered with geometric ornamentation in fresco technique, inspired by traditional Turkish carpets’ (kilim) patterns and motifs. Inside also inscriptions of quotes from Atatürk that corresponded to the theme of the tower were carved. Later, also two museums were adjoined to the site, the museum of Atatürk, exhibiting since 1960 Atatürk’s personal items, his wardrobe, his library, some of the gifts presented to him by other statesmen, and the museum of the Turkish Liberation War (1919-1922), opened to public since August 26, 2002.

The originality of its architecture, location, theme, dimensions and temple-like appearance have clearly led Anıtkabir to stand out as the most attractive monument in Ankara and paid a meaningful tribute to the nation-building projects, thus the modernist mindset of Atatürk, as clearly expressed in the words of Professor Onat, the chief architect of the mausoleum, as well:

One of the most important revolutions of Atatürk was to show us the value of the past. Even though the Ottoman Empire was full of honours, it must be confessed that it was a closed world inspired by a scholastic spirit. Our history, on the contrary dates back to thousands of years. It starts with the Sumerians and Hittites and mixes with many other tribes from Central Asia to Europe, and constitutes one of the most important classical dimensions of the Mediterranean civilisation. Atatürk gave us the pleasure of this rich and fertile history, widened our horizons and took the biggest steps to rescue us from the Middle Age mentality by showing us that our real story does not start with the Middle Ages but has common grounds with world classics. He also taught us that a real
nationalism cannot get its power from a closed Middle Age traditionalism, but it can only be revived by descending to old civilisations. That is why we wanted that the monument that we build for our the Great Leader [Ulu Önder] to express the new spirit that he brought to us and the revolution that he realized so that the Turkish nation can awaken from scholastics and rescue itself from the Middle Ages. (Onat 1953 cited in Güleklı 1993, pp. 26-7)\textsuperscript{10}

IV The Politics of Performing Memory in Anıtkabir

Official visits to Anıtkabir have been institutionalized as a national practice in Turkey since the erection of the monument. On the national days, the highest representatives of the Turkish state visit the mausoleum, observe a minute of silence and sign the Anıtkabir special notebook. A visit to Anıtkabir is also a protocol requirement for any official visit to Ankara from foreign countries. However, Anıtkabir has not become a site for official ceremonies only. On the contrary, it has always constituted a point of attraction for ordinary Turkish citizens.

I conducted field work on the site of Anıtkabir for half a day in August 2008 and two whole days in December 2009, visiting the site and the museums, observing, interviewing visitors randomly selected, and talking with the personnel of the museums and with some of the military staff on duty those days. Keeping in mind that memorial landscapes are inherently political and open to manipulation by those social groups in control (Dwyer & Alderman 2008, p. 176), my objective was to find out whether Anıtkabir is still aesthetically influential in shaping socio-political and cultural identities for the purpose of nation-building or whether its social function has been altered. I thus interviewed the visitors and keepers of Anıtkabir in order to better observe not only how the past is remembered and memory is performed in a certain way, but also social negotiation and struggle over where best to situate that past and memory within the broader Turkish socio-political and cultural landscape (Dwyer & Alderman 2008, p. 168).
The Management of the Politics of Performing Memory

