

**The Imaginations of Streets in the Istanbul 2010 European
Capital of Culture (ECoC) Event: Inclusion and Cultural
Diversity in the Production of Urban Space**

Inauguraldissertation
zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie
an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

vorgelegt von

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2019

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Datum der mündlichen Prüfung: [25 Januar 2016](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this dissertation have been a very though process in many ways, yet it also transformed me painfully and luckily, I wasn't lonely. I want to thank first the de facto supervisor of this dissertation, Dr. Derya Özkan for the strong support and meticulous labour and time they put on my work. I also want to thank Prof. Dr. Johannes Moser for supporting me and providing the best conditions for me to complete my dissertation.

I also want to thank

Begüm Özden Fırat for calling me one day randomly to inform me about this doctoral position and for keeping their support throughout this process.

my parents Ayşe Karakaya and Çetin Seçkiner for accompanying me in this personal transformation, caring about this transformation more than my carrier or title and especially to my mom Ayşe for surprizing with her power and courage for transforming herself together with me and opening her mind to totally new ideas, and speaking out against the nation-state hegemony in casual situation in public without any fears

Lisa Meinecke for proofreading the entire text, and encouraging me together with Angelika Buchenberger to keep writing

Fuat Karagüney for helping me with the illustrations on the maps

Gülden Aarsal for running from work to Tarlabası one evening just to bring me a good camera for taking pictures for my research when I wasn't prepared well, and my former colleagues in Istanbul for supporting me all the way long.

Gökay Yıldız, for taking all my criticism very serious although I have been very harsh on the event that they organized, and keeping an interest for understanding gentrification process together with me

My dear friends Pelin Özay and Sibel Hökelek who made their homes mone, and have been my family in Istanbul during the research

I want to thank my dear friends Olga Reznikova and Dominik Lehmann, who read my text several times, didn't escape from long discussion on my ideas and dealt with my stress and bad times since the beginning of this research.

Last, but not least, I want to thank all my interviewees, and other individuals that contributed to this dissertation in many ways.

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1 Introduction

This dissertation is part of the ‘From Oriental to the Cool City. Changing Imaginations of Istanbul, Cultural Production and the Production of Urban Space’ Project funded by Emmy Noether of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. It was hosted by the Department of European Ethnology at LMU. Principal investigator of the project Derya Özkan (2008) focuses on the imagination of ‘cool Istanbul’ as the latest imagination of the city that followed the former imaginations which our project analyzed in three periods: the imagination in the 19th century as an Oriental city; imaginations of Istanbul as a ‘Third World city’ and ‘crude urbanization’ in national developmentalist discourse; and the ‘global city’ discourse in post-Fordist globalization.

As part of the project, my task was to investigate the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Event (Istanbul 2010 ECoC) in terms of the imaginations of Istanbul that are produced, introduced and/or reinforced through this event. Meanwhile, I moved to Munich, a city to which I had never been before, from Istanbul, a city where I had lived almost for 3 years having worked at the Ministry of Culture, at the Second Preservation Board of Cultural and Natural Heritage of Istanbul as assistant specialist of culture and tourism. Before I left my job in Istanbul for coming to Munich, I was preparing a thesis to become a specialist in the ministry. In this thesis, I was expected to focus on space in terms of the physical and legal aspects of prevention of cultural assets. I wanted to analyze Tarlabaşı area, in which many inhabitants were displaced through a pilot urban transformation project. My purpose was finding out the ways and arguments that would call the rights of inhabitants that are renters or squatters in terms of their involvement with the maintenance of the buildings. Although I had this humble, yet naïve approach, I had a hard time to find a supervisor in the ministry due to my reference to the contested politics of urban transformation. Therefore, I initially perceived this

dissertation as an opportunity to analyze the process of urban gentrification in a broader sense.

However, the imaginations that produced and supported the post-Fordist urban transformation policies in Turkey were more complex than a mere physical transformation of the city and the legal terms of property. As soon as I started to work on the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event program, I realized that the transformation of the city was connected to an agenda for promoting the city as a ‘global city’ or a ‘cool city’ which includes the global city discourse too. Saskia Sassen introduced the concept of the global city in terms of the flow of information and capital after the market-oriented role of the nation-state in the post-Fordist era “as a result of privatization, deregulation, the opening up of national economies to foreign firms, and the growing participation of national economic actors in global markets” (2005, p.27). The global city discourse was already on the urban agenda in Istanbul since the aftermath of the Military Coup in 1980. The period after the coup was a turning point in terms of a shift to post-Fordist policies. Accordingly, Istanbul began to be imagined as a global city that would be a financial hub within the order of cities in the global economy.

Together with the discovery of the concept of ‘cool’ as a marketing tool (see Frank, 1997; Pountain and Robins, 2000; McGuigan, 2009), cities that compete in the global city market started to be branded as ‘the cool city’ to attract visitors and investment. In the “From Oriental to the Cool City. Changing Imaginations of Istanbul” project, Derya Özkan refers to article in Newsweek Magazine on 29th September 2005 as the initial demonstration of the ‘Cool Istanbul’ imagination (Newsweek, 29 September 2005). The cover of the magazine read: “Cool Istanbul: Europe’s hippest city might not need Europe after all”. In this representation, being cool was ascribed to Istanbul as its power to locate itself among the global cities, independent from becoming a European

Union city. The cultural diversity and clash of subcultures, the night life, the historical heritage, everyday life landscape and authenticity were juxtaposed to prove that Istanbul would offer the hippest adventure for those who wanted to discover a diverse urban experience in which they would find something for their own taste. According to Özkan (2007) the imagination of Istanbul through the ECoC event circulated this latest imagination, which put an emphasis on the aestheticization of the city. Within the framework of this dissertation, I focused on the event and the organizations around this event to analyse its connections to this imagination and to the production of everyday life.

The city form and almost every district of Istanbul have a history of physical and social change in relation to migration. In the beginning of 21st century, the newly elected AKP government wabruuns the first single party government after a long history of coalitions in Turkey. This new government started to produce urban transformation projects one after the other for the inner city spaces, which were produced by migration to Istanbul in the second half of the 20th century. Different from the fragmental approaches of former governments, AKP produced comprehensive transformation projects at once, both in the *gecekondu* neighborhoods and inner city settlements of marginalized as well as economically and socially disadvantageous communities. For the transformation of the inner city neighborhoods, a discourse of renewal of historical assets was employed by the government, and a law was enacted to construct a legal base for this transformation that replaced the law on preservation of historical assets No. 2863 for the areas determined as the urban renewal area.

The culture-led regeneration is one of the highlighted goals of the European Capital of Culture. The success of the Glasgow 1990 ECoC in transforming the city through the event shifted the focus of the ECoC tenure from achieving an identity of Europeanness through the discourse of cultural diversity to culture-led urban regeneration through

cultural diversity. In 2010, Essen, a post-industrial city was transformed and developed through the event's discourse of culture-led regeneration. Derelict and/or abandoned industrial areas were transformed into venues of the cultural sector. According to Steven Vertovec (2010) the success of Essen in getting the tenure of ECoC in 2010 lies already behind the promise to introduce cultural diversity to newcomers, and to transform the city through culture with the motto "transformation through culture-culture through transformation".

"Essen's application envisages the role of culture in structural change both as motor and resource. Its central idea is regeneration through culture. Culture, in this sense, is not only the motor of development, but is also a renewable social resource. This approach to culture is very much in line with the emergent 'cultural diversity' model of [the] European Council and succeeds in appealing to the EU institutions, which promote this model. In this context, the migrants are included in processes of creating new European identities, cultural conglomerates beyond the static and compartmentalized schemes of culture (be they folkloric and/or multicultural). Migrants, on the basis of their cross-border ties and networks, are expected to contribute to the regeneration and reinvention of the cultural sector in the region. They are envisaged as part of the social resource of the transformation." (ibid, p.129).

Since I was based in a city in central Europe during this research, I tried to observe the references to and representations of cultural diversity, European identity, and discourse of multiculturalism in everyday life to grasp the connections and nuances between the contexts of Europeanness and global cities in Europe and Turkey.

Alongside the conservative criticism that position the concept of multiculturalism as a threat to the society in terms of the cultural homogeneity, trust within social groups,

superiority of so-called Western culture, or composition of ‘Leitkultur/lead culture/common culture’¹, multiculturalism as a concept of liberal capitalism has been criticized also in terms of its link to verification of identity as a way of taming the singularities for the recognition of individuals in sterilized conditions of capitalism (Baudrillard, 2001); for being nothing but a verification of origin to construct a subjectivity in favor of the hegemonic discourse of global capitalism (such as Spivak, 1992 and 1999); and for its assumption that a universal regime of truth could be achieved through politics of multiculturalism (such as Shapiro, 1995). Together with the goals of ECoC events such as culture-led regeneration, social inclusion and highlighting diversity, the cultural diversity depicted in the mural has been one of the stimuli that led me to think critically about the concept of ‘culture’ in terms of the ways it is employed in the discourse of nation-state identity and post-Fordist urban development policies. I was present during the speech of the Mayor of Munich Dieter Reiter in the first large anti-PEGIDA² rally in Marienplatz, Munich, on 22nd of December 2014. According to Reiter, it is a great success in terms of integration that the migrant population is invisible in Munich while still being one of the largest migrant populations among the cities in Germany. Hence, the discourse of integration and cultural diversity was oscillating between the celebration of the invisibility of differences in the city and the emphasis on the stereo-typical representation of the ethnicities. However, what Reiter celebrates should be taken into account together with the consequences of the urban development policies and high rate of gentrification in the city which pushed refugees and most of the migrant workers to the outskirts of Munich.

Within the context of Turkey, ethnical identities other than the dominant Turkish nation-state identity have gone through oppressive and brutal state policies throughout the

¹ The dominant culture. Such as Melvin E. Bradford: See Katherine S. Mangan, “6th Generation Texan Takes on ‘Trendy Nonsense,’ ” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 8, 1992, p. A5.

² PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of Abendland/Occident) is a xenophobic move-ment against the refugees and migrants in Germany led by the NAZI leader Lutz Bachmann.

history of the republic. Although these identities were expected to integrate into the Turkish identity, they were also coded officially and discursively as the others. After Istanbul was chosen in 2006 as one of the ECoCs of the year 2010, government started to talk about a series of ethnic identity reforms, such as the reforms on the Kurdish, Armenian and Roma identities. However, these reforms did not recognize the violence of the Turkish identity over minority groups, such as the Armenian Genocide, the brutal attacks of the Turkish army and state forces against Kurdish people, or the exile of Roma communities and other communities that are considered as ‘gypsies’ from the cities through state-led urban gentrification. In the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event program, to highlight the cultural diversity, the minorities have been included in terms of architecture (such as Greek and Armenian architecture in the city), or life style with reference to the relationship between the community and neighborhood (such as *mahalle* ³) festivals). Moreover, subcultural activities such as street art and street performances were officially recognized by the state through this event program as part of the discourse of cultural diversity. The connection established by this event later turned into a collaboration between some of the actors of subcultural creative practices and the urban transformation projects located in the areas in which minorities, migrants from rural parts of Turkey and immigrants reside.

Since my research for the dissertation started in 2012, the event of Istanbul 2010 ECoC was already past. Along with residing outside Turkey during the research, inaccessibility of the material that was officially produced by the organization was another difficulty. When I started to investigate the event program and the projects, I realized that there have been some connections between this event and some later events that remained from the collaboration during the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event. I tracked the impact of the imagination of Istanbul produced in this Event in the latter events in

³ Although it can roughly be translated as neighborhood, since Ottoman Empire, *mahalle* has actually been an everyday life scale of social and residential unit that is defined ethnical, religious, occupational or economic characteristics (Ergenç, 1984; Bayartan, 2005). The administrative neighborhood unit in Turkey is also named after *mahalle*.

the city. Finally, I focused on two events for this purpose: Tarlabası Street Art Festival and Ahırkapı Hidrellez Festival. While the former is a street art festival organized by a group that took part also in Istanbul 2010 ECoC program with street art workshops. The investigation of this festival fitted also to the attempts of the ECoC organizers to include the street arts in the official agenda. The latter, Ahırkapı Hidrellez Festival is an event that has been regularly organized since 2002 and it was organized in collaboration with the ECoC event as part of the event program in 2010. I focused on the festival that was organized in 2012. Both events were produced through a cooperation between the public and the private sectors. In these events, I scrutinized the relationship between the events and everyday life in terms of urban gentrification.

Already during my first interviews with the event organizers, I frequently encountered statements that understood urban gentrification as a natural outcome of the system, even in case the interviewees were critical to the state-led urban transformation projects. In both cases, the actors that produced the festivals denied any contribution to the gentrification processes. For some artists, considering the long term impact of their work on the space in terms of gentrification would be merely a “political” responsibility that an artist is not obliged to involve in.

However, the protests against the enclosure of Gezi Park by a governmental project to transform it into a shopping mall in 2013 was almost an answer to my interviewees and to me. The park is neighbour to Tarlabası area, and it was practically defended through an occupation for over two weeks by protestors that initially rejected the enclosure of urban commons. Quickly, these protests that consisted of people from several different political directions substantially turned into an anti- AKP government movement. However, the defence of commons remained as an important concern and after the protests, some community structures were formed by protestors to keep defending the city in different scales.

These protests inspired me to talk about urban commons rather than public space since the idea of the possibility of another world could open up a discussion against the idea that “There is no alternative” which was actually a slogan propounded by former UK Prime Minister Margaret H. Thatcher throughout the 1980’s that instilled the governmentality of post-Fordist capitalist market economy. Another interesting part of the protests that connects to my initial material was that the practices, discourses and acts of the protestors were both against the consequences of the “cool Istanbul” discourse, and producing the imagination of the Cool Istanbul at the same time.

Although cultural capital is theorized by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) as a certified intellectual level, hence defined in terms of the position of individuals in society with regards to their cultural habitus, both culture as social hierarchy and anthropological concept of culture that refers to the practices, myths and production of everyday life in communities are included by the urban gentrification mechanisms as a value for branding spaces.

Sharon Zukin (1995) explains that culture started to constitute an economic sector as well as a power of governing policies to control the urban society. Especially after Glasgow 1990, ECoC programs reveal the transformation of culture into an economic surplus as Zukin (1995, 2004) mentions, and that the cultural capital subject to economic policies of government and the market is not limited to the intellectual accumulation. The imagination of cultural diversity produced by the Istanbul 2010 ECoC through the inclusion of ethnical identities and subcultural practices such as street art for the goal of culture-led regeneration indicates the surplus value that could be extracted from identities for capitalist enclosure of space.

In my investigation of the street imaginations, I approach the relation between the imaginative and the everyday production of the space interpreting the triad of the (social) production of space put forward by Henry Lefebvre (1991). Rejecting a reification of the space and differentiating ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ space, Lefebvre referred to the hegemonic discursive space production as the ‘abstract space’, and asserted that its

attempt of homogenizing the social space itself triggers the emergence of a new space, a space that emphasizes the differences: the differential space (ibid, p. 52).

While talking about everyday life, I consider the way Lefebvre took it, who introduced the concepts of the right to the city based on the politics of the critique of everyday life. Lefebvre added the analysis of everyday life to the description made by Karl Marx on the alienation in the workspace and pointed out that the life of workers continued also outside the workspace under the effects of alienation (Elden, 2004, p.110-111). According to Lefebvre (1991) space was not merely a container of things and relationships, but it was socially constructed and produced, simultaneously by three social dimensions. In this triangle, spatial practices and interpretations of space through these practices in everyday life, representation of space, and the imaginations that envision the space discursively and physically produced the (social) space together.

I employ street as an anthropological term rather than term of the city image. Moreover, I don't conceptualize the street as a public space, but as an urban common and as a venue for reclaiming the urban commons collectively. Kevin Lynch's (1960) approach to street as a cognitive tool in mental mapping, an element of the image of the city to envisage and conceive the space, is widely referred in an urban planning perspective. I rather see the street as a social context of everyday life and an urban common to reclaim against the capitalist enclosures created by means of urban gentrification. Maja Hojer Bruun (2015) also points out the relationship between urban commons and community in terms of the diverse claims and power relationships over commons, and centers the urban commons on her approach to the production of space rather than public space: "Urban commons and the right to the city are about much more than securing public access to physical spaces such as the street, parks and other city-scapes and to social spaces, knowledge, media and information infrastructures such as the internet; urban commons and the right to the city are about securing people a life in the city (Bruun, 2015, p.157)". Accordingly, Bruun develops an approach to urban commons through

the argument of Ida Susser and Stéphane Tonnelat (2013, mentioned in Bruun, 2015), for whom public space is only one aspect of urban commons other than labor, social services, reproduction of neighborhoods, housing, transportation and other consumption; as well as “collective urban visions, art and creative endeavours” (ibid.).

I employ the term commoning as an act of producing, reproducing and enjoying the commons collectively beyond the restrictions of property and possession, considering the social hierarchies among the people, to achieve a discussion over the struggle against capitalist enclosures. When I use the term of common, I attend to refer to the space and resources beyond the hegemonic dichotomy of public and private. Thus, under the conditions of post-Fordist capitalism, the act and idea of commoning inevitably present a resistance.

The street in this research stands for a venue of both repression and resistance. According to Asaf Bayat (2010, p.12), “[s]treets, as spaces of flow and movement, are not only where people express grievances, but also where they forge identities, enlarge solidarities, and extend their protest beyond their immediate circles to include the unknown, the strangers.” Departing from this understanding of the street, I intend to contribute in the search of a struggle against the capitalist enclosures of space.

To connect the production of the space to the labour that makes the space, I employ the term affective labour that is in strong relation with the commoning theorized by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt. Departing from the term *affectus* in the 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza’s theory of affects that is the and mind but also beyond them, the correlation of the act and mind, Michael Hardt (1999) conceptualizes the labour that is immaterial and motivated by the affective relations as “affective labor”.

While the connection to the event and space of artists in Tarlabası Street Art Festival 2012 is mainly based on the relations of prestige, the involvement of those who took part in Volunteers Project of the Istanbul 2010 Capital of Culture event and in the Gezi Park protests in 2013 demonstrated the affective relation between the production of the spatial practices and individuals that attended and produced these practices and work. In

former case, volunteers give the affective labor for a project organized by state authorities and private investors, while in the latter case the affective labor of protestors produce an resistance to the public – private cooperation for enclosures of commons.

Part of my research is based on the outcomes of my communication with actors of the organizational relationships, such as the state officials that took part in the Istanbul 2010 ECOC Event organization, and those who produced the art projects and festivals on the streets, and everyday life practices in the spaces on which I focus. I tried to contact and/or interview the same people for over three years. When I could do so, I didn't simply open up the same discussions over and over, nor just produced additional questions each time; but I shared the development and handicaps in my research process. Several inhabitants from the *mahalles* that did or did not involve with the event organizations, and some of the volunteers in these events joined my questioning and contributed in my research with their evolving interpretations and questions through this research process. I took these relations as a reference to structure this dissertation together with the statements and arguments that were repeated in one or in several discourses.

In my approach to cultural diversity, I link Michel Foucault's critical investigation of the possibility of universal truths and of power in terms of both oppressive production of hegemonic knowledge of reality and modes of resistance to the social production of space. To this end, I refer to the concepts of governmentality, biopolitics and power of discourse through a discourse analysis. According to Foucault (1981, p. 52-53), "discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized". I investigate the relations of power in the production of space through elaborating the connections between the cultural events, everyday life, and imaginations of space and identity. Instead of merely revealing these relations in terms of the

capitalist enclosures through the post-Fordist identity and urban development politics, I aim at opening discussions about the possibilities of resistance against these enclosures through the commoning of space and culture. To this end, I chose the streets as my laboratory in this research since streets are the venue of everyday contacts, cultural practices in public and also the venue of encounters between the people, marketing mechanisms and state repression through the discourse of security.

As Friedrich Engels already observed in 1873 in his work 'The Housing Question', the 'needs' of the bourgeoisie and the liberal market economy, so to say the power of ruling, continuously displaces and replaces the population in the city by means of different justifications. Michel Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics lights the way to understand this process in terms of the genealogy of capitalist liberalism, which constructed a new form of power relations in society; bringing the power of producing the 'regime of truth' in society; a truth generated through discourse.

After the eighteenth century, sovereignty started to be transformed into a model of governance that operated through a moderation of freedom. Foucault narrates this transition in the following way: "... the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species" (Foucault, 2007, p.3). With this new approach on governance of human beings, "a new body emerges . . . a multiple body, with a numerous if not infinite quantity of heads. Biopolitics works with the notion of population . . . population as a biological problem and as a problem of power (Foucault, 2003, p. 245)'. The administrative apparatus of biopolitics to govern populations is 'governmentality' in Foucault's terms, a methodology different than the rule of the sovereigns

before liberalism. This apparatus produces policies and discourses (based on principles of security and hygiene) and infiltrates every spatial, temporal and discursive dimension in human life in which individuals had to undertake the responsibility of their own ‘freedom’. In other words, individuals participate in the application of hegemonic power on population. In advanced liberal cities, together with the downsizing of state through privatization of state functions,

“[T]he multiple projects of contemporary urban government work with presuppositions about urban citizenship in terms of activity and obligation, entrepreneurship and allegiance, in which rights in the city are as much about duties as they are about entitlements...Strategies of governing through citizenship are inescapably open and modifiable because what they demand of citizens may be refused, or reversed and redirected as a demand from citizens for a modification of the games that govern them, and through which they are supposed to govern themselves (Rose and Osborn, 2009, p.752).”

Thomas Osborne and Nicholas Rose (2009) assert that this understanding of individual liberty regulated the population in cities through exclusive diagrams that constructed the relationship of individuals with the ruling power, market and each other according to the discourses promoted by the governmentality to tame the population. I approach the discourses that I analyze in this dissertation to reveal the power of post-Fordist governmentality in the contexts of EU and Turkey, and the “power to be seized” against its domination at the same time.

In Chapter 2, I examine the imaginations of culture and identity in ECoC events, relating discourses of urban renewal and culture-led regeneration to the politics of identity and space in Turkey. Istanbul took this advantageous position of European Capital of Cultures in 2010 as a chance to promote a city image for the global market rather than putting an emphasis on the European city image as a candidate for EU membership. After the event ended, the organization was criticized for the failure in making use of

the advantageous ECoC resources for a culture-led urban regeneration; for using the event as an accelerator in urban gentrification, cloaking it in a guise of urban regeneration; and/or for not establishing an effective and sustainable cultural policy. The process of candidacy was initiated by a group of urban elites in 1999, when the European Commission decided to open the candidacy to non-EU cities. In 2007, an Agency was constructed for the event organization. However, in this public-private model organization, the dominance of state officials in the boards ended up with the resignation of some of the civil initiative members of the organization. In the discourse of the civil initiative members, such as Korhan Gümüş and Asu Aksoy, the state dominant model was a threat to the goal of openness of Istanbul through the Event. Although the governmental approach to the urban land and culture was criticized for causing the loss of the civic persona of the city, the goals and approaches defined in this discourse didn't challenge the urban development and city marketing perspective of the government.

I approach the concept of social inclusion used in the ECoC programs to define the relationship between the event and the cultural diversity of inhabitants in Istanbul that are seen as disadvantageous groups in need of being integrated to the cultural development of the city.

To do so, in Chapter 3 I analyze the case of Tarlabası Street Arts Festival in 2012 which was organized through the relationships between street artists and state during the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event. This festival was the latest of the street festival series that took part in a street in the Tarlabası area after the eviction of its inhabitants; the demolition of their houses for the pilot urban transformation project produced by the collaboration between the public and private sectors. The area was composed of a diverse population of marginalized people most of whom suffer poverty. The area keeps receiving migrants from other provinces in Turkey, from sub-Saharan countries, and from the war zones in Northern Iraq and Syria. After the attraction of the urban trans

formation project, the area in Tarlabası which was not yet under urban transformation plans started to be gentrified plot by plot narrowing down the area in which the former inhabitants nestled thus far. Activists and professionals such as lawyers and architects supported the inhabitants in the negotiation process with the state and the company that executes the project. However, due to the tough conditions forced by the producers of urban transformation, the negotiations ended up as a contract leaving the tenants outside the picture. I will try to summarize the process that brought the conditions of the displacement in Tarlabası in terms of biopolitics, in order to point out the operational means of power through discourses.

The ‘cool Istanbul’ imagination in the Istanbul ECoC event introduced the street art to the collaboration of the state and urban development market in Istanbul. Street art workshops were held by volunteers as part of the event program, and instead of the streets of walls, the works were applied on canvas cloth. Luke Dickens (2008) approaches street art as post-graffiti with reference to its genealogical relevance. Different from the graffiti form of urban inscription, street art experiences and experiments the urban space in further forms of creative interventions. Another breaking point in this process is the artistic boom in New York in the 1980’s that opened the way for street arts to carry the urban inscription and creative guerilla interventions in streets to the art market (*ibid.*). Moreover, such as the case in the promotion of subcultures and subcultural practices as a prominent part of the image of Liverpool 2008 ECoC, street art practices are included in the space marketing as a capitalist value added to the space. The contact between state and people from street art scene in Istanbul by means of the ECoC event finally turned into a tangible collaboration in 2012. The festival was protested by groups and scholars for contributing in the imagination of Tarlabası promoted by the state-private sector cooperation in support of the state-led gentrification. In Tarlabası, gentrification doesn’t only process as the urban transformation projects, but also through the interest

of new-comers based on the authenticity of the area and consequently rising rents. Therefore, the attraction that the festival brought to the area which was demolished for the urban transformation project was welcomed by the City of Beyoğlu. Moreover, in another central district in Istanbul, in Yeldeğirmeni, international street artists were invited by the City for performing on the poorly groomed facades of buildings. To investigate this process of officialization of street arts as part of urban development policies, I firstly reveal the resistance process and handicaps of resistance and solidarity in the area, and then I analyze the discourse of the organizers and participants of the festival, the discourse of state representatives and researchers about urban renewal in Tarlabası, and the processes of displacement in relation to the discourses ascribed to the identities of the inhabitants in Tarlabası that suffer or are under threat of displacement.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the change in the everyday life conditions and the imaginations of Roma culture in Ahırkapı *mahalle* in the Cankurtaran neighborhood in connection with the Ahırkapı Spring Hıdrellez Festival that has been organized since 2002 regularly in the area with reference to the Roma culture. The festival was supported by Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency both in 2009 and 2010.

Thousands of visitors attend the Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival every year since 2002. Until 2011, it was organized by the Armada Hotel, a huge building between the neighborhood and the sea side, which became one of the substantial real estate powers in the area. The announcement of an entrance fee for the festival in 2011 lead to protests in social media and the resignation of the Hotel from the organization of the festival. Afterwards, several other companies organized another festival with the same name elsewhere employing Romani musicians (few of them were from the Ahırkapı). Finally, an art collective (Kumbara Sanat Studio) organized the festival in Ahırkapı in opposition to this. In this year, the festival organized in the neighborhood caused a split in the neighborhood association due to a conflict about beer sale, and a second

association was established against the former one. However, there was a more complex story behind the festivalization process in which the culture attributed to Ahırkapı inhabitants was interpreted in form of a large-scale event defining the area towards the needs of the touristic development and the gentrification process surrounding the area.

In the final Chapter, I intend to scrutinize the aftermath of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Event in terms of the continuities and disruptions of the imaginations of street promoted through this event. For this reason, I first examine the relationships between this imagination and the urban cultural and rental policies of the state. Later, I focus on the Gezi Park protest in 2013 as a defense of the urban commons to investigate the imaginations of culture and city within the Gezi Commune that took place on the Gezi Park for 16 days as part of the resistance.

I finally connect these processes to the effects of event and discourse on the everyday life in neighborhoods in terms of conflicts over culture, identity and security in urban space. This investigation of the spatial practices and contested politics over the production of space is an attempt to question the power relationships and hierarchies among the people, so to say, among the commoners during the process of the struggle for commons.

2 Imaginations of Istanbul as a European Capital of Culture

2.1 Identification of Cultural Diversity through the European Capital of Culture Event

The emphasis on ‘culture’ in EU policies was weak until 1980. In the mid-1980s, together with the rise of European integration projects for migrants, The Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union (a.k.a the Spinelli Plan) was adopted on 14th February 1984 by the European Parliament. It introduced the grant of the EU citizenship to Member States’ citizens and officialized the ‘People’s Europe’ discourse to shape the EU agenda towards the construction of a “European culture model” and to call for “cultural action” (Barnett, 2001). Finally, in January 1985, in a meeting of the European Ministers of Culture in Athens, the Minister of Culture of Greece, Melina Mercouri, put the idea forward to celebrate cultures of European cities in annual events ‘that would put the spotlight on cities around Europe and their role in the development of European cultures’,³. Thus, the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) project was established as the most prominent cultural project of EU thus far (Patel, 2013, p.74).

Clive Barnett (2001, p.10) points out that the European Commission’s framework for cultural action in the period between 1988-1992 intended to ‘shape a popular consensus’ in favor of the market and monetary integration: “The sense of being part of European culture is one of the prerequisites for that solidarity which is vital if the advent of the large market, and the considerable changes it will bring about in living conditions within the Community, is to secure the popular support it needs” (CEC 1987, 1, in Barnett, 2001).

³ European capitals of culture - The road to success: from 1985 to 2010, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture brochure – 2010, p. 3.

Before the boost of cultural policies of the EU in the mid-1980s, Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) had been already providing investment for cultural projects in relation to urban regeneration plans. Beatriz García (2004) notes that the employment of culture for urban regeneration rose in the USA in the second half of the 1970's, and began to spread amongst European cities striving for the transformation of industrial cities. Indeed, together with the impact of the 1990 Glasgow ECoC event, the focal concern of the event programs shifted heavily from producing 'europeanness' to producing 'culture-led regeneration' due to the recognition of ECoC as a promoter of such spatial transformations (Patel, 2013, p.77). In reference to the success of the 'Glasgow model', Myerscough Report in 1994 comments on the impact of ECoC events and connects the achievement to "a stronger involvement of local residents and experts... who understand the complexities and specifics of cultural tourism markets" (Myerscough, 2004 in Patel, 2013, p. 76).

In 1999, Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund regulation was revised in favor of promoting cultural projects. The same year, the European Commission decided to allow non-EU member cities to attend the competition to get the tenure of ECoC. Decision No 1419/1999/EC of European Commission in 25 May 1999 remarked that "establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019 is geared towards highlighting the wealth, diversity and shared characteristics of European cultures and towards contributing to improving European citizens' mutual knowledge" (European Parliament, 2005). This was followed by the Council of Europe (Action Plan adopted at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government, in 2005) promoting a discourse of 'unity in diversity' (Lähdesmäki, 2010). According to the selection criteria mentioned by the European Commission⁴

"...candidate cities must present the role they have played in European culture, their

⁴http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc459_en.htm and see also Decision on the European Capital of Culture 2007-19 – 1622/2006/EC.

links with Europe, their European identity. They must also demonstrate current involvement in European artistic and cultural life, alongside their own specific features”.

Unity in the ‘European’ identity has been a concern for the EU since it was noticed that integration of countries in Europe couldn’t be achieved in legal and economic terms only, unless a cultural identity for Europe was constructed (Sassatelli, 2002, p.435). The EU’s European integration agenda required the compatibility of ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’ in this discourse to promote a cultural action that all the EU countries could attend. Accordingly, in this geography of multiple cultural assets, the cultural unity could only refer to the integrity of different cultures under a unique identity. Hence, in 1990, the European Commission defined this “European cultural model” as a “multi-various, multi-ethnic plurality of culture, the sum of which enriches each individual culture” (European Parliament, OJ C 62 from 12.3.1990, p. 28-29).

Mark Ingram (2010) and Tuuli Lähdesmäki (2010a, 2010b, and 2012) explain the contributions of the European Capital of Culture event to promoting ‘Europeanness’ through a discourse of cultural diversity in order to generate a “unity in diversity”. Lähdesmäki assesses Europeanness as an identity that is constructed to be promoted by the European Union to “foster a common cultural heritage” , and propounds that the cultures and everyday lives of migrants and ethnic identities are utilized to create this picture of diversity. Lähdesmäki argues that this cannot be taken for granted as an unproblematic approach (2010b). Lähdesmäki remarks that the search for a common European culture with a reference to the concept of cultural heritage reminds of the colonial ideology due to its focus on certain European Union countries that dominate the cultural imagination of Europe:

“In a sense the heritage is colonized by the EU for its identity political purposes. ...The recent and the planned enlargements of the EU have caused a situation in which the EU

is forced to redefine itself in relation to its geographical and cultural boundaries.
(Lähdesmäki, 2010b, p.7).”

With the Common Cultural Policy of the EU in 1991, culture and arts were considered as the key for the construction of European identity. Heather Kathleen Field points out that this attempt to construct Europeanness was both for the integration of minorities and migrants and for the prevention of the domination of Anglo-Saxon popular culture (Field, 1998, p.245). To interpret the integration and multiculturalism policies of the EU through this attempt to create Europeanness, I recall the criticism of the construction of subjectivity through the hegemonic discourse of capitalism (such as Spivak, 1999). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1992, p.42) assesses liberal multiculturalism as a form of crisis management in post-fordist capitalism; it becomes nothing but national-origin validation, as the only thing the immigrants have in common is their wish to reside in that country. In case of the Europeanness by means of cultural diversity, the integration of enlarging communities in Europe to the EU context stands for both the economic transactions among the cities and the construction of the discourse of democracy. However, in her investigation on multiculturalism policies in the Netherlands, Ellie Vasta (2007) emphasizes that multiculturalism discourse actually functions as an imagined culture credited to the communities, brings further social divisions, and assigns the responsibility of integration to the immigrants. In case of the construction of the European identity through the discourse of cultural diversity, the cultural policies are employed to include the immigrants, citizens of EU states and minorities in these states with a perspective based on integration to the hegemonic cultural codes in society through an attachment to cultural heritage keeping the origin of people as an identifier in this process of inclusion.

