

## GRASPING THE DISCURSIVITY IN ISTANBUL, YELDEĞİRMENİ (1)

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1. This research was presented in Spaces and Flows: 8th International Conference on Urban and ExtraUrban Studies on 12-13 October 2017 at University of Hull, Hull, UK.

2. A fragment of a city is an urban space-time that is both a part of the city, as a whole, and also constituting a whole in itself, both merged in and emerging from body-space-time relations (Karababa, 2015, 15).

### INTRODUCTION

In the era of global capitalism, regarding the shift to flexible mode of production, which increased the flow of capital, people and information, the service sector gained importance. Hardt and Negri (2001, 286) state that in postmodernity, with the flexible mode of production, all production becomes “informationalized”, in other words all production has been transformed into a production of services. This new global condition transforms the socio-economic structures, and cities begin to be shaped or re-shaped via the cultural politics all around the world. Istanbul, having a centuries-long history of urbanisation, also has been changing rapidly under the influence of cultural politics of global capitalism, especially in the last couple of decades.

In the urban planning report issued by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2009), Culture-Oriented Tourism areas were defined as Beyoğlu, Historical Peninsula, Kadıköy and Üsküdar. In this regard, the cultural politics based on improving the service sector, are being implemented in various fragments (2) of Istanbul through the urban transformation projects since the early 2000s, accelerated following the Law of Transformation of Areas Under Disaster Risk enacted in 2012. These projects constitute an issue especially in the historically significant fragments of Istanbul in the inner-city centre, which were once neglected or deteriorated such as Sulukule (MegaIstanbul, 2019), Süleymaniye (MegaIstanbul, 2019) and Tarlabası (MegaIstanbul, 2015). The main objective of these so-called transformation projects is to raise land values through culture, which is regarded as an indicator of differentiation between urban spaces. In this process, while an urban space is considered as a tabula rasa, the residents and the culture, emerging through the relations between the residents and the space, are often ignored, and instead, the culture is reduced into a discourse, which is ascribed to the urban space. The dominant discourse is either a unilateral representation or an invented one, by the implementers of the cultural

politics, who are in power such as policy makers, governments agencies and private institutions. In this consideration, the culture does not emerge through a duration of time, which produces, to put in Deleuze's (1991) terms, "difference in kind", but mostly appears to be a fictive image, a representation of the space and people frozen in time, which refers to, in Deleuze's terms, "difference in degree". Duration is the location according to Deleuze (1991), what makes the difference in kind. Without a duration of time, a transformation, a production of difference in kind is not possible.

By means of the urban transformation projects (Anadolu Ajansı, 2006) (İhlas Haber Ajansı, 2018) (Taksim 360, 2016) discourses are ascribed to various fragments of the city as a representation of the culture, in order to distinguish one district from another, indicating a difference in degree but not in kind. In order to maximise the profits earned from restructuring of the urban space, the urban fragments are integrated to the global flow of capital through discourses, as a post-modern marketing strategy for place branding. Nevertheless, the culture erected as such a representation does not last long, since the dominant discourse gives a boost for a certain change but it does not provide social and economic necessities that envisions a continuous transformation in an urban space. In this regard the culture becomes a marketing tool that brands certain urban spaces and articulates them to the global market. It could be argued that, adapting an urban space to the requirements and desires of the services sector through the cultural politics by reducing the culture into a single discourse, leads to commodification of space. This paper problematizes the static understanding of culture and inquires into culture as a narrative that could point to the possibility of an alternative urban transformation process within the era of global capitalism, through a transdiscursive reading in Istanbul, Yeldeğirmeni.

### YELDEĞİRMENİ AS AN EXEMPLAR

The problematic of this study is investigated in Yeldeğirmeni as an exemplar, through a transdiscursive reading. An exemplar refers to an urban fragment through which a particular urban problematic, such as the concept of culture in the present-day, could be investigated but at the same time the results of the research could be generalised or applied to other urban fragments. In this regard, it should be mentioned that this study does not aim to present the culture of Yeldeğirmeni, but Yeldeğirmeni, as a fragment of Istanbul is an exemplar for understanding and interpreting the culture regarding the present-day global relations.

Yeldeğirmeni is a historical residential area at the seafront on the Asian side of Istanbul, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century where summerhouses were once located (**Figure 1**). The name comes from the windmills (*yel* meaning wind, *değirmen* meaning mill) built in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century that used to process wheat and produce flour for the general public as well as the palace and the military (Atılgan, 2017). Yeldeğirmeni is not only close to the land and water public transportation routes such as railways, subways, bus, metrobus, minibus and ferries but also to the thriving nightlife and entertainment centre of Kadıköy district, yet it was a neglected neighbourhood in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Although the neighbourhood relations were still strong (Uzgören and Türkün, 2018), the residential building stock was in a decay due to the increase in the commercial activities in 1980s and 1990s (Şendur, 2010). Since 2010 it is undergoing a culture-focused transformation, which stands-out from the prevalent urban



Figure 1. Location of Yeldeğirmeni

transformation processes taking place in Istanbul. Contrary to the top-down urban planning policy of many local governments, local government of Kadıköy pursues a bottom-up model, which aims an in-situ regeneration of Yeldeğirmeni together with its residents (Arısoy, 2014).