The monument site is open every day, from 9 am until 5 pm, free of charge. Visitors go through a detector control at the entrance of the Peace Park. Then, they either walk up a slope or a bus carries them to the main entrance of the monument where they are greeted by two towers, Freedom and Independence. In front of the Independence tower, there is a statue group of three women who represents the abundance in the country, the willpower of Turkish women, and the grief felt for losing Atatürk (Gülekli 1993, p. 48). In front of the Freedom Tower, there is a statue group of three men which depicts the Turkish soldier (with helmet and coat), the young Turkish intellectual (with a book in his hand) and behind these two, there is the Turkish peasant in rural clothing. The serious facial expressions of all three men represent the army’s, the peasants’ and the youth’s grief for losing Atatürk (1993, p. 47). After passing through the main entrance, the visitors approach the monument through the Road of Lions, a 262 m long pedestrian walkway that is lined on both sides by twelve pairs of seated lions carved in ancient Hittite style, representing respect and grief. The contrast between this walkway and the modern Ankara scenery with its tall and grey buildings around Anıtkabir is striking (see Figure I). At the end of the Road of Lions, there are two other towers through which the visitors enter the 129 m long and 84 m wide Ceremonial Plaza, designed to accommodate around 15 000 people. The floor of the Ceremonial Plaza is decorated with 373 rug and kilim patterns, and is made of travertine in various colours. The Hall of Honour situated in the north of the Ceremonial Plaza has an octagonal plan and a pyramidal ceiling inlaid with gold mosaics. With a height of 17 m and 14.4 m high columns, it is the iconic symbol of Anıtkabir and the location of Atatürk’s tomb, which is
situated right under the symbolic marble sarcophagus in the ground floor of the Hall (see Figure II).

Figure II: The Hall of Honour (location of Atatürk's mausoleum). Photo by Marco Antonsich, August 2008.

The management of Antıtkabir belonged until 1980 to the Turkish Cultural Ministry, while the Turkish Ministry of Defence took care of its security through special armed forces reserved only for Antıtkabir and a permanent military commandment situated on the monument site. However, since 1980, which is also the year of the Coup d'Etat organized by the army in Turkey, the Chief of General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces took care also of the management of the monument. Today, the visits to Antıtkabir are regulated in a rather strict manner. The site is extremely well taken care of and there are signs and military staff at the entrance and at various other points of the site, which kindly warn the visitors about what they can and cannot do during their visits to Antıtkabir. For instance, one cannot enter the site wearing a hat, although the women’s veil, a controversial garment in Turkey is allowed. One cannot enter the site with any type of nylon bags, because according to a staff member at the entrance, they make the site look like a market place (*pazaryeri*). One cannot chew gum, climb or sit on the statues, smoke, walk around with food or drinks, lean on the reliefs or throw trash to the floor. Finally, one cannot take photographs in the museums of Antıtkabir, and if the visitors enter the mausoleum, one of the towers or a section of the museum from a free exit door, instead of an entrance one, they are also kindly invited to use the right route.
According to my personal experience as a visitor, these regulations discipline the behaviour of the visitors of Anıtkabir significantly, by shaping the posture and disposition of the participants of politics of performing memory. Visitors are expected to honour the memory of the national leader and his achievements in a serious and respectful manner, and they are reminded constantly that their visit to the site is not a mere touristic activity. The army’s meticulous care of the site, its precision and gravity also gives an explicit impression to the visitors that the Turkish army is strong enough to be the ultimate guard, not only of the last resting place of the most important national hero of Turkey, but also of the Turkish nation.
Another important point about the management of Anıtkabir is that visitors are expected to be satisfied with the information presented to them during their visit. Nobody is allowed to read or even look at the pages of the visitor notebook of Anıtkabir for example, since ‘these are private matters of visitors’, as justified by a member of staff who keeps an eye on the notebook. Those who would like to have a look at it are invited to write an official letter to the Chief of General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces to receive permission. Even if he/she has proof of identification as a scholar or a researcher, a visitor cannot receive information from any of the staff in charge in response to questions about people’s complaints on certain political developments in the country addressed during their visits or the criticism that they may have about any aspect of the site. Personally, I was refused in this endeavour by a lieutenant colonel to whom I was directed by lower ranking personnel, on the grounds that I actually ‘know everything, but only try to hear certain things from certain people’. While greeting me on the way out, the lieutenant colonel emphasized, however that ‘Anıtkabir is the symbol of the Turkish Republic’ and if I want further information, I can write an official letter to the Chief of the General Staff of Turkish Armed forces. According to my view, such caution is generated as a result of the heavy denigration that both Atatürk and the Turkish army have recently been subject to, especially by certain political factions and the media groups in Turkey, within the context of the political polarization and transformation in the country.

