

READING URBAN STRATA OVER EVERYDAY LIFE IN A METROPOLE: ISTANBUL¹

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Abstract

This study is about focusing on the relation between everyday life which is thought to be a global living style in a metropole and metropole's urban strata. As is known metropolises have numerous strata and each stratum contains a very different "code" that is consistent. When we try to examine these layers, it becomes clear that the layers are constructed integrally with these codes. To discover these urban layers in a correct way, not only the social and cultural codes of the community had to be known but also the everyday life of the time.

When to think about culture, culture refers to the interactions of a society, a social group, or individuals in society with their lifestyles and encompasses the possibility of any kind of reality in which human beings exist. These possibilities are endless but they generally correspond in all kinds of material and spiritual products, such as the forms of existence and thinking of people / societies, what they do or want to do, their values, their traditions, their ways of organising their wishes or their organisational forms (association, school, state etc.), production and consumption.

On the other hand, everyday life is ordinary but multidirectional. It includes all kinds of needs such as nutrition, dressing, accommodation, neighbourhood relations and meeting all these requirements. So, it can be said that, everything about everyday life that is defined as the people's surroundings like houses, architecture, home furnishings, urban areas etc. are also part of the culture. The closeness of daily life to culture integrates both into the city in the context of production and consumption.

With an assumption that the concept of everyday life addresses to the social and cultural codes of the metropolitan people, the study relies on the intertextual readings with the concepts of everyday life, culture, urban spaces, urban strata and metropole. It tries to suggest a form of reading urban strata over everyday life in a metropole. To do so, social, cultural and architectural strata are analysed in metropolitan area over everyday life in different layers. The main concepts and the ways of reading the urban layers presented in theoretical discussion have been tried to be experienced through Istanbul and narrated in this paper.

Keywords: Everyday life, culture, urban spaces, urban strata, metropole

Introduction

Cities and subjects related to cities have received significant attention in academic debates in several different contexts and it can be said that researches based on cities have a basic place in literature. The common emphasis in almost all of the urban analyses is that modern cities are different from the pre-modern cities in many ways, and modern urban design has emerged as a new space in the equation of capitalism, industrialization and modernity (Esgin, 2016). In other words modern time cities have been shaped by the new dynamics of industrialization which supported capitalism. Especially after the 1980s, globalization and neo-liberal policies have stamped almost all over the world and have reshaped cities from every aspect. In fact industrial towns as "production sites" have been transformed to "service and consumption places" (Türkün, 2012). The new networks of relationships in the cities and the more competition and maximum unearned income inducement triggered by the nature of the urban policies thus produced have inevitably caused the spatial transformation of urban areas. At this point, it is important and necessary to understand the nature of the cities and maybe more the metropolises which is quite complicated and remarkable. As is known metropolises have numerous strata and each stratum contains a very different "code" that is consistent. When we try to examine these layers, it becomes clear

¹ Engincan, P., 2017. "Reading Urban Strata Over Everyday Life in a Metropole: Istanbul", LITERATURE, ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN SPACE '17 /International Interdisciplinary Conference on Literature, Architecture and Urban Space, 03-04 March 2017, DAKAM's International Architecture Studies Meeting March 2017 Conference Proceedings, ISBN: 978-605-9207-65-2, pp. 319-325, DAKAM Publishing, Istanbul.

that the layers are constructed integrally with these codes. In this context the elements such as individual action and interaction forming urban and urban everyday life become significant nearby the cultural codes and structural processes.

If we focus on everyday life, we will see that everyday life is ordinary but multidirectional. It includes all kinds of needs such as nutrition, dressing, accommodation, neighbourhood relations, etc. and meeting all these requirements (Lefebvre, 2013). So, it can be said that, everything about everyday life that is defined as the people's surroundings like houses, architecture, home furnishings, urban areas etc. which are also part of the culture. When to think about culture, culture refers to the interactions of a society, a social group, or individuals in society with their lifestyles and encompasses the possibility of any kind of reality in which human beings exist. These possibilities are endless but they generally correspond in all kinds of material and spiritual products, such as the forms of existence and thinking of people / societies, what they do or want to do, their values, their traditions, their ways of organising their wishes or their organisational forms (association, school, state etc.), production and consumption (Giddens, 2000). The closeness of daily life to culture integrates both into the city in the context of production and consumption.