In the context of Turkey, rather than the immigrants, ethnic minorities that have already been part of the population were the focal concern of the governmental approaches on the integration in culture and population. Cultural diversity in Turkey is interpreted by the AKP government with reference to the Ottoman heritage. The aesthetics of Ottoman and Seljuk art and architecture are recalled in the government's discourse and urban imaginations. The idea of Neo-Ottomanism in the Turkish Republic has a historic tradition in the discourse of conservative politics, beginning with the post-Fordist policies of the ANAP government after the 1980 Military Coup (see Saraçoğlu, 2013; Yılmaz, 2006; Laçiner, 2003). Later on, the policies of the AKP government were referred as 'New Ottomanism' (such as Karadeli, 2007; Taşpınar, 2008) especially with an emphasis on the international policies of the AKP government that tends to construct Turkey as a regional power. However, the term 'Neo-Ottomanism' is openly rejected by AKP officials due to the aggressive implications of putting emphasis on their discourse of zero problems and unlimited collaboration with the country's neighbors (Kardaş, 2011; Toledano, 2011). For example, Prime Minister Davutoğlu mentioned that attributing this term to AKP policies was illintended⁵.

While the reference to the Ottoman past generates power to govern the population in Turkey through post-Fordist national identity politics, the attribution of the term 'Neo-Ottomanism' recalls the conflict over national identity construction in the early Republic. However, the identity and cultural politics of the AKP government in the 2000s originates from the transition to post-Fordism and discourse of globalization after the 1980s rather than governance in the Ottoman Empire. The aesthetic reference to Ottoman history is employed to enhance the strategies for constructing a national identity to govern the population. Most prominently, the ethnic identity reforms of the government such as the reforms on the Kurdish, Roma and Armenian identity politics mentioned the

⁵ Nur Batur's interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Yeni Osmanlılar sözü iyi niyetli değil/ The term New (Neo) Ottomans is not well-intended", *Sabah*, 4 December 2009

identities that were not directly referred by government policies earlier, resulting in the dissolution of the dominance of the Kemalist discourse of identity.

This created aesthetics based on the discourse of cultural heritage were also used in the urban transformation projects. In an article on the latter, Işıl Kaymaz is more concerned about the loss of the aesthetical identity of city space than about the displacement processes. Kaymaz thinks that the “main threat” is “the standardization and homogenization of urban landscapes throughout Turkey” by TOKI projects (Kaymaz, 2013, p.753). According to Kaymaz, Ottoman and Seljuk style architecture approaches in TOKI projects produce “characterless imitations” due to the unfamiliarity “with Anatolian culture in terms of site selection, organization of neighborhoods, accommodation characteristics and social and cultural services” (ibid). Consequently, Kaymaz suggests finding ways of including this social imagination of urban space during the ongoing inevitable change from which the post-Fordist urban development process benefits:

“Similar to self identity, urban identity is also flexible and evolving. The change is an inevitable process. However, the question is how to manage the change and urban identity in today’s cities which are more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic than ever. Therefore, sustainability should not be limited to only natural resources, but should also include urban identity as cultural heritage. (ibid, p. 757).”

The imagination of culture and space in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event actually followed the direction of this approach, by promoting an urban identity that included cultural diversity in discourse and producing an urban identity as cultural heritage. Other than the direct references to Greek and Armenian communities, inclusion of the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez festival in the event program provided a rather weak reference to the Roma identity in Istanbul. Here it is essential to remember that due to the official minority status of some non-Muslim communities such as the Greek and the Armenian, ethnic

identities in Turkey are categorized mainly as Muslim and non-Muslim. The emphasis on non-muslim ethnic identities symbolizes also the historical connection between Europe and Turkey, just like the worn-out metaphor of ‘the bridge between cultures.’ Thus, the discourse of cultural diversity is employed both as crisis management, as elaborated by Spivak (1992) in terms of liberal multiculturalism, and as an urban identity striving to domesticate and benefit from contested identities to achieve a multicultural image.

The cultural diversity discourse in Istanbul 2010 ECoC is reflected in Mehmet Karakuyu and Mehmet Kara’s research on the non-muslim communities in Istanbul on Armenian, Jewish and Greek communities, as they call it. Their research concerns the socio-economic status and geographic distribution of the communities in the city. Both in their co-authored article on this research (Karakuyu and Kara, 2010) and in Kara’s master thesis based on this research (Kara, 2009) supervised by Karakuyu, they highlight the contributions of non-muslim minorities such as Armenians to the character of Istanbul. However, they disregard the contested historical processes (such as the pogroms against the Greek community, the problematic approach of the Turkish state towards asylum seeking Jewish people during the 2. World War, or the Armenian Genocide), omitting the motives behind the spatial distribution of these communities in the city. Karakuyu and Kara’s research strives to prove the discourse of cultural diversity in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event at the expense of concealing the painful history of the construction of nation-state identity. The cultural diversity approach of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event was criticized by Member of Parliament Akın Birdal (Peace and Democracy Party, Amed/Diyarbakır) in the Symposium of the Democratic Solution Istanbul organized by the Unity Movement for Democracy on 17th January 2010 as part of the Democratic Solution – Democratic Turkey campaign⁶. Birdal pointed out the conditions in Turkey through which the hegemonic national identity suppresses other identities

such as the civil war in the eastern Turkey and mentioned that a capital of culture would be a place where nobody is threatened or insulted because of their identities.

Regardless of such entanglements in the imagination of minorities in terms of a contribution to the identity of the city, in Istanbul 2010 ECOC event Istanbul's diverse population was reduced to an authenticated input for constructing a discourse of cultural diversity for the sake of establishing its uniqueness.

These search for an urban identity based on a construction of heritage coincides with the 'Eigenlogik/intrinsic logic' approach in urban studies in German speaking academia initiated by the DFG/ LOEWE - *Landes-Offensive zur Entwicklung wissenschaftlich-ökonomischer Exzellenz* research project "Eigenlogik der Städte" in Darmstadt Technical University between 2008 and 2013. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the 'habitus' was adopted by this group of scholars in order to look for a "common meaning" of the "multitude of urban practices" (see Löw, 2012), and to find out the distinctive characteristics of cities. Scholars following this approach gather different imaginations of one city to differentiate it from other cities and strive to produce a general tagline that embraces these imaginations in one (see Berking and Löw, 2008; and Frank, 2012).

Derya Özkan (2011, p. 174) evaluates this concept in terms of the social production of space and denotes that this approach comes short of analyzing visual culture in terms of the social, political and economic conjuncture. Pointing out that what the people think about the characteristics of the city is not independent from the discourses and images produced for marketing the city, Özkan asserts that the *Eigenlogik* approach "develops an analytics for analytics' sake, which is not useful to analyze the complex production of contemporary city", and that it "lacks a critical impulse to see through normative urban spaces and practices" (ibid, p.179). Hence, Özkan concludes, it doesn't offer an approach towards a new understanding for the possibility of "another city". Moreover,

⁶ Anadolu Agency, Akın Birdal: 2010 Kültür Başkenti aldatmaca, Haber7, 17 January 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.haber7.com/siyaset/haber/473037-akin-birdal-2010-kultur-baskenti-aldatmaca>.

Özkan writes: “the *Eigenlogik* approach resembles city marketing: they both pick up the most familiar, noticeable and pervasively seductive elements from what is already available as urban culture, reify cultural tenets and simply deploy them to represent the city (ibid, p.175).”

The approach of the members of the initiative group that started the candidacy process for Istanbul to become a European Capital of Culture was similar to that of the *Eigenlogik* scholars. The group criticized the urban transformation projects of the government in terms of its negative effects on the character, or ‘the civic persona’ of Istanbul, such as Asu Aksoy (see Aksoy, 2012). However, the concerns for catching the distinctiveness of the city through the ECoC event, and employing a discourse of culture to achieve it, did not challenge the discourse and practice of urban transformation. As Özkan criticizes in terms of the *Eigenlogik* approach, the search for a distinctive character of space reifies the culture for the sake of urban marketing, and comes short of analyzing of the displacement mechanisms.

Finally, other than the domestication of identities and communities within the discourse of cultural diversity, the disposition of the concept of culture adopted in the European Capital of Culture stands for the valorization of distinctness that a city could/should offer. Sharon Zukin formulates this mechanism in her frequently frequently referenced definition of culture:

“[C]ulture is a euphemism for the city’s new representation as a creative force in the emerging service economy... a concerted attempt to exploit the uniqueness of fixed capital... In this sense, culture is the sum of a city’s amenities that enable it to compete for investment and jobs, its ‘comparative advantage’ (Zukin, 1995, p. 268).”

The imagination of cultural diversity in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event complied eventually with the goal of the culture-led regeneration policies of the European Commission. In

the National Report of Council of Europe on Turkey's Cultural Policy (2013, p.10) it is stated that "Turkey shares the aims and targets of the European Union in terms of improving the national culture and encouraging the preservation of the cultural diversity." However, the Agency⁷ was highlighting the restoration projects for cultural assets, such as the Hagia Sophia Museum and Topkapı Palace, while other cultural assets, such as the Emek Movie Theater and the Atatürk Cultural Center were exploited by the same state for privatization. The start of the protests against the privatization and demolition of the Cercle D'orient building, in which the historical Emek Movie Theater used to be located, coincided with the Istanbul ECoC Event in 2010. Although the protests couldn't stop the privatization, and a shopping mall was constructed in place of the Movie Theater, the struggle turned into one of the symbols of the social opposition against urban transformation produced through public-private collaboration models (Fırat and Bakçay, 2012).

Moreover, the contested Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) was included in the 'Urban Projects' which basically referred to the restoration of several registered cultural assets. The AKM used to be an important public venue for culture and art in the city. The 11th of August, 2005, in a meeting with the representative from the tourism sector, Turkey's former Minister of Culture and Tourism, Atilla Koç, stated that the AKM should be demolished since it has completed its economic life. As part of this speech Koç also mentioned his expectation of a tourism boost in case Istanbul would be the European Capital of Culture in 2010. In 2008, the AKM was closed for restoration. The Second Board of the Preservation of Cultural and Natural Assets in Istanbul approved a preliminary Project for the building in 2008 (Decision No.2268 on 24.12.2008) which was contradicting the Law on the Preservation of Cultural and Natural assets (Law No.

⁷ Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency. I will continue to refer to it as the agency.

2863) changing the characteristic of the building rather than consolidation. However, in 2010, the building was still not under restoration, and protests were held in front of the building, claiming that this process in which the Center is closed and not renovated yet indicated the plans of privatization. Although in the end of 2012 the Minister of Culture and Tourism declared that the restorations would be completed in 2013, during the occupation of the building by protestors in Gezi Park protests it came out that the restoration didn't even start yet⁸. The building was in use as a police station in the meantime. In March 2015, the Initiative of 'We are in AKM' filed a criminal complaint about the institutions responsible for the fact that the building was not renovated since 2008⁹.

Moreover, the exploitation of cultural assets in this new process dissolves the communities on a neighborhood scale, as well. Several inner-city neighborhoods, such as the neighborhoods in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı (which are officially registered as cultural assets), already suffered this process through the latest wave of urban transformation. Moreover, the discourse of culture employed for the purpose of culture-led regeneration threatens the other neighborhoods in terms of gentrification. In the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency, the state-led gentrification was criticized by the urban elite that had initiated the candidacy process. However, this opposition was targeted at the AKP government as the only responsible legal entity; and reduced the post-Fordist urban policies to a tension caused merely by the politics of the representatives, disregarding the contribution of discourse of culture-led regeneration to these processes of displacement. This criticism based on the discourse of promoting Istanbul as a European city, bringing Istanbul in the global order of cities, and developing the city through cultural policies and events detaches the context of social struggles in a space from the imaginations of the

⁸ Personal notes of the author from the field.

⁹ Kuzey Ormanları Savunması. AKM'deyiz İnisiyatifi'nden AKM için suç duyurusu. 27 March 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.kuzeyormanlari.org/2015/03/28/akmdeyiz-inisiyatifinden-akm-icin-suc-duyurusu/> last visited 25.08.2015.

space. Moreover, as I will elaborate below, this perspective strives to add a value to the space which replaces the inhabitants of the city due to their conditions to afford this new added value.

2.2 Introduction and Production of Istanbul as a Capital of Culture

In this part, I will analyze the publicity and the opening event of Istanbul 2010 ECoC in terms of two imaginations prominent in the event projection of the agency; one is the initiative group that strives for a Europeanized Istanbul as city of the creative sector and cultural diversity; the other is government's representation of Istanbul based on the discourse of the cultural heritage of Ottoman Empire with uncontested cultural and ethnical diversity. Both imaginations tend to portray Istanbul as a city convenient to invest in. I will focus on the images and discourses about the streets of Istanbul present in the publicity and the opening event to investigate these conflicting and coinciding imaginations produced by the agency in relation with the discourses of Istanbul as oriental/Ottoman city, global city, cool city and a financial center.

After the Military Coup in 1980 in Turkey, the first elected government, the government of the Motherland Party, introduced the transition from an inward-oriented development model to post-Fordist policies. This transition required a new position for the city of Istanbul within the competitive global order of cities. Thus, the city had to leave the manufacturing sector behind in order to adopt a 'global' or, if not, a regionally significant position in finance, culture and tourism as all the other cities in the competition had to do. However, as Çağlar Keyder (1992) mentioned to support his suggestion to 'sell' Istanbul to the global market, the needs of a global city might not correspond to the needs of its residents.

Derya Özkan (2012) approaches the transformation of Istanbul through four discourses. Accordingly, in the 19th century, the discourse of the oriental city was an attempt for

modernity. In the 20th century, through the discourse of ‘the third world city’, the informal urban development once condemned as urban sprawl, and the cultural practices that domestic migration brought to the city, were transformed into values of the city. After the 1990s, together with the development of the post-fordist policies after the 1980s, through the discourse of the global city Istanbul was expected to be opened to international finance, and art and cultural events were envisioned as means of bringing Istanbul into the global market. Finally, ‘the distinctiveness’ of Istanbul was discovered as the new values to promote the city as ‘the cool’. This new attribution to the city marketed all the former discourses as characteristic distinction of the city.

My dissertation was incorporated into the research project on the ‘Changing Imaginations of Istanbul’ initiated by Derya Özkan in 2011. According to Özkan, Istanbul 2010 ECoC event was one of the initial promoters of the discourse of ‘the Cool Istanbul’. However, Özkan refers to a former representation of ‘the Cool Istanbul’ as the first celebration of this discourse. On 29th of September 2005, Newsweek Magazine put this ‘cool’ imagination of Istanbul into words with its ‘Cool Istanbul’ cover. The article about this ‘cool city’ starts with these words:

“Spend a summer night strolling down Istanbul's Istiklal Caddesi, the pedestrian thoroughfare in the city's old Christian quarter of Beyoglu, and you'll hear something surprising. Amid the crowds of nocturnal revelers, a young Uzbek-looking girl plays haunting songs from Central Asia on an ancient Turkic flute called a saz. Nearby, bluesy Greek rembetiko blares from a CD store. Downhill toward the slums of Tarlabası you hear the wild Balkan rhythms of a Gypsy wedding, while at 360, an ultratrendy rooftop restaurant, the sound is Sufi electronica—cutting-edge beats laced with dervish ritual. And then there are the clubs—Mojo, say, or Babylon—where the young and beautiful rise spontaneously from their tables to link arms and perform a complicated Black Sea line

dance, the horon. The wonder is that each and every one of these styles is absolutely native to the city, which for much of its history was the capital of half the known world. (Newsweek, August 25th, 2005).”

The Newsweek article renders an excitement for the streets of Istanbul and for its cultural diversity, which espouses the Ottoman symbols, artistic richness and “its Western credentials”. This attraction attributed to the city due the ethnic and cultural variety represents the streets of Istanbul as “surprising” and authentic assets for the visitors. The agency adopted a similar approach to promote the city. For instance, as I will elaborate in the following parts of this chapter, the representation of Istanbul in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC marketing adopted a similar way to depict Istanbul as a city offering a diversity of spaces, identities and activities within this context.

Evinç Doğan and İbrahim Sirkeci delve into the images created for the publicity of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event, and assess the role of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event in terms of the city development policies as “a unique opportunity for international visibility” (Doğan and Sirkeci, 2013, p.39) with reference to the European Commission: “the opportunity is there and it is up to the city to make the best use of it” (European Commission, 2010, in Doğan and Sirkeci, 2013). According to them, the event adopted both the oriental city image and the discourse on the western and the eastern to compose a ‘new image’ for the city, which implicates Istanbul as ‘the world city’ rather than a European capital. Moreover, “[T]he new image created for Istanbul defined a new life-style for its residents by taking culture and arts at its forefront to start culture-led regeneration.” (ibid, p. 40). Doğan and Sirkeci also interpret this attempt of the event in terms of the creation of the ‘cool Istanbul’ image:

“The image of cool Istanbul is an example of the materialization of the discourses directed towards the cultural production, which turns commodity fetish into romanticized images and/or phantasmagorias. The lived space transforms itself into imagined space as the urban cultural assets and the cityscapes are transforming into a theatre decor marketed to spectators (ibid, p.37).”

Through my investigation, I intend to reveal the impact of this imagination of the ‘cool Istanbul’ on the everyday life of inhabitants in terms of subjectivation, inclusion and gentrification.

The process of making Istanbul a candidate for European Capital of Culture in 2010 dates back to Habitat II (a United Nations Conference on Human Settlements) that took place in Istanbul from the 3rd to 14th of June 1996. Habitat II facilitated the development of NGO’s and civil society was developed in terms of the integration with Euro-pean Union; these new structures have been the first to contribute to creating the possi-bility for Turkey to receive this title¹⁰. Later, in 1999, after the decision of the Euro-pean Parliament and the Council of E
urope that enabled non EU member cities to get this status, Korhan Gümüş made the first call for an initiative to start the candidacy process of Istanbul for the event¹¹. A proposal under the title ‘The City of Four Elements’ was submitted to the Head Office of Education and Culture of the European Council in Brussels in 2005. In the following year Istanbul was confirmed as one of the three European Capitals of Culture in 2010, together with Essen (representing Ruhr Region) in Germany, and Pecs in Hungary.

The candidacy process for the tenure was started by civil initiative, but not by the state. As soon as the law for the Istanbul European Capital of Culture (Law No. 5706) was enacted in 2007, an agency responsible for the event was founded. State officials, NGO representatives, and the civil initiative group joined together in this agency. Hence, the event organization provided a base for the collaboration between public and private sectors in terms of the development of the city through culture-led regeneration discourse.

¹⁰Korhan Gümüş, interview on 24.10.2011, in Ara Café, Istanbul. Korhan Gümüş took part in the Initiative Group and Advisory Board of 2010 Istanbul ECoC. In 2008, he became the Director of Urban Execution of the event.

¹¹Korhan Gümüş in Ertas, Hülya; Hensel, Michael; Hensel, Defne Sunguroğlu (2010): Creating Interfaces for a Sustainable Cultural Programme for Istanbul: An Interview with Korhan Gümüş. In: *Archit Design* 80 (1), S. 70–75.

The projects of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture were not strictly planned or proposed by the agency, other than the restoration projects. The agency issued an open call for applications, and received project proposals. It assessed the applications, holding the responsibility to choose and compose the general conceptualization of the event. Being composed of public and private sector members, some parts of the organization, such as public relations, were held by private companies. However, all members of the Coordination Board were from the public sector, while the Executive Board was dominated by members from public institutions. In addition to the public sector members, one member of Istanbul Chamber of Industry, one member of Istanbul Chamber of Trade, and two members of the initiative group that started the process of becoming ‘the European Capital of Culture’ took part in the Executive Board. According to the Article No.6 of Law No. 5706, the advisory board consisted of some district mayors, scholars, chambers of professions such as the Chamber of Architects, representatives of cultural associations, as well as some independent members, such as members of the initiative group.

Projects, logo design, posters, and publicity films had to be approved by the agency to become an official part of the event. According to the Article No. 16 of Law No. 5706, the use of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC logo was under control of the Executive Board of the agency. There were several sub-boards for different fields to take decisions about the event, such as urban projects, publicity, education, urban culture etc. At the end, the decision-making process established the agency as an authority in terms of constructing an image for Istanbul. The projects approved by the Agency either received funds or the right to use the Istanbul 2010 ECoC logo in order to take part in the program. Pertev Emre Tastaban, the curator of Tarlabası Street Art Festival in 2012 organized street art workshops within the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program. According to him, the use of the

logo enabled many artists to overcome difficulties in actualizing their works. Hence, many projects attended the event through the use of the logo. Finally, 719 projects were accepted out of 2484 projects; 586 of them were implemented and 133 were cancelled. 22% of all projects were supported by commercial companies, and 17% were financed directly by the agency¹².

After the first monitoring panel meeting of the EU at the end of the year 2007, the perspective of the government conflicted with the civil initiative about the organization model and the principles of the agency. Therefore, a new, more government-oriented structure was established in the agency, and consequently some members of the civil initiative, such as TV journalist and former chairman of the executive board of the agency, Nuri Çolakoğlu, radiobroadcaster Gürhan Ertür from Açık Radyo, and scholar Asu Aksoy, resigned. The members of the initiative that stayed in the agency, however, kept asserting their critical standpoint about the way the event was conducted and the cultural policies of the government during and after 2010.

Asu Aksoy, a member of the civil initiative who had been very active in the event process until she resigned in 2007 due to this conflict, describes the transition in her article in which she criticizes the event organization after this breaking point:

“The first announcement that the newly arrived General-Secretary delivered after his (Ankara-initiated) appointment to the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency was that turning Istanbul into a ‘brand city’ would henceforth be the key objective of the 2010 programme. In similar fashion, with the same objective in mind, in his first press conference following the award of 2010 European Capital of Culture status, Prime Minister Erdoğan was declaring that ‘the aim is to attract 10 million tourists to Istanbul’” (2012, p. 103).

¹² Ernst & Young (2011) İstanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Etki Değerlendirme Raporu (impact report).

In the same article, Aksoy states that the concern of the initiative group about the restructuring of the city through the urban transformation projects of the AKP was that “[T]he city was (is) losing its civic persona” (ibid, p. 94). Aksoy strongly opposes the city-image making as a concern and exploitation of culture for the sake of the transition to post-industrial city market. Aksoy criticizes the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s plan for “projecting a ‘contemporary’ image of the city for the city’s competitiveness by way of investing in culture and cultural infrastructure (p.102)”. However, the concept of ‘openness’ against the urban transformation projects of the AKP government is not clarified as a method, and hence, mainly stands for a critique of the conservatism of the government.

Former examples of European Capitals of Culture since Glasgow and Liverpool always ended up with an image construction changing the perception of cities (see Hankinson, 2006). For example, in Lille, natural aspects were promoted as the essence of the city in ECoC 2004; in Liverpool a cosmopolitan image was promoted by means of a discourse based on cultural and ethnic diversity. Moreover, in all European Capitals of Culture the events were conducted under slogans that consolidated the image-making process due to certain aspects ascribed to the cities. Being alarmed for the loss of a civic persona against the urban transformation, and hoping that the European Capital of Culture status would bring a solution with its culture-led regeneration emphasis does not challenge the approaches that ignore the impact of the concern for identifying the space on everyday life practices and lives of the people that are excluded from the capitalization of the city. In everyday life level, the search for a spatial persona functions in different ways than it would do for city marketing such as exile of minorities and/or workers from the inner city to the outskirts of the city.

In Bergen, European Capital of Culture in 2000, different from the process in Istanbul, the political elite put effort together with the cultural elite to promote the city in terms of its cultural assets long time before the event, in the 1980's. In 1993 an official presentation was produced by the politicians and professionals under the title of 'The Cultural City Bergen' in which "culture was primarily defined as an intrinsic value to be promoted by the city authorities, mainly for the benefit of the resident population" (Sjøholt, 1999, p.344). The initiative group that started the candidacy process for Istanbul also adopted a similar discourse that considered the benefits of the event - as a promotion of the cultural assets of the city and a way of producing sustainable cultural policies – in favor of the conditions of the residents; but this time in opposition to the practices of the government. For example, Korhan Gümüş (2009a), who took part in the initiative group and the agency organization, envisioned that this event could enable a shift from the dominance of sponsorship and private investment in art and culture to a more public intellectual production. According to Gümüş, it could provide a way for non-exclusive development strategies in small-scale production districts; it could also provide an important opportunity to learn from experience about displacement of small-scale production and gentrification. In the program of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event, Gümüş (2009b) emphasizes the role of art in the openness of the city, and he assesses the event as a creative project with an objective of "building communication among people, introducing different cultures to one another, freeing and enriching the insight of societies through the creative energy generated by art". After all, the project enabled relationships between some of the actors from different sub-cultural practices (such as street arts and street music) and state institutions (such as the municipalities) that turned into collaborations in the following years. This connection reproduced the power relationships over the city propounding the distinctiveness associated with space as a value

to open Istanbul to the global market¹³. Indeed, Gümüş elaborates this concept of ‘openness’ of the city promoted by the project in terms of the relationships that he anticipates:

“Enhancing the prestige of art and artist, on the other side, involves providing the support mechanisms an artist needs to perform better. Through this, people will see that via art and culture, they can improve and express themselves, make money, build a future, influence others and improve their life quality (ibid, p.9)”.

For Gümüş, the Project supports the art and cultural sector enhancing ‘the prestige’ of art and artist. As I will elaborate more in the Chapter 3, this prestige of art and artists doesn’t amount to the improvement of the quality of life for everyone. The improvement of the quality of life is in the power of public-private cooperation, and the commodification of art contributes to the displacement process at stake in Istanbul. In examples such as the Sulkule and Tarlabası urban renewal projects, the added value to the space was related to the improvement of living conditions, although these new improved conditions were not affordable for the inhabitants. In this case, ‘the improvement of life quality’ is a selective process that excludes people that don’t have access to social and/or economic capital.

Moreover, the ‘openness’ of the city refers to the distinctiveness of space that could compete in the global order of cities. Hence, the imagination of ‘openness’ is connected with the discourse of the ‘global city’ which entails putting Istanbul on the world market. The city’s openness implies opening the localities to global flows of information and capital. This urges the local configurations to present a value that could attract investment and visitors. The urge for locating Istanbul as a global city produces imagina-

¹³For instance, the connection built through the Project between street artists and the state institutions developed into a collaboration for the promotion of urban transformation areas after 2010. In Chapter 3, I investigate this connection through the Tarlabası Street Art Festival that took place in the ruins of the pilot urban transformation area with the support of the state institutions and private companies.

tions of localities in relation to globalization, dissolving the structure of *mahalle*, which is the unit of social and spatial interaction in everyday life. Consequently, this approach focuses on the space as a ‘value’ itself, and *mahalle* as an authentic resource for attraction rather than the displacement of those who cannot afford the costs of this added value of the space.

Zeynep Enlil (2011, p.23), a contributor of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program, analyses the urban economy after neoliberalism, and attributes the solution for social inequalities such as housing problem and enlarging population of Istanbul to geographically balanced investments and improvements for the city. Accordingly, Enlil affirms the search for the position of Istanbul in global competitive order of cities to achieve this balance. Enlil’s solutions resembles Aksoy’s call for ‘openness’ (2009; 2012). After the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture event, these two scholars wrote books for the 2010 ECoC Agency about the creative sector and cultural tourism in Istanbul¹⁵ that doesn’t question and even consolidates the discourse of culture-led regeneration adopted by European Parliament through ECoC. Especially Enlil’s point of view fits in the earlier vision of Çağlar Keyder (1992) through which he affirms an infrastructural and superstructural transformation to ‘sell’ Istanbul. In these terms, her concern for the housing problem and inequalities lacks consideration of the threat of gentrification through the attractiveness of culture, and the problems of housing that are generated by this urge for a competitive image of city. In this chapter, my investigation on the event program will address this relationship; how a discourse based on personification, persona, beauty

15 Kültür Ekonomisi Envanteri İstanbul 2010/ Istanbul 2010 Cultural Inventory (Zeynep Enlil, Asu Aksoy, 2011, Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları), İstanbulda Kültür Turizmi İçin Yenilikçi Stratejiler/ Innovative Strategies for Cultural Tourism in Istanbul (Zeynep Enlil with Ebru Seçkin, İclal Dinçer, Yiğit Evren, 2011, Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları), Yaratıcı İstanbul; Yaratıcı Sektörler Ve Kent / Creative Istanbul: Creative Sectors and the City (Zeynep Enlil with Yiğit Evren, 2011, Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları).

(attractiveness) or diverse culture of a city for the sake of ‘opening’ the city to the world prepares the ground for neoliberal urban transformation and gentrification processes. Aksoy (2009, p.48) summarizes this idea in these words:

“...if this megalopolis of around 15 million can hold on to its perspective of what might be termed ‘worldliness’ – a combination of openness, liberalism, pragmatism, democratic culture, and global embeddedness – then this momentum would help Turkey become more centrally and deeply engaged with, and implicated in, world affairs. Turkey would finally leave behind the remnants of the inward-looking modality that has hitherto marginalised the country and condemned its people to provincialism and isolation.”

It makes sense at this point to remember the answer of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the question about the benefits of this event for Istanbul: “We will bring our Istanbul in the world”¹⁶. Erdoğan added that the aim is that Istanbul 2010 would bring ten million tourists to the city in 2010. Likewise, the definition of the tasks of the agency was also in compliance: “a comprehensive urban development project through arts and culture, and (to) reveal Istanbul’s cultural wealth as an inspirational source for the whole world” (Öner, 2010, p.270).

Mücella Yapıcı (2009) criticizes the conception of culture in the then-upcoming ECoC event in terms of commodification. Yapıcı defines culture as a process that consists of an integrity of values produced by the inner dynamics of a distinct society together with the elements of subcultures. Accordingly, Yapıcı remarks the ridiculousness of rewarding the title of the ‘capital of culture’ since her definition of ‘culture’ would not differenti-ate any spaces as the spaces of culture, or cultural capitals. Reviewing the ECoC process in Istanbul as a marketing program for promoting the natural, historical and cultural

¹⁶ 12.04.2006, Press Conference about the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture, Conrad Hotel, Istanbul. Retrieved from <http://v3.arkitera.com/h8376-erdogan;-%E2%80%9898kultur-baskenti-istanbul-a-10-milyon-turist-hedefliyoruz-.html> Translation from Turkish to English by author.

assets of the city to the global market, Yapıcı suggests ascribing the ironic title ‘Unlimited Capital of Culture Industries and Urban Transformation’ to Istanbul.

What was ‘culture’ finally for the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency? It included fine arts, music, literature, dance, architecture, heritage, tradition, but also street art, religion and images of everyday life, such as the street vendors and the vehicular traffic. This representation of culture was tagged with some key words that were in compliance with the requirements and goals of the European Parliament: diversity, social inclusion, and finally ‘urban transformation through participation’ which was what attracted the attention of the Selection Panel of ECoC to Istanbul (Öner, 2010, p.270). The concept of diversity employed here has a substantial meaning in the discourse of culture that the European Union adopted since 1992 due to the concern of ‘linking up’ European cities of different geographies through the European Capital of Culture events (European Communities, 2009, p.5). Both in Decision1419/1999/EC (the decision due to which Istanbul was chosen as ECoC 2010) and Decision1622/2006/EC of the European Council, highlighting diversity in ECoC events was mentioned as a general and specific objective¹⁸.

In the case of Istanbul in 2010, diversity is represented as a portrayal of different ethnic identities that “share a life together”¹⁹ and keep their distinctive cultural values sticking to the Turkish identity at the end. While the city was welcoming all newcomers, it could also provide authentic experiences for tourists through symbols of different cultures. Actually, through the emphasis on finance, touristic attraction, and the cultural sector, Istanbul was represented as a city that Europe could easily invest in, rather than a European city.

¹⁸ Interim evaluation of selection and monitoring procedures of European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) 2010-2016, Final Report, p.9

¹⁹ ‘Living a shared life’ and different formulations of this phrase were used frequently in Istanbul 2010 ECoC program.

The ‘imagination’ of diversity appeared in a way that the symbols of ethnic cultures and newly spreading sub-cultural practices such as street art, graffiti, and street music were officially included in the event program. This official recognition provided a picture of everyday life full of contemporary and traditional cultural assets and happenings without any conflicts or contradictions. This representation of diversity also emphasized cosmopolitanism for Istanbul as it did for Liverpool back in 2004. Liverpool employed a similar approach as a European Capital of Culture that revived an official discourse of diversity. Ethnic diversity in the city, despite the acknowledgement of the presence of several ethnic communities, was never included in any official representation or record before the event (Bunnell, 2008, p.251). However, in 2004, Liverpool, with the slogan of ‘The World in One City’ celebrated its diversity, as Istanbul, ‘The City of Four Elements’ strived to do in 2010, detaching ethnic identities from related conflicts. Hence, through the ECoC tenure, officially excluded identities could turn into a value for the distinctiveness of the cities.