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of Haydarpaşa Train Station (*Haydarpaşa Garı*) triggered a transformation in Yeldeğirmeni, with the production of the apartment blocks in European style such as the Valpreda Apartment. It could be argued that today, the culture-focused transformation of Yeldeğirmeni is also related to Haydarpaşa Train Station, through a regeneration project called Haydarpaşa Port and Station Regeneration Project. Haydarpaşa regeneration project on which many speculations have been made, covers the train station and also the port, ro-ro and container terminals located alongside of the station. This regeneration project was based on a renewed master development plan dated 2012 (Yazman, 2012) and cancelled in 2016 (Karakoç, 2016), in which the area where Haydarpaşa Train Station is located is shown as accommodation and cultural facility area, signifying that Haydarpaşa terminal building could be re-functioned as a short-term accommodation facility (Cumhuriyet, 2013). On the other hand, the recent news on the written media states that Haydarpaşa will continue to be a railway terminal, but some cultural facilities such as museum, exhibition gallery, meeting halls will be added to its program (Aksu, 2016). Considering these developments on the speculative regeneration project, Yeldeğirmeni occurs to be a possible gentrification area, the land values could increase significantly in a very short period of time, which could lead to displacement of the current inhabitants. In order to prevent Yeldeğirmeni from rapid gentrification, through which the existing inhabitants are often displaced, Kadıköy municipality started to implement a regeneration project in 2010 (Atasoy, 2011), which has been finalised in 2014. In this project, the social and physical improvement strategies for Yeldeğirmeni is designed in association with *Çevre ve Kültür Değerlerini Koruma ve Tanıtma Vakfı* (the Foundation for the Protection and Promotion of the Environment and Cultural Heritage) (ÇEKÜL), a non-governmental organisation working for preserving historical environments and culture. The local government still pursues a culture-focused regeneration through renovation of idle buildings, implementing cultural activities and cooperating with non-profit cultural institutions as well as the private sector. In this process, the socio-cultural environment was improved but Yeldeğirmeni also opened up to the economic ambitions of the

services sector through the discourses such as newest on-the-rise district. Although the bottom-up model designed and implemented with profound intentions, and stimulates an in-situ urban transformation, the threats of commodification of space still exists.

The capital-focused cultural politics and the economic ambitions of the service sector could cause a rapid change in the urban space by producing difference in degree, which could in the future lead to displacement of the inhabitants. In order to avoid this, a certain approach culture and space should be embraced, which would not only improve the socio-cultural environment, but also support the sustainability of a continuous transformation. In this regard, in an urban fragment, before designing an architectural project, which will potentially be articulated to its transformation in social, cultural, economic and political ways, it is essential to understand and interpret the urban fragment regarding the relations it is merged in and it emerges from. For achieving this objective, transdiscursive reading based on relational experience, is proposed as a tool which could be employed in order to gain a deeper understanding of Yeldeğirmeni as an exemplar.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A transdiscursive reading is going to be employed with a holistic approach, for understanding and interpreting culture in Yeldeğirmeni. The term “transdiscursive” is borrowed from the influential philosopher and historian Foucault (1998, 217), who refers to the founder of discursivity as a transdiscursive author. The transdiscursive authors empower discursivity in their works, by denoting the relations between discursive and non-discursive dimensions. In an urban fragment, in order to transcend the culture as a discourse, it is crucial to generate discursivity, which could be achieved by a deeper understanding of the relations in an urban fragment. Employing a transdiscursive reading could reveal the relations between tangible and intangible, or to put in Foucauldian terms, discursive and non-discursive dimensions in an urban fragment that give way to discursivity. The relation between these opposing and complementary dimensions enables one to have a deeper understanding of the culture in Yeldeğirmeni both in the past and in the present time and triggers discursivity. Foucault (1998, 217) claims that, transdiscursive authors are able to produce certain discourses in their works that promise new interpretations, every time they are scrutinised. The deeper understanding of the culture in the present time through a transdiscursive reading, could encourage new interpretations of Yeldeğirmeni and open it up to new possibilities for the future. Moreover, works of transdiscursive authors do not only foster new works but also, re-reading their works, modify their works and discourses they produce which Foucault (1998, 219) puts it as a “return to the origin”. In this regard, the transdiscursive reading does not only give way to discursivity, but also at every encounter, every new interpretation that is encouraged, modifies or transforms the urban fragment. A transdiscursive reading could point out the transformation in Yeldeğirmeni, where the neighbourhood life is not vanished but shifted. That is to say Yeldeğirmeni is transformed into something new, while carrying the traces of the past. By the same token, the urban sociologist Zukin (2009) emphasizes that instead of longing for an ideal origin, the tension between the origins and new beginnings leads to the reinvention of both the urban community and the city, through



new users, spaces and experiences forming the unique character of a neighbourhood.

The transdiscursive reading concentrates on the asymmetrical relations between the opposing poles such as discursive and non-discursive dimensions in an urban fragment. This study argues that the asymmetrical relation challenges the view of a process in which either, one of the opposing poles changes and the other stays unchanged, or one could be reduced to the other, forming equilibrium or balance. On the contrary, both of the opposing poles do not only change, transform, in the process in relation to one another, but asymmetrical relation emerges through the instability between these opposing poles. Renowned scientist Prigogine (1997) introduces the role of instability that breaks the time-symmetric view of thermodynamics (both the time reversible and time irreversible processes). He emphasises that when the relation is connected to instability, the possibilities and probabilities emerge and the outcomes cannot be predicted in advance. In this consideration the discursivity in the transdiscursive reading points to instability, both emerges from and merged in the asymmetrical relation between discursive and non-discursive dimensions in an urban fragment.