With an assumption that the concept of everyday life addresses to the social and cultural codes of the metropolitan people, this study is about focusing on the relation between everyday life which is thought to be a global living style in metropole and metropole's urban strata. It tries to suggest possible forms of reading urban strata over everyday life in a metropole. To do so, this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents the literature background by reviewing studies on everyday life concept. "Urban Strata and Metropolis" section discusses the urban strata in a metropole and the possible ways of reading layers over everyday life systematically. The main concepts and the ways of reading the urban layers presented in theoretical discussion is tried to be experienced through Istanbul and narrated in the "Reading Urban Strata over Everyday Life: Istanbul" section. The last section is in lieu of conclusion which outlines future research directions and questions.

Literature Review: Metropolis from the Perspective of Everyday Life

To fully understand everyday life, it is essential to draw upon the studies of Georg Simmel, Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau. Simmel's urban analysis, is the product of an effort to understand and explain urbanization process and related transformations that takes place parallel to the development of industrialization and capitalism by analysing individual behaviours (Esgin, 2016). In his work "The Metropolis and Mental Life", he puts forward the mental characteristics of an individual living in a metropolis and the important features of metropolises. According to Simmel (1969), to cope with the problems of modern life in the metropolis, the metropolis people have had to relocate themselves, to provide psychological harmony with the environment. In order to do so, metropolitan people use mind instead of their emotions and have a different level of consciousness from rural areas: "Thus the metropolitan type of man – which, of course, exists in a thousand individual variants – develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him. He reacts with his head instead of his heart." (Simmel, 1969). By this means, a metropolitan individual is able to maintain his/her subjective life against the oppressive power of metropolitan life. Additionally, a metropolitan man is 'free' "to adopt an exaggerated personal style, to be different and stand out from the crowd." (Borden, 1997).

The important features of metropolis which is the location of modernity are money and division of labour. Metropolis is at the centre of the money economy which is one of the clearest symbols of modernity and "Money is at once the permanent and the transient, the abstract and the concrete." (Borden, 1997). By the effect of money economy everything in the metropolis has become shopping objects, turned their qualities to quantitative value. In the metropolis, which is the meeting point of the growing social distance for the metropolitan individual who needs to acquire his/her individuality, the division of labour has become important. Moreover the location, size and density (Borden, 1997) of metropolises which are physical conditions are important features to make development of money economy and labour division possible. Nearby these physical conditions according to Simmel (1969), spatiality in the metropolis is different from any other city.

When we move on to the studies of Henri Lefebvre, we see that everyday life is ordinary because people born, live and die. In life time daily things; money, minute, meter, kilogram etc. are measurable. After all life can be good or bad and now (present moment) is enjoying or suffering (Lefebvre, 2013).

Everyday life as well as ordinariness is so versatile because it's "economic, psychological and sociological... nutrition, dressing, accommodation, neighbourhood relations, environment..." (Lefebvre, 2013) namely basic necessities. With all this content, the city is integrated both in terms of production and consumption,

and in this context it is possible to talk about a daily life that is organized by the influence of globalization. Organizing is a consumption-oriented organization for the urban parts and it forms a society with consumption oriented. The action of directing this consumption contains all the dimensions of globalization and it mediates the delivery of goods to the city in the context of the city. In the process of globalization, where almost everything is commoditized, shopping centres, theatres and art centres, cafes, restaurants, sports complexes etc. are being produced in increasing numbers in urban centres. Urban space productions are supported by advertisements and social prestige indicators, which not only describe consumption at the level of individuality but also determine the content and direction of everyday life (Engincan, 2016).