The Chief of General Staff of Turkish Armed forces, after nine months of meticulous work, opened a War of Liberation museum in Anıtkabir, on 26 August 2002, the anniversary of the launch of the last liberation battle against the occupying Greek army in 1922. This museum has a powerful effect on visitors, even many foreign ones who, although
they do not know much about Turkey, cannot refrain from expressing admiration for Atatürk after visiting this museum. In the words of an elderly Italian tourist visiting the site, for example, ‘Turkey owes everything to him’. In the first room of this museum, there are maps showing the occupied and later liberated territories and room-size panoramas re-enacting historic battles and victories in the modern Turkish history such as the battles of Gallipoli and Sakarya (Battle of Sangarios). Special techniques for sound, three dimensional effects, original wartime artefacts and life-size models emphasize the themes. Loud-speakers fill the exhibition room with the sounds of battle, patriotic songs and elegies written for the martyrs.

In the next room, there are paintings by artists from Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey who were commissioned to depict the occupation of Anatolia by the Allied powers (especially the Greek Army), the sufferings during these years, the preparations for the Liberation struggle and the war heroes. The emphasis in these paintings is given to the participation of all segments of the society (urban, rural, religious, women, men, children, and the elderly) to the Liberation struggle. Here benches allow for a more comfortable visual contemplation. The following section, hosted in a long aisle, exhibits photos and documents about the liberation committees which were created across Anatolia, the peace agreements signed with Allied powers after Turkish military victories, the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the Kemalist revolution. Here it is visually possible to observe that the liberation war included all segments of the society (e.g., peasants, landlords, the westernized urban elites, the religiously oriented, etc.) and different ethnic groups existing in Anatolia, notably Kurds, although there is no particular verbal emphasis given to distinct ethnic identities within the Turkish nation. Finally, the museum ends with a large room containing Atatürk’s library, where it is possible to survey works which have influenced Atatürk’s cultural revolution. This library also includes the eight books that Atatürk wrote, one about geometry and all the others about military strategy, which can be briefly studied through a digital book system.

Individual and Collective Performances of Memory

One of the biggest achievements of Atatürk was to encourage national pride within the Turkish society, especially in the wake of military victory (Landau 1984, p. xiii). I have observed throughout my field-work in Anıtkabir that this legacy continues today no matter how deep the actual ideological divides impinge on the founding principles of the Turkish Republic. The ease of access to Anıtkabir by almost everybody, including children, the elderly and the handicapped thanks to the existence of special facilities, and the enclosure of both modern and traditional women in the iconography of the site make Anıtkabir a welcoming place for large segments of the society. As the resting place of Atatürk, Anıtkabir helps to reproduce among these people collective feelings of pride, and as such it is continuously constituted, reshaped, and made important.
Admiration and affection to Atatürk, and being proud of him were thus the main motivations behind the majority of the visitors whom I interviewed in Anitkabir. As summarized by a middle-age respondent from Tarsus, a southern province: 'We owe everything to him. The Turkish Republic owes everything to him.' Many of these visitors also referred to Atatürk, as 'our Ancestor', 'my Ancestor' or 'the Ancestor', constituting Atatürk as a paternal figure, as the following quote from a young man illustrates: 'I came to see my Ancestor [Atam'ı görmek] I will come, again.' Among the families that I interviewed on the site, the main motivation was to give younger generations a didactical experience, as illustrated by a 47 year old man from Bolu, a north-western Turkish city, who visited the mausoleum with his two children and veiled wife: 'We come here to show our children the Great Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic and to freshen our knowledge.' A young man aged 22 also emphasized the educational dimension of his visit by telling that he came to Anitkabir to learn about his history, and 'how Turks founded this state'.

Young university students who have come to study in Ankara from other parts of Turkey constitute an important part of Anitkabir's visitors. Some of them re-visit the site with their friends or relatives who come to Ankara for the first time. A student couple from Izmir, a metropolis on the western coast of Turkey found the atmosphere in Anitkabir powerful. According to them, 'it is a very exciting experience to be on the actual site after having seen it so many times in books or on television'. Another university student from Isparta, a south-western province said that he used to draw Anitkabir's pictures in his notebooks when he was small, and being then on the actual site was a very moving experience: 'Being here stimulates our national sentiments.'