Together with the discourse of diversity, urban regeneration through culture imagined by the Istanbul 2010 ECoC organization produced the means for post-Fordist urban governance to radically intervene in urban space. While the cultural content of capitalist production process increased in the competition of places in the post-Fordist era (Scott, 1997), urban development policies reformulated the imaginations of the cities towards the real-estate development possibilities and global / regional economic competition. The privatization of urban public spaces in globalizing cities triggered a return to the urban center (Herzog, 2006). As a consequence, this movement brings up “the reoccupation of urban space in the center districts by hegemonic groups and often finds expression in processes of gentrification, urban renewal, and slum clearance as well as in new urban consumer and lifestyle identities” (Kaltmeier, 2011, p.108).

Istanbul had been a regional node of European trade and industry in Turkey throughout history. Accordingly, migration from rural areas to Istanbul due to the industrialization after the 1950's entailed the development of new housing and a new urban form. This new form was the *gecekondu*, the artisanal production of migrants to solve their housing problem, which had not been solved by the state thus far. This housing type spread around the urban periphery; faced populist policies of the government; and was finally included within the urban rental market. The macro-form of the city changed accordingly, and the *gecekondu* neighborhoods became inner city neighborhoods as the city expanded.

Gecekondu neighborhoods were mostly considered as a source of votes, or a dynamic for an increase in the rental value of land. Until the late 1960's *gecekondus* were shelter to migrants and other low-income households striving to hold onto the city. However, the use value of the land transformed quickly into an exchange value, and the land rent of *gecekondu* neighborhoods increased due to the urban growth that crossed the former periphery and enclosed these *gecekondus* within the inner city. The discourse of urban sprawl and the theory of modernization (such as Kiray, 1964) assumed that all these rural migrants would 'modernize' in time. Together with the neoliberalization of urban policies as the majority of manufacture activities opted out of the city led to a new era of transformation of *gecekondu* areas and the inner city where the population that doesn't have access to economic capital reside.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government was the first single party government in Turkey after long years. As in the former processes of state-led gentrification in Turkey, the AKP government enacted several laws to justify their urban development policies in relation to the urban transformation. According to Aksoy (2012, p.93) the policies of AKP concentrated on "the development of new spaces of consump-

tion and of tourist commodification; the implication of the city in new financial flows and the rapid expansion of the real-estate and service industries; and the proliferation of gated communities and the gentrification of living spaces” to integrate in the global order in financial terms. In order to consolidate these goals, a new approach for Istanbul was adopted by the Government. Prime Minister Erdoğan, who is also one of the former mayors of Istanbul, declared the plan to make Istanbul a global financial center in 2009 during the IMF - World Bank Annual Meetings, and on 1st May 2010 the institutional process of this plan started with a memorandum. Finally, in April 2013, the name of the Istanbul Stock Exchange Market was changed to Borsa Istanbul together with structural changes in the institution gathering the capital markets in Turkey under one institution with the new slogan ‘Value for the Investment’ to develop Istanbul as a hub in the global market.

The process to support these goals had already started with the foundation of the Metropolitan Planning Office and Urban Design Center (IMP). Law number 4966 enacted on 6th August 2003 about the new assignments of the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKİ), the Law on Housing Development in 2004, the Law of Local Authorities in 2005, the Law on Renewal (Use of Decrepit Historical and Cultural Assets) number 5366 enacted on 5th July 2005; and the foundation of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning in 2011 boosted the real-estate oriented objectives of the local government. In this new process, registered natural and historical assets were considered as economic potentials; thus, decision-making and application processes for renewal projects were accelerated to consolidate the real-estate and construction-based development policies of the new government. Together with the gecekondu neighborhoods, the settlements on valuable inner-city lands in which the lower-income popula-

tion resided started to be the target of urban transformation projects. This basically caused the replacement of former residents with upper classes.

Here it is also essential to denote the new urban aesthetics brought by the AKP government that shuttle between inspirations of Ottoman style (such as the Ottoman Houses built in the Sulukule neighborhood, from which the Roma residents were evicted for the urban transformation project) and high-rise buildings (both in housing and business districts; besides the residences in gated communities and the business towers, also as a mass housing construction approach of TOKI). This aesthetics can be recognized easily in the promotion and the program of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

In the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program, both imaginations of the city were present: one which is produced by the government based on the discourses of Ottoman heritage and Istanbul as a financial center; and the other one which is produced by the creative urban elite: a creative city of culture and entertainment. In the end, all these discourses produce an imagination that goes far beyond the concerns of modernization and political nostalgia and support the acclaimed position of Istanbul in a global order of competitive cities. Indeed, Asu Aksoy (2009, p.78) affirms the latter imagination, assuming that it is a change in the orientalist approaches due to the cultural change in the city bringing a “westernized lifestyle”. Aksoy connects this “cultural openness” to the globalization process that Turkey entered after leaving the inward-looking import substitution model.

For Aksoy, this discourse of openness implicates the basic difference between two “conflicting” approaches in the event process. Initiative group members criticized the agency for shifting the goal of the event towards “city branding” in relation to urban transformation. Together with this, their concern for the “image of the city” and loss of

the civic persona of the city are different than what they criticize in the approach of the state officials only in one sense: while they ignore or deny the contribution of their approach and the culture industries to city branding, the governmental discourse explicitly mentions the goal for city marketing and justifies it as a dynamic of urban development.

2.2.1 Publicity and Introduction to Istanbul 2010 ECoC

The preparations for the event started right after the announcement of the title. Periodicals published special issues for the purpose of fueling expectations and introducing the upcoming event; competitions for logo design, posters and publicity films were organized in universities and high schools. Also participating in the Projects Catalog of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC, Açık Radyo, a local radio that frequently covers civic oppositions and urban social movements against urban transformation, announced the events in the program throughout the year of 2010. On 16th January 2010, in support for the opening ceremony of the event, the search engine Google put the Istanbul 2010 ECoC logo and a doodle only for its domain in Turkey, depicting the event on top of the search box (Figure 1). The doodle used the image of the ‘bridge’, symbolizing the cliché of Istanbul as the bridge between Europe and Asia.



Figure 1. The Google doodle for Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Event

The Volunteers Project of the event also played an important role in spreading the information and creating “enthusiasm” for the event. However, an anecdote of İlker Girit, a volunteer of the Volunteers Project and also one of the coordinators of this program, reveals that even the institutions related to municipality were not well-informed about the event. He told that the security guards in Beşiktaş Pier didn’t allow the volunteers to hand out the flyers of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC, assuming that they were members of an “ideological group”, although they tried to convince them proving that they were volunteers of a state-organized event²⁰.

One of the sub-boards within the agency was responsible for the publicity. On the 3rd of December 2009 the publicity program for the event was introduced to the public in the Çırağan Hotel by the Executive Board of the agency and the creators of the publicity campaign, photographer and advertiser Paul McMillen and advertiser Hakkı Mısırlıoğlu. In this meeting it was announced that the publicity of the event was planned and conducted in two parts: domestic publicity and abroad publicity. The slogans for the Turkish speaking audiences were calling for participation and enthusiasm for the event: “Rediscover” and “Our energy comes from Istanbul”. The slogans for audiences abroad highlighted the “inspiration” that Istanbul, as a city would offer to the visitor: “Most inspiring city of the world” and “Istanbul Inspiration”. Also in mainstream media in Turkey, the event was represented frequently as associating Istanbul to ‘inspiration’, or calling Istanbul ‘the city of inspiration’. The title for the introductory text to the event program by Şekib Avdagiç, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency, was the same: ‘Istanbul: Most inspiring city on earth’.

As “inspiration” evoked to point out the unique experience of Istanbul as an adventure for visitors, the cultural program for the Istanbul 2010 ECoC was presented in the application to the EC with the slogan of ‘Istanbul: City of Four Elements’. This title was referring to

²⁰Interview with İlker Girit on 22.03.2013 in Beşiktaş.

earth, air, water, and fire as the elements that made up Istanbul, and characterizing the stages of the event based on the four seasons. These stages connotate the direction of culture-led regeneration perspective:

“-‘Earth – Tradition and Transformation’ during winter, focusing on history, traditions, cultural heritage;

-‘Air – Heaven Sent’ during the spring period, with a focus on the city's spiritual wealth;

- 'Water – the City and the Sea' during the summer period, with the aim being to bring together as many different cultures of Europe as possible and give everybody a chance to see the art and culture of different European countries;

- ‘Fire – Forging for the Future’ during the autumn period, with forward-looking projects which seek to create sustainable cultural assets and urban renewal.” (Ernst and Young, 2011)

2.2.1.1 The Opening Event of Istanbul 2010 ECoC

The event program already started in 2009, and some projects were already realized under the title of Istanbul 2010 ECoC before the opening, along with the preparation works for the year of 2010. Media strategies for the opening activities/celebrations were held in three phases: Operational works; interviews during the celebrations and media reports for the opening; and the process after the opening ceremony. Locations for the opening celebrations were chosen together with the private companies that took part in the organization of these happenings. Accordingly, these celebrations took place in Taksim, Kadıköy, Pendik, Beylikdüzü, Haliç, Bağcılar and Sultanahmet. While Taksim and Kadıköy are popular destinations in the city center, the other places where the opening celebrations were located are in the outskirts of the city. The spatial allocation of the rest of the events of the program were mostly concentrated around the central areas of the city, such as Beyoğlu and the ‘Historical Peninsula’ in Fatih (Koramaz and Kısar-Koramaz, 2011).

The Agency organized a ‘Historical Peninsula Tour’ for media members on 16th June 2010, the day of the event opening, under the title of ‘We look after our cultural heritage’, and informed them about the projects for the protection of cultural heritage and its sustainability. In his speech for the opening celebrations of the event, Prime Minister Erdoğan put an emphasis on the cultural and historical heritage of the city. He pointed out the cultural diversity, history and the global position of the city in a way that already positions the city superior to other cities in the global urban market:

“Istanbul is a bit Sarajevo, a bit Jerusalem, a bit Paris, a bit Vienna, a bit Madrid, a bit Bagdad, a bit Damascus, a bit Amman. However, Istanbul is mostly Istanbul. If Istanbul is delighted, then Cairo is delighted, Beirut is delighted, Baku is delighted, Skopje is delighted. When Istanbul grieves, humanity grieves.”²¹

His speech included a tribute to all the leaders of Istanbul from Emperor Constantine, Fatih the Conqueror, to Sultan Süleyman, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk alongside the architects and poets that produced works in and about Istanbul. The rest of his words were glorifying Istanbul mostly based on the Ottoman history. In this ceremony, State Minister Hayati Yazıcı from the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Coordination Board said that Istanbul was a “sacred seal bringing Europe and Asia together” and “it was (is) time to put this seal everywhere”. Furthermore, the Chairman of Executive Board of the Agency, Şekib Avdagiç, said: “Istanbul lights up the future of the 21th century. It calls us with its mosques, churches, palaces, libraries, fountains, bazaars and streets”. In this

21 Since the Istanbul 2010 ECoC web site is closed immediately after the event ended, parts of this speech and news about the opening ceremony can be found on <http://haber.sol.org.tr/kultur-sanat/istanbul-pop-kultur-baskenti-oldu-haberi-22893> and <http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/kultur-sanat/diger/01/16/istanbul.artik.resmen.2010.avrupa.kultur.baskenti/559588.0/index.html>. Translated by the author.

discourse, the streets of the city are mentioned as an attraction together with the landmarks that stand for the cultural value of the space. Hence, the imagination of the street indicates the street as an aesthetical asset of the city with the function to open the space to the attention of the visitors as a spectacle.

2.2.1.2 Publicity Posters and Films

A vast number of official posters were commissioned to designers by the agency: posters for domestic publicity, and posters for the slogan ‘Istanbul Inspirations’ with Rainer Strattman’s photographs showing the silhouette of the city for publicity abroad. In the domestic version, landmarks of the city were replaced with other landmarks and represented in different locations from their original locations. The aim was ‘surprising’ the inhabitants of Istanbul who are used to seeing these buildings in their original locations; to call them to participate in the event²² through the excitement of the ‘beauty’ of the city.

The publicity intended for audiences abroad was more elaborate than the one for the domestic ones. Billboards of 8 metropolitan cities in 6 countries were used for publicity actions. Turkish Airlines broadcast the event advertisement during their flights. The event was introduced at several international tourism fairs. Other 2010 European Capitals of Culture as well as festivals in other countries, such as the New York Summerstage Festival, were visited by the Agency with projects and promotion material about Istanbul. For Tourism and Marketing the used budget was 62,500 €, for Tourism

²²Istanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Ajansı Faaliyet Raporu ’09 (Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Activity Report ’09), Publicity and Marketing.

Promotion it was 3,427,604 € (Ernst and Young, 2011, p.69). However, the international press was widely used, and according to the final reports, 489 pieces of news only about the opening of the event reached a total value of media marketing equivalent to 1.573.193.226 \$.

The domestic commercial launching of the event was realised in two campaigns. The first campaign was ‘Istanbul goes ahead’ in 2008. The second campaign, ‘Sahne Senin İstanbul – İstanbul, Take the Stage’ was held in 2009 by means of advertisements in newspapers, radio, magazines, internet, TV channels, and movie theaters. The directorate of public relations held a press conference before the opening, and the Directorate of Publicity and Marketing prepared news and advertisements for the press. In Turkish media, the slogans of ‘inspiration’ and ‘rediscovery’ were used, however, in the activity reports it is mentioned that in domestic publicity the main concern was to put emphasis on the ‘rediscovery of the city’ to stimulate participation and awareness. This way, people already living in Istanbul were called for participating in the event with an emphasis on them lacking the knowledge of the city; they therefore had to rediscover the city for contributing to the ‘inspiration’, since, inspiration was actually the catchphrase for the publicity abroad.

Domestic publicity films followed the aforementioned posters of this campaign and used the landmarks out of their original places to attract the attention of inhabitants of Istanbul. Although the relocation of the urban landmarks was intended to provoke the inhabitants to rediscover the city, the government project for privatization of the cultural and historical assets was imagining these landmarks detached from the public. Hence, this call for rediscovery repositioned the landmarks only to be enjoyed visually by the public to construct the enthusiasm for and identification with the city. Indeed, the case of Haydarpaşa Railway Station, which appeared in this domestic publicity campaign

as a landmark to be discovered located in Taksim Square, instead of its original location in Kadıköy, is an example of the conflict over the approach of the government to the cultural heritage (Figure 2). On 28 November 2010, the roof of the building burnt down in a fire allegedly caused by the restoration work. Moreover, the station was closed²³ for the construction of the Marmaray tube connecting the two sides of the Bosphorus. Despite the protests against the closure of this public asset, on 27th April 2014, the Finance Minister of Turkey Mehmet Şimşek finally announced the plan for privatizing Haydarpaşa Railway Station to the press on his way to Katar where he met international investors.

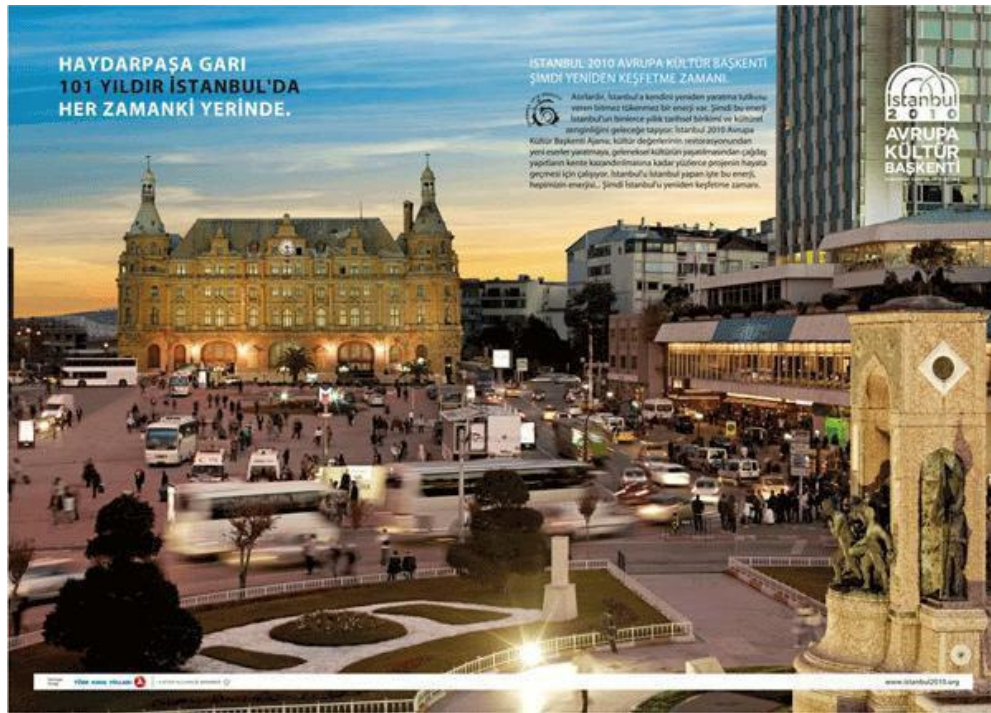


Figure 2. Istanbul 2010 ECoC Event Official Publicity Poster, Haydarpaşa Railway Station in Taksim Square, “Haydarpaşa Railway Station has been in its usual place in Istanbul for 101 years.

One of these domestic publicity films of the Agency posed a question for citizens: “Could our accumulation of 8.500 years be shared with the world in one year?” (Figure 3). The answer was “yes, it can be”. This accumulation in the city stands for the cultural heritage. In this film we see very fast images one after the other - basically a shortened

²³ On 31 January 2012, only the intercity rains were terminated. The trains to the suburbs were terminated on 19 June 2013.

and time-lapsed version of one of the publicity films for abroad. The only difference is an image of a child in between, overwhelmed with these sequences of ‘cultural richness’. This image seems to give the message that the sustainability of the cultural heritage is also part of the goals of the event, which was also pointed out by the publicity department during their press meeting. Hence, one of the most dominant images about the city was the cultural assets symbolizing the position of Istanbul as a container of aesthetical historical accumulation.



Figure 3. Istanbul 2010 ECoC Publicity Film. ‘Could our accumulation of 8.500 years be shared with the world in one year?’

Promoting Istanbul abroad was already on the agenda of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality before the city got the tenure of being a European Capital of Culture. In 2005, a publicity film intended for audiences abroad was prepared under the title of ‘Welcome to Istanbul’ to promote Istanbul within the context of the Turkey Grand Prix (Figure 4). In the eve of the year 2006, in which Istanbul got the tenure of being the European Capital of Culture for the year 2010, this film emphasized the unity of different cultures and religions under the Turkish flag alongside the various touristic experiences available in the city including the everyday life encounters with the workers and street vendors.

I start with elaborate the imagery of this film that ushers in the imagination of Istanbul that we later encounter in Istanbul 2010 ECoC.



Figure 4. Publicity film for Istanbul produced by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality: ‘Welcome to Istanbul’, 2005

The film starts with a bird flying above the clouds. Then, first a church appears amidst the clouds, we hear the bells ringing and prayers of a sacrament. After a while, a mosque appears amidst the clouds and the sound of the call to prayer from the mosque, *ezan* merges in the prayers and the bells from the church. Afterwards, the bird flies into the clear sky and we see the Hagia Sophia and the Galata Tower. While the bird soars to the garden of Eyüp Mosque, the prayers end with the theme music.

The film puts the emphasis on the togetherness of several religions in Istanbul affirming that the policies of the AKP government embrace all the religious minorities. In the 3rd year of the government, this reference to the minority policies stands for an attempt to overcome the international criticism and concerns about the Islamic emphasis of the Turkish government.

The film continues with the images of the bridges on Bosphorus, fisher boats, ferries, historic landmarks, trams, people fishing on the Galata Bridge, churches, mosques, green hills. Then suddenly, a woman and a man selling flowers on the street in front of the Blue Mosque appear; the man stands up with a flower in his hand, and ‘welcomes’ the audience bowing. Within the context of Istanbul, selling flowers on the streets is

identified with the Roma communities. However, this image actually indicates the precarious economic conditions that people face in relation to their ethnic identities. As I will elaborate in the Chapter 4, certain economic activities such as selling flowers on the streets or jobs in entertainment sector are ascribed to the Roma identity by hegemonic representations, and accordingly it becomes difficult for people with Roma identity to get recognized or simply to be employed in other jobs. The relation to ethical discrimination and stigmatization are hidden behind the images of the film. These conditions are cleared out of the picture through the inclusion of these vendors as welcoming ‘elements’ in the city.

Sirkeci and Doğan’s elaboration on this imagination in terms of the international promotion of the city image also indicate the everyday life conditions for the inhabitants concealed in these publicity films:

“The spectacularization of the culture connotes the critical theory on consumer culture, in which the culture becomes the commodified object. The contemporary culture industry and creative sector were thought to be underdeveloped compared to the possession of rich cultural heritage. Therefore, the images concentrating on the heritage sites, such as Hagia Sophia, Galata and Haydarpaşa, are coupled with the images of ‘cool city’ vibrating with arts and culture. However, this image is exposed to the international arena to put Istanbul on the showcase. Istanbul is not cool for its locals, who suffer from the everyday life, traffic, economic crisis, unemployment, high rents and etc. (Doğan and Sirkeci, 2013, p.37).”

Indeed, this publicity film continues to espouse the images of cultural heritage and the workers. After the audience is welcomed into the Archeology Museum, the camera passes through the Grand Bazaar and this time, a shoe shiner welcomes the audience. Then it goes inside a tram; later a tram driver bows to welcome. The camera passes through the streets on which people outside cafés sit on tables and drink tea. Although this image was included in the promotion of the everyday life imagination of the event,

in 2011, the City of Beyoğlu, where these tables used to identify several streets around the popular Istiklal Street, gave the cafés a very hard time. The the permission to have tables outside was not extended by the City, and the municipal police rigorously forced the cafés and restaurants to remove tables on the streets.

Later in the film, a greengrocer greets the audience next to a broad array of fruits and vegetables. A taxi driver opens the door of his car and bows to welcome. Then a waiter in the tea house in Pier Loti welcomes the audience. Unlike the customers in the café, people who serve and work bow and welcome the audience. These bowing people working in the city can be read as a reference to the purpose of generating participation of the people that live in Istanbul to the process of promoting Istanbul as the cultural capital. However, this also reveals that this imagination of the streets was mainly based on the promotion of the city abroad, rather than the perception of the inhabitants. The role of the inhabitants was actually a passive one; they were expected to ‘participate’ to the ‘welcoming’ face of the city. Moreover, everyday life was reduced to a ‘welcoming’ image of workers and aesthetics of ‘cultural heritage’ concentrated around central Istanbul. However, the impact of the ongoing urban development policies on the everyday life of workers and the tensions in everyday life regarding the production of space through the hierarchies between the classes and identities are left outside of this picture.

At the end of the film, we see the slogan ‘Istanbul welcomes you’ with the signature of the Metropolitan Mayor Kadir Topbaş. The message of the last scene of this publicity film, in which religions merge into the Turkish flag, and everything ends up with a welcoming image of a mosque, coincides with Sassatelli’s assessment (2002, p.439) on the discourse of diversity promoted by European Union: “(A)s the renewed version of

Europe as unity stresses cultural globalization, a renewed version of Europe as diversity responds to it stressing the recent phenomena of nationalist or ethnic recrudescence”.

In Turkey, the case was similar, but this time associated with the Ottoman Empire model. In a press conference in Riga on 2nd April 2013, President of Turkey Abdullah Gül mentioned the vision of identity for Turkey accordingly (as a reply to the questions about the peace process between the Turkish state and the PKK-Kurdish Workers Party, an armed Kurdish movement):

“Ottoman Empire and (Anatolian) Seljuk Empire are known in history as Turkish states. However, it doesn't mean that all the citizens were Turks, but in history these all were states that were led by Turks... Today we are not an empire. We are a unitary state. However, I believe that we can act with reflex and self-confidence of an empire. If we act this way we can solve many problems.”²⁴,

This approach to Istanbul as an Ottoman capital is present in the representation of the city in the 2010 ECoC through the images of historical assets from different eras, and religions in the city under the unity of national identity based on territory and ethnic diversity.

²⁴Parts of the speech can be found at TRTTürk, Cumhurbaşkanı Gül'den 'Osmanlı-Selçuklu' teklifi, 3. 02.2013, <https://www.trtturk.com/haber/cumhurbaskani-gulden-osmanli-selcuklu-teklifi-33084.html>

Istanbul Inspires, directed by Chris Hartwill for the abroad publicity of the event, which uses the slogan “the most inspiring city in the world”, combines historical landmarks, contemporary art, and impressions of a vivid night life to offer touristic experiences in the city to the audience (Figure 5). The film, following the Grand Prix promotion film in 2005, collocates the imagery that arrays the architectural contrast between the modern buildings and the mosques, and night life and art scene, hence it refers to the togetherness of modern and the oriental in the city. At the end we hear: “What would it be, what would inspire you? Istanbul, the most inspiring city in the world.”

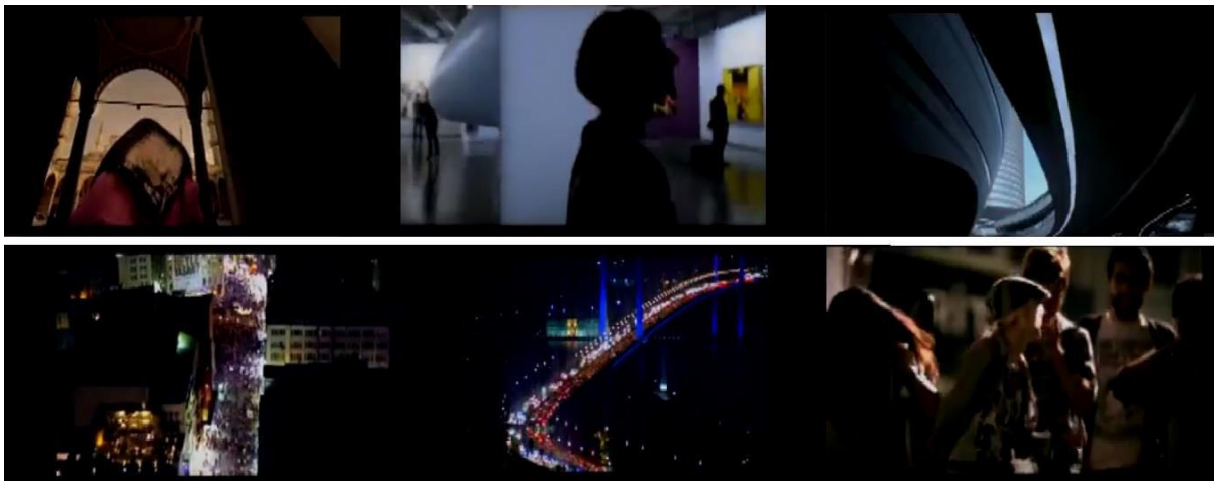


Figure 5. Istanbul Inspires

Another abroad publicity film approaches the city employing imagery similar to the adventure offered in the Newsweek cover and article about ‘Cool Istanbul’ in 2005. This film focuses on people in everyday lives in Istanbul that complete the coolness of

²⁵I assume the woman to be a tourist because of the way she put her hairscarf on at the entrance of the Mosque.

the city with their cool and content attitudes. The film opens with a scene in which a woman sees the Blue Mosque through the window of a public transport vehicle, opens to aerial viewpoint images of the Hagia Sophia, the Süleymaniye Mosque, the Dolmabahçe Palace, ferries, the Çırağan Palace, and the Haydarpaşa Train Station. Then the camera enters the station and we see a group of people that walks by and throw a glance at the camera. One of the most remarkable things in this film are the facial expressions of the people, in which one can read the self-confidence and a ‘cool’ attitude.

Cool is a concept that is shaped contextually, hence hard to define by words. To handle this obscurity in the definition, Dick Pountain and David Robins (2000) approach cool in terms of the relationship between human behaviour and the cultural artefacts that inheres in the attitude of people (Pountain and Robins, 2000, p.18). Actually, the genealogy of the concept of ‘cool’ dates back the ancient civilizations in Africa (Frank, 1997). ‘The cool’ of the African cultures spread first among black communities in United States as a code of construction and performance of manhood after the slave trade (Majors and Billson, 1992). In 1950s and 1960s, the cool was adopted by US subcultures in relation with its associations with hedonism and resistance. It was considered as an opposition to the ‘one-dimensional man’ of the 1950s’ business environment (McGuigan, 2009, p.6 and p.45). Hence, ‘the cool’ blended in the white US cultures, too. Especially after the 1990s, the consumer market realized the potential of cool as a marketing tool; discourses of ‘consumer hip’ and ‘cool business’ based on the concepts of taste and lifestyle suggested that cool was distinctive due to the consumer subjectivity. McGuigan (2009) elaborates this discourse of consumer sovereignty through the cool as a link between the consumer and the commodity, and calls this neoliberal ideology “cool capitalism”. Alongside being a mode of individual resistance, cool was now also promoted as becoming distinctive through consumption and attitude.

Pountain and Robins (2000, p.26) describe 'cool' as "an attitude or personality type" that is "recognizable in all its manifestations as a particular combination of three core personality traits, namely narcissism, ironic detachment and hedonism", and "a rebellious attitude, an expression of a belief that the mainstream mores of your society have no legitimacy and do not apply to you" (ibid., p.23). According to them "the look of Cool is obtained subtly through distinctive body language, a leisurely rolling gait, a meticulously chosen hat or hairstyle, a mute expression and an air of circumspection" (ibid, p.114) and "a carefully cultivated Cool pose can keep the lid on the most intense feelings and violent emotions" (ibid. p.22).

Later in the film, we start to see several people at work, similar to the publicity film released in 2005. First the restaurateur in Hagia Sophia interrupts his work to look through the hole in the wall to see the Blue Mosque. Then a watchmaker gives a look at the camera during his work, still welcoming, but with a distant and confident facial gesture (Figure 6).

The gestures in this last publicity film representing the cool city image of Istanbul as the Newsweek cover introduce a 'cool' welcoming, different from the workers in everyday life that welcome the visitors with warm gestures in the aforementioned publicity film in 2005. This time, those who enjoy living in this city just throw confident glances at the camera, and therefore at the audience, rather than convincing them to visit the city smiling and bowing. These gestures reveal a mode of confidence, distance and pleasure. Hence, the orientalist looks of the 2005 film give place to the definition of the cool people of the cool city through the cultural encounters in the Event. Since the poor working conditions, economic difficulties etc, in other words, the political economy is left outside this imagery, this emergent coolness of the workers can be read as a hint for a prosperity and economic development.



Figure 6.

After that, we see a woman in head scarf, a man and two children, symbolizing a family, pass by the Eminönü Mosque amidst a huge number of birds; so that the imagination of an ordinary family merges into the cool spaces of Istanbul. Thus, the everyday life imagination of the cool city is completed with ordinary people enjoying the city as the tourists do (Figure 7).



Figure 7.

In the following scenes, a woman – most likely a teacher - points to the ceilings of Topkapı Palace to show them to the children around her, and the children look at what she points out with mesmerized eyes. This scene brings the audience back to the inspir-

ing cultural heritage of the city, and completes the the discourse of ‘inspiring Istanbul’ together with the cool people and cool experiences reminding the audience of the reasons why the stage is given to Istanbul as mentioned in one of the publicity slogan of the agency: “The stage is yours Istanbul”.

The film continues with the images of a church wedding, a mosque, bridges across the Bosphorus, and then people feeding seagulls on a ferry with ‘simit’²⁶. According to this image, this practice of the people in Istanbul offers a distinctive experience for those who will visit the city. Moreover, the common images of street food, which is known for being (subjectively) cheap food available for everyone, includes the ‘culture’ of poverty as an experience for visitors in Istanbul. Hence, the

Then we see people leaving the boat in Eminönü, and then a group of young people walking and giving distant but self-confident, hence, ‘cool’ glances at the camera. The following image is a young man with dreadlocks walking in front of a wall full of graffiti (Figure 8). In addition to its position as a representation of the cool in Istanbul, I find this image significant due to the collaboration between the state and the artists of subcultural practices such as Street Art that was developed in the course of the event. As I argued above with reference to Thomas Frank, Dick Pountain and David Robins works, the marketing concept of cool was based on the rise of the subcultural cool and youth cultures. Hence, the inclusion of subcultures into the representation of Istanbul is based on various life styles that are available in the city which makes the city distinctive and allows the visitor to choose an experience in accordance with their taste.

²⁶Simit is a type of bagel that is very commonly sold in streets. Throwing ‘simit’ to seagulls from ferries is something common that people enjoy.



Figure 8.

This film presents also a group of street musicians in Istiklal Street playing Santur, guitar, and darbuka and a crowd watches their show. However, the next image suddenly takes place in an office building, probably a business company. A business woman looks out of the window of her office with a very self-confident attitude to see an area full of skyscrapers. The camera continues to capture the skyscrapers beyond the hills in day time, and then we see night images of mosques and crowded but sparkling car traffic around the historic landmarks. Thus, Istanbul offers an experience of vivid life style on the streets with subcultures, as well as resources for business and investment. Moreover, the following scene of a fashion show in which a model on the stage strikes a pose towards the camera represents Istanbul not only in terms of the ‘styles’ in everyday life, but also as potential of designing further styles for the international fashion market. The embodiment of the cool space in the representations of people searches for a character of the city through this personification directed at both investment and tourists.