One of the most important points about everyday life is the repetition. These repetitions are according to Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2013); "Movements of hands and body, movements of parts and assemblies at the same time, rotation or departure / arrival), hours, days, weeks, months, years; linear repetitions and cyclic repetitions, natural and rational time, etc.". In other words, daily life has routines and habits. It is possible to read these habits and routines of everyday life through its components. These components include; work, family and 'private' life and leisure time. Each component finds its spatial characteristics in urban areas and includes alienation with externalities (Lefebvre, 2013). "Work" refers to the different positions of the individual in the service or production sector as a component that covers most of the everyday life. The difference between the regions in which the city is located and the working activity that takes place in the daily life of an individual can well coincide with the empty time in another individual. For family and 'private' life, the house and meaning of house is gaining importance. In lots of cases, free time is part of family and private life. Especially with the globalization, the changing housing presentation and the housing equipment have made it possible for the leisure time to be transformed into activities in the house itself (dealing with the garden, watching television, making repairs, etc.). On a higher scale, it is not a misleading approach to consider leisure time as the main axis of consumption-oriented change of cities. Because the leisure time evaluation, the activities offered in the inner city areas are fun, resting, distracting and all these have no obligations. Relaxation and enjoyment are the basic ideas of leisure time (Lefebvre, 2013).

The last person to address is Michel De Certeau whose aim was to create a theoretical ground by reading everyday habits and attitudes, especially on consumption culture. De Certeau often mentions about strategy and tactics. De Certeau (2008) states that many habits, attitudes and practices in our daily lives (reading, talking, wandering, going to the market or eating etc.) are tactical. On the other hand, inhabitants of the cities live in an environment planned by experts and surrounded by strategies.

Urban Strata and Metropolis

Urban spaces are the physical counterparts of the city's daily life, both due to its functional characteristics and cultural codes. When we attempt to define the urban space, mostly the places which reflect the cultural face of the city such as cinemas, theatres, restaurants, shops, museums, galleries, libraries, hotels, bars, coffee shops, parks etc. come to mind (Aytaç, 2007), but this can be deceptive especially when searching urban strata over everyday life. Because in such an analysis based on cultural indicators, it will be possible to overlook the practices of everyday life that are not yet defined in cultural codes. Thereby as a component of everyday life work and family-'private' life has to be analysed as much as leisure time in daily life and it is necessary to examine the physical spaces that they correspond to.

So it can be said that reading the layers of the metropole over everyday life has a facilitating effect in order to draw a path in analysis because almost every layer in the city has a place in the everyday life of not all inhabitants, but at least some of them. Besides it is unrealistic in any way to read all of the urban strata in the whole metropolitan scale at once. In this context, they can be handled in a piecemeal fashion as "layers related to the time they are perceived in everyday life" (Aydınlı, 2012).

At the same time handling urban strata in fragments will also allow us to ask the question 'for whom' to each layer in the context of its meaning. This question is especially inevitable when we think that layers defined by cultural codes have common or similar semantic value for the whole city, whereas some layers may be valuable for different groups. Additionally, the question can transfigure an urban layer perceptually. Even when we deepen the examination, it is realized that some layers, especially the physical ones, are far from perceptual for almost all urban people and are not even perceived physically. On the other hand the layers which are not perceived in daily life can be perceived some 'time' mostly when their functional characters are damaged. Therefore, while attempting to read the urban strata, it is necessary to take into consideration all the layers at least in the context of their physical beings even when they are not perceived by the metropolitan people but because functional for their daily life. As an argument to support

this, Jach (2001) in his book titled 'Layers of the City' states that dealing with the layers of the city means not only with subterranean, but also with the streets, buildings and the spirit of the city. In this context, urban strata can be analysed in varied forms. We can basically divide the urban strata into two groups which are physical and perceptual and both groups may also be subject to examinations, including horizontal and vertical layers. In fact, all of the physical and perceptual urban layers overlap both horizontally and vertically. In Figure 1, an attempt has been made to develop a scheme that collects possible physical layers in a metropolis and reveals inter-layer relationships. Additionally, intertwinement and continuous/discontinuities of the layers were tried to be expressed in the scheme. While identifying the layers, it is experienced that some layers have sub-layers and even they are related to each other, they could be in the different spaces of the city such as transportation. This level for example has sub-layers in underground/sea and over ground/sea vertically and horizontally. On the other hand, we see that historical layers can intertwine with too many layers such as transportation, buildings' layer and with the other historical layers physically.