Turkey is quite a centralized country, and for this reason, many need to go to Ankara in order to handle their administrative affairs. Anitkabir constitutes an important visiting site for many of these people, as I observed during my field work. Also, unions, civil society organisations and political parties usually organize their mass demonstrations in Ankara. Although protests of any kind are not allowed in Anitkabir, according to a member of staff, the participants of such demonstrations usually visit Anitkabir, either before or after the event, so the monument site becomes very crowded on these days. During my field-work in Anitkabir in December 2009, TEKEL (a former monopoly holder for alcoholic beverages and tobacco) workers who travelled from 106 provinces of Turkey were protesting against the loss of their rights in the course of privatization, in front of the governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party) headquarters in Ankara. I saw many of these workers visiting Anitkabir, as well. Five of these workers from Hatay, a southern province close to Turkey's Syrian frontier told me that they were very moved to be in Anitkabir. The monument is 'impressive, beautiful...perhaps matchless in the whole world'.
Out of fifty people that I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork, only five said that they would come to Anıtkabir to address a complaint about the government policies in Turkey. A young university student observed, for example, that he would not come to Anıtkabir for this purpose, because he said ‘who can I address my complaint to?’ Nevertheless, Anıtkabir is symbolically significant for many, to address discontent, resentment and concern. For a young lady from İzmir, a Turkish metropolis which has never voted for Islamist parties, ‘it is very important to visit Anıtkabir and Our Ancestor [Atamız] in today’s Turkey’, most probably because Atatürk is now the only remaining symbol in the country by which to declare support for a secular-modern way of life (Ökten 2007, p. 96).

Figure V: The statue group of three women and female visitors of Anıtkabir. Photo by Marco Antonsich, August 2008.

Despite these facts, however, I saw many religiously oriented people—as visible from women’s veils—among the visitors of Anıtkabir. As a matter of fact, my personal tally indicates that the religiously oriented people constituted approximately half of the visitors to the monument during the days of my observation. A young couple, after taking a picture in front of Atatürk’s sarcophagus in the Hall of Honour, wanted to tell me that they came to Anıtkabir to see their leader: ‘It is so obvious that Atatürk was a great leader and has achieved so great things. We are unable to end our visit here.’ Three other veiled women who came to Ankara from İnegöl, near Bursa, a northwestern Turkish city, told me that they wept a lot in the Turkish Liberation War museum: ‘The women in the paintings who participated to the Liberation War are women like us [meaning veiled and traditional]. We need to know the value of our country. It’s through great hardship that this land was preserved.’ Additionally, when asked the motivation of their visit, two young veiled women who came to Ankara from İstanbul to enrol in university said, ‘When someone says
Ankara, the first place that comes to our mind is Anıtkabir’, suggesting that conventions and habits shared by the people living on the same territory can be stronger than their ideological divides.

Almost all the people whom I interviewed, regardless of their age and gender were perplexed about my questions concerning their feelings and opinions about the architecture of Anıtkabir. Visitors who are not coming to the site in an organized tour generally visit Anıtkabir without a guide. They are thus not very informed about the meanings and representations behind the iconography of the monument, since these are also topics not emphasized in the media or textbooks. I observed many people asking questions to each other about the significance of the statue group portraying the three women, also because such representation is not as obvious as that of the statue group with the three men. As a matter of fact, it is probable that foreign visitors of the site are more informed about the iconography of the monument than the Turkish ones, as they often visit Anıtkabir in an organized tour with a professional guide. Hence, most of my interviewees expressed only that they liked the architecture and the monument made them feel proud. Some of them commented, however, that they paid little attention to the architecture of Anıtkabir, which their ‘state elders’ (Devlet büyüklerimiz) planned and built accordingly. Thus what was important for them was to be able to see their ‘Ancestor’. A female visitor in her fifties, who worked as a school teacher, told me...
that what was important for her in Anıtkabir was to be able to feel Atatürk’s spirit:

I am very moved at the moment, since I feel as if Atatürk is looking at me now. Those who do not know his value should be ashamed. My ancestors came from Georgia when the Ottoman Empire dissolved. Thus, I am not an ethnic Turk. My closest neighbour is a Kurd. We do not have problems between each other. Exterior forces divide us. Atatürk was a unifying factor when he was alive. He still is.