Another international publicity film gives a short summary of the history of the ECoC events, showing the cities that carried the title since 1985 (Figure 9). At the end, Istanbul appears with mosques, Topkapı Place, churches, and the film concludes with the image of a Turkish flag at the beginning of the Bosphorus Bridge swaying over the “bridge between Asia and Europe” accompanied with the caption “Istanbul 2010 Euro-

pean Capital of Culture”. These publicity films refer to metaphor of ‘bridges’ frequently.



Figure 9. Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Publicity Film, ‘The Bridge between Asia and Europe’

As the publicity film produced by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2005 points out the ‘shared life together’ with ‘differences’ that welcomes the newcomers, the everyday life in the city is depicted as an issue of peace and hospitality that newcomers can enjoy and take part in. Accordingly, this metaphor opens a fresh discourse to excite the potential tourists and investors with its richness in happenings and everyday culture. The films that I analysed line up contradictory images one after the other, bringing the image of a city “where you can find whatever you want” in which a beautiful landscape, night life, street arts, alternative cultures, every kind of art from modern and post-modern to classical art works, historical and modern architecture, mosques, and churches all together inspire the cultural industry such as cinema, fashion sectors as well as artists and visitors. All this imagery is embodied in the bridge metaphor and constitutes the imagination of diversity in Istanbul. Besides the crowd of the city, even the traffic jam becomes a distinctive quality reminding of Istanbul’s liveliness.

Evinç Doğan (2010) remarks on the contribution of mega-city events to the local economy and political authority through the image they formulate, and in case of Istanbul 2010 ECoC, demonstrating the direction of political power change towards new conservatism. Indeed, the new identity discourse of the government arises in the representation of the city on the one hand (the national identity based on the imagination of Ottoman

heritage), while on the other hand the images of skyscrapers and business people call for the future of Istanbul as a global financial center, as imagined by the prime minister. In the meantime, alternative cultures get included in the official agenda of the City in a way that their presence would not contradict this new discourse anymore, and contribute in the local economy as part of the attraction of the city.

I interviewed several street artists who took part in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program and later produced street art festivals through collaboration with the Beyoğlu Municipality and sponsors. In their discourse, the transformation of the city was inevitable; and therefore the only thing that could be done to intervene in this process would be adding an aesthetical value to the space. Likewise, the emphasis on creativity and participation of the volunteers strived to produce an enthusiasm for the culture-led regeneration on the ‘mahalle’ level concerning the areas that had the potential to blend in the imaginations of the ‘cool Istanbul’ due to their location, such as Rumelikavağı and Kadirga, two mahalle around the Bosphorus. However, the representation of everyday life of people detached from their everyday struggles turns into a consumable value for the sake of spectacles. In Chapter 3 and 4, I investigate this relationship through the collaboration between the agency and the festival organizations in Ahırkapı and Tarlabası in terms of their contribution to gentrification and the displacement of the inhabitants.

2.2.2 Participation in the Event through the Volunteers Project

In the Ex-Post Evaluation of 2010 European Capitals of Culture (Rampton, McAteer, Neringa, Levai and Akçalı, 2011, p.77) it is stated that in Istanbul “there was an increase of 11% in the number of foreign tourists visiting the city between 2009 and 2010; overnight stays by foreign visitors increased by 12.5%, whilst overnight stays by Turkish visitors increased by 4%” partly attributed as a consequence of the marketing campaign of the ECoC; and according to the survey of the report, 15% of tourists mentioned

the influence of the event in their decision. Richards and Hall (2003, p.298) evaluate challenges for such concerns of participation in terms of the development of a sustainable tourism sector:

“Despite the community-orientated rhetoric of much sustainable tourism policy, it remains problematic to find ways and means of ensuring that all sectors of the community participate in tourism development and that conflicts surrounding the use of community resources are resolved or at least minimised.”

Both the European Council and the agency emphasized the goal of delivering the participation of the citizens in the event organization. On top of such concerns, the Volunteers Project of the agency was an attempt to bring in young people to the organization for generating ‘enthusiasm’ for the event, as well as to construct a participatory structure. Most of the projects in the event program were produced with the labor of the volunteers that participated in the Volunteers Project.

The Habitat II event in 1996 in Istanbul led to a discussion about participatory governance in Turkey and motivated a socio-political agenda that initiated the development of a civil society in new institutional bodies (Uzun, 2010, p.763). This new process coincided with the concepts of “multiculturalism, participation, negotiation” that the AKP government adopted to promote the “conservative democrat” discourse (Doğanay, 2007). However, in this discourse the participation of citizens in the governmental process is intended only in terms of “solving problems” and generating a more democratic image for governance instead of taking decisions together with the citizens (ibid, p.81). Within the neoliberal policies of the AKP scaling the government down in terms of economic activities to promote a “smaller but dynamic and effective state” withdrawing from its “fundamental functions” (ibid), these civil organizations play a role in the collaboration between state, market and civil society as a “third sector” (ibid, p.84;86).

Mayor Kadir Topbaş, in his visit to Mecca on 10th of March 2013, affirmed this ideas in his words about urban transformation: “In urban transformation areas, we first motivate the foundation of an NGO. They constitute a bridge between us and the citizens. We follow the works (process) this way”²⁷. Indeed, The National Report of the Council of Europe on Turkey’s Cultural Policy (2013, p.10) celebrates the NGO’s and the art sector for developing in the form of companies:

“It is seen that the NGOs are structured and institutionalized as private companies being in different manufacturing or service industry, culture and art in the field of private companies that perform their activities within their places of production, and exhibition of art and culture community that performs the activity location or private companies that reach the institutional structure and provide support services. Institutions and organizations such as ; Akbank Art Centre, Garanti Culture Co., Ltd., Yapı Kredi Culture and Art Publishing, Inc., Is Bank and IsArt Cultural Publications, Beşiktaş Cultural Centre, Borusan Culture and Arts, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, Istanbul Modern, Garajistanbul , Vehbi Koç Foundation emerge important cultural and artistic life actors.”

The Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency acclaimed its “participatory” structure referring to the participation of NGO’s and volunteers. The law about the foundation of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency transformed the initiative structure that was composed of thirteen NGO’s into a bureaucratic state-dominated organization (Öner, 2010, p.269-270). To facilitate the decision-making process, the agency was directly connected to the office of the Prime Minister that ended up weakening the influence of the civil initiative and creating more complex inner hierarchies (ibid, p.270). While the role of civil initiative members in the agency shifted to be that of advisors and coordinators, many members of this initiative resigned opposing the dominance of public authority in the organization. Thus, the expectations of the ECoC event to bring a “good governance model” to

²⁷ Available on <http://www.kadirtopbas.com.tr/HaberlerVeDuyurular/2013/3/987> and <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=21006#.UXUtKErwHEU>

Turkey, and to constitute an “interface” between public and private actors was let down. According to Oğuz Öner, a member of Urban Implementations Directorate of the Agency, this process showed a shift from “participations to transform” to “participation to legitimize” (2010, p.272).

Nil Uzun assesses the urban governance in Istanbul as a “powerful mayor and weak council” model “closely tied to the central government” (2010, p.766). She evaluates the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency process as an unsuccessful attempt for participatory urban governance model of public-private sector relations. Moreover, she points out “that urban management systems (in Istanbul) are influenced by global forces, and the participation of the private sector in urban development has been increasing in Istanbul (ibid, p.769).” Nevertheless, although the active public participation goal mainly failed, the nationwide extra tax levy to fund the ECoC event in Istanbul brought the public into the project in terms of financial capital.

Alongside this “participatory governance model” in the organization of the agency, “an extensive volunteer programme was operated with the aim of providing a resource for the implementation of the cultural programme, but also to encourage long-term participation in culture” (Ernst and Young, 2011, p.81). A Volunteers Project was held between 2008 and 2010 to “increase the visibility of (Istanbul 2010) ECoC projects and involvement of young people” (Öner, 2010, p.273).

Pointing out the increasing importance of the creative sector for tourism, Duygu Salman and Duygu Uygur emphasize that “emotional labor”, or in other words “hospitality employees”, which stands for the service laborers of the creative tourism sector, should be regarded as the providers of an authentic and emotional experience to the “creative tourists”, and “creative tourism should include the clash of different socio-cultural realities

and the questioning of established organizational rules” (2010, p.195). What Salman and Uygur suggest in this study is basically a transformation of what they call emotional labor into a surplus value for the sector.

However, the involvement of the volunteers in the project was different than that of those who have to perform certain emotional expressions to serve and welcome tourists. The key word “enthusiasm” in the Volunteers Project’s description and the workshops before the event for preparing the volunteers for this process of promoting Istanbul’s culture imposed an excitement for taking part in this event and contributing to the development and image creation of Istanbul. Moreover, for several volunteers, the project was also a chance to bring sub-cultures onto the agenda of the city’s cultural policies. Different from “emotional labor”, referring to the emotional performance of the worker to fulfill the requirements of the workplace (Hochschild, 1983), “affective labor” is the labor that is “immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community” (Hardt, 1999, p.96). While emotional labor is a term related only to the exploitation of emotions and labor for the improvement of the capital, “affective labor” is a term that implicates an affinity to the outcomes of the work and/or to the work itself. While emotional labour is already expected from the employee as part of the job, affective labour can amount to capitalist exploitation of labor through the manipulation of affects, as well as the resistance and the solidarity against the capitalist exploitation.

In the former direction, the ECoC event was fed by the Volunteers Project providing the “affective labor” to spread the enthusiasm of the event in Istanbul, and constructed an image of public participation for “transforming local populations, including their skills, their civic consciousness, their love and care for the city, and their creative potential, networking in urban governance” (Hoyng, 2012, p.2). This model of participation was

also a criterion to be fulfilled according to Article 4 of Decision 1622/2006/EC specified in the “City and Citizens” part of the “Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture” (ibid, p.12) as to “foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad”.

By coincidence, many of my friends whom I shared my flat with in Istanbul back in 2010 took part in the Volunteers project. Many of these friends had migrated from Diyarbakır. Some of them were either officially unemployed, working precariously in small jobs, and/or still students. Several of them were already involved in the projects of the Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TOG) before the ECoC event and continued to do so after the event ended. They did not only provide unpaid labor force for the events in the ECoC project, such as concerts, festivals and ceremonies; but were also involved with the production process of workshops and street and *mahalle* festivals. My friends were mainly interested in street art, music and juggling. I met Pertev Emre Tastaban, the curator of Tarlabası Street Arts Festival who produced street art projects also for the agency through these friends, since they continued to organize graffiti/street art workshops after the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event, in venues such as the Bilgi University Spring Festival. I witnessed their excitement for the Volunteers project throughout the year 2010. They were excited for being involved with the projects, for socializing with each other, and also for being able to attend several events for free. Thanks to their efforts, I could also attend their private celebration of the ending of the event in Sepetçioğlu Kasrı, by the Golden Horn. This choice of place for this celebration itself was enough to arouse excitement. Events such as this celebration were exclusively organized for the Volunteers of the Project, and the opportunity to attend the events in the program, such as the U2 concert, fed the enthusiasm of the young volunteers. They didn't receive any material rewards such as possibilities for employment. However, here have been intangible returns of this exciting time in their lives, such as the experience

they accumulated through the event, the social capital they built up through the connections they made with each other to collaborate further with other projects, and the friendship they made through the Volunteers Project.

In the program, 6159 people were registered as volunteers, 223 of them were educated as active volunteers, and 901 volunteers eventually took part in the activities²⁸. 15 Volunteers Projects were conducted under the Urban Culture Directorate of the agency, and most of these projects intended to reach local people living in Istanbul's peripheral neighborhoods. However, other than these projects directly produced within the Volunteers Project program, these volunteers constituted the labor force for almost all the projects conducted by the agency in 2009 and in 2010 from stadium concerts (such as the U2 concert) to individual projects (such as the Graffiti workshops by Pertev Emre Tastaban)²⁹.

One of the Volunteers Project coordinators, Gökhan Göktaş, mentioned that another objective of this project was making the youth produce while they consume. However, according to Anna Richter, this would be “naïve enthusiasm”, and “[p]resenting participation in an unproblematic way allows to ‘add value’ to the business-as-usual approach of upgrading and privatising of gentrification and to reframe it as regeneration” (Richter, 2010, p.184). Indicating the “partnership” as a cover for inner hierarchies created within a discourse of a “heterarchic” organization model, such as the Istanbul 2010 ECoC agency, she defines volunteerism as “a technique of governance to foster a culture of rights and responsibilities in relation to employability” (ibid, p.186). In her analysis of volunteering in the Liverpool 2008 ECoC event, Richter points out this partici-

²⁸ Final Reports of Istanbul ECoC Agency, 2010 and Ex-Post Evaluation of 2010 European Capitals of Culture, 2010, Ernst and Young

²⁹ Interview with Ilker Girit from Volunteers Project of the Agency and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Youth Assembly, and interview with Gökhan Göktaş from Kültür A.Ş., a coordinator of Volunteers Project, on 26.03.2013 in Maura Cafe, Beyoğlu.

pation discourse actually defines what is ‘in’ and what is ‘out’; thus the social inclusion through participation actually defines the field of exclusion. A total exclusion amounted to the deprivation of surplus value that could be extracted from human beings, and unemployment could motivate rebellion (Foucault, 1988, p.57). Volunteerism brings this surplus value of unemployed individuals to the regeneration discourse, in other words, to the urban gentrification process.

Öner (2010) notes that the Volunteers Project was quite successful, but not as much as it was expected to be. He associates this situation to the managerial problems in the agency that caused an incompatibility with the universities about some of the intended projects (ibid, p.273). He remarks that the agency couldn’t succeed in developing a “broader perspective to achieve inclusiveness”, although several projects attested to a potential for it such as “Social Exclusion and Art” which brought art workshops to women prisoners, to elderly people in public shelters, and to mental health institutions; “Obstacle-Free Urban Projects for the Disabled which aimed to conduct awareness-raising meetings organized by the disabled themselves”; the “Meeting the City, Getting to Know the Museum” project, which aimed to bring cultural activities to women and children facing social and economic obstacles. According to Öner, particularly some identities, such as those of ethnical and religious minorities and LGBTI people were considered ‘controversial’ and were excluded from the program.

However, the Istanbul 2010 ECoC logo was given to the “Living Library” project of the TOG (Community Volunteers Foundation) that was conducted by the volunteers of the agency. It was intended to motivate people to reconsider their prejudice against each other by means of having a personal and positive conversation with people to whom they usually would not have an opportunity to talk, despite of living together in one

city³⁰. At the library entrance, visitors received a list of marginalized identities, such as ethnic identities, LGBTI, sex workers, religious identities, etc. They were asked to choose an identity, the most ‘marginal’ one for them, and about which they had the biggest prejudice. Then, they would meet someone of this identity inside the library to ask questions and to receive answers. However, categorizing these identities and domesticating them to be integrated in the “hegemonic” discourse showing that “there is actually nothing to fear from them” corresponds to the imaginations of non-conflicting diversity as represented in the publicity of the event.

The Volunteers Project mostly involved this kind of social inclusion projects. To look at the outcomes of this project, I will first investigate the neighborhood festivals, then the street art events, in terms of social inclusion discourse and the gentrification process that is supported by such practices.

2.2.3 Social Inclusion in Neighborhoods through Festivals

The imagination of the street as a container of images and financial resources through the discourses of openness, urban identity and the global city detached the ‘street’ from its social and political context and from the context of everyday life practices of the inhabitants in the *mahalle*. Such discourses call for continuous creative interventions in order to attribute a character to the space, and to maintain an image for it. The discourse of social inclusion and cultural diversity in culture-led regeneration processes searches for a global multicultural image reducing the *mahalle* to an aesthetical nostalgia.

According to Sibel Yardımcı (2007), the formation of neighborhoods in Istanbul due to ethnic affiliations, personal relationships, and the “infrastructural weaknesses that limit escape from the city” provided a less socio-spatial fragmentation in comparison to other metropolitan areas, such as Mexico City and Sao Paolo. However, she also denotes that

³⁰ Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency Activity Reports, Öğren!, p.200.

this situation doesn't amount to proper access to cultural capital (which for her refers to the level of consumption of culture) that "create[s] new distinctions among different groups" in terms of social integration within the city.

The promise of Egemen Bağış³¹ in the ECoC application was that the event would "pave the way and do all within (our) power for culture and art to meet with the people [and] thus transform the Istanbulite into [the] Enthusiastic Participator [sic]" (Initiative Group, 2005: 17, in Hyong, p.13). However, the analysis about the spatial allocation of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC (Turgay Kerem Koramaz and Elif Kısar-Koramaz, 2011) shows that majority of the projects were concentrated in the central city, and most of these happened around the Beyoğlu, Şişli, and Beşiktaş districts. Among the periphery districts, Eyüp and Sarıyer had the highest number of events. According to the findings of the analysis, the activities in the periphery differed from the activities in central areas, and the periphery activities were mostly educational activities, street events, and Sisters Cities programs "which may contribute to the people-centred cultural programs" (ibid, p.10). This refers to the common description of the periphery activities, such as neighborhood festivals, in the final reports and the program catalog as "social inclusion".

Koramaz and Kısar-Koramaz conclude their analysis with these words:

"... [T]he continuity of such people-centred and decentralised cultural programs aiming production instead of consumption of culture would be a long-term success of ECoC 2010 – Istanbul. Such progressive cultural development programs and projects are so crucial for increasing access to culture, art and education programs and for providing local cultural production among citizens and especially in the underserved districts of the city (ibid, p.10)."

³¹ Advisory Board Chairman of Istanbul 2010 ECoC and former Minister of EU Affairs in Turkey.

The majority of projects in the outskirts of the city, and all ‘neighborhood festivals’ were designed and realized by the volunteers of the agency. Together with these festivals, the Cultural Management Training Education Program for Local Administrations and the oral history project ‘I write a history from my street’ held with high school students were attempts to extend the radius of the event to a wider geography. These were attempts to extend the radius of the event to a wider geography. However, as Koramaz and Koramaz also found out, the project didn’t concentrate in such areas, and the perception of these areas was much rather based on the terms of social inclusion.

Indeed, neighborhood festivals seemed more like a mixture of national holiday celebrations and some sub-cultural practices, such as juggling and graffiti workshops. For example, the opening ceremonies were just like the national holiday celebrations, local administrators made opening speeches, school bands marched through the streets, open air stages were constructed and municipal police officers surrounded the festival area. This mixture indicates both the division and compliance in the agency between the imaginations of the state officials and the civil initiative members.

The Rumelikavağı Neighborhood Festival started just like this on 2 October 2010. It was a two-day festival, and according to the coordinators of the Volunteer Project, Girit and Göktaş, it was the most important one among the other festivals organized directly by volunteers due to its longer term. During the day, there were ECoC information desks, a workshop for recycling, handicraft and jewelry design workshops, an a juggling and graffiti workshop in the festival area. Turkish Folk Dance groups performed in the fair area with the people; local musicians, young break dancers and hip-hop singers from the neighborhood took the stage. I read the inclusion of the practices such as the folk dance and local handicrafts with reference to tradition as attempts to bring the authenticity of the community to the event.

The Kadirga Neighborhood Festival on 15 May was an even smaller but very similar event. There were stands for local handicraft, food and beverage sale, rug weaving, ‘ebru’ arts, and graffiti workshops. Students of Medicine from Istanbul University measured people’s blood pressure and blood glucose level and educated children about hand and facial hygiene. ‘Urfa Sıra Night’ was performed, and the Ahırkapı Roma Orchestra took the stage at night as the main attraction of the festival.

In the event program and on the web site of the Rumelikavağı Neighborhood Festival, the aim of the Volunteers Project in organizing these festivals was considered as “sharing the examples of shared life in old neighborhoods of Istanbul with Istanbulites on the one hand, and on the other hand empowering the participation process of inhabitants of this neighborhood to local governance processes”. Accordingly, these festivals were like educational programs and celebrations of local cultures.

In the interviews, both Girit and Göktaş noted that these festivals did not receive many visitors other than a small group of people strictly following the event program, and that there were no tourists from abroad. According to the notes of people that live in the festival areas and of volunteers about the festivals on the web sites and blogs, the festivals were exciting experiences for both sides. Hyong reports that volunteers of the agency approached some ‘key individuals’ in *mahalle* and tried hard to convince them ‘to participate’. They were unsuccessful in some of these attempts, which indicated that “the responsibility and will to participate lay with the people” (2012, p.14). Hyong quotes that according to Yeşim Yalman, director of Urban Culture part of the Agency, the evaluation of the success of the event should depend on the number of people reached, but not those that were not involved; accordingly it was still an urban governance experiment that could be considered as a success (ibid).

The Volunteers Project ended after 2010, and so did these *mahalle* festivals initiated by this project. Back to the evaluation of Korkmaz and Korkmaz, these were not sustainable cultural investments for the periphery, but more like projects to give place to express the concern of the agency for “social inclusion” in the program. However, it is hard to imagine whether it would bring an improvement in the accessibility of cultural events if the festivals would have become regular events. I will scrutinize a specific neighborhood festival to point out a certain tendency of what the value of ‘local cultural production’ (as Korkmaz and Korkmaz formulized it) might mean in post-Fordist production of space, and to what kind of a cultural consumption it might lead. In my two case studies, Tarlabası and Ahırkapı, the Volunteers Projects didn’t directly bring any festivals to *mahalle*; however, the connections and collaborations made through the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event were significant in terms of the attribution of authenticity to space and the power relationship over the social production of space.

3 Officialization of Street Arts in Istanbul: From Canvas to the Walls of the Urban Transformation Area in Tarlabaşı

In this chapter, I first demonstrate the inclusion of street arts in the official agenda of state institutions in Turkey, and then, following the connection made through the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event, I investigate the implementation of culture-led regeneration policies by the government through festivalizing the demolition of the buildings in an urban transformation area.

After the privatization of public resources in the 1980's, central areas in Istanbul experienced a gentrification process led by the state or/and investors. Together with the return of the single-party government period in Turkey in 2002, state-led gentrification processes were accelerated through comprehensive urban transformation plans for the city. New laws were enacted one after the other to enable this public-private collaboration. The plans projected private enclosures in public spaces, public properties, and in the inner city neighborhoods, in which people with low income level and people from marginalized identities resided. These projects annihilated the disposition of *mahalle* as a venue of social encounters based on various everyday activities and practices, and suggested gated communities. The gated community concept is fed by the fear produced by the government's discourse of security, and suggests controlled and limited everyday encounters with people based on economic hierarchies. While the social and physical construction of *mahalle* follows and allows a variety of everyday contact among the people regardless of whether they are inhabitants or not, the gated community however filters the contacts. The social and physical intermingling in the *mahalle* structure provides solidarity networks on the one hand, while on the other it enables internal social

control mechanisms. However, the gated community form brings social segregation and displaces the *mahalle* of workers and minorities.

The position of the art and creative sector in the post-fordist city as an attraction for the taste of upper classes causing the displacement of former residents has already been elaborated after the rise of the art sector in the development of urban land with innovative economies in the contexts of the US cities like New York and European cities (such as Zukin, 1982 and 1987; Ley, 1996 and 2003). Moreover, the artists were mostly interested in “marginal spaces” in the search for the “edgy,” “run-down,” and “experimental” (Mathews, 2010, p.663):

“What the artist values and valorizes is...more than the aesthetics of the old urban quarter. The society and culture of a working-class neighborhood, especially where this includes ethnic diversity, attracts the artist as it repels the conventional middle classes (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005, p.40 in Mathews, 2010, p. 663).”

Tarlabaşı, an area that consists of several neighborhoods in the city center, has received a lot of attention immediately after the eviction of its inhabitants in the summer of 2012 because of the pilot urban transformation project. The challenge of researching the Tarlabaşı urban transformation area lies in approaching the ethnology of an evicted area that received many researchers, artists, activists and curious visitors after its demolition. Here, I focus on the debates over a street art festival that took place in the pilot urban transformation area in the Tarlabaşı neighborhood after the demolition. The festival was organized by Emre Pertev Tastaban, a graffiti artist who also brought street art onto the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event agenda.

3.1 Officialization of the Street Arts

The interest for street art was evident in the local governmental agenda already in 2008. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Council of Youth organized a ‘Graffiti Festival’ on 24 August 2008 in Fatih, Balat on the Old Galata Bridge. In this festival, other than

the exhibition of works of 40 ‘VIP’ graffiti artists with the leitmotif of ‘Istanbul’, skateboard and bicycle shows, and stage performances took place. On the website of the Council, this event was announced as part of the enthusiasm for the upcoming Istanbul 2010 ECoC event³²:

“...We give importance to the local and national publicity of Istanbul that is chosen as European Capital of Culture of 2010, and hence we organize an event to attract attention to Graffiti that has been considered an alternative field of art... Moreover, (it is intended) to encourage the Graffiti artists for legal ways rather than illegal dimensions of it, and reveal the level of art that Graffiti deserves... Besides, (it is intended) to make the city a center of visual feast and contribute in the aesthetical understanding of youth along with providing a platform for the Graffiti artists to exhibit their talent and express themselves.”

Through this festival, it was already imagined to tame graffiti for the sake of the publicity of the upcoming event, and hence, of Istanbul. Indeed, in 2010, the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event program included several graffiti workshops. In neighborhood festivals prepared by the Volunteers Project, graffiti and stencil workshops were performed to teach how to make graffiti. Within the ECoC program, the ‘Meeting of All Stars’ – 2nd International Graffiti Festival³³ was organized in Taksim Gezi Parkı, on 25th July 2011 with volunteers of the agency. Back then, all these works in graffiti workshops and festivals were performed on canvas or posters, but not directly on the streets or walls. This approach of the local authorities was about to change in 2012, in an area demolished for the sake of urban transformation, on which I will elaborate in following chapter.

The Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency organized also the ‘Creative Streets Festival’ between 17th and 26th September 2010. A “Flying Grass Carpet” was placed on a square near the seaside in Beşiktaş District, designed by design companies HUNK and ID Eddy

³² <http://www.ibbgenclikmeclisi.com/Kurumsal/Makaleler/Ayrinti/404-Graffiti-Yildizlari-Istanbulda-Bulusuyor>

³³ The first one was organized by the same group of curator-coordinators in 2006 as Moast Fest 2006.

from Holland. On the stage and on this grass platform several shows were performed such as juggling, fire dancing, and break dance. In the meantime, the square around Galata tower was used as a stage for street musicians, and several local and international street musicians performed in this square throughout the summer of 2010³⁴.

Although the local government's policies started to give the street musicians hard times right after the termination of the ECoC term³⁵, the official approach to street art continued to produce collaborations with artists. After the demolition for the urban transformation project in the Tarlabası area in summer 2012, the emptied buildings, together with rising discussions about the transformation in Tarlabası, attracted the attention of artists and of the creative sector. As an area that was "another world in the city" (Saybaşı, 2005), stigmatized with fear and crime³⁶, Tarlabası became a destination for a large number of curious visitors. The writing on the walls of an emptied building signifies a discomfort among the inhabitants about this abrupt attention: "You couldn't get enough of taking pictures!" (Figure 10)



Figure 10. "You couldn't get enough of taking pictures!"

³⁴Personal notes of the author and interviews with the members of the Volunteers Project.

³⁵The municipality's Department of Culture made it very difficult or almost impossible to perform in the street not extending the three-month permissions.

³⁶There used to be even a very common myth assuming that even police forces would not be able to enter Tarlabası.

Regardless of this signs of discomfort, many festivals took place with support of the Beyoğlu Municipality one after the other in the ruins, such as ‘VJFest’, ‘Division Unfolded: Tarlabası Intervention’ (an art exhibition), and ‘Heyt Be!’ (an exhibition of fanzines). Another festival was held between 12th and 16th September 2012, in Karakurum Street, transforming the greater part of the street and one of the ruined buildings into a gallery of graffiti (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Tarlabası Pilot Urban Transformation Area

The title of the festival was first determined as ‘Tarlabası: Destroying the City’”, however, it was changed into ‘2012 Renovation Tarlabası’ afterwards. Sponsors and supporters of the event were the Municipality of Beyoğlu, the Pamukkale Construction Company, S.O.S. (a Security Company), the Kadir Has University, and Filli Boya (a Paint Company). Curator of the event was a former employee in the advertisement sector, now a graffiti artist, Pertev Emre Tastaban.

In this chapter, I will continue to elaborate on the 2012 Renovation Tarlabası Street Art Festival as a case study to investigate the extensions of the discourse and the approach

of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event organization to street art, since the prominent actors that developed street art as a sector in Istanbul are involved in this festival taking place in one of the urban transformation areas that revealed the comprehensive imagination of the project areas. In order to point out the connections between the urban transformation in the area and this graffiti festival, I will first elaborate on some dimensions of the story of urban transformation in Tarlabası.

3.2 Becoming Tarlabası: Urban Transformation and Displacement

Derya Özkan (2015) clarifies the use of the word “Becoming” in representations of cities in exhibitions such as *Becoming Istanbul* (2008, DAM) as a signifier of the post-fordist understanding of the city as an organic form that continuously needs to “become”; that is incomplete and imperfect; that needs to change itself continuously, just like the individual that needs to improve oneself constantly to “make the best of human capital”: “The self in a post-fordist regime of government is constantly becoming” (ibid, p.20). Borrowing her critical approach on this discourse of cities, I will trace the process of ‘Becoming Tarlabası’ and what became of it in relation with the physical, social and discursive impact factors on the area. In the following part, I will illustrate the imaginations of “Becoming Tarlabası” accordingly.

‘Tarlabası’ stands for an area that consists of the Bostan, Bülbül, Çukur, Hüseyinağa, Kalyoncukulluğu, Kamer Hatun, Şehirmuhtar, Sururimehmetefendi, and Yenişehir Neighborhoods. A pilot area of 9 blocks (block no. 360, 361, 362, 363, 385, 386, 387, 593, and 594) is still going through a process of renewal and displacement that benefits from the history of governmental and discursive management in the area to transform the poor conditions of inhabitants into a profitable value in the urban market. The area is in the Be-yoğlu District and surrounded by prominent commercial spaces such as Tarlabası Boulevard, Dolapdere Avenue, and it is one of the closest settlements to Istiklal Street, the busiest commercial and cultural area receiving millions of people a day, constituting one of the most popular places in the city, even in the entire country.

Not as a coincidence, but as a result of political and physical processes connected to the nationalist discourse and the post-fordist policies in Turkey, Tarlabası became the shelter for Roma people, Kurdish migrants from eastern Turkey, undocumented migrants, sex workers, transsexuals/transvestites. All these groups share both the conditions of being recognized as standing at the social margins of the city and the challenging economic and social conditions. In fact, the social ties and interaction between the residents characterized the space in Tarlabası. The resistance of marginalized people, such as sex workers, used to survive in the city through the community structure in Tarlabası³⁷ in the face of the conditions and oppression produced by the state forces, as well as hate crimes. In the meantime, internal tensions among the diverse communities in Tarlabası constituted a threat for the inhabitants themselves, too. Therefore, there have been inner closed clusters of groups for survival against the hate in the area, and to hold on to the city. The agglomeration within the area formed the *mahalle*, a cluster of social interactions. While ‘*mahalle*’ as neighborhood defines only an administrative unit in Turkish, *mahalle* in everyday life stands for the practiced space of inhabitants. The displacement through urban transformation can be seen also as an attack on this social formation of everyday that reemploys and deepens the existing social hierarchies as one can see in the negotiation process between the inhabitants of Tarlabası and the producers of the projects. As I will continue to, tenants were left out, and the property owners were forced to accept the terms proposed by the Project holders.

This new process brought very tough conditions in physical, social, economic and political terms to the population in these neighborhoods that already were in a disadvantageous position in the city.

A struggle against the urban transformation projects was organized with the involvement of the Chamber of Architects, volunteer lawyers, and scholars.

³⁷For a narrative on the struggle of transgender sex workers in Tarlabası see Selek, Pınar (2001) *Maskeler, Süvariler, Gacılar*. Aykırı Yayıncılık.

However, the struggle against transformations was covered up by the authorities through a discourse that strived to justify these interventions with the marginalized identities of the inhabitants, holding them responsible for the degradation in entire city. This discourse was based mainly on former modernist and nationalist discourses that initiated a nostalgia attributing an emotional value to space, regardless of the human beings suffering the existing conditions. As a consequence, Tarlabası was personified while the inhabitants were assumed to merely be elements of this glorified spacial imagination. This approach affected even the practices aimed at being critical to the process, such as the civil initiative in Istanbul ECoC organization and the activists and artists that showed interest to the area. Thus, the imagination of urban transformation got reproduced underlining the definitions produced through the discourse.

The composition of Tarlabası's population has been undergoing changes throughout history. The urban transformation project has a long history dating back to the modernization attempts of the Ottoman Empire to integrate with capitalist economy in the eighteenth century through foreign trade and creating a commercial and residential center for people from abroad and upper class people in the city (Yılmaz, 2008, p.209). The non-muslim population of this area dissolved by the effects of the Wealth Tax enacted in 1942, the nationalist attacks and pillage on the 6th-7th of September 1955, and then the deportation of citizens of Greek nationality in 1964. After that, the precarious legal conditions and unlawful confiscation of the properties in this area allowed the migrants from rural areas to the city to squat, sell, or rent the properties beyond legal terms. The rental value of the properties went down below their values (ibid, p. 210).