In the transdiscursive reading, the body discovers asymmetrical relations between the discursive and non-discursive dimensions in an urban fragment through the relational experience. Merleau-Ponty (2002) asserts that the body, as one's relation to the world, is the medium and source of one's experience. The relational experience is a reflective act of the body that constantly forms new connections in an urban fragment, which gives way to discursivity. Dewey (1980, 17) states that the experience is an interaction between the body and its surrounding, where the body continuously reaches a closure, a fulfilment and pursues an opening, an initiation of new relations. While the body inquires into the urban fragment, both the body and the space transforms into something new. The relations between the body and the space are constantly unfolded and new relations are formed, thus instable and points to an asymmetrical relation between the body and the space. When an urban fragment is isolated from the social, economic, political and cultural relations it is merged in and it emerges from, it is reduced into an object through which certain discourses are manifested. This study claims that the relational experience enables the body to go beyond the certain discourses and discover the relations as non-discursive dimensions in an urban fragment. In the relational experience, moving from the discursive dimensions in an urban fragment, the body links them to the non-discursive dimensions, thus makes connections between spatial elements and connotations they recall. Furthermore, through the relational experience, the body explores the political acts of the residents, their social fabric, economic condition and cultural scene in an urban fragment, as well as the city in general. During the experience in the present time, the body establishes generative relations with the past as well as imagines the future as a promise (Dewey, 1980, 18). In this regard, the relational experience opens up the urban fragment for new ways of understanding and interpreting the present time and simultaneously, contemplating the past and imagine the future.

### **Methodology of the Transdiscursive Reading**

In this study, in order to problematize the commodification of space, and scrutinise the culture as a narrative through a transdiscursive reading, methodological tools are interwoven with a theoretical framework.

Throughout the study, the theoretical framework and the empirical research methods are developed in relation to each other. The theoretical framework is constructed through a literature review on topics related to the ways for understanding and interpreting culture within the present-day relations. Yeldeğirmeni, as an exemplar, became prominent while inquiring into the problematic of culture in relation to the theoretical framework.

An empirical research was carried out regarding the theoretical framework in Yeldeğirmeni. In this regard, observational and interview data was collected. Yeldeğirmeni was visited in an extended over a period of time from 2015 to 2019, in different seasons, on different days of the week and at different hours of the day. During the site visits, not only the physical and social fabric of the neighbourhood was observed first-hand, but also cafes and restaurants, cultural institutions such as the concert halls, art galleries and event venues had been experienced during events. The obtained data in the early visits both contributed to the development of the theoretical framework and also accordingly, brought about a concept specific to Yeldeğirmeni to the forefront. Further visits link the concept of culture as a narrative to the research problematic and the related literature. First-hand observation was documented in Yeldeğirmeni by taking field notes as verbal data, and taking photos and making sketches as visual data. The visual data demonstrate the old and new buildings, everyday life of the users, cultural and commercial spaces in Yeldeğirmeni. As a constituent of the empirical research, semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions were also made with seven users of Yeldeğirmeni including the neighbourhood headman. Out of four inhabitants, two of them were artists who live and work in Yeldeğirmeni. The other interviewees were a partner of an architectural office who realised an architectural project in Yeldeğirmeni and a constant visitor of the neighbourhood. Questions were related to the users' preference of Yeldeğirmeni for living, working and visiting, their perception of the past and present day of the neighbourhood, and what they find unique or value about it. Further data was obtained through written sources such as the interviews made with the past and current residents, on-line newspaper articles, on-line blog entries that promote culture and lifestyle in Yeldeğirmeni between the years 2015-2020. A deeper insight to the past and present-day of Yeldeğirmeni was also obtained from the data collected from the books, articles and theses written on the neighbourhood.

All the obtained data is interpreted regarding the theoretical framework constituting verbal and visual texts. Visual texts are made up of diagrams that are considered as the visual representation technique of the transdiscursive readings. Diagram is an assemblage of concepts, photos and sketches, brought together in relation with the theoretical framework, which encourage open-ended interpretations (Karababa, 2015, 26-7). In these diagrams, various images such as the photos taken during the site visits, sketches, the photos that are collected from secondary sources such as online pages and city maps are brought together in relation to the arguments and concepts utilized in the verbal text. Superimposing and juxtaposing these images forms a whole, which represent more than what they would represent if laid out separately. The diagrams are designed to give an insight related to culture as a narrative, without confining the viewers to rigid judgements but aims to trigger discursivity as in the transdiscursive reading.

## CULTURE AS A NARRATIVE IN YELDEĞİRMENİ

Throughout its history, Yeldeğirmeni has been a flour production site, as well as a neighbourhood of Muslims, Christian and Jewish communities, a decaying neighbourhood inhabited by lower-income groups as well as a central residential area with low-budget rents. After being subject to a local government-led bottom-up regeneration project for more than half a decade, now Yeldeğirmeni, is mentioned with the discourses of “the popular arts and culture location” (Ezer, 2015), “the newest on-the-rise district” (Tapan, 2016), “hearth of street art” (Gillis, 2016) or “a new hipsterland” (Oi, 2017), the trending neighbourhood of Istanbul (Çankaya, 2020). These discourses both acknowledge the success of the bottom-up transformation process but also confine Yeldeğirmeni in a certain image as if the transformation could be fixed at this point in time.

Certain social events such as migration as well as political implementations such as culture-based urban politics influence the social organisation, the cultural habits and the economic structure, and, stimulate a transformation in an urban fragment. Within the present-day relations, the transdiscursive reading based on relational experience could be helpful to understand the culture in an urban fragment within its ongoing transformation, and discover new ways to be articulated to the process. In this regard, how the culture as a narrative could be unfolded in Yeldeğirmeni, a fragment of Istanbul, is going to be demonstrated through fragmented sequences of relational experiences. These sequences will be pointing to the discursivity in Yeldeğirmeni, as well as the threats of commodification that above-mentioned discourses entail.

