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THE PLACE OF LOCALITY FOR IDENTITY
IN THE NATION: MINORITY NARRATIVES
OF COSMOPOLITAN ISTANBUL

A greater understanding of the politics of nationalism and identity must consider the importance of locality. This research, conducted among Muslims and non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul, Turkey, and Tel Aviv, Israel, relies on place narratives of Istanbul during the mid-20th century, when Istanbul was transforming into a predominantly Muslim, “Turkish” city. Place narratives reveal the multiplicity of interpretations of the national past and are thus a powerful resource for examining the cultural politics of identity in the national present. This research contributes to studies of national identity, which have traditionally focused on the top-down role of the state in producing the nation, by examining the processes through which ordinary people make meaning of the state-authored nation. I conclude that place-based relationships can transcend national/minority frameworks for identity, as shared ties to local place create feelings of common belonging among diverse residents.