Between 1960 and 1980, the area received migrants from central and northern parts of Turkey. However, after the Military Coup in 1980, the composition of the population started to change: The majority of families of migrants from central and northern Turkey left Tarlabası. In the meanwhile, Kurdish migrants from eastern Turkey started

to settle here due to reinforced migration after the attacks of the Turkish Army and state forces in the villages on the ground of the fight against the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party)³⁸. Tarlabası provided affordable living conditions for the newcomers.

The construction of Tarlabası Boulevard in the late 1980's resulted first in physical and then social segregation between the İstiklal Street and Tarlabası, which let marginalized groups such as sex workers, transvestites, Roma people, single young men and transit migrants settle in (Yılmaz, 2008, p.211). While the reason for the migration for the Kurdish people from the east was mostly based on economic issues until the 1990's, after the displacement of villagers by the army in 1993, the district received a mass migration from the Eastern provinces because of the tough conditions in this region due to the political conflict. Thus, the population in Tarlabası was dominated by the number of Kurdish people afterwards.

According to the 2000 census data received from the Turkish Statistical Institute, there is a higher rate of unemployment in Tarlabası compared to the rest of Istanbul. However, "precarious, irregular, and temporary jobs in the informal sector, without social security and with low wages" (ibid, p.215) (such as street vending) that are very common in this area, are not included in these official data. These are the sectors in which most of Tarlabası inhabitants work: Some Kurdish residents work in used paper and can collecting; Roma people find work in the entertainment sector (ibid, p.215). According to the field research of Bediz Yılmaz, even if more than one person in the household works, the overall income remains very low, and the majority of the people

³⁸The PKK is the Kurdish Workers Party, an armed organization among the Kurdish freedom movement active in Turkey which has been at war with the Turkish Army since the Military Coup in 1980, being forced to function as an illegal guerilla organization.

has a 'Poverty Certificate' to get aid from state institutions, which is never sufficiently distributed to all inhabitants in the area (ibid).

In the Tarlabası Toplum Merkezi (TTM - Tarlabası Community Center) Field Research Interim Report³⁹ (Şahin and Çağlayan, 2006), according to local administrators of neighborhoods (*muhtar*), the migrants still reside in Tarlabası that migrated in the 1960s and 1970s from central and northern Turkey and still reside in Tarlabası constitute 20% of the population of the area. These people are mostly employed as shop keepers, civil servants or workers. According to the first part of the report, in which administrators in the area were interviewed, these residents are held exempt from "illegitimacy and criminality" that is attributed to the area. Based on their observations, *muhtars* mentioned that migrants from African countries, Kurds and the Roma people "made Turkish Republic what it is now" (referring to a moral and economic decay in the Turkish Republic) either involving in criminal activities such as theft, smash and grab, and drug trafficking or at least using electricity and water illegally or not paying taxes (ibid, p.2).

Yılmaz (2008) analyzes Tarlabası in terms of different dimensions of exclusion: economic, social, political, spatial and discursive. According to her field research, lacking access to education, child labor, or social exclusion caused by stigmatization based on ethnicity and class are substantial reasons for social deterioration that manifests in the form of high criminality rates and weakened solidarity networks. Giving the example of Istanbul Ansiklopedisi, a popular culture encyclopedia, in which the criminality of Tarlabası is emphasized, and memoirs of writers who lived in Beyoğlu⁴⁰, Yılmaz warns that "the identification of Tarlabası with criminality has both real and imagined sides" (ibid, p.221). According to Yılmaz, the realistic side of criminality attributed to the area

39 Retrieved from http://goc.bilgi.edu.tr/documents/Tarlabası_rapor_2006.pdf. Last visited 06.06.2015.

⁴⁰Yılmaz refers here to Gülersoy, Çelik. 2003. *Beyoğlu'nda gezerken*, Çelik Gülersoy Vakfı, İstanbul; Kocu, Resat Ekrem. 1961. *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul.; and Scognamillo, Giovanni. 1990. *Bir Le-vantenin Beyoğlu Anıları*. İstanbul.

is mostly purse-snatching, pick-pocketing, house and car burglaries generally towards strangers rather than residents and dominated by the “gang” and corruption of policemen collaborating on the crimes; however, crime rates on murder, assault, and armed robbery are relatively low in numbers (ibid, p.221). Yılmaz denotes that the residents who are not involved in crimes or who do not want to participate in crimes are victimized both by the lack of safety in this criminal environment and the bad reputation of the area as an “immoral slum”.

On the discursive level, Tarlabası is subject to two interrelated discourses that produce fear: on the one hand, it is stigmatized as the space of crime and prostitution; on the other hand it is stigmatized due to the discourses on ethnic identities, such as Kurds as “terrorists”; and undocumented migrants from African Countries as drug-dealers (ibid, p.229). The official reports prepared for the “urban rehabilitation” projects in the area and the justification of the urban transformation on the official website of the municipality, which I will evaluate in the following part, also deepens this discourse of fear and marginality. Hence, these features assigned to the area then constitute both the justification of the urban transformation project, and of making the area a the venue of an authentic experience.

3.3 Knowing Tarlabası: Discourse of Urban Transformation in Tarlabası

The 21st century started in Istanbul with comprehensive urban transformation practices by the AKP government. Different from the fragmental approaches of former governments, the AKP produced comprehensive transformation projects at once, mostly in inner city settlements of discursively marginalized and economically and socially disadvantaged populations. The legal and institutional base for this extensive destruction plan for real-estate oriented objectives of the urban local government was prepared within a few years with the new institutions and laws: the Metropolitan Planning Office

and Urban Design Center (IMP), law number 4966 enacted in 06/08/2003 covering the new assignments of the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI), the Law on Housing Development in 2004, the Law of Local Authorities in 2005, and the Law on Renewal (Use of Decrepit Historical and Cultural Assets) number 5366 enacted in 5/7/2005, The Law on the Amendments in Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage and Various Laws (Kültür Ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Kanunu İle Çeşitli Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun) number 5226 enacted in 14/7/2004 were the first signs of the upcoming renewal policies for the decaying urban areas protected as cultural assets. Based on the Law no. 5226, the Law on Renewal (no. 5366) has prepared the ground for urban transformation in protected urban areas (protected by the Law On the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage number 2863) such as Tarlabası, dividing these urban archeological sites into pieces to implement different plans for each parcel, enabling both the expropriation of properties to sell them later for a large amount of profit and the change in the original plans of the buildings which couldn't be possible according to Law no. 2863. Moreover, the law no. 5216 on the Metropolitan Municipalities enacted on 10th July 2004 strengthened the power of the Metropolitan Municipalities over the rest of the local authorities.

Discourses on the urban transformation in Turkey were developed mainly in relation to the domestic migration and spreading *gecekondu* areas. The discourses to justify the new urban transformation wave in the 21st century in Turkey have a strong link to the former approaches. Academic discourse on *gecekondu* was dominated by the Theory of Modernization after the 1950s. Migration from rural areas to Istanbul was evaluated in terms of an expectation that rural migrants would integrate into the urban life along with modernization (Erman, 2000, p. 985). In the meantime, governments enacted amnesty laws⁴¹ for *gecekondu* one after the other, in every decade since the amnesty law no. 5218 called "Stimulation for Construction" in 1948. Prominent scholars such as

Mübeccel Kıray (1964) considered *gecekondu* and inner city slums as a “buffer mechanism” between rural migrants and the urban modernization process in terms of urban development.

As the expectations of this approach were not fulfilled, a discourse of “non-planned urbanization” started to be used referring to spreading *gecekondu* neighborhoods. Contrary to the theory of modernization and the discourse of non-planned urbanization related to this approach, another group of scholars (such as Kongar, 1973 and Şenyapılı, 1978), this time influenced by the Marxist Theory of Dependency, interpreted *gecekondu* as the “disadvantageous and exploited” part of the city caused by the capitalist urbanization (Erman, 2000). This new approach criticized the non-planned urbanization as well as the Modernization Theory asserting that it merely demonstrated the envy for the “western” culture (see Kongar, 1973).

In the 1980s, amnesty laws continued to bring legal status for *gecekondu*. This time, *gecekondu* started to become part of the formal housing market, especially with their transformation into apartment blocks by the means of the amnesty law “Amendments to Carry Out in The Dwellings Incompatible with The Legislation of Development and Gecekondu” dated 14th February 1984 (Ekşioğlu, 1984. p.103). This law was justified as compensation of the conditions of the urban poor caused by the policies of a liberal economy (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2002. p.165). Thus, the government transferred the public land to municipalities, and started to regulate the urban rent value of *gecekondu*

⁴¹ For instance: Amnesty Laws no.5431 (1949), no. 6188 (1953), no.7367 (1959), no.775 (1966), no.1990 (1976), no.2085 (1983), in 14.02.1984 which was named “Amendments to Carry Out in The Dwellings Incompatible with The Legislation of Development and Gecekondu”, Law no.3290 (1986), Law no.3366 (1987), and Law no.3414 (1988).

(Şengül, 2001. p.90). According to İclal Dinçer (2008, p.44), these amnesty laws in the 1980s “have shaped the subsequent discourse of urban transformation in all of Turkey’s cities, especially Istanbul.” Moreover, the urban transformation project in 1989 that transformed a part of Tarlabası area into Tarlabası Boulevard detached the area from the rest of this very vital center, and the physical and social segregation of Tarlabası have been employed as a ground for the pilot urban transformation project due to Renewal Law 5366. Just like in *gecekondu* areas, the urban transformation in inner city areas, such as Tarlabası, dissolved the *mahalle*, the social and physical refuge of people who do not hold the capital to survive in the city.

Concerns for the renewal of decaying urban areas protected as cultural assets had started together with the Law on the Amendments in Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage and on various other laws (Kültür Ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Kanunu İle Çeşitli Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun) number 5226 enacted on 14th July 2004. Based on these concerns, The Law on Renewal (no. 5366) has prepared the ground for urban transformation in protected urban areas (protected by Law On the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage number 2863), such as Tarlabası, dividing these sites into pieces to implement different plans for each parcel, enabling both the expropriation of properties to sell them later for a large amount of profit and the change in the original plans of the buildings which could not be possible according to Law no. 2863. Likewise, the Law on Disaster no. 6306 took a turn for opening northern Istanbul into development using the threat of an expected earthquake in Istanbul as an excuse. Finally, based on the Law No. 5366 enacted on 16th June 2005 H, on 20th February 2006 Tarlabası was declared as Urban Renewal Area due to Decision 2006/10172 of the Council of Ministers.

Friedrich Engels pointed out already in 1872 in his book ‘The Housing Question’ how the ‘reasons’ to justify such urban transformations and modes of destruction employed for surplus absorption giving the example of Haussmann’s method in Paris that displaced the proletarian population in the central city in favor of the bourgeoisie:

“...No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is always the same; the scandalous alleys disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise by the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else... The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! The same economic necessity that produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place (Engels, 1935, first published in 1872, p. 74-77)”.

In the case of Tarlabası, in addition to the “workers”, the population that might have been defined as “lumpen proletariat” by Engels and Marx⁴², was the target of displacement policies. Hakan Koçak (2011), adopting an orthodox definition of the “working class” from Engels and Marx, in which the working class stands for the industrial proletariat that is revolutionary because they produce, unlike the lumpen proletariat. Accordingly, he assesses this comprehensive transformation program of the market-government collaboration in Istanbul as an attempt of exiling the laborers out of the city. However, it is important to see how the presence of labor plays a role in this

⁴² Marx defines the ‘lumpen proleteriat’ as “...vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni (homeless people in Naples), pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, maquereaux (procurers), brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars - in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*” (Marx, Karl. 1972. *The Eitheenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow. Chapter V, p.63). According to Marx, lumpen proleteriat is a reactionary “class fraction” which does not have a class consciousness and cannot develop one. David Harvey, in a video interview in Tarlabası when he came to Istanbul for his conference ‘Crisis of Capitalism and the Urban Struggle / Limits of the Capital and the Anticapitalist Movement’ in Bilgi University, defines the paper/garbage collector passing through as “skilled laborer”. Therefore it might be considered that the understanding of “lumpen proletariat” in part of Marxist theories is also transformed in the post-Fordist era (and differed from what Engels and Marx put forward) in which the revolutionary potentials are attributed also to this category due to the practice and form of the politics of class struggle (such as the uprising in Greece and Spain after the crisis in which this category of the proletariat appeared with a leading dynamic) and the influence of some of the new social movements.

transformation, both in its physical and discursive production, and how the labor class (together with the class that Koçak wouldn't categorize under the title of working class according to the definition he attributes to the concept) is fantasized as an authentic value that turns into a "surplus value" itself through the discourse of the imaginations produced in this process. It is essential not to take for granted that these urban transformations amount to consistent and stable urban policies; which would in the long term endanger the post-fordist development of urban space based on the notion of flexibility of the correlation between the space and the population. Referring to Engels again, changing profitability opportunities would force these settlements of disadvantaged populations to move from one point to another constantly, according to the new needs of the capital development and surplus absorption. However, laborers are an integral part of the city within the post-Fordist urban development policies, they produce, serve, and make the city, even if they don't reside in the inner city anymore. Moreover, the population influenced by these changing development policies in post-Fordist capitalism involves an extended part of society including unemployed people, precarious workers, undocumented migrants, migrants without economic capital, sex workers, marginalized identities, minorities, garbage collectors, street vendors, etc., as well as the working class defined by Marx and Engels.

Michel Foucault gives the example of the plague-stricken town, and points out the political dream behind the power relationship "that assures the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his 'true' name, his 'true' place, his 'true' body, his 'true' disease'":

"The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder and as its medical and political correlative discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of 'contagions', of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder'. (Foucault, 1977, p.197)

Indeed, the demographics and the conditions in Tarlabası were neither a coincidence, nor a result of the intention of these residents to invade this area. Just like Foucault's metaphor of the "leper", Tarlabası "was left to its doom in a mass among which it was useless to differentiate" (ibid, p.198). As demonstrated above, it was a consequence of political, discursive and physical processes that discredited this area where the newcomers and marginalized groups ended up taking shelter under affordable but disadvantageous conditions, only until the new spatial arrangements of state-market policies arrived producing new conditions to bear for the inhabitants.

Alper Ünlü, Yasemin Alkışer and Erincik Edgü reported in 2000 that housing areas in central İstanbul such as Tarlabası reflect the historical process in the city. It was mostly the oldest and worn-out spaces that had "different profiles of people" and physical problems in terms of urban services and infrastructure; that regeneration and renewal projects were barely held in these areas; and thus, the land value and housing value of these areas were lower than the other areas in the city (Ünlü, Alkışer, Edgü, 2000, p.14). They also mentioned that most of the households in Tarlabası mentioned that the areas where they lived were actually not "places to live". However, a few years after this report, together with the government of the AKP, these areas have been approached in ways that produced a profitable value for the housing market.

The preparation of urban transformation projects in İstanbul was not only based on the legal and imaginative (such as the plans that envision the future of the area) terms, but knowledge about the area was also required for the basis of rehabilitation. Hence, a group of specialists including Ünlü, Alkışer, and Edgü, who prepared the aforementioned analysis in 2000, prepared another report in 2004 about the rehabilitation of Tarlabası for active use of the area and presented it to the Beyoğlu Municipality. The

report indicated the potential of Tarlabası to turn into a center of attraction for financial investments⁴³.

The report assigns Tarlabası the identity of “a typical Mediterranean-Islam city”, and asserts the five visible socio-dynamics in this area as “poverty, migration, incompatibility with the city, marginality and criminality”. Based on statistical data, it is emphasized that immorality was rising in the area in a historical process, and it is considered that criminality increased after 1993, associating this data with the mass migration of Kurdish people from eastern Turkey. Another notable side of this report is that it criticizes the earlier urban transformation in the late 1980s conducted by former Mayor Bedrettin Dalan for accelerating this social and physical degradation. This remark in the report implies a favouritism towards the urban transformation agenda of the AKP government over the former governments.

Moreover, the report can also be considered as the pre-justification for the merging parcels in the urban transformation project that would cause the destruction of the buildings except for the facades, due to the intervention of property owners and occupants to make smaller rooms to rent them out to more people. However, the final sentence of the report reveals in what ways the rehabilitation of the area was imagined: the reporters mention that, similar to the cities of Salamanca and Porto, Tarlabası has the potential to attract international financial resources within the framework of the Adaptation to the European Union Program after an intense rehabilitation process, with its original structure in terms of architecture and urban pattern, and its “historical and social richness” (ibid, p.188). Although this suggestion indicated the displacement of the inhabitants with reference to “poverty, migration, incompatibility with the city, marginality and criminality”, it still included the existing communities as a “social richness”.

⁴³ Ünlü, A.; Ocakçı, M.; Edgü, E.; Alkışer, Y.; Ülken, G.; Apak, S.; Tonbul, Z.; Cimsit, F.; Yücel, G.; Özden, T.(2004) Avrupa Birliği Uyum Programları Kapsamında Pilot Bölge Olarak Beyoğlu Çöküntü Alanlarının Aktif Kullanım Amaçlı Rehabilitasyonu Projesi, TC İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, Emlak İstimlak Daire Başkanlığı, Yerleşmeler ve Kentsel Dönüşüm Müdürlüğü, Şehircilik Atölyesi.

A similar justification for the urban transformation plans has been brought in by Ipek Yürekli and Arda İnceoğlu (2011, p.6):

“There is also criticism about the architecture and urban design, based on the principles of joining plots, demolishing of original buildings and building replica facades. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine another method of transformation in this area given the marginal conditions of buildings as well as its inhabitants without major public investment.”

They defend the urban transformation due to the economic value it will bring to the city, and moreover, they encourage the process, even assuming the opposition to the project would disappear after the achievement of “great economic values” (ibid, p.14). In this statement, the “marginal conditions” are attributed to both the physical and social configuration, and employ the discourse of criminality and marginality for justifying the interventions on the original plans which used to be challenged by the Law No. 2863 on Conservation of Cultural Assets before the new law No. 5366 on renewal. Indeed, in their description of the profile of the people in Tarlabası, these people are remarked on as a justification of the transformation due to the developing entertainment sector around the area:

“The area was very quickly marginalized and became a habitat for the very low-income people who at times live in extremely crowded spaces. The area also started to be associated with crime so overall deterioration accelerated. Many illegal immigrants working on informal and marginal sectors live in the area.” (ibid, p.14)

According to Foucault, the production of knowledge is not independent from “power”; it is an important component of the “biopolitics” to induce and manipulate the population to its “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p.131). Indeed, the knowledge produced about Tarlabası is asserted as scientific data - for example the use of the statistical numbers given in the aforementioned reports, and produces the discourse only to become the base for the justification of urban transformation. Considering the use of

terms like “low-income people” or “illegal immigrants” in the aforementioned text, this account points at the poor living conditions, as if they were intrinsic to the people that live in the area, rather than investigating the processes that generate the poor living conditions in the area. Finally, the report does not suggest any solutions that “rehabilitate” the space in favor of the inhabitants without any rental value added; the report does not criticize the possible consequences of this project for the inhabitants that will suffer and already have suffered for a long time. On the contrary, these consequences are justified goals of the project. Earlier discourses that relate *gecekondu* neighborhoods and slums such as Sulukule and Tarlabası only with criminality and moral, physical and economic degradation, and nationalist discourse that condemns minorities with “terror” and criminality also contributed to the justification for the urban transformation projects that envisioned these areas as future neighborhoods of “decent” upper social classes. While the work of making Istanbul a “global city” went side by side with the government policies to transform it into a finance center, in strong relation to this, the discourse of the “cool Istanbul” imagines the inner city in relation to the aestheticization of the discourse of “non-planned urbanization” which used to be condemned as degradation in earlier discourses on the city (Özkan, 2007).

On the official website of the Beyoğlu Urban Transformation project, the comprehensive “great” transformation is defined as a “poem of transformations”:

“The great transformation is conducted in areas that lost their vital functions, in dead areas in which mostly derelict people reside, in areas of degradation; especially in areas of risk due to the high numbers of buildings that are non-resistant to earthquake; in areas that are incompatible with the *raison d'être*, conditions of existence, and goals of existence of the city; in areas of non-planned urbanization and *gecekondu*; in areas in which the residents and users of the city suffer difficulties in affording humane needs such as food and beverage, sheltering, security, socialization; in areas in which small-scale shareholders face with difficulties to come together

in order to take decision and start regeneration; and in central points with a wide sphere of influence that can spread their energies to peripheries and lead the transformation of their environments.^{44,}

The description of the project on this official web site continues under the title “The attraction center that is in demand again”, and in this part, it is told that the abandoned and neglected buildings caused the loss of economic efficiency in the city, and it was required to attract investors to stop this situation. This part continues with the success story of the Beyoğlu Municipality in creating attraction and increasing the real-estate values in Beyoğlu with great transformation movements through qualified economic activities, thereby producing job opportunities. In this explanation it is mentioned that the culture, art, tourism, finance and fashion sectors accelerated the transformation.

The explanation of the transformation in Beyoğlu in this website extends the “negative” effects of areas such as Tarlabaşı to the entire city, condemning the “derelict” (*metruk*) people in it, without a consideration that all these aforementioned negative conditions had been living conditions of these people for a long time. A prominent point in this discourse is the use of the word “derelict”, *metruk* in Turkish, which is usually, in most contexts, used to describe the condition of buildings, rather than people. This use of the term for human beings from the transformed area insinuates that what it refers to is more an object that could easily be replaced/eliminated in favor of the gentrified imaginations of the area for the imagined “real” human beings, than the subject.

In 21 May 2012, in an interview with the newspaper *Akşam*, Ahmet Misbah Demircan, mayor of the Beyoğlu district, mentioned that Tarlabaşı suffered a “cerebral death” and

⁴⁴ Translated by the author from Turkish to English. “Beyoğlu'nda Büyük Dönüşüm”. Retrieved from <http://www.beyoglubuyukdonusum.com/iletisim/detay/Bize-Ulasin/47/171/0>. Last visited, 12.06.2015.

continued in these words: “We are healing a poisoned princess”⁴⁵. He claimed that Tarlabası was closer to death than to life; the transformation project was developed to save it just like a surgery, and in this process the Municipality of Beyoğlu worked in coordination with the Metropolitan Municipality, the government, several NGOs, institutions and citizens. However, the official website of the urban transformation project proves this “coordination” to be a wishful statement, rather than part of the intended process, indicating that it started as a mere cooperation between the City and the investors⁴⁶: “Within the legal process, the cooperation that has started between our Beyoğlu Municipality and the investment (investors) based on the project will (would) develop and flourish with the participation of property owners, people that live in the area, and the NGO’s to the projects process.” This statement does not define in what part of the process this participation was imagined to be established.

Demircan justifies the economic value (profit) that the transformation brings giving the example of the rising value of Van Gogh pictures after his death, mentioning that he had a poor life, while his ‘Dr. Gachet’ was sold in 1990 for 82.5 million dollars:

“Indeed, we are not artists. We are municipality. However, the economic part of it cannot be our priority. Of course, the renewal will add value to Tarlabası. Of course, we are constructing a new node for visitors from outside. The inhabitants of Tarlabası will also derive profit. A financial triangle of life will be established. What actually excites me is that the future will be seen through the windows of these buildings”⁴⁷.

While the mayor defended in this interview that the economic profitability was not priority, that the project was not aimed at evicting the residents, and that their condi-

⁴⁵ Dönüştüremeyen 2014’te gider, Ercan Öztürk, Akşam. Interview with Ahmet Misbah Demircan, 21 May 2012. This interview can also be found online: <http://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/donusturemeyen-2014te-gider/haber-117068>. Translated by the author from Turkish. Some words are added by the author to make the sentence clear.

⁴⁶ <http://www.beyoglubuyukdonusum.com/tarlabasi/detay/Proje-Hakkinda/9/8/0>, 14.02.2015, 15:20, translation by the author from Turkish to English.

⁴⁷ Demircan, *ibid*. Translated by the author from Turkish.

tions were also taken into consideration, Figure 12 and Figure 13, taken from the official website of the Beyoğlu Municipality (titled as “Beyoğlu Big Transformation”) reveal the imaginations of Tarlabası produced by this discourse, in which not only the appearances of buildings, but also the human profile differ considerably from the former Tarlabası.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.

Figure 12 represents Tarlabası before the urban transformation with laundry hanging on strings tied between the windows of the buildings; cars parked on the very narrow, almost invisible sidewalks, and satellite dishes hanging on the facades. Figure 13 is taken from the same site and was listed under the title “Tarlabası Perspektif” (Tarlabası Perspective). It represents the same area after the urban transformation. In this representation of the area, the facades and the streets are pictured with an imagination of hygiene. Cars are no longer parked on the sidewalks, since every building has underground parking areas (which was among the reasons why the buildings were reconstructed only keeping the facades). In the latter visual, the people on the street carry shopping bags, briefcases; they are dressed well in suits. In Figure 12, however, the people on the street do not carry anything: they don’t carry any items referring to property. For instance, the child in Figure 13 has a bike and toys, while we barely see something which could be a toy in the hands of the child in Figure 12. In these figurative representations on the

website of the project, the physical conditions of the streets before and after the transformation are related to the change in the human profile.

In the discourse of the Mayor, Tarlabası is personalized and victimized. People residing in this area are reduced to marginal entities responsible of their own poor conditions and the neighborhood's degradation. The metaphorical approach to the area strives to justify the eviction of the inhabitants disregarding the process that brought them here and the consequences of this project that aggrieve them.

If we look at the entire urban transformation, we can see the actual target group for marketing this transformed area. By means of the new law enacted in 2005, the buildings get destroyed except for the facades to combine the narrow plots and to build new, wider buildings, although this kind of an intervention to the buildings registered by the state as cultural heritage conflicts with the basic principles of the Law on the Cultural and Natural Assets No.2863, which is still in force. Almost all the buildings and the whole area subjected to transformation hold the title of cultural heritage, and in addition, the whole area is under protection by the law due to its street fabric and architectural structure. Together with this area, Taksim Square, the main node from which the traffic flows to Tarlabası, is also under transformation. The square and the transformed part of Tarlabası are interconnected through an underground road and thanks to the underground parking areas suggested in the urban transformation plans, the new residents will be able to reach their houses without any encounters with the rest of the area not yet transformed⁴⁸ (see also Dinçer, 2008, p.54). This lack of encounters will enable

⁴⁸I had a chance to analyse the relationship between these two projects in these terms together with Can Atalay, the lawyer of residents of Tarlabası during the trial process about property rights in transformation process, when I interviewed him on 5th November 2012 in his office in the Chamber of Architects, Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

the area to keep the imagination of the project since the visibility of the rest of Tarlabası will be eliminated.

3.4 Resistance in Tarlabası

The bargaining between the project holder company GAP, property owners, and tenants went through an unsteady process. An association was founded in opposition of the Urban Transformation project to demand the rights of property owners in which tenants also took part next to their landlords. This organization brought some power to the resistance, preventing individual negotiations and enabling collective ones. Tenants were even offered temporary financial support by GAP in case they accepted to move in a newly constructed satellite city called Kayabaşı. Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal (2010) mentioned their concern that the property owners could stop these solidarity ties with their tenants in case they could secure more gain due to the changing discourse of an active member of the resistance, community organizer Erdal Aybek, who at the beginning claimed that there was no way to force property owners and tenants to leave Tarlabası, and after the tough bargaining process, pointed out the direction of bargaining due to the increasing possibility of being kicked out, and thus getting the best out of it (ibid, p.16). Indeed, tenants were finally left out of this process, and evicted by state security forces in a very short time.

Can Atalay (interviewed on 15.09.2012 in Istanbul, Chamber of Architects Office), one of the volunteer lawyers of this process that defended the association, explained that this resistance failed also due to the conflict among Tarlabası residents approaching one another in terms of ethnical identities and marginality. The interim field report of TTM pictures this conflict in detail. In the interviews, local administrators (*muhtar*), according to their “observations”, hold Africans, Roma and Kurds responsible for smash and grab, theft and drug trafficking, referring them as “dark-skinned” (*esmer* in Turkish) citizens. Another stigma appears in the attitude of Roma people towards

Kurds in this area. They hold Kurdish people responsible for criminality. Even when they admit that some of the Roma people are also involved in crimes, *muhtars* define them as “Kurdish Gypsies” in these interviews, although such an ethnicity doesn’t even exist. On 6th April 2013, in his speech for the ceremony of urban transformation destructions in Gaziosmanpaşa, Prime Minister Erdoğan associated *gecekondu* with terror, referring to the migration from east Turkey. According to him, these transformations were an act of “drying the swamp”, as a metaphor for removing the people that contributed to “terror”⁴⁹.

The report of TTM reveals that this approach to Kurdish identity in Tarlabası is related to the nationalist discourse that associates Kurdish identity with ‘terror’. Romani people complain about the number of Kurdish people in the area concerning that Tarlabası is about to become ‘Kurdistan’. However, Romani people also complain about the discrimination against themselves by Kurdish people (ibid, p.3-4).

Accordingly, Kurds in the area, being aware of the effects of the nationalist discourse among the Roma community, see the reason of this discrimination against themselves as a matter of the concern to get a “bigger slice of the cake”, due to the scarce resources available in these neighborhoods (ibid, p.5). For Kurds, the conditions of Tarlabası and being condemned to live there is a punishment of the Turkish state for being Kurdish, while Roma people attribute the poor conditions in the area to the Kurds and migrants from African countries (ibid, p.12-13).

In an environment in which several “marginalized” identities ended up living together sharing a stigma, how could this strong conflict be possible between them? Emmanuel Levinas (1987, p.83) asserts that “The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other’s character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other’s very alterity”. In

49 This speech can be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aANA4-mN8w>.

Tarlabaşı, the position of ‘Others’ against ‘Others’ produces micro-power relationships due to this ‘alterity’ that are not independent from the other levels of hierarchical power relations that manipulate the space both in physical and discursive terms. Indeed, the conclusion part of the aforementioned interim report makes it clear that all the inhabitants of Tarlabaşı, Kurds, Roma, and the others, are aware of the discourse that discriminates and condemns all the residents in Tarlabaşı as a whole. This report was prepared before the destruction started in the summer of 2012. In my interviews on 23rd March 2013 in Sakız Ağacı Street, right next to the emptied transformation area, residents seemed to surrender to the fact that they would also be evicted soon. A 16-year-old Kurdish boy, Hüseyin, who migrated to Istanbul some years ago, said “I know that ‘they’ wouldn’t let us survive here anymore either”. I interpret this “they” here connected to the imagination of the residents before and after the transformation as illustrated in the visual representation of the project on the official website as I elaborated above. To whom did he refer? This “they” that wouldn’t let Hüseyin live in Tarlabaşı includes the actors of this production of the imagination, such as the local state authorities, the city, the state security forces, and the company which designs and implements the project, as well as all the others that subscribe to the hegemonic imagination of the people in Tarlabaşı as *metruk* people. Actually, Hüseyin’s ‘they’ refers to the relationships that produce the conditions for displacement, rather than the actors.

It wasn’t merely the implementation of the urban transformation that threatened the inhabitants; the identities of people were also targeted in everyday life. In summer 2014, the Sakız Ağacı Street has been closed from the Tarlabaşı Boulevard side for the implementation of urban transformation in the pilot area. Shortly after this, on the 2nd of September 2014, Ouadilou Lezl Gail, a transnational migrant from Congo was

murdered in a hate crime. On the 22nd of April 2014, Çağla Joker, and on the 18th of October 2014 Corti Emel, a transwoman, were murdered in Tarlabası in hate crimes, too. The case of Festus Okey, who was murdered in the 20th of August, 2007, by a police officer under custody revealed the importance of the support of solidarity networks. Okey was a football player from Nigeria seeking for asylum. He was murdered by a police officer in the Beyoğlu District Police Department in Tarlabası while he was under custody for allegations of drug possession. The trial process was prolonged because the court decided to get Okey's identity information confirmed by the Nigerian authorities, and five consecutive hearings in 2009 and 2010 were postponed since the identity hadnot yet been confirmed by Nigeria. The motion for involvement of Istanbul and Ankara Baros, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, the Association of Freedom for Earth and the Human Rights Association of Turkey was rejected by the court; and the court made a denunciation about the activists of the Migrant Solidarity Network and volunteer lawyers from the Association of Modern Lawyers for insulting the court by proposing their motion for involvement. However, this pursuit of the solidarity networks brought the case to the attention of the public and followed the process of confirmation of identity. The police station in the area stands for the control of the state over the area; however, it threatens the inhabitants and passerbys rather than providing security. Especially during and after the Gezi Park protests, this station constituted the control point against the riots.

The cases of hate crimes and violence in Tarlabası show that commoning a space requires networks of solidarity among the inhabitants and between the inhabitants and people concerned about the social segregation and discrimination that either closes the space as a stigmatized ghetto or gentrifies the space through enclosures. Nevertheless, Tarlabası is still the refuge for the newcomers that have no access to capital and/or are discriminated by society, such as the migrants from Syria that took refuge in Istanbul

after the war that started in 2011⁵⁰. Moreover, in 6th-7th October 2014, Tarlabası was one of the neighborhoods in which the demonstration for solidarity with Kobane took place, and the police forces attacked the area brutally with pepper spray for these two days. The opposition to the international politics of the Turkish state has been used by the AKP government to associate the pluralist HDP (Democratic Party of the People) with the death of the people that died during these demonstrations in Tarlabası. Besides the discourse on the “peace process” or “democratic initiative process” between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state after the Kurdish Reform of the AKP government in 2009, the discourse of terror is still employed to refer to the political actions of Kurdish people and the people who oppose the war.