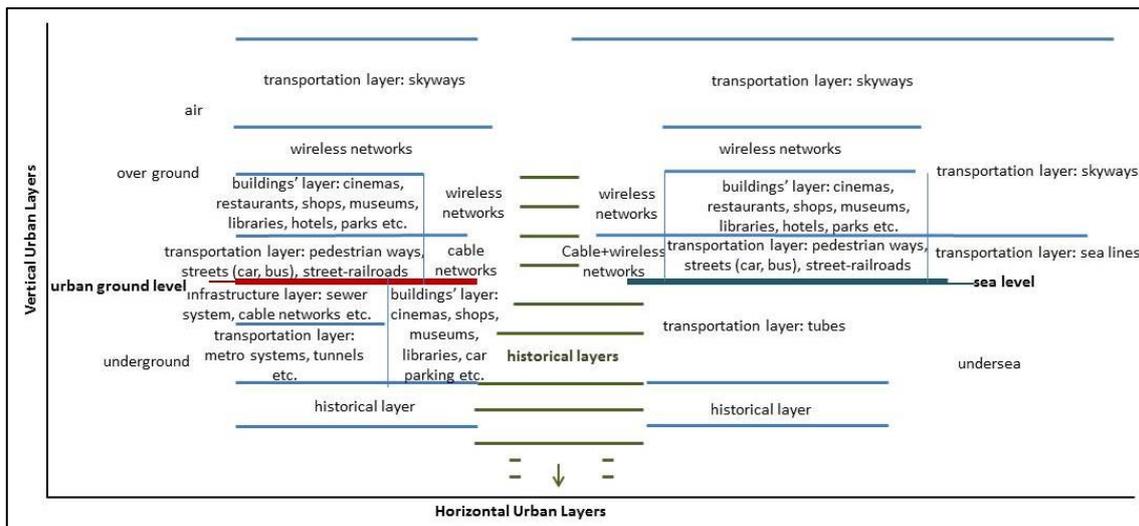


Figure 1. Possible Physical Layers of a Metropolis – Trial Table

All perceptual layers are somehow personal experiences, depends on an individuals' sense. For this reason, when identifying perceptual layers of the city/metropolis, everyday life and its routines gains importance. The components of everyday life which are work, family and private time and leisure time give reference to urban strata. This reference act sometimes finds a physical response, sometimes perceptual, sometimes physical and perceptual. It is precisely for this reason that the layers of the perceptual cycle of everyday life cannot be assembled on a table. This cycle also has the ability to change with cultural codes, differences between metropolises, and pluralities in the same community.

If you are for example an architect or a sociologist, in other words an outsider examining the layers and then mapping can be a way of perceiving the city and visualising your data. As is known "A map is a graphic representation of the spatial arrangement and distribution of a territory, a lens through which we see the city. Maps are forms of discourse that frame our experience of places and spatial practices; tools that we use to navigate, control, understand, imagine and transform the territory of the city." (Dovey & Ristic, 2017).

Reading Urban Strata over Everyday Life: Istanbul

Istanbul is chosen as a metropolis to give spatial examples in the context of the theoretical framework which was tried to be established. These examples as you will comprehend will be sections from Istanbul. We will see two physical layers in mapping works and two perceptual layers in photographs.

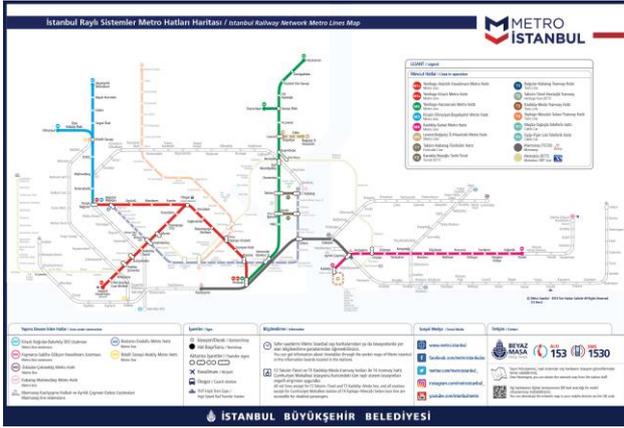


Figure 2. Istanbul Railway Network Metro Lines Map (Istanbul Buyuksehir Belediyesi, n.d.)