### Re-shuffling of the Residents

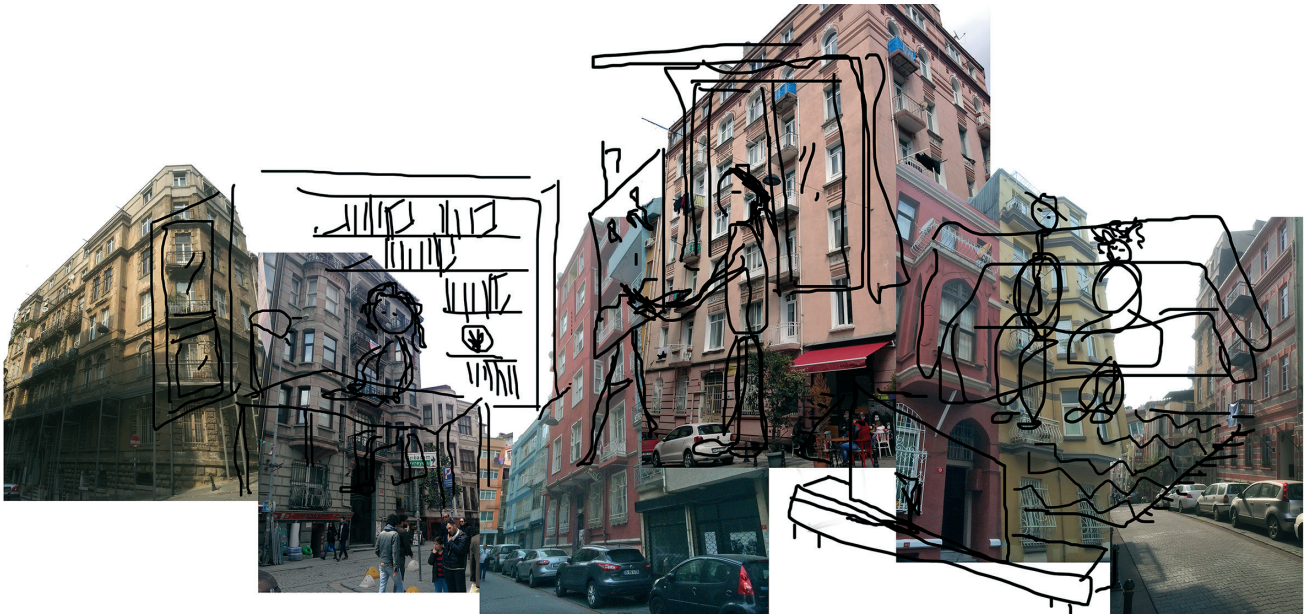
Although today many visitors approach to Yeldeğirmeni from the Kadıköy marketplace and walk down from the Karakolhane Road, which is the main road going all the way through the neighbourhood, it probably was not the main direction of the flow in the early 1900s. Back then, this end of Karakolhane Road was dominated by the everyday life of the inhabitants of high-storey apartments, students of both foreign and local elementary schools and high schools, and the congregations of the existing religious buildings. Furthermore, the closeness of this end to Haydarpaşa Train Station, a major construction activity of the time, was making it an already bustling focal point. While sitting in a café or walking down to the ferry terminal in Yeldeğirmeni today, it is quite common for one to notice 5-6 storeys high apartments, with delicate ornaments on their façades. They recall both the existence of Jewish community, who were the first ones to build these apartments in Istanbul at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and also the population increase in Yeldeğirmeni at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to the inhabitancy of the foreign engineers that came to work for the construction of Haydarpaşa Train Station.

The demographic structure, which was dominated by Turks and Greeks, was changed when the Jews living in Kuzguncuk, another seaside village on the Anatolian Side, had to move because of a fire in 1872 (Atılğan, 2017). Jews built apartments in Yeldeğirmeni, which were the first to be built in a residential area of Istanbul (Şahin, 2013, 61). The Jewish community resided in Yeldeğirmeni and they invested in the neighbourhood, however as soon as the families got wealthier they moved to other comfortable neighbourhoods in Kadıköy, as well as to the districts on the European side (Ender, 2016). The population of Yeldeğirmeni had increased significantly

once again, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Haydarpaşa port and train station were being constructed. New buildings such as Valpreda Apartment, were built by German engineers in order to accommodate the Italian masons who worked at the construction of the port and the train station project (Şahin, 2013). These apartments are located closer to Haydarpaşa Train Station, where the character of the streets portrays 2-3 storey-high houses in the beginning of Karakolhane Road gradually upgrades to 5-6 storey-high apartments, and notable landmarks such as religious buildings down the road. Although today, some of these old buildings are no more in a physically good condition, these buildings, mostly located at the corner of the blocks recall the glory days of Yeldeğirmeni with their multiple storeys, large windows and sophisticated façade ornaments.

The relational experience intensifies the encounters with these buildings, which enables one to make connections to the cosmopolite past but also relate to the present time. Until recently, the apartments were mostly inhabited by the workers immigrated from Anatolia since the non-Muslim population decreased gradually since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Today more people from diverse backgrounds such as students, white-collar workers, artists and people in creative industries and foreigners, especially expats, came from various countries, chose to reside in these apartments. Their preference is related to the closeness of Yeldeğirmeni to the public transportation routes as it is also mentioned by two of the interviewees who moved to the neighbourhood in the 2010s. Another reason for moving to Yeldeğirmeni is related to relatively low rents compared to other neighbourhoods of Kadıköy, which is also asserted by three interviewees, an artist and white-collar workers. Therefore, while shopping at the local market, it is not unusual to come across with artists that have a workshop in Yeldeğirmeni, or a university student that inhabits. Also, sitting at a local café at Karakolhane Road, one could overhear conversations in various languages, such as English, German or French and so on which are probably foreigner either expats or university exchange students living in Yeldeğirmeni. Yeldeğirmeni is preferred for accommodation among both the university students who come to Istanbul from various part of the country, and the foreign students who come from foreign countries with exchange programs or for graduate education (Uzgören and Türkün, 2018). Artists further prefer to work in Yeldeğirmeni because of various reasons such as the possibility to find larger indoor spaces with high-ceilings, being part of an art-based solidarity among each other and closeness to the craft ateliers which enables them to produce collectively (Aldinç, 2018). Artists not only have workshops in Yeldeğirmeni, but they also choose to live here because of its neighbourhood culture as well as closeness to the vivid life in Kadıköy (Aldinç, 2018). All the interviewees pointed out that even though the economic and demographic structure changed in Yeldeğirmeni throughout the years, the neighbourhood culture still persists. Furthermore, one of the interviewees who lived in Yeldeğirmeni for six years states that random encounters with friends or local shopkeepers, is one of the unique aspects of the neighbourhood culture here. She mentions that these encounters could lead to spontaneous incidents such as getting out of the house for the grocery shopping but finding herself at a friend's house, or dining at a restaurant. Newcomers rediscovered Yeldeğirmeni by settling in once-neglected historical apartments that offer affordable accommodation in the mid of public transportation routes. This preference denotes that as short-term residents of Yeldeğirmeni they are not in the