The eviction and the demolition were a big impact on the entire Tarlabası. Nevertheless, it didn't create a void in everyday life; on the contrary, it continued to be a space of survival. However, this time the conditions for survival are much more severe. The inhabitants that I met in Tarlabası between the September of the year 2012 and June of the year 2015 around the Sakızağacı Street, where the Migrant Solidarity Kitchen is located, related their stories about the effects of the demolition and the threat of displacement. They didn't use the political terminology of the resistance against gentrification, however, their spatial analysis was mainly based on this process of displacement and demolition. For example, children whom I met in the Kitchen in April 2012 wanted to give me a tour around “their mahalle” when we decided to spend time outside the kitchen until the food was ready. In their narrative, the current conditions of the space followed the story before the demolition (for example, who used to live in a building; where did their parents used to prepare stuffed mussels to sell to the street market).

⁵⁰Within the extent of this dissertation I did not touch upon the case of migrants from Syria that escaped from the war and took refuge in Tarlabası as ‘guests’ of Turkey, however, there is a need for a critical analysis of the discourse of culture-led regeneration and cultural diversity in terms of the conditions of transnational migrants and migrants from Syria in Istanbul.

Although the pilot area has been evicted and demolished, the Tarlabası Urban Transformation project actually is not legally grounded yet. On 4th May 2015, the 6th Department of the Council of State rejected the appeal of the Beyoğlu Municipality for an amendment of the reversal of the former decision that allowed the expropriation of the area. This court decision was the aftermath of the legal resistance process. However, even the fact that the project is not legally confirmed does not remedy the loss of *mahalle* in the area, in which the social ties to hold on to the city are constructed beyond relationships of possession. Moreover, gentrification in Tarlabası is growing from the south to the inner *mahalle* increasing the rental values and displacing the inhabitants that already have a disadvantageous position.

3.5 Celebrating Destruction

On 6th April 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan attended the ceremony for the destruction of *gecekondu* neighborhoods in Gaziosmanpaşa, Istanbul. Billboards all around the city were celebrating this destruction with the title ‘Urban Transformation continues!’ accompanied by pictures of Erdoğan. Finally, the urban transformation was openly and officially celebrated in the form of a festival; the Prime Minister’s speech, during which buildings in several cities were demolished, was broadcasted live on several TV channels on 5th October 2012.

The celebration of the demolition in a festival form had already begun with the events taking place in Tarlabası in the summer 2012. The 2012 Renovation Tarlabası Street Art Festival was the last of these street festivals in summer 2012 (Figures 14 and 15) and was protested by a group from Public Art Laboratory for contributing to the gentrification in the area.

An interview with the curator and participants of the 2012 Renovation Tarlabası Street Art Festival in İHaber (Istanbul University Faculty of Communication News Center and

Newspaper) opens with this title: “Tired soul of Tarlabası cheered up!”⁵¹. Similar to the aforementioned discourse of the mayor and the prime minister, this article in İHaber also assigns a personality to Tarlabası and continues: “Street art Festival Istanbul started; worn-out buildings in Tarlabası came to life with the touch of graffiti artists.” The curator tells in the İHaber interview that they didn’t choose Tarlabası especially to attract attention to the urban transformation project; that they have already done this festival in several different places “to be together with everyone”.



Figure 14 and 15 from the first day of the preparations of ‘2012 Renovation Tarlabası in Karakurum Street’, Tarlabası, on 12.09.2012

Here, “being together with everyone” may stand for producing art in a public space, or being together even with people that the artists wouldn’t get in contact easily under everyday life circumstances. The artists from the festival organization that were inter-

⁵¹ Songül Bakar, Tarlabasının Yorgun Ruhı Şenlendi. 24 Eylül 2012, İHaber, in Turkish Retrieved from <http://ihaber.istanbul.edu.tr/kultur-sanat/tarlabasinin-yorgun-ruhu-senlendi-h535.html> , last time visited on 15.04.2013.

viewed in this IHaBer article mention that the inhabitants didn't expect them to make their voice heard, but still helped them with hospitality. Pertev Emre Tastaban explains their intention in this festival as exhibiting different types of post-graffiti, and complains that the critics of the festival assumed that they would have got some kind of an economic benefit off their work as graffiti artists. Reminding that the people in Tarlabası are referred to as "the others", he says that he sees himself an "other" too due to being a graffiti artist. He says that he doesn't have a gallery; the street and the artists' works belong to the inhabitants, and that there is a communication between artists and inhabitants, which makes him very happy. It is interesting that he does not see any other possibilities than this transformation when the location is taken into account, and still considers this "renovation"⁵² as a reasonable outcome of the "system" that is not a radical change:

"Here, it is the middle of the city. When we look at it as the economic system, it already makes what is required here. I put forward a title (for the festival) suggesting that we have to think about the concept of 'renovation'. While we conceive renovation as removing something and replacing it with something new, the word itself actually constructed on a mentality that makes us question the value that we attribute to the place. If we look at the place where we are, if we feel it, we would already understand the value of what we have. However, if we look at it considering that it will cease to exist and something new will come anyway, we would lose it... What I want to see is a glance of intelligence, and men⁵³ (people) that are impressed by its light (of this intelligence). However, if there is no intelligence, there is no glance of it either. In that case there is a continuous investigation. There is continuously a state of discussing; a state

⁵²Here I translate the word 'yenileme' as 'renovation' instead of 'renewal' with reference to the initial title of the festival 'Tarlabası Renovation' (the title was in English) which was changed later into Tarlabası Street Art.

⁵³In the original Turkish version Tastaban uses the word '*adamlar*' men' instead of people. To translate it without losing the meaning of the sentence, I added the explanations in paranthesis.

of not agreeing. There is no sharing. We are here to share. We did it to share and we do share.”

(Tastaban in Songül Bakar, 24 Eylül 2012, İhaber)⁵⁴

Tastaban sees the “economic system” completed. Therefore, according to him, the critique of urban transformation is vain, and questioning the value added to the space through the renewal prevents “sharing the space”. Although it is not mentioned in this interview, these words of Pertev Emre Tastaban seem to be directed at the criticism he received about the event by the group that protested the festival on the opening day of the graffiti gallery on 16th September. Kamusal Sanat Laboratuvarı (Laboratory of Public Art) is a collective of critical action against the art scene and creative sector in Istanbul for their collaboration with the new capitalist urban economies. A group from the collective visited the festival with banners, on which public figures such as Angelina Jolie, the Mayor of Beyoğlu District, the Mayor of Istanbul, and owner of Ağaoğlu Construction Company, Ali Ağaoğlu⁵⁵ congratulated the festival for contributing to the project’s targeted image of transformation and to the further gentrification process in Tarlabası. Actually, as pointed out in this protest, this street art festival was in favor of an imagination that calls for gentrification, which is already visible in the changing facades of the buildings and rising rents in other parts of Tarlabası in which the urban transformation projects are not in force yet. This gentrification of the other areas is finally in support of the realization of the urban transformation in force produced through the government and private sector collaboration.

I attended the meeting of the protestors on 15th September 2012. They were not sure how to protest the festival, although they wanted to be creative. They were aware of the risk of unintentionally affirming the problematic political approach of the festival with

⁵⁴ Translated from Turkish by the author. In Turkish available on <http://ihaber.istanbul.edu.tr/kultur-sanat/tarlabasinin-yorgun-ruhu-senlendi-h535.html>, last time visited on 15.04.2013.

⁵⁵ Ali Ağaoğlu is a constructor that is most strongly related to the urban transformation projects during the AKP government. For further information about his involvement with this urban transformation process see Ecumenopolis: City without (dir. Imre Azem, 2011).

their creative action. They didn't want to intervene into the works of the artists either, both for not contributing to this visual celebration of the demolition, and because their criticism was addressed to the happening and the relationships behind it, rather than the form or content of the art works. Therefore, instead of a direct physical intervention on the graffiti works or on the street during the festival, they finally decided to prepare the aforementioned banners, depicting the images of people from popular culture, or actors of urban transformation with speech bubbles: for example, the Mayor of Beyoğlu saying "Tarlabaşı finally became Champs-Élysées"; the Mayor of Istanbul saying "It is brilliant, thank you"; Ağaoğlu saying "Even I wouldn't be able to do anything better than this".

The manifesto of the Laboratory of Public Art reads:

We boycott the Street Festival Istanbul 2012 for it serves the Project of gentrification in the city; of evicts its real owners to market it; which turns it into a finance and cultural center for the international capital. We believe that street art takes its power from the criticism of hegemonic public sphere. Therefore, we think that artists should make intelligent moves, overseeing the social, cultural and economic consequences on the public sphere which is a network of political relations. We assess this event, which represents the institutionalization and destruction of oppositional art, as a parody of the violence suffered during the urban transformation in Istanbul. According to us, Street art Festival Istanbul presents the partnership of construction and security companies, municipality, university and cultural industries in the crime. Street art is tamed in this festival, and urban opposition, struggle of Tarlabaşı inhabitants and the reality of the area are ignored. We invite the participants of Street Art Festival İstanbul to target their power of creativity at the culture of the hegemony.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This manifesto in Turkish is available on <http://www.e-skop.com/skopbulten/tarlabasinda-galeriye-donusturulen-yikim-ve-evcillestirilen-sokak-sanati-protesto-edildi/889>, translated by me into English.

Although the manifesto of the Public Art Laboratory reclaims street art as the criticism of hegemonic public sphere, street art already went through a process of inclusion in the market, thus blended in the relations of hegemony in terms of capitalist economy. Graffiti was first considered as controversial intervention on the streets of the 1970's. For example, in the US context, Norman Mailer (1974) greeted street arts as a pure rebellion, and as a mode of rebellious transgression, while Nathan Glazer (1979) saw it as a crime in subways, as a threat for the law-abiding citizens. However, the art boom in Manhattan in the 1980's included it within the art market and the era of the post-graffiti started (Dickens, 2010). After that, street art produced a noticeable value on the streets as a form of "art". The works of Banksy, "a notorious street art vandal and art world provocateur" that comes from UK, started to be sold for millions of dollars to art collectors and he started to contribute to the advertisement sector (Cockroft, 2008, p.1).

Moreover, Banksy and his agent Steve Lazarides founded Pictures on Walls Ltd, a company in which the handmade street-art items/posters are produced on request of clients (Dickens, 2010). After this financial success of Banksy, street artists started to make careers in 'legal' forms or/and in advertisement sector. Street arts were now both a way to promote commodities and a commodity to be promoted in the market. Thus, as a work of art, it had to compete within the order of commodities. As a final example of this new direction, in the 2015 US reality TV show 'Street Art Throwdown' (on Yes TV) 10 street artists compete with each other in front of a judge to get a 100,000 \$ award. In the introduction of the first episode on 2 February 2015, the motivation of this competition has affirmed the process of inclusion in the mainstream popular culture, leaving the commodification of street art as a goal of the process:

"Street art has come a long way since its subversive beginning. What was once an underground movement in the shadows has now come into the life of mainstream popular culture. This is art

for the people, by the people. But getting recognized can take years... until now..." (Street Art Throwdown, 2 of February 2015, on Yes TV)

Likewise, the curator of the Tarlabası Street Art Festival considered street art as "being together with everyone" and "sharing the space" regardless of the hierarchies in the production of space. The emphasis on "getting recognized" actually reveals the process in which the rebellious and anonymous state of street art was appropriated as a venue for the artist to merge in the hegemony of the art market.

In Turkey, street art has first appeared during the 1960s student movements as plain text graffiti (Şenyapılı, 2012, in Taş and Taş, 2014, p.329). According to Tuğba Taş and Oğuzhan Taş, different from the "artistic manifestation of subcultures" in the 1970s in US cities, "(i)n Turkey, graffiti was typically understood as a way for groups to express their identities and disseminate their political messages; it occasionally took the form of visually striking murals" (Taş and Taş, 2014, p.329). Although street art was not welcomed by the state authorities for a long while, in 1999 the municipalities of Bayrampaşa and Güngören districts invited street artists to a Coca Cola factory to perform their works (ibid). Finally, as I have elaborated above, together with the Istanbul ECoC tenure, street art entered the official agenda of the state. However, there has still been a conflict over the anonymous street art and the state. For example, the graffitis painted over the shutters of the musical instrument shops on Yüksek Kaldırım Street, Beyoğlu, were continuously removed by the City. In summer 2012, I talked to several shopkeepers on this street. They told me that as soon as the graffitis were deleted, they were painted back over night. However, since 2012, the graffitis painted by street art collectives such as Anonymous Protest Art and 1UP are now permanent on these shutters. Moreover, graffitis and murals spreaded in the streets of popular inner city places where subcultural activities agglomerated; several cafés and pubs painted their facades with murals and graffitis; the Kadıköy Municipality of the Republican Party of People (CHP) even invited international street artists to paint murals on the

facades of plain buildings. Hence, the value added to the space through street art is now recognized by the state institutions, too.

Michael Saren wrote a book to specify the methods to create "branding" for street arts, referring to Jean Baudrillard who actually arrives at his ideas criticizing the image production in capitalism:

“As Baudrillard (1990) starkly illustrates, once a concept gains totality and becomes appropriate to everything and anything, it also becomes appropriate to nothing. An absolute definition is also meaningless...The implication of Baudrillard's observation for branding is that if a label can be applied to almost anything, it becomes meaningless as a distinguishing feature. The paradox is that this is exactly what has happened to the use of the concept of branding itself (Saren, 2006, p.198).”

Meanwhile, he starts his analysis of consumer profiles with a justification of his position: “We are all consumers. Unless we go and live on a desert island we cannot avoid consuming and thus playing a role in the marketing process.” (ibid)

Indeed, Baudrillard's critic on the age of “simulacrum” in which the images of things are produced and copied to prevail the entire perception of reality (hence reality is now produced merely through this imagination) doesn't leave much space for a discussion on resistance through imagery (see Baudrillard, 1994), nor does his critic on consumer society:

“Consumption is a myth. That is to say, it is a statement of contemporary society about itself, the way our society speaks itself. And, in a sense, the only objective reality of consumption is the idea of consumption; it is this reflexive, discursive configuration, endlessly repeated in everyday speech and intellectual discourse, which has acquired the force of common sense. Our society thinks itself and speaks itself as a consumer society. As much as it consumes anything, it consumes itself as consumer society, as idea. Advertising is the triumphal paean to that idea... In this sense, affluence and consumption - again, we mean not the consumption of material goods, products and services, but the consumed image of consumption - do, indeed,

constitute our new tribal mythology - the morality of modernity. (Baudrillard, 1998, p.193-194)”

The search for resistance against capitalism through the rebellious cool, though it is adopted in the market, recognizes that the struggle against capitalism within capitalism requires the appropriation of the capitalist mechanism of consumer society. Baudrillard’s idea about imagery of consumption becoming the reality does not open any insights for possibilities of resistance within the mechanism of consumer society, because it assumes capitalism as a completed system. Hence, Saren’s reference to this approach, instead of interpreting the position of the consumer to find out the possibilities of resistance, postulates consumption only in terms of the capitalist market economy as an intrinsic characteristic of the society that cannot be avoided, and hence should be supported by marketing techniques admitting the consumer as ‘the subject’ in marketing (Saren, 2006; see also Gouding and Saren, 2005).

According to Saren, there is no alternative to the inclusion of the acts and forms of resistance in the market. Although Saren is affirmative about the position of street art in the market, this assumption attribute street art and creative interventions of resistance nothing but an inevitable market value. Similarly, curator Pertev Emre Tastaban defends the value added to the space through street art and considers urban transformation as a proper way to integrate the space into the market. Instead of assuming the market value immanent in the creative interventions, Begüm Özden Fırat criticizes the Tarlabası Street Art Festival in terms of the connections behind it, the imagination of the space, and the space produced through it with reference to the context of the space and urban transformation. In the July-August 2012 issue of the critical culture magazine *Bir+Bir*⁵⁷, Fırat referred to these festivals as “a pornography of destruction”, for turning the remains of the destruction into a spectacle, and opposed the term “abandoned buildings” used in the announcements of these events for the buildings in the area since people didn’t abandon their houses, but were forced to leave. Fırat reminds us about the

photographic representation of the ruins in Detroit that attracted further attention of journalists, researchers, artists, and finally the investors adding an aesthetical market value to the buildings.

Pointing out that there have been no artistic interventions on the streets of Tarlabası before the demolition, Fırat suggests to use either the billboards along Tarlabası Boulevard that conceal the destruction site (Figure 16) or the city hall for ‘creative minds’ that don’t have patience for an organized process of struggle.



Figure 16: The billboards for the advertisement of urban transformation that shields the destruction site, hiding it from the passers-by on Tarlabası Boulevard

in picturing the creation process of the graffiti exhibition and artists because there was no communication between the photographers and the people from Tarlabası. However, later they seemed more interested in taking pictures of these ‘others’. In our conversation about

⁵⁷ Fırat, Begüm Özden (2012) Tarlabası’nda Sanat: Yıkıma Dek Görülebilir! Bir+Bir 18. Retrieved online at <http://birdirbir.org/tarlabasinda-sanat-yikima-dek-gorulebilir/> last accessed: 01.06.2015

the festival on 12th September 2012, Badegül Kurt from the Academy of Photographers without Borders, said they did not choose Tarlabası because of the conflicts about the urban transformation; that they already made an exhibition there before; and that they absolutely had no monetary profits in attending the festival: “on the contrary”, it was just a project for “prestige”. Naz Köktentürk, one of the photographers, added that the exact date for the exhibition of these photographs taken during the festival had already been fixed.

For Badegül Kurt, prestige is contrary to any economic benefits. However, Pierre Bourdieu conceptualizes prestige as a symbolic capital that equals to power and recognition in the art market:

“The struggles to win everything which, in the social world, is of the order of belief, credit and discredit, perception and appreciation, knowledge and recognition - name, renown, prestige, honour, glory, authority, everything which constitutes symbolic power as a recognized power - always concern the 'distinguished' possessors and the 'pretentious' challengers (Bourdieu, 1984, p.251).”

Moreover, artists keep holding the credit for creative interventions also in case of resistance and struggle (see Kuryel and Firat, 2013). On top of the debates over the artist’s position in the city either as an anti-capitalist resisting against the art market, or as a collaborators of the land market, Vanessa Mathews (2010, p.666) interprets the position of the artist in the gentrification through aesthetization of space independent from their intentions: “Whether artists resist market forces or profit from them speaks to the unevenness of resistance to urban change, and their structural position within the economy... Art has emerged as an important element in the urban economy, a tool through which to build and expand the image and representation of place using a neoliberal urban agenda.” Considering the aforementioned process of producing knowledge about Tarlabası, I add to this statement that not only the production of images and imagination but also the production of knowledge holds a power over the space. The justification of the position of the photographers in the festival based on prestige doesn’t approach the

creative industries critically and assumes that the ‘artistic value’ doesn’t amount to economic value. However, as Bourdieu discloses, prestige is the link between the artist and the art sector; hence recognition is the symbolic capital, the power of the artist in the market. Furthermore, intervention on the space is detached from its wider context and reduced the space to a mere nostalgia of the story of the space until the latest evictions. It is remarkable that the ruins standing for the eviction, outrage, and violence turn into the material for the prestige work of artists.

Furthermore, the connection with the official urban development policies that Tastaban made through the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event and Tarlabası Street Art is followed by further collaborations between the creative interventions on the city and the official objectives. For instance, Kadıköy Municipality organizes the ‘Muralist Wall Painting Festival’ annually since September 2012, inviting several street artist from different countries to paint the entire facades of several buildings and some other walls in Yeldeğirmeni, Kadıköy.

I interviewed Pertev Emre Tastaban after the festival, on 5th November, 2012, in his house in Bostancı, Istanbul. He was very angry with the protesters, and criticized them for reducing the art produced during the festival to a political discourse. His point was that this protest did not even care about the content, about the graffitis that had something to say about the history of the area. According to him, as an artist he is not even obliged to “be political”; and this protest, attributing him “bad intentions” manipulates the works of art instead of making “a correct criticism”.

These discourses of bad intentions and good intentions of the artists have been opposed by Fırat. With reference to Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, Fırat (2012) reminds the necessity to focus on the relationship between the art work and the space as much as on the content and form of the art work. In chapter 5, I will illustrate some of the creative interventions on the public space within the context of the Gezi Park protest in 2013

that aimed at disrupting the discourse and practice of power and produced contested spaces. However, the case of the Tarlabası Street Art Festival in 2012 does not amount to any disruption in the repressive process of gentrification; on the contrary, it allows the appropriation of street arts onto the official agenda in Turkey.

I find similarities between Tastaban's fantasy about the negotiable conditions of the Tarlabası inhabitants and the sentimental imagination of Tarlabası in the discourse of Mayor Demircan. They both depoliticize and a-historicize the urban transformation and strive to domesticate the criticism. Tastaban complains about the allegations that he would have a benefit from his festivals. In the interview on İHaber, he says "when you add value to somewhere, its reciprocity is not necessarily in material terms." In the following parts of the interview he attributes this reciprocity to emotional satisfaction: "We are in a perfect state of communication. I don't care at all how this building is. I am very pleased to see it (the communication between artists and the inhabitants). The moments that I experience here have a value for me. I enjoy this pleasure."⁵⁸

Tastaban's approach to the relationships between the participants of the festival and the inhabitants in Tarlabası takes it for granted that any communication would mean that it is totally welcomed by the people, and that it is also 'good' for them. Another artist from the festival, Ali Esin⁵⁹ also emphasizes that they had had a nice time with inhabitants. However, what they do not take into account is that this emphasis on the communication and aggrandizing simple interactions between people to justify the festival deepens the discourse of otherness, since it ascribes to this communication a deeper meaning, as if something very difficult or impossible was succeeded. In the street that the festival took place in all the inhabitants were evicted – many of them by police

⁵⁸Interview with Pertev Emre Tastaban on 5th November, 2012.

⁵⁹Elif İnce, *Bir yanı AİHM bir yanı festival*, Radikal, 20/09/2012

retrieved at

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=haberyazdir&articleid=1100940>

force – before the demolition. Hence, the people that visited the festival were people that did not reside in Tarlabası and people that reside in the surrounding streets. Here, it is also important to note that in Tarlabası throughout the summer wedding celebrations take place on the streets. Beside the guests invited to the wedding, it is very common that the passer-bys or people from other streets attend the celebrations for entertainment. Especially for the children spending a lot of time on the street any event that takes place in the area is irresistible. Actually, until the late evening, and sometimes even at night, streets are everyday socializing venues full of both adults and children. Therefore, the attention of the inhabitants is not unique to this street art festival.

According to Tastaban's comment on the protest in relation to the aforementioned interview in İHaber⁶⁰, he approaches the area in a romantic way and already enjoys the nostalgia of the destroyed Tarlabası. A similar fantasy is also noticeable in the manifesto of the protestors, in which a perfect struggle of the inhabitants is taken for granted. However, both this reference to the resistance and the attribution of an oppositional and independent "nature" to street art cannot be a naïve statement which disregards the changing role of this art form on the urban market. Such a reading of this statement would create an oxymoron with the rest of the manifesto in which the relationship of street art with the gentrification and urban transformation is strongly indicated. This attitude in the manifesto actually reclaims the street arts as means of "targetting the power of creativity to the culture of the hegemony". To support this objective, instead of falling into pessimism about the inclusion of street art in the post-Fordist urban policies, in Chapter 5 I intend to show how the street art or creative interventions on the streets can turn into a disruption of the hegemonic politics and aesthetics besides being an expression of individual ideas.

⁶⁰Tastaban in Songül Bakar, 24 Eylül 2012, İhaber

The discourse of organizers and the statement of 2012 Renovation Tarlabası Festival register that the festival was “prestige” work that “added value” to the area. Indeed, exclusion itself had a handicap of losing the “surplus value” that could be obtained from human beings (Graham, 2007, p.201). Thus, the festival functioned as a means of transforming the discursive exclusion of Tarlabası into a value for the creative sector as well as the urban development⁶¹.

During my interviews with the curators of Tarlabası Street Art Festival in 2012, I tried to understand their position towards the hierarchical power relationships within the process of urban transformation, reminding them the power they hold through their “creative” intervention. Tastaban was complaining about being marginalized himself, his work was neither in favor of city marketing, nor a contribution to the discourse of urban transformation that produces the transformation against the inhabitants. However, he associated his work with the possibility of the negotiation between two conflicting sides of urban transformation. I tried to discuss with him the hegemonic power which is reproduced through the festival, referring to the invitation of Laboratory of Public Art, to use the power of creativity against this hegemony. However, he insisted that this warning of the protest was just a manipulation about the intentions of the festival.

During our first interview with Tastaban on 5th November 2012, Göker Yıldız, the assistant curator of the festival and a second year student in the Bilgi University Depart-

⁶¹ We can look at another earlier example of the touch of arts and cultural sector on “derelict” areas, the Temple Bar initiative in Dublin. The initiative mentioned the intention of the project to achieve urban regeneration in favor of the residents with disadvantageous conditions in this post-industrial area of economic and social depression (McCarthy, John. 1998. *Dublin's temple bar: a case study of culture-led regeneration*, European Planning Studies, Volume 6, Issue 3, pp 271-281). We can conclude from this example that when the approaches are disconnected from the local and political context and unaware of the methods of existing power relationships that already produce the poor conditions call for the inevitable gentrification processes. Such attempts transform the space only in favor of the urban market, causing a greater exclusion of the former residents from the regeneration process, whatever intentions towards the well-being of these people pursued at the beginning by these creative groups.

ment of Performance Arts, was also present. He was not convinced of the criticism of the protestors yet. However, I had a chance to keep in contact with him discussing these conflicts and interviewed him again on 8th April 2013 in Bilgi University.

This time, he had surprising news for me. He told me that after receiving the abovementioned criticism and our first interview, a group of volunteer participants of the festival came together to discuss the effects of their work. This time they agreed that they produced something that they did not mean to; they assessed the festival in terms of its negative effects for the struggle of inhabitants and decided to be careful about such possible consequences in their future works. In this second interview, we discussed power relationships within the context of this festival, and Begüm Özden Fırat's suggestion about expressing creativity against the authorities. Yıldız was convinced that the festival contributed in the goals of urban transformation, and the approach of the participants was deepening the marginalizing discourse. Though he was disturbed that in this discussion among the volunteer participants, they only admitted that the festival was "something wrong", but it was not clear what exactly was wrong with it. He was concerned that he might reproduce the same discourse again, because of the lack of analysis and awareness that makes it clear in what ways and in what sense this kind of events and the approach of the participants could make contributions to gentrification and the hegemonic power, instead of taking a critical stand point.

Istanbul 2010 ECoC prepared a platform to construct this collaboration between street artists and the urban developers. Once street art was discovered as an international gentrification trend in line with the objectives of the project in Tarlabaşı, this collaboration awarded the street arts moving them from canvas to the street walls – those of the demolished buildings.

Badegül Kurt and Pertev Emre Tastaban already mentioned that the urban transformation wasn't a motivation in their choice of place for the festival. However, it refers more to their detachment from the consequences of the urban transformation for the inhabitants that reside here before the project is implemented. Moreover, graffiti artist Ezgi Sönmez asserts it more clearly in the interview in the aforementioned İHaber article about the festival mentioning that they find the destruction in Tarlabası very convenient for the "soul of graffiti" (Sönmez in Songül Bakar, 24 Eylül 2012, İhaber). This approach to the space as canvas detaches the physical space from its context and ignores the influence of the marginalizing discourse on their work. The conflict about the 2012 Renovation Tarlabası Street Art Festival indicates simply that content, imagery and context are inseparable dimensions that complete an art work and its effect.

4 Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival: Assigning Culture through Festivalizing Otherness

In this chapter, I elaborate on the discourse of cultural diversity, the implications of culture-led regeneration in terms of the displacement, and social production of space through the relations between the event and the everyday; the festival and the street. Similar to the case of Tarlabası in Chapter 2, the story of the composition of the people in Ahırkapı is related to the migration to the area due to the affordable living conditions after the people from the Greek minority were forced to leave. However, this time it was mainly a consequence of the population exchange in the early Turkish Republic rather than the nationalist pogroms. Just like in Tarlabası, social ties have played an important role in the formation of the community.

The Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival is an event that took place in the Ahırkapı part of Cankurtaran Neighborhood regularly since 2002. In 2009 and 2010, the event was supported by the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency, and was named Istanbul 2010 Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival for this period. Although the term ‘Roma’ or any direct reference to this identity was not mentioned in the program catalogue of the event, in the representation of this festival and in the publicity of the ECoC event, the codes and images attributed to Romani identity was used in reference to the discourse of cultural diversity and social inclusion.

In 1997, the Armada Hotel was opened between the neighborhood and the road along the seaside. At the night of 5th May 1997, Kasım Zoto, the owner of the Hotel, organized the Hıdrellez celebrations as part of the opening party. However, the Hotel was “too small for the huge number of VIP guests” and the celebration spread onto the streets of the neighborhood (Şeyben, 2010, p.116). Especially this event on the Ahırkapı

streets attracted the attention of the media, and a second event, Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival, was organized by the Armada Hotel in 2002, this time directly as a festival on the streets of the neighborhood; and henceforward, the Hotel, together with local organizations such as the Civil Initiative of Fatih, and the Platform of Eminönü continued to organize the festival every year on the streets with sponsorship of private companies such as Coca Cola and Garanti Bank⁶². Along with this process, it turned into an international music festival in which many Roma music bands from other cities of Turkey and from other countries were hosted, and some of the local rituals for Hıdrellez were enacted in symbolic ways, such as making wishes and jumping over fire.

Due to the increasing number of guests, in 2009, the festival was organized in Ahırkapı Park next to the seaside (Figure 17). In this year, the number of guests reached over 100.000 (Şeyben, 2010, p.118). Because of the increasing costs and the difficulty in providing security and cleaning services, Armada Hotel applied to Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency as ‘Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival Association’⁶³. This association was founded by the initiative of the Hotel in 2008 to apply for the ECoC funding.

⁶²Nedim Mazlıyah names this as an internal finance model; with the support of the sponsors, an income was created through the labor force and catering, and this income was spent totally for the expenses of the festival organization.

⁶³Interview with Nedim Mazlıyah on 16.03.2012, in Armada Hotel.



Figure 17. Ahırkapı

In 2010, the festival was organized with the logo and financial support of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency, and labor support of the Volunteers Project. The number of guests reached approximately 120.000 (Şeyben, 2010, p.118). Several stages were constructed in the festival area, Ahırkapı Park, and international bands took the stage, while local musicians mostly performed around the stages, merged in the crowd. Symbolically, walls and trees were prepared to hang up papers to make wishes, and fires were set at night to jump over. Other than these, it was a music festival with catering and alcohol consumption (an international music festival with Hıdırellez and Roma theme).

In 2011, the festival organization announced on their web page that they were not able to afford the festival anymore, so they had to ask for an entrance fee. This announcement met a big reaction in social media, and finally the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival Association cancelled the event and announced that it would not be orga-

nized anymore. Thereupon, some companies overtook the festival organization, and moved it to Park Orman, a commercial festival place in another part of the city. In my interview with Nedim Mazlıyah of the Armada Hotel, he mentioned that the Association provided the ‘know how’ and linked up the new festival organization to musicians from Ahırkapı.

This new festival used the name ‘Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival’ in another place, and received a substantial opposition in social media. An art collective, the Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi (Kumbara Art Studio) organized people through social media “against the capitalists that took over the festival of people”. On 5th May 2011, a group of thousands of people entered the Ahırkapı streets to celebrate Hıdrellez Festival in protest against the festival that is organized in Park Orman.

In this chapter, I investigate the production of knowledge about this specific location in relation to the production of authenticity. To do so, I focus on the discourse and knowledge about the festival and the space. I refer to the interviews that I held with the inhabitants, the local administrator, the representatives of the organizations involved with the festival, activists, and I observe the area in terms of urban gentrification and cultural appropriation.

In this analysis, my interpretations do not involve merely the criticism of city branding, but also focus on the attributions of culture and hierarchies that occur in the production of space following the cultural interventions. This comprehension of the space allows me to approach the actors (inhabitants, representatives of the local organizations, the organizers of the festival, the government, state institutions, parliamentary representations) critically, and to collect data on the physical, social and land-use change in order to investigate the power relationships that allow, support, or

promote gentrification, as well as the reproduction of this power and the resistance against it.

My field research and interviews with the Armada Hotel staff, the Kumbara Art Collective, local administrator (*muhtar*) Nevin Taş, members and heads of the two neighborhood associations Pire Mehmet, of the Ahırkapı Association of Artisans and Musicians, and Osman Dursun, of the Ahırkapı Orchestra Association, and some of the inhabitants of the neighborhood residing on the streets where the festival takes place, revealed some critical points of this story in relation to the threat of gentrification, marginalization, and exclusion of Romani people, power relationships produced during the process of festivalization, and discontent among the inhabitants concerning the festival.