Anıtkabir is not a site that stimulates emotions for Turkish citizens only. During my field work, I interviewed some Turkish Cypriots (Turks of Cyprus), visiting Anıtkabir as well. A group of Turkish Cypriot women told me that they came to Ankara before, but they did not visit Anıtkabir then. They added that they liked the place very much and wept a lot in the Liberation War museum. One of them even uttered that now that she saw Anıtkabir, she would not mind even if she dies—Ölsem de gam yemem [A Turkish proverb meaning having completed a life time accomplishment].

Anıtkabir receives many Iranian visitors as well. A considerable number of Iranian citizens come to Ankara in order to get visas from the United States’ embassy, which does not exist anymore in their country. While in Ankara, many of them visit Anıtkabir, most probably because Atatürk is a well-known figure in Iran and there are not many other tourist attractions in Ankara. As also emphasized by the director of the Turkish Liberation War museum in Anıtkabir, Atatürk is also well known and respected in other Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, especially for having run a liberation war against the European powers. These visitors come to Anıtkabir with already a good knowledge of the site. For other foreign tourists, first the dimension of the place and then the museums adjoined to the monument play an important role in shaping their opinions. A German businessman whom I interviewed found the site impressive, huge and antique. According to a Turkish tour guide who leads English-speaking groups, ‘if you do not exaggerate about Atatürk and Turkish history, foreign tourists usually admire Atatürk even if they do not know much about him at the very beginning’. He continued:

When they see the maps in this museum showing Turkey occupied and later liberated, they understand the value of the national liberation struggle, run by Atatürk. In order to understand the architecture, however, they need to be given some information. Anıtkabir’s architecture was influenced from the Hittite civilisation. It also does not exclude the influence of Hellenistic and Roman periods. In this sense, it represents Atatürk well because he was such a person, a unifying figure, emphasising the Anatolian synthesis always. When you tell about all this, then tourists admire Atatürk.
V Concluding Remarks

The findings of my field-work conducted on the site of Anıtkabir suggests that rather than having become a symbolic shrine for the Kemalist, nationalist, and a segment of the socialist pole in the current political scene in Turkey, and losing thus its original social-function as a national landmark in the nation-building process of the Turkish society, Anıtkabir still holds a privileged position in shaping collective memories in Turkey. As the resting place of the most important hero of the Turkish Republican history who arouses affect, pride, respect and admiration within large segments of the Turkish society also as a paternal figure, Anıtkabir still stimulates aesthetically the public imagination and national solidarity at a collective level. Such phenomena serves in return the continuing nation-building and re-building process in Turkey, as also observed through the visitors who cry, are in awe of the mausoleum, experience a great sense of pride or feel that the mausoleum is a place which stimulates ‘national sentiments’. All this is indeed despite the fact that Anıtkabir’s intended message, the hard-line modernist discourse of the early Republican elite which put an emphasis on ancient pre-Islamic Anatolian civilisations may have slipped away a long time ago.

To be true, the rigorous ways that the Turkish army administers Anıtkabir and its design of the Turkish Liberation War museum shape the behaviour of the visitors as we have mentioned above. However, this does not create a contradiction to the co-constitutive performative power of Anıtkabir, in the sense that the Turkish army of which Atatürk was the beloved commandant is not an exterior actor or the manager of the on-going nation building and re-building process of the Turkish society. On the contrary, as a constituting element of the Turkish society, as also represented in the iconography of Anıtkabir, it is embedded in the social negotiation and struggle over where best to remember the past within the broader Turkish cultural landscape, as well as in the politics of performing memory. In return, Anıtkabir, rather than acting as a passive ideological symbol of any kind of privileged elite, continues to structure/re-structure and maintain national identities and sentiments.