**Figure 2.** Diagram of re-shuffling the residents

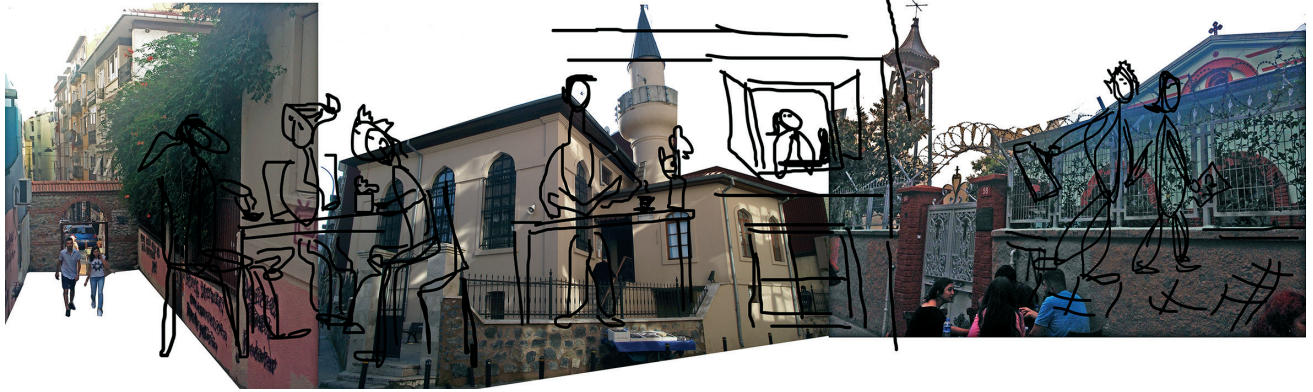
quest of revitalizing the past nor they are looking at the past as nostalgia, but building up new relations on its past relations (**Figure 2**). In this reflexive process, both the residents and the culture in Yeldeğirmeni are constantly transforming each other, which further triggers the discursivity.

### **Re-inventing the Socio-cultural Variety**

The old apartments, that currently host locals or foreigners for long or short term, are not the only traces left by the Jews and Christian communities of the past century. A synagogue, churches and missionary schools are also transmitted up to the present time, recalling the dense existence of different cultures in Yeldeğirmeni's past. Although more than half a century now, the demography of the neighbourhood is mostly dominated by immigrants from Anatolia, these past traces attract newcomers from diverse backgrounds and trigger a socio-cultural variety.

While approaching to Karakolhane Road from the seaside, climbing up from the street, passing through a passageway one could discover the entrance of the Hemdat Israel Synagogue, which is hardly noticeable if one does not look for it on purpose. One of the most significant synagogues in Istanbul is an introverted space, hidden behind high walls enclosing its garden, offering service only on special occasions. Although over the years, the Jewish community in Yeldeğirmeni got richer and moved to wealthier districts, this synagogue still carries a special meaning concerning the history of the Jewish community in Istanbul, especially for those who moved to other neighbourhoods of Kadıköy (Şalom, 2008). The importance given to the synagogue, which transmits through its materiality also pushes forward the relation between material and immaterial dimensions, giving rise to discursivity.

On the other hand, while strolling around the streets of Yeldeğirmeni, one would not only hear the voice of the muezzin from Rasimpaşa Mosque, but could also hear the bells of Ayios Yeoryios Church, spotted by its grey iron bell tower located at its courtyard. Ayios Yeoryios Church, Notre Dame Du Rosaire Chapelle, and schools such as Sainte-Euphemie Middle School for Girls which is now a part of national education system under



**Figure 3.** Diagram of re-inventing the socio-cultural variety

the name Kemal Atatürk High School, and Saint Louis Elementary school, indicate that the Christian population was once dense in Yeldeğirmeni. Furthermore, a German School was also built for the children of the German engineers, which was one of the elaborately designed grandiose buildings of the time (Atılgan, 2017). Although these missionary schools are now a part of national education system, their physical existence as a discursive dimension, reminds the cosmopolite past of Yeldeğirmeni as a non-discursive dimension. Encounters in Yeldeğirmeni with both the people from different parts of the world and the historical and religious buildings points to discursive dimensions. One could link these discursive dimensions with the non-discursive such as an awareness of the multi-cultural past that eroded away decades ago. Moreover, this link could also encourage one to imagine a future where different cultures come together in a new way (Figure 3).

### Re-functioning the Cityscape

On a regular week day, in the morning, one could attend a workshop at *Tasarım Araştırma Katılım* (Design Research Participation) (TAK) Kadıköy, a non-governmental organisation, which collaborates with designers and private sector for solving design issues in Kadıköy district. In the evening one could prefer attending jazz seminar in Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre, which is a renovated old church. The day could end with hearing out a concert of a local artist while sipping couple of drinks at a workshop-café-art gallery. These activities could give one an idea about the present-day cultural scene in Yeldeğirmeni as well as make an individual to think about the dynamics that trigger this cultural productivity.