4.1 Institutionalization of Ethnic Identity under Nationalist Discourse

My research started as an analysis of the relationship between the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program, the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival, and the social production of space in Ahırkapı. I initially wanted to question the ways the ECoC imagined this space, and in what ways the festival produced the space of the everyday life. This investigation involves with the attribution of culture to ‘marginalized’ identities, and the ways that everyday life is produced through cultural events, since the festival has been attributed to the Roma culture due to the composition of the ethnic identities of the inhabitants.

Ahırkapı is a part of the Cankurtaran neighborhood in the Fatih District of Istanbul, surrounded by the most popular touristic areas and printing houses. It is in an urban and archeological protection site, neighbouring the Bosphorus and several popular tourism sights. The economic conditions and the occupations vary in the area, however, the settlers after the 1940’s and the inhabitants that came to the area through

their social ties to these people were usually workers, some of whom work precariously, and sometimes merely seasonally. This group agglomerates in the Ahırkapı part of the Cankurtaran neighborhood and the majority of the people in Ahırkapı, around 800 people, have the ethnic identity of Roma. Since 1999, this area has been identified as ‘the Roma neighborhood’ in consequence (and also as the motive, as I elaborate below) of the Hidrellez Festival organized until 2011 by the Armada Hotel, a complex of hotels and restaurants located between Ahırkapı and the seaside.

As I mentioned previously in the case of Tarlabası, the concept of *mahalle* in Turkey defines both the cluster of a community due to the social and everyday interaction, and the administrative unit neighborhood scale administrated by a *muhtar*. Tarlabası and Ahırkapı are examples of the former presenting different scales. This meaning of *mahalle* is a reference to social and physical proximities that define the *mahalle* as a community, as well as the segregation of ethnic communities from their surroundings due the social exclusion (see also Gültekin, 2009). Tarlabası, although consists of several neighborhoods, is referred as a *mahalle*, while in Ahırkapı, a smaller area in Cankurtaran Neighborhood is also referred as a *mahalle*. However, in both cases, the *mahalle* is defined by the ‘otherness’ in their contexts: Tarlabası is now the buffer area between the working class residential areas and the agglomeration of financial and art sectors, tourism and entertainment. The area is a *mahalle* in which infrastructure used to be ignored; marginalized people and ethnic communities could hold on to the city living in this area due to the low living costs (after the impacts of nationalist attack to non-muslim communities in 1955, and the interventions of transformation projects, such as the Tarlabası Boulevard in 1989), and the accumulation of the social ties and survival opportunities. Ahırkapı, however, is differentiated from

the rest of the Cankurtaran Neighborhood mainly based on the reference to Roma identity.

As I demonstrated in chapter 2, in the context of Turkey, the urban transformation policies of the government is related to the discourses on minorities and migration. Sulukule, a *mahalle* that consists of the Neslişah and Hatice Sultan neighborhoods has been site to one of the most outrageous cases of urban transformation projects that benefitted from the criminalizing and discriminating discourses on minorities and marginalized identities. This historic settlement in Fatih District is very close to Ahırkapı, and suffered one of the urban transformation projects of the AKP government in in due to the Law on the Amendments in Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage and Various Laws number 5226 enacted on 14th July 2004 and the Law on Renewal (Use of Decrepit Historical and Cultural Assets) number 5366 enacted on 5th July 2005. Before the urban transformation, the neighborhood used to be known as a ‘Roma Neighborhood’ in which the most visible economic activity used to be entertainment, and was stigmatized by a discourse of criminality. The urban Renewal Law no. 5366 brought the conditions that “owners had to either come to terms with the conditions raised by the local authorities or sell their rights to the Municipality” (Kıyak İngin and İslam, 2011, p.126). The urban transformation project expropriated the area and offered the inhabitants to reside in the mass housing provided in the outskirts of the city in case they couldn’t afford the new rents in Sulukule. However, the price to pay for the inhabitants was unaffordable: they had to lose their social and occupational ties due to the distance to the city; they were forced to give up their everyday life setting that they produced throughout history; and they had to pay monthly payments for their new housing conditions which was not affordable for most of the inhabitants due to their economic situations. A long

time after the demolition in the area and construction of the new buildings, Sulukule is still like a ghost city, in which only few of the former inhabitants, who were able to afford the negotiations, reside and the same situation applies to the households that tried to live in mass housing. Ozan Karaman and Tolga Islam (2012) approach the consequences of urban transformation in terms of intra-urban borders, coinciding with the interpretation of *mahalle* in everyday scale:

“In ethnic enclaves like Sulukule, neighborhood borders can be highly protective and impermeable spaces of exclusion, yet they also define territories in which communities exist as an ensemble of highly interconnected bodies; this communal territoriality grants residents certain freedoms that they cannot enjoy outside (Karaman and Islam, 2012, p.242).”

On the one hand, several studies about the urban transformation case in Sulukule emphasize the ethnical discrimination and stigmatization in conjunction with displacement (such as Göncüoğlu and Yavuztürk, 2009; Somersan, 2007; Potuoğlu-Cook, 2011; Karaman and Islam, 2012; Dobben Schoon, 2014), as well as the social movements, such as Sulukule Platform and Association for Zero Discrimination. On the other hand, the official discourse produces knowledge about the identity that instills all the stigmatization. An example for the official discourse on the Roma people can be found in the research about “gypsies”, published by the Municipality of Fatih District in 2008 which described the history, culture and everyday life of Roma people in Istanbul (Suver, Kara, Kara, 2008). In this research, it was mentioned that the conjuncture produced by those who are not Roma was more determinant than the self-determination of these communities (ibid., p. 72). The book criticizes also the prejudice against the economic activities of the Roma people on the one hand; however on the other hand, it just expands the borders of the definitions given to Roma people assigning few more occupations and traits to the identity. Moreover, the im-

ages of Roma people used in the book support stereotypic fantasies from clothing to the limited field of occupation ascribed to this ethnicity. In my field research, Roma inhabitants complained mostly about these ascriptions about their occupations.

My research process introduced me to the challenges in approaching the self-identification of the inhabitants in Ahırkapı, and to the construction of ‘Otherness’ for the inhabitants. First of all, there was a debate in social movements, academic work and among the communities concerning the way to name the ethnicity of majority of the inhabitants in Ahırkapı. The festival was promoting Ahırkapı as a Romani *mahalle*, and in the interviews, although I never brought it up as a question, the inhabitants that I interacted in Ahırkapı referred to their identities both as ‘*çingene*’ (gypsy) and *Roma*. Before I could ask any questions on the way that the inhabitants perceive their ethnical identity, the mention of ‘*Roma*’ and ‘*gypsy*’ popped up mostly after the question on Sulukule, or the representation of the community in the festival.

In the meantime, some of the inhabitants that I talked to on the streets, or interviewed, complained about the discrimination and humiliation towards their “Roma identity”, while they attributed ground of stigmatization to the life style of the other Roma communities in Istanbul such as the former one in Sulukule. I came across even with some inhabitants that interpreted urban transformation as something that the inhabitants in Sulukule already deserved⁶⁴. Moreover, Osman Dursun, an inhabitant in Ahırkapı and member and chairman of Ahırkapı Orchestra Association also complaint about the perception of Roma people only as entertainers, telling that there are also doctors among the Roma people. Here, “doctors” actually stand for the edu-

⁶⁴ During small talk with an inhabitant on Ahırkapı Street, 20.03.2012.

cated people, addressing the prejudice that considers, and hence, conditions the members of Roma community to be uneducated, but talented in music and dance.

I didn't aim at a statistical research on what the inhabitants of Ahırkapı think about the other Roma communities in relation to the urban transformation in Istanbul. I rather followed the circumstances in which I could encounter the comments of the inhabitants on several issues related to Hıdırellez, the festival, and their personal lives. I was able to encounter the inhabitants on the streets, in the office of *muhtar* Nevin Taş, in two coffee houses, and in shops. During the festival, it was not possible to encounter the inhabitants, due to the crowd and their low attendance. Especially elderly inhabitants were eager to talk, and I could listen to some of the life stories, only to confirm that it would not be possible to approach the community as a homogenous group of people due to the ethnic identity. For example, although it is invisible in the statistical data on the occupations of the inhabitants, two women in their 60's that worked in Germany for long years (one of them for 18 years) and then turned back to Ahırkapı immediately told their story as soon as they heard that I live in Germany. I also tried to talk to several people working in the Armada Hotel, but do not live in the area. However, they were not willing to talk to me. I do not think it was due to instructions of the Hotel, but because they did not want to talk to a stranger who asked questions about the festival, the Hotel and their relationship with the area, since I already tried to talk to them before I interviewed the representative of Armada Hotel.

Especially the small talk and spontaneous discussions with the inhabitants led me to questioning whether the reference to the Roma culture in the festival would reproduce the imaginations of Roma that deepens the stigmatizations dividing the Roma communities at the same time. I approach the concepts of culture, tradition and iden-

tity within this context focusing on the power relationships and inclusion in order to indicate the possibilities of collective resistance.

In the report 'Reaching the Romanlar' prepared for the International Romani Studies Network, Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand point out that approaching the minority status in terms of the identity referred as 'gypsy' is not claimed in Turkey due to the prevailing ideology of national identity:

The most striking difference between Turkey and the rest of Europe is the perception of its Gypsy population. In Turkey, the notion of regarding the Gypsies as a separate ethnic minority is largely rejected, even by Gypsies themselves, as it is seen as divisive and therefore discriminatory. This contrasts with the European context, in which ethnic minority status is seen as a measure towards integration and the ensuring of equal access, opportunities and rights. Whilst the transnational elements of Gypsy identity is a cornerstone of the international Romani movement, in Turkey, little recognition of Gypsies exists outside the "disadvantaged group", or "brilliant musicians" categories ... Neither passive, nor particularly (in comparative terms) "assertive" about their Gypsy identities, their preferred and primary identification is Turkish (Marsh and Strand, 2005, p.12-13)."

While Sinan Gökçen and Sezin Öney (2008) confirm that the Turkish national identity is adopted in Roma communities, and interpret it as a result of the fact that the nationalist discourse against minority status which assumes human rights as a threat from Europe and makes it scary and difficult to defend rights; Marsh (2008, p.19) addresses the defiant attitude of the state and the society towards the minority status. The editorial team of European Roma Rights Center (2008) points to the difficulties that Roma people suffer in Turkey in terms of the access to citizen rights although they hold nothing but a regular citizenship status, and asserts the faithfulness of Roma communities to the state. The team suggests structural strategies in state institutions to overcome the problem of "unequal citizenship", such as a housing ombuds-

man for investigating the conditions of housing rights in urban transformation cases, but does not mention displacement. However, it is important to keep in mind that the urban transformation is based on the Urban Renewal Law 5366 which forces the landlords to agree with the public-private partnership that produce the projects; and the legal terms of the so-called negotiations concern only the conditions of the property owners, leaving the renters outside the picture. Hence, for the suggestions for a solution concerning the conditions of the inhabitants, the space should be imagined independent of the legally recognized or legitimized rights based on the access to property ownership. This suggestion to institutionalize the resistance against the urban transformation (or control it through official involvement of state institutions) collaborates with an understanding of space merely as the abstract space of property rights or an item for the urban rental market. Moreover, the discourse of “unequal citizenship” amounts to the institutionalization and detachment of the Roma identity from the contexts that it is produced in, such as the strong relation between the *mahalle* and community; reclaiming only an equality in terms of citizenship rather than antagonizing the discourse, practices, institutions and the conditions that produces a ‘Roma’ identity against the Roma people together with the inequalities based on ethnic identity and economic status.

During my research, I witnessed that the inhabitants saw themselves primarily as Turkish (for example, an inhabitant reproached about the discriminatory attitudes of the state and society: “We are also Turkish!”⁶⁵), and referred to themselves both as ‘gypsy’ and ‘Roma’. However, while the self-identification mostly appeared as ‘Roma’, other communities were mentioned both as ‘gypsy’ and ‘Roma’. During the talks about the ethnic identity in the neighborhood, the inhabitants claiming the Ro-

⁶⁵ A small talk on Ahırkapı Street, 20.03.2012.

ma identity attempted to clarify their identity against prejudices, although it contradicted their imagination of the “other gypsies/Roma”. However, when we asked whether we could smoke inside the Ahırkapı Orchestra Association’s coffee house (because of the ban on indoor smoking in Turkey since 2008), I and my friend were reminded that we are in a Roma neighborhood and we could smoke (“you are now in a Roma *mahalle*”⁶⁶). In this case, invoking the Roma identity appears as an imagination of the autonomy of the area. The Roma of the neighborhood are imagined as an identity in relation to the space, rather than any reference to a common culture/ethnicity of all Roma (not even the Roma in Istanbul) or belonging to a wider Roma community. In other words, Roma identity is divided within the community, as the Roma in Ahırkapı, and the “other” Roma.

The national identity of the Roma has been brought up in the claim on the Declaration of Nation in the 5th Romani World Congress in Prague in 2000 and the ‘We the Roma Nation’ declaration in 2001. These declarations called for imagining the Roma community in Europe as a nation without a state. However, this claim did not specify the way to achieve this in practice. Agreeing with Engin F. Işın’s interpretation (2012), the ‘nation’ as a different status than that of a minority endangers the ethnicity also in terms of citizenship; it does not provide any means for the freedom of the movement claimed by the Roma movement; and does not challenge the identification of ‘We, the People’ promoted by the EU which relates the European Citizenship to identification and nationality under integration policies.

Finally, his demand for a ‘nation’ did not challenge the discourse of “European identity based on cultural diversity” and European Countries and institutions started to produce or fund reports, studies, and projects on the conditions, history, and culture

⁶⁶Interview with Osman Dursun, 10.05.2012.

of the Roma people. However, in these works, Roma identity has been embraced in terms of human rights with regards to the disadvantageous social and economic conditions of the communities, and Roma did not resound as a national identity in this context. In 2011, the European Commission adopted an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies concerning education, employment, healthcare, and housing. The reception of Roma movement in Turkey also works in this direction of producing projects for integration.

Işın (2012, p.161) assesses the impossible demand of the nation without a state and territory as “a rupture, a break from the given order” bringing a question on the arbitrariness of the dependency of the idea of nation to territory and sovereignty. However, he continues to question the formation of identity in relation to the demand of a nation of Roma without a state:

“Roma is as invented, or made up, as any people. Although its origins are traced to the waves of migration from Northern India to Europe between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, who exactly settled in Central and Eastern Europe is complicated.”

Işın criticizes the idea of the “nation without a territory” for not opening any political action areas other than blending in the present multiculturalist approaches based on the institutionalized participation of the identified communities (ibid, p.163).

Although the Roma identity has been differentiated from the other identities referred to as ‘gypsies’ since the World Romani Conference in London in 1971 where a flag and an anthem were attributed to Roma identity, Işın reminds that other groups such as Sinti, Mahouches, Romanichals and Kalo have different traditions and languages, and points at the inclusion of Roma identity in the European discourse as a symbolic violence that promotes the assumption that all these communities are homogenous. Işın also recalls the conditions of Roma identity in Europe quoting the Council of

Europe Assembly stating that the Romani community does not enjoy rights since in several EU countries Romani have not the status of neither an ethnic, nor a national minority, yet. This reclaim for a nation of Roma is in facta definition of identity available in the concept of nation-state (Karlıdağ and Marsh, p.145).

A challenge in the studies on the communities in relation to ethnic identity, such as the one in Ahırkapı, is the way to refer to the people. I agree with Işın that the identities are constructed inside and outside communities simultaneously. David Mayall (2003) also points out that the ‘gypsy’ identity is socially structured with the surrounding contexts throughout the history, opposing the discourse of “shared culture” in defining the ‘gypsy’ communities that generalize the identity. Mayall elaborates that it was constructed silencing the communities, being enthusiastic about their ‘otherness’ and attributing to them stereotypical representations such as the representation of the ‘gypsy’ in literature. I investigate the construction of the ‘gypsy’ identity in a specific location through an event intending to approach to the construction of the self and the other in connection to the discourses and representations attributed to the community in a wider context.

After the 2000 Prague Declaration, the reference to the ethnic communities as ‘gypsy’ started to shift to term ‘Roma’. For example, The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, founded in 1888, changed the name to Roma Studies in 2000. In Turkey, local ethnical groups started to get organized officially founding “associations” of Roma or Gypsies. Although, several associations in several cities were founded in the early 2000’s, most of them have not remained active since.

Especially together with the declaration of the Roma Reform of the government, many more local organizations were founded due to the call for participation to the

process through Roma associations. Pire Mehmet, founder and chairman of the Ahırkapı Association of Artisans and Musicians, and a very powerful figure in the neighborhood due to his organizational skills⁶⁷, mentioned that this first official association in Ahırkapı was founded on this call of the Government.

Süleyman Faruk Göncüoğlu and Şükriye Pınar Yavuztürk (2009) attribute the use of the Roma as a term to the former Sulukule inhabitants; according to them, Suluku-le inhabitants wish to differentiate themselves from other ‘gypsies’ due to their reputation as entertainers (ibid., p. 128), and explains the etymology of the word “çingene” in Turkish (gypsy) in relation to the word “çengi” (female dancers) (p.108-109). However, Hüseyin Yıldız (2007) interprets the etymology of the word ‘çingene’ as a word originated from the word “çığay” – poor – in Chagatay Turkish, and categorizes all the names such as Cano, Kıpti, and Sepetçi given to these communities, together with Rom, Dom and Lom. According to Yıldız, all of these names refer to the same ethnical roots, and such names are given to them by others. Although his etymological interpretation may be disputable, the stories of the contexts that Yıldız narrates to assume the roots of the words unwillingly illustrate the discrimination against these communities behind these names throughout the history.

Larry Olomoofe (2007, p. 12-13) explains that according to the participants in his research, they were more familiar with term ‘gypsy’ “since this term has deeper, historical, socio-cultural roots than the term “Roma”, and for them is a far more accurate and legitimate cipher for their people”; although for some of them identifying oneself as ‘gypsy’ derived from “ignorance”; and the word ‘Roma’ was received as imposition by the educated ‘gypsies’ and non-gypsies. However, he remarks the link to the

⁶⁷He works like the manager of musicians in the neighborhood and was organizing the musicians since the beginning of the festival in collaboration with the Armada Hotel.

effects of the attributions to Roma/Gypsy in this debate: “The two trajectories intersect in the ascriptive process by mainstream participants who deploy unreconstructed, stigmatised, racist stereotypes to refer to Romani/Gypsy communities in their midst, which is subsequently internalised by the group and deployed in a caricature of itself, reaffirming much of the stereotypical perceptions that the mainstream hold of Roma.”

After referring to Olomoofe to mention that she is aware of this debate, Funda G. Onbaşı (2013, p.68) reminds the discussion in the First Roma Studio on 10th December 2009, in which Erdoğan Şener, the chairman of the Akhisar Modern Roma Association furiously declared that he takes the word ‘gypsy’ as an insult. However, Adrian Marsh (2008, p.20) points at another approach to justify the use of “çingene” (gypsy) in his work: Mustafa Aksu, the honorary chairman of the Gypsy Association in Turkey, and a ‘gypsy’ who could tell his identity only after his 60’s, protests the word ‘Roma’ since he sees it as an attribution of the Roma Reform of the government, and according to him, none of the promises of this reform were kept⁶⁸. Therefore, instead of adopting a new name, he wants to be able to say proudly that he is a ‘gypsy’ (see also Aksu, 2000). Moreover, Aksu took an action against the racist and discriminating description of the word ‘çingene’ in several dictionaries such as the dictionary of the Turkish Language Institution. However, the European Court of Human Rights decided against his claim in the trial he led against Ali Rafet Özkan’s book ‘Gypsies of Turkey / Türkiye Çingeneleri’ in which ‘çingene’ is described in these words: “they live in derelict houses and tents, they are polygamous and have many children, they are aggressive, they steal, beg, profiteer, extort, prostitute, and the wives cheat on their husbands”. Although the trial was opened due to the article

⁶⁸ Hüseyin Aksu, "Romanım" Diyen Çingene Kardeşlerime Sesleniş, 06.01.2014 Retrieved from: <http://cingeneyiz.blogspot.de/2014/01/mustafa-aksu-romanm-diyen-cingene.html>

14 on discrimination, the court referred to article 8 on private life alleging that ethnicity was related to the physical and social identity of an individual; hence, ethnicity is an individual concern.

In Turkey, the organizations and local associations in Turkey differ in terms of the identification though the words; some of them identify their ethnicity with the word ‘Roma’ while the others use the word ‘Gypsy’ in their names. Ebru Uzpeder (2008, p.119) narrates the approach of Edirne Roma Association (EDROM) while deciding which word to use:

“Unlike Roma in various parts of Turkey, they were for proudly embracing the term “Gypsy” that is laden with derogatory meanings in social life. The activists from EDROM advocated that in order to combat social prejudices, they should be confronted instead of being avoided: Likewise, they regarded the term “Roma” as sounding foreign and literary; so all in all, they wanted to refer to themselves. However, the general tendency among other Roma associations was to employ the term “Roma” (since the word “Gypsy” resonated negatively amongst the general public), and thus, as a sign of respect for the general will, they changed their name as an association.”

Elmas Arus, a film maker, co-founder and activist of the Association for Zero Discrimination (Sıfır Ayrımcılık Derneği), documented several Roma, Dom and Lom communities in Turkey for 9 years and illustrated the differences and similarities of Rom, Dom and Lom communities between each other and among themselves in ‘Buçuk’ (2007, dir. Hüseyin Haluk Arus, Elmas Arus). When Arus received the Council of Europe Raoul Wallenberg Prize for her contribution to the struggle of Roma people, the title of the article about it on mainstream newspaper Hurriyet was ‘Award Winning Gypsy Girl’,⁶⁹ and another mainstream newspaper, Sabah, pre-

69 Available on <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/25304756.asp>, last accessed 10.04.2015

ferred the title ‘First educated daughter of the thirty thousand years old family’,⁷⁰.

Arus, having her master thesis written on the discriminatory representation of Roma in media in Turkey, was not content with this reference which enthusiastically celebrated this prize in relation to the ethnical identity from which she comes. According to Arus, it does not matter how the community is called, unless the stigma and the structural discrimination of the people end:

“Until today, ‘gypsy’ has been perceived and defined as a single thing. Hence, all these negative things were produced over this ‘gypsy’, and today, even if they define themselves differently as a group, as long as these negative things stay, it won’t mean anything.”⁷¹

Arus also pointed out that the attribution of the term ‘Roma’ to all of the communities known as ‘gypsy’ doesn’t add up:

“You can’t go and tell a Dom “you are Roma too!”. You can’t tell an Abdal “you are Roma”. Nor to a Lom. Because they don’t identify themselves like that. Among these groups, everybody call each other with their own names. However, when you look at it from outside, they all suffer the same fate. They all used to be ‘gypsies’ and they survived until today with the difficulties of it. Although the fight should start at this point, instead of fighting, instead of getting rid of these negative thing...we hide under another word.”⁷²

The governmental discourse included the Roma identity through a discourse of “opening to Roma”. First of all, State Minister Faruk Çelik announced the upcoming Romani Studio in Parliament while he was informing the public about the Alevite Reform of the government, and attended to the first Romani Workshop on 10th December 2009 which was organized in Istanbul through the collaboration of the state officials and 80 representatives of five Roma Federations from 36 provinces of Turkey.

⁷⁰ Available on <http://www.sabah.com.tr/yasam/2014/01/19/30-bin-kisilik-sulalenin-ilk-okuyan-kizi>, last accessed 10.04.2015

⁷¹ Interview on 16.03.2015, in Association for Zero Discrimination, Kılıç Ali Paşa Neighborhood, Anahtar Street, Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

⁷² *ibid.*

43 demands were discussed including the demand for a house with a small garden instead of flats in mass housing of TOKİ. In the report of the Workshop, it was mentioned that the Ottoman Empire used to be more tolerant towards Romani people than the European countries. The demands in the report varied from the problems of discrimination in social and economic terms, to “preventing the addictions such as drugs”. Another item in the report was encouraging Romani people to get organized in social, cultural and political terms.

Shortly after that, due to the motivation of European Union integration process, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan attended the Roma Meeting in Istanbul on 14th March 2010, and introduced the Roma Opening of the government as well as the new mass housing projects. This relation reminded me of Michel Foucault, according to whom the “objectivizing of the subject” is a method of subjectification process that produces the discourse of individual liberty, as “dividing practices”, through which “(T)he subject is either divided inside himself or divided from other. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminal and the ‘good boys’ (Foucault, 2000, p.326).” The Roma reform of the government was a method of subjectification of Roma; so that, they would not be the ‘criminal’ or the ‘other’ anymore. Exclusion resulted in a deprivation of utility of human beings, and the “surplus value” that could be obtained from them (Foucault, 2007, p. 201). For example, Linda Graham (2006) analyses the inclusion of students in education system and assess this inclusion as a way of taming their differences, and puts forward that inclusion does not amount to inclusiveness. It is rather a term that calls for a “bringing in”: a pretended attempt to bring in the marginalized *Others* (ibid, p.10). Hence, the discourse of inclusion functions as the domestication of identities and acts.

Alongside the emphasis made on the ethnical discrimination and stigmatization in conjunction with the displacement of Roma in Turkey, Funda Gençoğlu Onbaşı analyses also the media reports and governmental and parliamentary discourse on the Roma reform in relation to human security:

“...(W)hat has been experienced in Turkey in terms of the Roma rights issue is more like the reconstruction of the hegemonic configuration of power relations than the resolution of a sociopolitical problem in a consensual manner although it didn’t receive as much criticism and opposition as the other ethnic reform projects of the government such as Armenian, Alevite and Kurdish Openings (Onbaşı, 2013, p. 56-57)”.

Onbaşı approaches the Roma reform of the Government with reference to Ryan Powell’s emphasis on the relations of power in understanding the stigmatization of Roma, and to Foucault’s emphasis on power mechanisms in everyday life. Accordingly, Onbaşı borrows the terms “saving” and “corrective treatment” (Powell, 2008 in Onbaşı, 2013, p.61) to the discourse of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 14th March 2010 about the Roma Opening. Erdoğan mentioned his discontent about the Roma people living in tents and shacks in this speech, and then promoted the new mass housing projects. Indeed, the urban transformation projects that the Erdoğan administration introduced in this day followed and promised to save the Roma from their ‘incorrect’ life style.

Onbaşı quotes Gülseren Köksal, an inhabitant of the Roma ethnicity in Istanbul, who says that she felt humiliated by these words of the Prime Minister (Onbaşı, 2013, p.61). Likewise, Nevin Taş reported that several Romani residents from Ahırkapı were transported to the Abdi İpekçi Sort Hall on 14th March 2010 for the Meeting, however, returned heart broken by the words of the Prime Minister.⁷³ Moreover, Piri

⁷³Interview in Nevin Taş’s Office, on 18.03.2015, Cankurtaran Neighborhood, Istanbul. Translated by the author from Turkish.

Mehmet, the founder of Ahırkapı Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar Derneği, a local Roma Association, complained about the lack of interest of the state after this declaration of an “opening”, leaving behind local Roma organizations in varying states of neglect, sometimes having to transform a coffee house into an association, just like in the case of his own association.

Ayşe Yıldırım⁷⁴, a long time non-Roma resident on Akbıyık Street in Cankurtaran Mahallesi, who migrated to Ahırkapı from Malatya when she was six months old, criticized the government for its policies on poverty as an answer to my question about her comments on the Roma Reform. Her approach was mostly based on the policies of poverty:

‘The citizens had only a *simit*⁷⁵ (that they could afford to eat), now they⁷⁶ took it from them as well...The factories are getting closed and unemployment increases...Medicine for cancer costs 480 TL (referring to the illness of her husband)...Nothing is possible unless they solve the problems of ill people, retired people, and working people.’⁷⁷

Likewise, Onbaşı (ibid. p.61) criticizes the emphasis on the housing in the discourse of the Prime Minister Erdoğan:

“...Although housing is a big problem for the great majority of the Roma community in Turkey, this approach risks overlooking the fact that the Roma’s practical problems related to accommodation as well as to education, poverty and unemployment are not the root causes of the disadvantaged position they find themselves in. On the contrary, underneath their practical problems lie discrimination, prejudice and exclusion...”

⁷⁴Interview on 30.04.2012, in her Office.

⁷⁵Simit is a bagel-like food in Turkey, sold on the streets by street vendors, and stands for the cheapest food to afford. Here, Ayşe Yıldırım talks about the actual price change of simit, rather than referring to it just as a metaphor.

⁷⁶“They” refers to the government here since she talked about the Prime Minister previously.

⁷⁷Interview in the Office of Nevin Taş, on 18.03.2015, Cankurtaran Neighborhood, Istanbul. Translated by the author from Turkish.

The discourse of the Prime Minister in this Roma Meeting, and the introduction of the new mass housing projects for the Roma indicates that the poor living conditions are both caused by the “discrimination, prejudice and exclusion”, and merges to the biopolitical mechanisms of stigmatization and oppression. This discourse of the PM and the approach of the Roma Opening signaled forthcoming urban transformation projects for the Roma settlements. After Sulukule, several Roma *mahalles* have been subjected to urban transformation projects, such as Sarıgöl, Hacıhüsrev and parts of Balat and Ataşehir. I agree with Onbaşı that the discourse introduces the practice of power. Therefore, the reclaim for a space suffers the hierarchies rooted in this cycle unless the interventions on the space aim at analyzing and abolishing the existing and possible power relationships. However, as I will elaborate in the following part, the case of the activist attempts to sustain the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival after the Armada Hotel resigned from the organization reveals a lack of the concern on the power relationships in the area and on the position of the festival in the reproduction of the stigmatization and the marketing of the place.

Other than the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival Association which was founded by the Armada Hotel to apply for the support of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture, and then dissolved in 2011 since the Armada Hotel resigned from the organization, there are two local organizations in Ahırkapı. As I mentioned above, the Ahırkapı Association of Artisans and Musicians was founded by Pire Mehmet in 2010, after the call of the government to organize Roma communities. However, this association is not active in terms of identity politics, and basically functions as a social space where men from the area socialize and some work connections (especially for musicians) are made.

The second organization is a split from the former due to the conflict over the benefits of the festival in 2011. Ahırkapı Orchestra Association is founded by younger musicians and is also a coffee house, similar to Pire Mehmet's association. Since this second organization did not want to take part in the festival together with Pire Mehmet, and since they were not convinced by Kumbara Sanat (the art collective that organized the festival after 2011) about the beer sale in the festival, they did not attend it after 2011. Thus, the musicians in the festival after this year were mostly from other neighborhoods.

The ethical diversity policies of the AKP based on the discourse of 'opening' were limited to the foundation of neighborhood associations, promises of housing, and some improvements in social and economic terms for Roma people. Both Pire Mehmet and Osman Dursun criticized this discourse of reform for remaining unfulfilled. According to them, there had been neither regulations nor improvements about the Roma identity. Actually, all the Roma inhabitants interviewed mentioned that they were neglected in spite of the Roma reform. In addition, the expression the Prime Minister Erdoğan used when he was calling out the Roma people were romanticizing (referring to song lyrics to describe the conditions that Roma people suffered) and ratifying the general perception of their culture⁷⁸. Finally, the Prime Minister announced in this speech the good news that "they" (the government) were planning to build mass housing all around Turkey for Roma citizens, which ushered in new urban transformation projects threatening Roma people residing in other inner city neighborhoods.

⁷⁸ The speech is available in Turkish at Hürriyet, Erdoğan'dan 'Roman' Açılımı, 03 October 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/14104307.asp> . Last accessed 20.05.2015

4.2 Imagining the Roma, Festivalizing Hıdrellez

The inclusion of the Ahırkapı Spring Festival in Istanbul 2010 ECoC program contributed to the imaginations of the city produced by the agency to fulfill the requirements of the European Parliament Decision in 1999 about highlighting cultural diversity. The Roma people were already represented as part of the city in publicity films of the event either selling flowers on the street during day time, or entertaining people at night. These clichés about the Roma people, however, also came up in the discourse of the organizers of the Hıdrellez Festival, Nedim Mazliyah (Armada Hotel) and Ahmet Saymadı (Kumbara Art Studio) that I will elaborate below.

Hıdrellez basically refers to a set of rituals to celebrate the coming of spring, every year on 5th and 6th of May. According to the widely affirmed legend of Hıdrellez, Hızır was a respected person in society who drank the ‘ab-ı hayat’ (water of life-water of immortality) and continued to live forever among the people, distributing health and help to hard up people, making the nature become green again, and symbolizing wealth, plenitude and luck (Güngör, 1956, p.56 in Yücel, 2002). This myth has several variations, such as the holy brothers Hızır (Khidr) and Ilyas (Elijah), or Hızır and his lover Ellez coming together once a year (Uca, 2007, p.114; Aslan, 2012, p.208). These celebrations were part of different religions and different geographies such as the Balkan, Kazakhstan, Altai, the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, Crimea, Syria, and Iraq, as well as Turkey, everywhere based on similar legends (see Uca, 2007; Yüce, 2011; Yund, 1960). Based on etymological analysis of ‘hıdrellez’, Ferhat Aslan (2012, p.208) indicates that the word ‘Hıdrellez’ can be traced back until 1533 in Turkish literature, and attributes the festival to Turkish culture. Talat Koç and Nazan Keskin (2001) approaches Hıdrellez as a date indicating the relationship between the perception of the temperature change by people in everyday life (they

call this “people calendar”) that may be one of the explanations for the geographical context of the myth. In Turkey, it is celebrated commonly by different communities on the 5th and the 6th of May, and there are different assumptions about the origins of Hıdırellez. On the one hand, it is explained as a Turkish-Islamic belief (see Günay, 1995), or a belief and tradition that is rooted in paganism, before Turks adopted Islam (see Uca, 2007 and Ocak 1998), on the other hand, it is attributed to the “gypsy or Roma” communities.