The first example is about transportation. In everyday life transportation is seriously significant especially when we are thinking about a metropolis. Istanbul metro lines are located in the underground part of the transportation layers and may be seen as a sub-layer. Over the ground the bus lines, “metro bus” lines, street-railway lines, ships and etc. take part in this layer and it can be said that transportation level is one of the most important layers which is perceived by the metropolitan people physically and perceptually as it a public space.

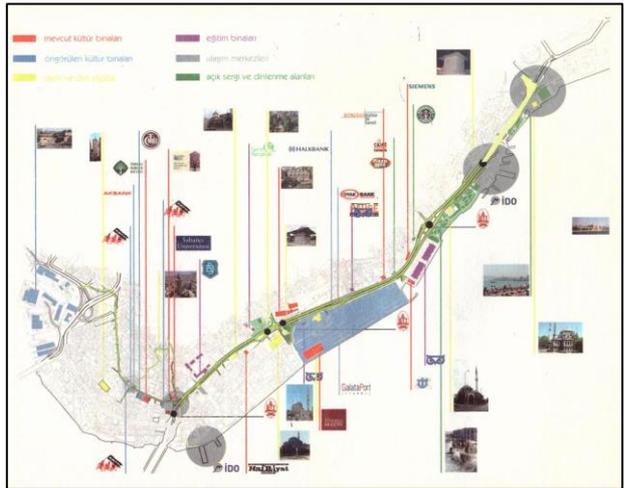


Figure 3. Map which has various layers (Yüçetaş & Dede, 2014)

The layers shown in Figure 3 are our second example for physical ones. The owners of the study Yüçetaş and Dede (2014) explain this figure: “Mapping that shows various layers of information superimposed: existing cultural attractions, open exhibition and recreation areas, historical and religious buildings and educational buildings along Bankalar Street and Meclis-i Mebusan Street.”. So according to this statement we see historical layers, buildings’ layers on this map, but it has to be added that we also see transportation layer on this map as it is related to the entire field.



Figure 4. Gezi Park Protests, Taksim, İstanbul (Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 2013)

In Figure 4, we can tell that we are discovering a perceptual layer of the metropolitan people. It would not be wrong to say that such public spaces, where the inhabitants of the city come together and use their right to the city, can be perceived as a layer because of perceptual meaning of the urban space. On the contrary we have to be aware of other layers of this area such as historical layer which refers to both physical and perceptual layers, buildings' and transportation layers etc. So we can state that while we are trying to identify the layers of urban spaces, we realise that all the layers related to the area overlap with each other.



Figure 5. Fındıklı Neighbourhood Square, Maltepe, İstanbul

The last example is an individual example from a site which is not a famous place in the city. For most of the metropolitan people this site has no meaning –there may be people who haven't heard the name of the site yet- but on the contrary for the people who live here, this square is a place to shopping, a key location for transportation and special place where they turn back to their homes in the evenings. It has physical layers with its existence in the context of the metropolis but perceptual layers for its inhabitants.

In lieu of conclusion

In this study possible forms of reading urban strata over everyday life in a metropole tried to be presented. After literature review the urban strata of a metropolis is discussed and given place to a trial table which had been developed in order to collect possible physical layers in a metropolis together and reveals their inter-layer relationships. Four examples are given from İstanbul as a case study that are related to physical and perceptual layers.

At the beginning of this research, it was envisaged that one or more methodological fiction could be put forward in the context of reading the urban layers through everyday life practices. However, during the study, it was revealed that besides dozens of new problems, millions of perceptual reading styles can be put forward. If we talk about the spatial perceptions that can be customized as much as the population in the city, it is necessary to carry out much more extensive studies in the metropolitan population, accepting at the beginning that perceptual studies match up with individuality.

In this context, many questions are left to the researches that can be done in the future. For example; how can it be possible to map layers that are perceived by different individuals in field studies that will be carried out on the basis of work, family and private life and leisure time? Is it possible to enlarge the cross-sectional studies on physical layers without losing data on the horizontal? Is it possible to make an in-depth study on an individual's metropolis perception, to make inferences about the perception of other individuals, and will these bring us scientific results?

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