Regarding the bottom-up regeneration project several old buildings are renovated in Yeldeğirmeni such as Notre Dame Du Rosaire Chapelle which was the church of La Nouvelle Eglise et Le Pensionnat Sainte-Euphemie Middle School for Girls and re-functioned as Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre (*Yeldeğirmeni Kültür Merkezi*) in 2011 after being idle for a decade. Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre became an important event space in the neighbourhood hosting various cultural activities such as local artists' concerts and seminars on various topics. It should be mentioned that, as one of the interviewees states, not only the newcomers or visitors but also the existing inhabitants attend to the events in Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre such as film screenings or concerts. Watching a movie, listening to a concert or attending a jazz seminar in Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre, recalls memories of the past, while simultaneously reveals the potentials in the area and foreshadows further developments.



Besides the reuse of the buildings prompted by the local government, public-private-civic initiatives are also being articulated to this cultural scene by re-functioning old buildings or various neglected spaces. TAK Kadıköy could be given as an example, which is an initiative established with the collaboration with Kadıköy municipality, ÇEKÜL Foundation and *Kentsel Strateji* (Urban Strategy). TAK Kadıköy re-functioned one of the oldest cinema theatres in Yeldeğirmeni as a collective space for designers where workshops and other design-related events take place. TAK aims to offer solutions to the district with a design-focus by collaborating with various stakeholders such as industrial designers and architects as well as material providers, construction companies from the private sector.

There are also places where eating and both producing and exhibiting arts come together, one such place functions as a workshop-café-atelier and another could be a vegan café-gallery-arts space. One of the artists interviewed emphasizes that the artist ateliers, some of which are located at the spaces previously used as storages or offices, contributes a lot to the cultural scene in Yeldeğirmeni. Another interviewee who is a frequent visitor of Yeldeğirmeni, and a volunteered yoga trainer, states that locals, not only newcomers but also long-time residents, attend to the activities such as yoga classes arranged by the Rasimpaşa Social Center (Rasimpaşa Sosyal Hizmet Merkezi) operating in a renovated mansion that was once idle. These cultural facilities intensify the activities in Yeldeğirmeni giving way to a transformation, which does not limit the space to a certain discourse but opens it up to new encounters (**Figure 4**).

In the first Mural Istanbul Festival, which took place in Yeldeğirmeni in 2012, the blind façades of buildings are also re-functioned and became useful as a canvas for the murals. On the way to a newly opened café, a visitor turns around the corner and notices a mural on the solid surface of a building, stops for a second and then moves on thinking about the mural he just encountered. Another mural makes a current resident change her way, on the way to her home to have a look at it once more. Some other resident uses a mural at the corner of the block as a reference point when giving his address to a friend. Moving on from the material aspect of this city-scale art, the body relates them to the immaterial aspects. These murals could be read as a clue of the culture-focused regeneration project that

**Figure 4.** Diagram of re-functioning the cityscape



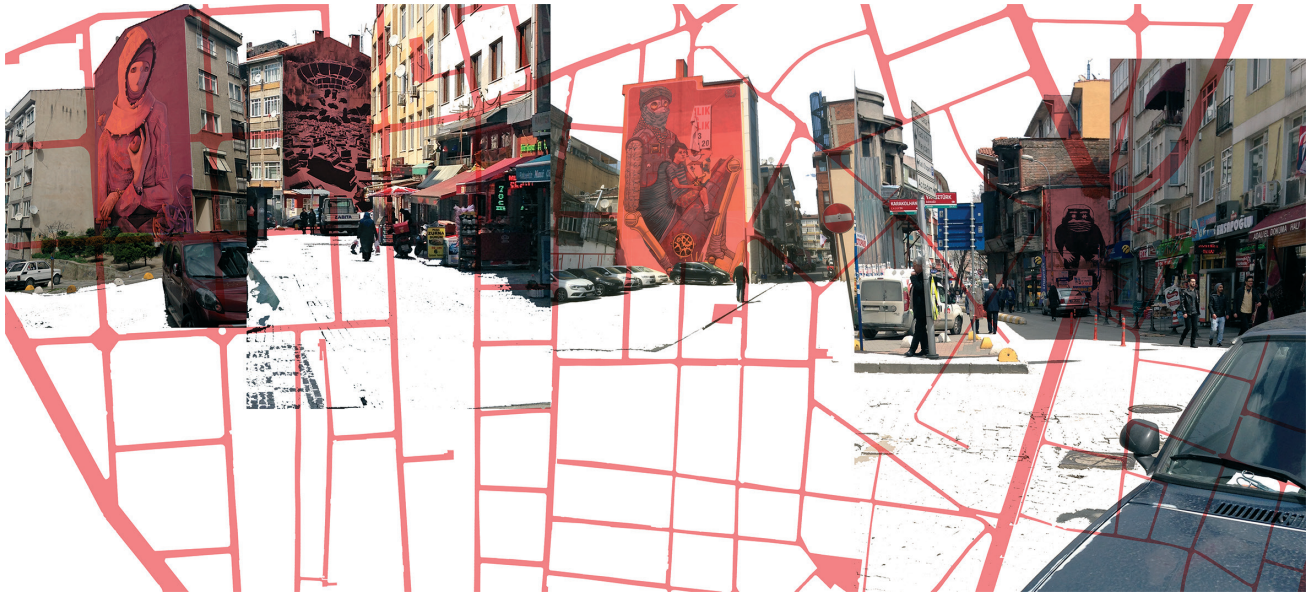


Figure 5. Diagram of cityscape as a canvas

attracts visitors and, for the residents they reinforce their attachment to the neighbourhood, through the connotations they evoke (Figure 5).