All this is most probably why contesting Anıtkabir and Atatürk is still a too far stretch for any socio-political faction in Turkey. That is also why perhaps after a long period of rejection, pro-Islamists have also begun to appropriate the image of Atatürk, by using ‘the dominant paradigm to gain easy access to a limited public sphere’, that is the sphere of national sentiments (Ökten 2007, p. 96). Socio-political factions which have contested the principles of the Turkish Republic as defined by the Kemalists have in fact adopted their own political symbols, in order to better challenge the dominant political ideology and reinforce their own political discourses. Thus, for instance, the official emblem of Ankara, which was a sun disk belonging to a pre-Islamic Anatolian Hatti civilization, was changed in the 1990s by Melih Gökçek, the current pro-Islamic mayor of Ankara. Gökçek’s new emblem is the
white silhouette of a mosque, which represents both the Islamic Ottoman past and the recently completed Kocatepe mosque, the largest ever built in the Turkish capital since the foundation of the Republic (Erdentuğ & Burcak 1998, p. 598). It also evokes Atakule, the tower of the shopping mall built in the 1990s in Ankara, bringing tradition and neo-liberalism together, much in line with the globalization paradigm.

Such politics of challenge and contestation of the founding principles of the Turkish nation-state has recently reached its peak, thanks also to the international context. As a matter of fact, it nearly attained the required (trans-)formative power. However, all this does not lead to a situation where Anitkabir is unable today to create historical narratives and stimulate national feelings and pride, as also expressed through the politics of performing memory. According to Calhoun, the importance of the public sphere lies in achieving social solidarity (Calhoun 2002, p. 171). Furthermore, for national sentiments to give way to some postnational organization of social life, other types of collective identities, as well as hybridity and cultural plurality, it will not simply be ‘a matter of new formal structures of organization, but of new ways of imagining identity, interests, and solidarity’ (2002, p. 171). Hence, without accomplishing such new ways of imagining identity, interests and solidarity, it seems that national landmarks will be alive and well in the age of globalization. They will also continue to build and re-build national identities and constitute collective memories, although the relationship between architecture and the nation-state can no longer be taken for granted (Delanty & Jones 2002, p. 456), and the meanings embedded in the national landmarks are no longer easily controlled by a privileged elite.

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Notes

1 PKK is the acronym given to the Kurdistan Worker’s Party which has launched an armed struggle against the Turkish army and civilians since 1984, in order to control the southeastern part of Turkey.

2 Kemalists is the name given to the followers of the Kemalist Revolution and its six principles: republicanism, secularism, statism, revolutionism, nationalism and populism.
According to the info received by a member of staff at Anıtkabir, the Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces obtains the number of visitors through detector control at the entrance of the monument.

Further information on monthly and annual figures of visitors is available at the Turkish Armed Forces official web site, viewed 3 January, 2010, \url{http://www.tsk.tr/anitkabir/guncel/faaliyetler/ziyaretcisayilari.html}

Anatolia is the geographic term given to Western Asia comprising most of modern Turkey's territory.

The language of the ancient Sumer civilisation that existed in Mesopotamia.

I borrowed this interpretation from Landau (1984).

Turkey stayed out of the Second World War.

Turkish people usually refer to Atatürk by epithets such as the Great Leader (\textit{Ulu Önder}), The Ancestor/Our Ancestor (\textit{Ata/Atamız/Atam}), Chief Commander (\textit{Başkumandan}), Chief Teacher (\textit{Başöğretmen}), Our Leader (\textit{Liderimiz}), Mustafa Kemal Pasha (\textit{Mustafa Kemal Paşa}).

Translated to English from Turkish by the author.

Hatti civilisation was situated between ca. 2500-2000/1700 BC in present-day central and southeastern parts of Anatolia, Turkey.

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