### Re-vitalizing the Socio-economic Activity and Entailed Threats

Söğütlüçeşme Road as the main road that reaches up to the sea, borders the Kadıköy marketplace, and by just crossing this main road, one could find themselves in the marketplace of Yeldeğirmeni. Yeldeğirmeni marketplace extends perpendicular to this main road, all the way through the Karakolhane Road, on which many shops, patisseries, bakeries, artisan workshops, cafes, restaurants are densely located. Following the presence of students and artists residing in Yeldeğirmeni, new cafes, restaurants and shops began service, to satisfy the needs of the newcomers. The artist ateliers, cafes, third-wave coffee shops and new-wave barber shops are not isolated from the neighbourhood on the contrary, they are located side by side or face to face to traditional coffee houses, the local grocery, hardware store or quilt maker stores. As three of the interviewees mentioned, the togetherness of local and new shops creates diversity, which is one of the noteworthy aspects specific to the neighbourhood culture in Yeldeğirmeni. The lifestyle of the new residents boosted the services sector, which also improved the economic condition of current residents and their perception of their neighbourhood, even if slightly. For instance, some of the existing facilities are renovated in order to keep up with the present-day needs of their customers. The spatial transformation of local stores denotes that new spaces of the services sector not only trigger a cultural transformation but also an economic one (Figure 6). Improvement of the social and cultural life and economic power of existing inhabitants is an important aspect of urban transformation, otherwise as Kuyucu and Ünsal (2010) argues the physical improvement would lead to displacement of the current population and deepen the socioeconomic segregation within the city.

Either as residents or as visitors, newcomers are articulated to the ongoing neighbourhood culture while at the same time they contribute to the culture in Yeldeğirmeni. Moreover, Yeldeğirmeni Cultural Centre and Rasimpaşa Social Centre also play a pivotal role in this process, by bring the newcomers, visitors and existing inhabitants together through





Figure 6. Diagram of re-vitalizing the socio-economic activity

the events they organize. Through the relational experience, it could be construed that the neighbourhood life is not vanished but shifted. That is to say Yeldeğirmeni is transformed into something new, while carrying the traces of the past.

While the spatial distribution of the old and new generation recreational and commercial facilities of the services sector resembles togetherness in a form of social mix, it should be noted that, there is a certain spatial segregation as well (Figure 7). The newcomers or the visitors both young and elderly, man and woman prefer to socialise and spend time in the cafés that are freshly opened around the neighbourhood. Meanwhile it is not unusual to see teens and elderly women socializing on the door steps, chairs or stools in front of their houses or on the benches around the neighbourhood, and the presence of male residents is easily noticeable as they tend coming together at the local coffee houses. The different socializing space choices of old and new residents, as a discursive dimension, refers to social and economic difference which could result in gentrification where the old inhabitants could be displaced regarding the increase in the land values in relation to the preferences of the newcomers. If the process is solely led by market forces and lacks integration of the existing inhabitants, leads to gentrification of the urban area and loss of its heterogeneous socio-cultural structure (Uzun, 2003). Uzgören and Türkün (2018) put forward that the gentrification has already began in 2010s with the increase in the rents and the displacement of the existing residents due to the short-term accommodation opportunities which is preferred primarily by the Erasmus students and tourists coming from abroad. While the landlords benefit from the short-term accommodation in economic terms the tenants suffer from the high prices. As the neighbourhood headman and the artists having ateliers in Yeldeğirmeni also claim, the rents began to rise especially after the Gezi Park protests in 2013, when the neighbourhood gained popularity, following the opening of Don Quixote Occupied Social Centre, a collaborative initiative of local people. The



Figure 7. Diagram of visible and invisible borders of spatial segregation

increase in the rents is even more questionable considering the structural weakness of the buildings against the possible high-intensity earthquake that is expected in Istanbul as pointed out by the neighbourhood headman.

On the other hand, bloggers, maggers or social media influencers introduce and promote Yeldeğirmeni to the general public, by visiting, taking photos and writing on the popular places to see, eat, drink and chill out. Also, various guided tours are organised to visit Yeldeğirmeni either by cultural organisations or ethnic communities such as local tourism agencies or the Jewish community. Zukin (1998) claims that the walking tours organized in the historic neighbourhoods initiates the gentrification in terms of cultural appropriation. In this regard, it could be argued that in the present-day city these usually paid-tours appear to be a way of consuming Yeldeğirmeni, a popular historical neighbourhood, through culture. Since these short visits, allow a limited time for personal contemplation, they yield to shallow comprehension of the dynamics of the urban space. The culture-based tourism gives a kick to improve the economic scene, but does not assure a socio-economic transformation along with a socio-cultural one. Furthermore, as Zukin (1999) states, the aim to connect culture to tourism creates an image, in other words, confines the urban space into a discourse, and this idealisation of the space carries the risks of commodification.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, the commodification of the urban space, by reducing culture into a discourse as a constituent of postmodern marketing strategies, in the urban transformation projects that take place in Istanbul, was problematized. It is argued that the main problem with reducing the culture into a discourse is freezing an urban fragment, to a certain image by abstracting time from space, as if it has always been and will always be



what that discourse indicates. The problematic of image was questioned in Richard Serra's film *Hand Catching Lead*, in which the fixed frame shows a hand that opens and closes nonstop, while lead is falling from air. The hand tries to catch the lead and if it does catch it for an instant, the fingers open and lead drops down. According to Bois and Krauss (1997, 187) Serra's film refers to a never-ending performance of making and unmaking which could be understood as an attempt to "invade the fixed image of stabile sculpture with the counterimage of process".

On the contrary to the abstraction of time from space, which leads to the commodification of urban space, by confining culture to an image in urban transformation projects, culture as a narrative refers to a process. In order to understand and interpret the culture as a narrative, transdiscursive reading was introduced as a methodology, rooted in theory that would enable a deeper understanding of the urban space in the course of urban transformation. In the transdiscursive reading, the body grasps discursive and non-discursive dimensions through the relational experience, which gives way to discursivity. In this context, the transdiscursive reading was carried out in Yeldeğirmeni as an exemplar, which is a fragment of Istanbul, subject to urban transformation initiated by Kadıköy Municipality a decade ago. Yeldeğirmeni deserves a special attention since it exhibits an alternative to other urban transformation processes that take place in historical urban fabrics of the inner-city centre, but also carries the threats of commodification.

The transdiscursive reading revealed that the culture is always in a process of making and unmaking in Yeldeğirmeni, both a constructive and de-constructive action of the urban actors such as past and current residents, newcomers, visitors, local initiatives as well as the local governments, architects, etc. Although Yeldeğirmeni is not exempt from commodification since as it gets popular the service sector proliferates and the rent prices increase, it still exhibits a unique neighbourhood life which is being transformed due to the contemporary needs of the residents and visitors. In other words, culture in Yeldeğirmeni coincides to a production of in Deleuze's terms, difference in kind, which also stimulates further transformations by recalling the past and enabling to imagine the future.

As a result, the discursivity in an urban fragment could be revealed through the transdiscursive reading, without neglecting the possible threats that are associated with it. Threats are not eliminated at the expense of protecting the existing culture or reaching an equilibrium between the two, but the continuity of the oscillation between these opposite poles triggers discursivity and culture emerges as a narrative. In order to unveil the discursive potential of an urban space and making the possible threats of commodification visible, transdiscursive reading could be employed in other historical urban fragments where the urban transformation projects taking place.

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**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Kentsel dönüşüm; söylemötesi okuma; ilişkisel deneyim; anlatı olarak kültür; Yeldeğirmeni.

## İSTANBUL, YELDEĞİRMENİ'NDE SÖYLEMSELLİĞİ KAVRAMAK

Bu makale, küreselleşme bağlamında kültür kavramını anlamak ve yorumlamak için İstanbul, Yeldeğirmeni'ndeki dönüşümü irdelemeyi amaçlar. Toplu ulaşım ağlarına ve Kadıköy ilçesinin gelişen eğlence ve gece hayatının merkezine yakın olan Yeldeğirmeni, İstanbul'un tarihi bir mahallesidir. Yerel yönetimce 2010 yılında başlatılan, kültür ve sanat etkinlikleri üzerine temellenen kentsel yeniden canlandırma projesi, Yeldeğirmeni'ni yerli ve yabancı kullanıcılar için çekici bir yer haline getirirken, sermayeyi cezbetmekte ve kentsel mekânın metalaşma tehlikesini de içermektedir. Yine de Yeldeğirmeni'ndeki dönüşüm, kültürü bir söyleme indirgeyerek mekânı metalaştıran kentsel dönüşüm projelerine bir alternatif sunar. Makalenin teorik çerçevesi, Foucault'nun "söylemötesi müellif" kavramının kentsel okuma kapsamına kültüre ve mekâna bütünsel bir yaklaşımla çevirisi üzerine kuruludur. Beden-öznenin kentsel mekândaki ilişkisel deneyimine dayanan söylemötesi okuma, bütünsel yaklaşımın bir bileşeni olarak teorik çerçeveyi, yöntemsel araçlarla birleştirir. Sonuç olarak, Yeldeğirmeni'de, teorik çerçeve ile iç içe geçmiş söylemötesi bir okuma yapılmış ve Yeldeğirmeni'nin metalaşma tehditlerinden muaf olmasa da varolan mahalle kültürü kullanıcıların çağdaş ihtiyaçlarıyla harmanlanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda,

Yeldeğirmeni'nde bir anlatı olarak ortaya çıkan kültür, verili ya da icat edilen bir ürün değil, süregiden sürecin bir bileşenidir. Kültürü bir anlatı olarak anlamak ve yorumlamak, kentsel mekânın metalaşmasına direnebilen mimari ve kentsel tasarım için alternatif yollar açabilir.

### GRASPING THE DISCURSIVITY IN ISTANBUL, YELDEĞİRMENİ

The aim of this paper is to scrutinize the transformation in Istanbul, Yeldeğirmeni, for understanding and interpreting the notion of culture within the context of globalisation. Yeldeğirmeni is a historic neighbourhood of Istanbul, which is close to both public transportation routes and thriving nightlife and entertainment centre of Kadıköy district. In 2010, local-government-initiated urban regeneration project founded on arts and cultural activities, triggered the transformation in Yeldeğirmeni, which attracts local and foreign users, but also tempts the capital and brings about threats of commodification of the urban space. The transformation in Yeldeğirmeni, exhibits an alternative to most transformation projects that lead to commodification of space by reducing culture into a discourse. The theoretical framework of the paper is built upon Foucault's concept of "transdiscursive author" translated into the scope of urban reading, with a holistic approach to culture and space. As a constituent of the holistic approach, the transdiscursive reading, which is rooted in relational experience of the body-subject within the urban space, incorporates the theoretical framework with methodological tools. Interwoven with the theoretical framework, a transdiscursive reading is carried out in Yeldeğirmeni and it is concluded that although Yeldeğirmeni is not free from the threats of commodification, the existing neighbourhood culture is incorporated with the contemporary necessities of the locals, newcomers and visitors. Thus, the culture in Yeldeğirmeni, which emerges as a narrative, is a constituent of an ongoing process rather than a given or invented product. Understanding and interpreting the culture as a narrative could open up alternative ways for an architectural and urban design that would resist the commodification of space.

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