However, during my interviews in Ahırkapı, I realized that actually Kakava came out as the reference to celebration of spring for the inhabitants. As soon as I asked about the ways in which Hıdırellez used to be celebrated in Ahırkapı, Piri Mehmet told me that it was initially ‘Kakava’ they used to celebrate; however, not on a festival scale⁷⁹.

Although some resources refer to Kakava as Hıdırellez celebration of Roma with a different name (such as Arslan, 2012, p.222), Nazım Alpman (1997) differentiates it historically and in terms of the myth. According to Alpman (ibid, p.97) Kakava is a six thousand years old tradition originated from Egypt and Asia Minor; and according to the “gypsy mythology”, it is based on the miraculous escape of Copt people (Kıpti) from the pharaoh and his army, since the soldiers sank in the water, and the Copts that survived waited for a “rescuer” on the waterfront; thus the three day long celebrations of Kakava following the 6th May are dedicated to the immortal rescuer that is expected to come. A description of Kakava can be found also in H. Hale Bozkurt’s book (2013, p.129) in which the Roma are imagined again as people that entertain themselves whatever happens: “It is the carnival in Edirne that Roma people that see even door cracking as a motive to dance have been celebrating for hun-

⁷⁹ Interview with Piri Mehmet on 10.05.2012, in the Ahırkapı Association of Artisans and Musicians.

dreds of years annually on 5-6 May.” Moreover, a biologist approach appears in Ferhat Arslan’s article on the Ahırkapı Hidrellez Festival, after he asserts that Kakava is just a ‘gypsy’ version of Hidrellez (2012, p.221): “Roma, in other words Gypsies, differentiate from other communities due to their life styles, and physical and spiritual characteristics, and they mostly live as nomads.⁸⁰” This assumption does not only describe the people in a biologically racist way, but also assigns an imagined culture of “nomadism” as if it is intrinsic to these communities. Unlike these kind of approaches, Adrian Marsh (2008, p.25) propounds that among the ‘gypsy’ communities in Turkey it is very common to appreciate the Saints and the powers of the nature such as celebrations of Kakava and Hidrellez; and he adds that it is not a consequence of the beliefs in the history of ‘gypsies’ but a common characteristic of the rural communities and a reflection of the different religious influences in the surrounding.

Due to the narrative of Piri Mehmet, and the inhabitants that I talked to while I was waiting for Osman Dursun (Chairman of Ahırkapı Orchestra Association), Osman Dursun himself, and the members of the Ahırkapı Orchestra Association, in Ahırkapı inhabitants used to celebrate the coming of spring with some rituals, hanging papers on trees (preferably rose trees) to make wishes on the night of 5th, going picnicking on the 6th, eating certain food especially prepared for this day such as ‘süt böreği’, lighting fires and jumping over fire to redeem from sins⁸¹. Osman Dursun’s answer was similar, and other people in the coffee house remembered that they used to wake up early and go to the sea side. All these narratives agree that until 1997 neither Hidrellez nor Kakava was celebrated in a festival form, hosting visitors in this area.

⁸⁰Translated from Turkish by the author.

⁸¹Interviews with several inhabitants in Ahırkapı, Piri Mehmet from the Ahırkapı Association of Musicians and Artisans and Osman Dursun from the Ahırkapı Orchestra Association.

People did not necessarily celebrate it together; it was just a series of rituals that every family used to practice themselves, sometimes coming together with their neighbors. Osman Dursun mentioned that Ahırkapı had never been a place to gather for Hıdırellez. In the meantime, Kakava started to be festivalized before Hıdırellez, and it is also an international Roma music festival organized by the City of Edirne. Nedim Mazlıyah, the marketing director of the Armada Hotel and representative of the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival never mentioned Kakava; however, its success might have inspired the Armada Hotel while transforming the first smaller scale Ahırkapı celebration in 1997 into an international music festival.

As distinct from other celebrations of spring such as Hıdırellez in Sulukule⁸², and Newroz⁸³, the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez festival never faced any kind of state oppression, any difficulties caused by state institutions, or local authorities. On the contrary, it was always supported; even in case the activists took on the festival, local authorities provided cleaning and security services. The inclusion of the event in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC program is also an example of this relationship.

4.2.1 Festivalizing Hıdırellez

On 8th May 2012, a few days after the festival, Ahmet Saymadı, a self-described anticapitalist member of Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi (Kumbara Art Studio), an art collective which organized the festival in 2011 and 2012 hosted me in their café in Küçükparmakkapı Street, Istanbul, which shares the same name as the Studio collective. When I asked him how they got involved in the organization of the festival, he started criticizing the way that the Armada Hotel conceived the festival. According to him, the reason why Armada Hotel started to organize a festival

⁸² This festival used to be organized with the involvement of Sulukule Platform against the urban transformation project.

⁸³ Newroz organized with the involvement of Sulukule Platform against the urban transformation project.

while the inhabitants in the neighborhood were already celebrating the ‘Hıdrellez’ among themselves is part of a comprehensive plan to market the neighborhood, and thus the Hotel itself. He claimed that since the Hotel strived to brandize Ahırkapı for their own interest, because it was not located in Sultanahmet, which is the highly gentrified and touristic neighbor of Ahırkapı. He asserted that the inhabitants were included in this plan only in terms of some extra income that they could earn for one day of the year.

In our interview, Nedim Mazlıyah justified the entrance fee due to the increasing number of guests. According to him the festival should not have received so many guests, and this was the only reason for the conflict. He said that they never did any advertisement for the festival, and their intention was just to contribute to the economy of the neighborhood and to promote the image of Roma people stigmatized in society.

Saymadı also agrees with Mazlıyah that the reason of entrance fee was the uncontrolled expansion of the crowd and asserts that it was also an attempt to be selective about the guests. In the meantime, although none of the inhabitants of the *mahalle* publicly opposed the festival, nor called for solidarity against the plans of the Armada Hotel, in social media many people protested the entrance fee remarking that “their”⁸⁴ tradition was not to be sold. In response, Kumbara Art Studio took the initiative. Ahmet Saymadı explained their attitude towards the debate in these words:

⁸⁴This “their” here refers to the people, who protested the entrance fee in social media.

“We said that we wouldn’t even protest them, we didn’t care what they did. We just said that we would go there and celebrate it on our own. The only authority that we would ask for permission was the inhabitants of the neighborhood⁸⁵”.

Saymadı told that after they took this decision in their group, they first announced it in social media, and went to the neighborhood to ask for permission. In the neighborhood, they asked people to whom to talk about this issue, and they were addressed to Pire Mehmet⁸⁶, a very influential figure in the neighborhood, who plays a key role in this entire story⁸⁷.

In 2011, the organization was mostly carried out by the Kumbara Sanat Studio, while only few of the inhabitants were involved in the sale of food and beer, or performed music. In the announcements of the festival, it was highly recommended not to bring any drinks or food, so that the inhabitants could benefit from the festival in economic terms.

However, the economic benefits that the festival brought to the neighborhood caused a conflict in the Ahırkapı Association of Musicians and Artisans. Ahmet Saymadı and Osman Dursun explained that in 2011 the organization of the festival caused some disagreements. According to Saymadı, a group around Pire Mehmet, benefitted more from the beer sales, and another group of younger musicians and Artisans split from the association to found another one, which is the Association of Ahırkapı Orchestra.

⁸⁵ Interview with Ahmet Saymadı, on 8th May 2012, in Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi (Kumbara Art Studio) Küçükparmakkapı Street, Istanbul.

⁸⁶ I refer to him as Pire Mehmet since he uses this name as if it is his official name (also on his business card).

⁸⁷ He works like the manager of musicians in the neighborhood and was organizing the musicians since the beginning of the festival in collaboration with Armada Hotel. There was already a footnote about this above!

In 2012, Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi took over the organization again collaborating with Pire Mehmet, and the Association of Ahırkapı Orchestra was not convinced to take part. Pire Mehmet was organizing the musicians both for the festival in Park Orman and for Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi. According to Ahmet Saymadı, they had no other choice than working with him, because he was the only person who could make such arrangements. My interviews with the shopkeepers and inhabitants showed that Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi did not really make an effort to reach people in the area other than these two associations.

The shopkeepers on the street from Kanaat Bakkal (Mini-market), Akbıyık Tee House, and Aile Bakkaliyesi where the festival took place told that they were not very well informed before the festival neither in 2011, nor in 2012. Hüsnü Yıldız told that they heard about the festival in 2011 at the very last moment, and in 2012 only a few days before the festival thanks to the rumors. Akbıyık Tee House told that they were not very well informed and when the toilet of the tee house became very busy, they started to charge people. However, Aile Bakkaliyesi could know about the festival since Pire Mehmet informed them few days before the festival, and they could make a good sale out of it. When I asked the shopkeepers and inhabitants about their response to the festival, their frequent answer had been “they didn’t even ask us whether we wanted such a festival in our neighborhood”.

As soon as I left one of these shops that I interviewed on 4 th May 2012, the owner of the first house in the street (Ahırkapı Street, on which the festival takes place), an elderly man, stopped me on the way when he understood that I was interested in hearing about the festival, and complained about the crowd referring to their behaviors during the festival as immoral for drinking too much alcohol and even having sexual intercourse (in his words) in the front yards of the houses. The

most frequent complaint had been about the consumption of alcohol and the behaviors of the guests. Many of the residents, even the ones that did not criticize the festival openly, appraised the smaller scale celebration among themselves as a better event. Nevertheless, some shopkeepers said that the bigger event was not bad for them because of the increase in their sales. However, shopkeepers were disappointed because they were either informed very late about the event, or not at all, and therefore they were not ready to provide as much beer as they could have done if they had been prepared.

Ahmet Saymadı recalls that he went together with Pire Mehmet to the local authorities for permission in 2012. Meanwhile, Pire Mehmet signed a contract with the organization in Park Orman to provide musicians from the neighborhood for this second festival as well. Saymadı emphasized the authority of Pire Mehmet over the others in the neighborhood and claimed that in case the two associations unite ever again, he would be the chairman. According to him, this kind of a relationship based on economic terms between musicians and the organization in Park Orman was inexpugnable, and therefore Kumbara Sanat let them do their own business in their own way.

Upon the request of the inhabitants⁸⁸, Saymadı went to Armada Hotel to ask for their opinion about the festival in 2012. He mentioned that the attitude of the Armada Hotel was negative about their wish to organize the festival in the neighborhood, and warned them about the difficulties, such as cleaning the area after the festival, providing security, and getting permissions from local authorities. Saymadı asserted that Kumbara Sanat did not give up, trusting in the experiences in political street

⁸⁸ Ahmet Saymadı chose to say ‘inhabitants’ each time when he talked about their relationships with the neighborhood. However, it came out when I interviewed with several inhabitants in the neighborhood (residents, shop keepers, the other association) that he assumed Pire Mehmet and his association as these ‘inhabitants’ that they worked with.

demonstrations of the members of the Studio. Although in the announcement for the festival in social media it was assumed that cleaning after the festival and security during the festival would be undertaken by the participants⁸⁹, Saymadı told that for cleaning, the municipality enabled service, and police forces provided security. For the problem of providing toilets, residents and shop keepers opened their doors to the guests. According to Saymadı, this toilet issue provided a way for socializing in the festival: some people met in the toilet lines with other guests, some people communicated with the residents in their houses. He mentioned that a guest even invited the house owner for breakfast the next day after the use of their toilet, while some other people didn't even greet the house owners and just used their toilettes. He assumed this socializing with the residents issue as something personal, but not a matter of the form of the organization. This comment on the modes of "socializing" brought me back to my question that I insistently posed in each interview I made: What was the role and the position of the Roma people living in this neighborhood in the festival and during the organization of the festival?

Nedim Mazlıyah asserted that as Armada Hotel, they reminded their tradition to the Roma people in the neighborhood, and then added that the strategy and the institutional mission of the hotel were protecting and embracing "the culture of life" in Istanbul. He set forth that these people used to have nothing but some rituals to celebrate the Hidrellez, and as Armada Hotel, they did not conceive of this festival as a meeting of Roma people, but as an organization that was nourished by the music of Roma people. He mentioned that their intention in promoting the festival using the name of the Roma people was to enhance their reputation. According to him, it was not even a Roma event; it was a "traditional" event with predominant Roma ele-

⁸⁹This announcement (call for attendance to the festival) is available in Turkish: https://m.facebook.com/events/227142420763884?_ft_

ments, celebrated by many different ethnic groups. He explained that as Armada Hotel they intended to keep the celebration alive as an urban event in Istanbul; that the reason why they attached it to the Roma identity was the location of the Hotel, and the music of Roma people which suited the joy of the festival. He continued with mentioning that if the Hotel had been in another neighborhood, the festival would be totally different, but it might not be as colorful as it was in Ahırkapı. He found the relationship between the festival and the Roma people in the neighborhood overrated, and said that Hıdırellez was mostly celebrated in Thrace by Roma people, "...and even now if one asked to the inhabitants in the neighborhood, they would say that they didn't even care about it, but they still contributed a lot into the festival both with their colorful lifestyle and music". He claims that at the beginning the inhabitants opposed the large scale festival "as they always do against any new ideas since they don't like strangers in their neighborhood", but according to him, in consequence of the economic interests they obtained through it, they also adopted the event. In this discourse, again the notions of "saving" and "corrective treatment" were employed to position the Hotel in the story.

Mazlıyah signified that the Roma inhabitants had no role aside from making music and earning money in sales; their joy had been "makeup" for the festival. Moreover, according to him Roma people had only symbolic participation in the Association of Ahırkapı Spring (Hıdırellez) Festival. He added that after all, the shift in the place of the festival from the neighborhood to the park also caused the loss of authenticity. According to him, cobblestone pavements, women staring out of the window and the presence of Roma people were attracting the guests. Similar to the approach of the organizers and artists of the Tarlabası Street Art Festival that I analyzed in Chapter 4,

the community and the space that they live in and produce is conceived as a décor, an aesthetical background, and element of attraction for the event in Ahırkapı.

Thus, the goal of Armada Hotel for “protecting and embracing ‘the culture of life’ in Istanbul” emerges as a marketing strategy fed by the authenticity of Ahırkapı, considering the inhabitants as the “objects”, as elements of entertainment, awaiting there to be exhibited. Assumption of culture as the imitation of representative practices and discourses related to the authenticity of a community reduces it to an aesthetical form and qualities deprived of the material content of culture emptying it out of the conflicts over the identity and space.

As for Saymadı, the question of the position of the Roma people revolved around the approach of the Armada Hotel to the Roma people. He interpreted the withdrawal of the hotel from the organization due to the end of their profits. According to him, they did not need the festival anymore; they already had achieved everything and could no longer benefit from it. He criticized the attitude of the Hotel for behaving as if they owned the entire neighborhood and even the culture of the people living inside it. He assessed the attitude of the Hotel as disparagement towards the Roma people assuming that they could not do anything by themselves.

However, in their announcements for the festival, Kumbara Sanat referred to the festival using the expression “our tradition”. Although Ahmet Saymadı explained their goal as leaving the organization totally to the inhabitants after teaching them how to organize it, in his following statements, the way he talked about the inhabitants, referring to them mostly as ‘Roma’ people rather than something like “Ahırkapı inhabitants”, sounded like he also saw them as a passive ethnic community incapable of making a claim on their “tradition” and their neighborhood on their own, without a

help from outside. In the meantime, he also mentioned that what the Armada Hotel could not see was what these people could do by themselves if they didn't interfere in their issues. However, although Saymadı kept criticizing inhabitants for not being involved in the festival organization, he continued to indicate the power of the festival organization over the inhabitants, and referred to the festival organization as “we”, and to the Armada Hotel as “they”: “they don't see what we could do if they abandoned these people to us”⁹⁰.

In the words of Mazlıyah from Armada Hotel, the position of Hotel, the organizers of the festival after 2011, and the inhabitants were clearly differentiated, while Saymadı's words went around two sides of the story: “we” and “them”. For Nedim Mazlıyah, it was clear who the “other” was. This can be read also due to the distinct position of the Armada Hotel in the neighborhood as the biggest power, in that several people from the neighborhood either work in the hotel or, especially musicians, make work connections through the Armada Hotel and Pire Mehmet.

However, Ahmet Saymadı was referring to Roma people from time to time as “us” while he was reproducing the marginalizing discourse on the other hand. It was clear that he did not consider himself as one of “the Roma people”, but he considered himself as one of the intermediaries in the relationship between the inhabitants and the organization of the festival, reducing this relationship to binary a tension between “the capitalist” and “the people”. As response to the question in what ways the Studio collective got involved in, Saymadı claimsthat before this festival they were not involved in urban issues, such as gentrification, as Kumbara Art Studio. Their relation was mostly due to their interest for Roma culture besides his own personal experience with Roma people when he “lived together with Roma” for a while in the past.

⁹⁰ Interview with Nedim Mazlıyah on 16.03.2012, in Armada Hotel.

Mazlıyah justifies the Hotel's festival organization for being located in the neighborhood (being neighbor to Roma people). Likewise, the Prime Minister, in his speech⁹¹ about the Roma Reform of the government relates himself to Roma population personally: "I was born among you". However, the division of oneself from Roma people as "the others" appears as the objectification and homogenization of the inhabitants in the discourse. Saymadı attributed Roma people characteristics such as not being organized or not claiming their own culture. However, the statements of inhabitants reveal that he and his Studio did not have direct communication with the inhabitants; instead, he did what the Armada Hotel did, and worked with the most powerful figures in terms of work connections in the neighborhood although (and because) there were critical approaches to the festival among the inhabitants.

Saymadı emphasized continuously that "they" wanted to prove that the festival could be organized without any monetary fund. He mentioned that twenty people from Kumbara Sanat invested some amount of money for lighting and arrangements on the streets. He said "we told them"⁹² that we will empty the neighborhood at 11 pm, and we pulled all the people to the waterfront only making an announcement with megaphone". He also said that they explained to the inhabitants what was actually going on, such as the abuse of their labor, and the risk of gentrification. Consequently, according to Saymadı, the economic interests of the inhabitants were one of the most important points for Kumbara Sanat.

The aforementioned criticism of Nedim Mazlıyah and Ahmet Saymadı assumed that the inhabitants had already left, forgot or did not care much about their "tradition".

However, even the references to the rituals of Hidrellez during the festival were lim-

⁹¹ Erdoğan'dan 'Roman' Açılımı, 03 October 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/14104307.asp> . Last accessed 20.05.2015

⁹²It is still ambivalent to whom he referred with 'them' and 'us' but when I wanted him to make it clear he always addressed Kumbara Sanat, as in this case.

ited to jumping over fire and making wishes by hanging letters onto trees or walls. The rest of the festival boiled down to a street entertainment of listening to live music, dancing, drinking alcohol, and eating (in the restaurants or from the street vendors). In other words, it was based on the consumption of material goods (alcohol, food etc.) and immaterial ones (e.g. "culture") all geared towards entertainment.

In their work on the construction of a discourse of tradition in the cases of Quebec and Hawaii, Handler and Linnekin (1984, p.281) found out that "social life is always symbolically constructed, (it is) never naturally given; and acts that are performed due to the tradition were reinterpretations of social life changing the traits of the past continuously." They took the concept of tradition due to the continuities and discontinuities in history, and propounded that "the traditional symbols" are actually not related to the past objectively, and the understanding of tradition in social and scientific terms was based on a naturalistic metaphor (ibid, p. 285-286). What is named as tradition is actually "a symbolic process", a meaning in the present that is attributed to a past phenomenon (ibid, p. 287). Moreover, the social identity is

‘formulated in interaction with others, and depends upon evolving distinctions between categories that are symbolically constituted... The Western ideology of tradition, with its correlative assumption of unique cultural identity, has become an international political model that people all over the globe use to construct images of others and of themselves. (ibid, p. 287)... One of the major paradoxes of the ideology of tradition is that attempts at cultural preservation inevitably alter, reconstruct, or invent the traditions that they are intended to fix. Traditions are neither genuine nor spurious, for if genuine tradition refers to the pristine and immutable heritage of the past, then all genuine traditions are spurious (ibid, p.287-288)’.

Handler and Linnekin suggested that tradition should be interpreted as a term that signifies "a process that involves continual recreation" (ibid, p.287-288). Indeed, the discourse of tradition produced by the actors outside Ahırkapı attributed a certain

identity to the people and their everyday life, and enabled the outsiders to attach themselves to this symbolically constructed identity. In case this discourse of tradition is removed, the only measure of association for the outsiders with the inhabitants, or “Roma people”, disappears forasmuch as their only relation to the Roma people during the festival consists of enjoying the music and exhibiting some of the rituals attributed to Roma culture. Other than these, it is hard to find any elements or concerns about the Roma culture in this event, the inhabitants could not relate themselves to the festival. Moreover, when I interpret the final picture of the event, the will of the Roma people was (intentionally or unintentionally) excluded from the organization process, and they were included in the festival only as figures of an imagined culture and from time to time as service providers. The words of Saymadı that I discussed above is a case in point that constructs the relationship between the festival organization and the inhabitants in terms of the power relations produced by the assumed savior position of the Kumbara Sanat.

According to the inhabitants and the representatives of the two associations, Pire Mehmet and Osman Dursun, some of the rituals continued taking different forms in time. Some of the rituals were left, some of them were kept, and some new elements were added to the celebrations. According to these narratives, it turned out that when the Ahırkapı Shore was filled in 1987, it was the end of one of these rituals: going to the sea side in the morning after prayer (*namaz*).

Saymadı explained the reason why the inhabitants were not involved in the organization process with their lack of experience and knowledge of using social media and media in general for announcing the event, though, adding that they started to learn and show interest in these matters. He mentioned that it wasn’t possible for them to bring an organization from outside; that the Roma people themselves had to “set their

hearts on” the festival. According to him, after the relationship between Roma people and Kumbara Sanat happened this way, these people started to take the issues in a totally different way than before, and he saw a potential in these people for being in charge in the future.

It was considered by both of the organizers of the festival that the commodification of Roma music would bring economic benefits to the inhabitants in Ahırkapı. However, this matchup did not add up in terms the profile of the economic activities of the inhabitants. After the case in Sulukule, Ahırkapı was also imagined through entertainment as a common economic activity of the Roma communities. Koray Değirmenci (2011) approaches the Roma music in Turkey through a discourse analysis and emphasizes the relation between the locality in the construction of the Romanness as a community belonging through the music rather than the “sense of ethnic identity”:

“Thus, the commodification of Romanness seems to occur more on the basis of a notion of locality that is constructed via senses of community belonging rather than via senses of ethnic identity. This belonging might express various levels of attachment to place, namely mahalle, town or village or other spatial locations (such as, Sulukule, Keşan, and Istanbul respectively). Moreover, this sense of attachment or belonging is further fostered by the life-style and musical tradition that characterizes that particular place. However, Romanness as signifier of a particular locality rarely implies a particular place and its respective forms of community belonging but instead implies a popular image of being Roma ... that emphasizes musical qualities and attitudes. However, it is also worth noting that recently there is a tendency to represent Romanness as an ethnic identity in international festivals, probably due to the interaction with the other Rom musicians coming from different regions to the festival (ibid., p. 121).”

The Romanness in Ahırkapı was associated to music and entertainment after the Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival, and the success of the Ahırkapı Büyük Roman Orkestrası

(Ahırkapı Great Roma Orchestar). Both Nedim Mazlıyah, and Ferhat Aslan (2012) regard the album ‘Ahırkapı Great Roma Orchestra’ released by Sony Music in 2002 as a success of the festival; since the contract for the album was signed one month after the outstanding concert of the band at the first Ahırkapı Hıdrellez Festival in 2002. However, according to several studies (see Alpman, 1997, and Bayraktar, 2011), activists of the organizations against discrimination such as the Zero Discrimination Association on Roma identity, and the narratives of the inhabitants in Ahırkapı, the conditions that promote the identity of ‘Roma’ or image of ‘the gypsy’ focusing on music and entertainment do not allow any opportunities for other occupations and this challenge is among the most crucial problems that reproduce the discrimination against this community. Moreover, the inhabitants even criticize or despise other Roma communities such as the former one in Sulukule because of their life style referring to their involvement with the entertainment sector. Hence, the imagination of the ‘gypsy as good musicians/entertainers’ actually challenges the collective resistance against discrimination and urban development policies, and reinforces the stigmatization. So that, rather than being “we, the roma” as a universal community, my observation about the community in Ahırkapı indicates an imagination of the dichotomy of “we, the Roma in Ahırkapı” and “the other Roma/gypsies”.

4.2.2 Performing ‘the Roma’

On the 5th of May 2012, I attended the festival in Ahırkapı. Before I could enter the neighborhood, the streets on which the festival was organized were already full of thousands of people (Figure 18). In some points, musicians were entertaining the crowd (Figure 19). A wall was prepared to hang up the letters for making wishes instead of the rose trees (Figure 20) and later at night a fire was set in Ahırkapı Park next to the sea.



Figure 18: Ahırkapı, 05.05.2012



Figure 19: Ahırkapı, 05.05.2012



Figure 20: Ahırkapı, 05.05.2012



Figure 21: Ahırkapı, 05.05.2012

I came across some visitors from time to time who carried some references to the costumes attributed to the Roma culture (Figure 21). Scarfs and flowers on the head, tambourine in hand, colorful clothing... Some of the visitors imagined the Hidrellez

in Ahırkapı similar to the presentations of the “hot gypsy woman” in TV shows and Turkish cinema, such as the “Hot Gypsy” performed by famous actress Türkan Şoray (Figure 25).



Figure 22. Two scenes from ‘Ateşli Çingene / Hot Gypsy’ (1969, dir. Metin Erksan)

According to Elmas Arus, the discontent of inhabitants about the festival may also be based on the rising conservatism among Roma communities. I did not conduct an analysis of this process towards conservatism in the community since it needs respective research with different methodologies. However, the attribution of “immorality” by some Ahırkapı inhabitants to other Roma communities, such as Sulukule inhabitants, evoked that the mainstream and historical discourses on the immorality and criminality attributed to Roma divide the communities want to be recognized by non-Roma as equal citizens. However, the terms immorality and criminality have actually been ascribed by the hegemonic discourse to these communities throughout the history with the representations that marginalized the communities due to their identity and living conditions.

Pelin Tünaydın (2013) illustrates the imagery of ‘the gypsy woman’ beginning with representations in the Ottoman Empire: “From literature to travel books, from popular history to early ethnographical essays, it possible to come across frequently with

the examples in which Gypsy women were stuck within unidimensionality, stereotypes and otherness within the triangle of swarthinness-egzotism- promiscuity (ibid., 40)⁹³.” She compares the illustration about ‘the gypsy woman’ and the photographic representation with the representation in Ottoman Empire, and reveals that the illustration of the gypsy women showing her breasts with seductive clothing and accessories does not match even with the photography. She states that although in Ottoman Empire Gypsies had comparably better living condition than the ones in Europe, this attribution of criminality and immorality did not only bring discrimination and stigma, but it also enabled legislative regulations that strived to keep the Gypsies under control (ibid., p.41).

Tünaydın argues that the cliché about ‘the gypsy woman’ still continues with reference to these representations in Ottoman history (ibid., p. 45). Indeed, Turkey’s Forum of Roma People protested the TV Show ‘*Roman Havası*’ (Romani Tune) after the first broadcasting on 4th December 2014 (Figure 23). In a press statement, the Show was criticized for reproducing the stigma and stereotypes about Roma people. Later, when the TV channel offered modifications to the show, Elmas Arus negated this offer in a meeting organized by Association for Zero Discrimination, Say No to Racism, and the Discrimination Association on 27th December 2014 in Istanbul, pointing out that modifying the script or changing the costumes would not be not enough; that the overall mentality (about the Roma people) should change; and hence, that the Show should not be broadcasted anymore.

⁹³Translated by the autor from Turkish.



Figure 23. A scene from TV show 'Roman Havası/Romani Tune' (2014, dir. Hakan Arslan)

The imagination of the inhabitants in Ahırkapı in discourse of Mazliyah and Saymadi shows resemblance to the orientalist image of the 'gypsy' in 'From Russia with Love' due to the representation of the community in Istanbul both in terms of the costumes and the attribution of passiveness, wildness, colorfulness and exoticness.

In a scene of 'From Russia with Love' (1963, dir. Terence Young)⁹⁴, Kerim Bey (Pedro Armendariz), the Turkish colleague of James Bond, brings him to a "Gypsy Camp" in Istanbul, since the "Bulgarians" that work for the USSR attack the Bond's MI6 office in Grand Bazaar, and the 'gypsies' are allies of NATO, in collaboration with MI6 against Bulgarians. The camp is surrounded by the ancient city walls (such as in Sulukule and Balat), and the 'gypsies' entertain themselves in the midst of their tents. As soon as Bond and Kerim enter the camp, two women are brought to the midst of the tents to fight to death over a man. "It must be settled in a gypsy way" says Kerim Bey. Just after this, the other "gypsy women" welcome Bond and his colleague in a very seductive way, and then Bond watches a belly dancer.

⁹⁴I thank Dominik Lehmann for suggesting this film to me.

All these women, the two women fighting with each other, the dancer, and the other women that serve Bond carry costumes similar to each other completing their seductive ap-proach. Moreover, the two women undress to start the fight; one of them says “She will take my man!” in Turkish. Before one of them can hit the other on the head with a glass bottle, “the Bulgarians” attack the camp, and James Bond saves the life of the gypsy chief in battle. After the battle is won by the MI6 agents and gypsies, we hear painful screaming, and Kerim explains it: “They make one of the Bulgarians talk”. Then, the chief comes to Bond and Kerim translates for him: ‘Thanks for saving his life. You are now his son.’

Bond: Thank you. I’d like to ask him a favor. Could he stop the girl fight?

Kerim : He says your heart is too soft to be gypsy but he lets you decide the matter.

Bond: As if I didn’t have enough problems.

The ‘savior’ is also ‘bothered’ for being responsible of the matter later. However, when these two women are brought to him by Kerim (“...they are both yours”, says Kerim), he says “this will take some time” with pleasure, and the two women willingly serve Bond together until he leaves the camp.

This scene contains the promiscuity attributed to ‘the gypsy woman’, the uncivilized/brutal ‘gypsy man’, and the ‘non-gypsy’ rescuer saving the people from their own ‘culture’. Moreover, the script is an example of how the ‘gypsy’ as a figure is imagined in such a flexible way that it could be installed in any political context (as an ally of NATO in this feature film, or within a so-called ‘anti-capitalist’ discourse that the Ahırkapı Hidrellez festival organization promotes as from 2011), and any kind of ritual or ‘tradition’ could be attributed easily to it. The ‘gypsies’ immediately

leave ‘the tradition’ when the ‘civilized non-gypsy’ tell them to do so. This man saves their lives not just from the bullets, but also from themselves, although “it must be settled in a gypsy way” according to the male Turkish figure. The scene does not only reveal the orientalist imagination of ‘gypsy’, but also settles the power relationship between the ‘gypsy’ figure and the rest. The ‘gypsy’ is so uncivilized and unaware of their tradition that the ‘hero’, in this case James Bond, saves them unwillingly, quickly, on his way to another duty. I recalled this fictional representation because of the discourse that the festival organizers share in which the Roma in Ahırkapı is a community unaware of their traditions, and imagined as passive entities, waiting to be ‘saved’, although there is no sign of such a connection between the representation of Hıdırellez in the festival and the rituals of the inhabitants.

Moreover, the ‘gypsy that dances/amuses one self and the others everywhere and under every circumstance’ is another stigmatization. Hatice Çetinkaya and Elmas Arus of the Association for Zero Discrimination⁹⁵ explained their disappointment about the representation of Roma in the second Episode of TV documentary *Kültür Yolcuları* (Passengers of Culture) produced by journalist Can Dündar, a journalist that they would actually trust. They criticized that the Roma were again pictured as in mainstream media; for example, the Roma were again very cheerful, and Hatice Çetinkaya was upset especially about the scene in which a Roma woman was dancing over the fire. According to her, Dündar just assumed that together with the demolition in Sulukule the entire culture and (the other) neighborhoods ended; and he neglected the threat that is still there for the other neighborhoods; moreover, he just depicted

⁹⁵ Interview on 16.03.2015, in Association for Zero Discrimination, Kılıç Ali Paşa Neighborhood, Anahtar Street, Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

the symbols of the “entertainment culture” attributed to Roma people, such as the famous percussion artist Burhan Öçal and the famous Ahırkapı Roma Orchestra. Hence, according to Çetinkaya, this approach that considers that the Roma would continue to dance and amuse themselves whatever happens to them is in fact condescending towards the Roma people.

On the other side, Roma people frequently express their wish to be seen as equals, as the claim for “equal citizenship” indicates. I came across a Blog entry on the website Çingenelerin Sitesi (Site of Gypsies) in Turkish in which Ali Mezarcıoğlu, who mentions that he is also a ‘Gypsy’, emphasizes this wish to be united with the rest of society:

‘Our society loses its cultural values due to several reasons. Hidrellez is one of these. ... It became almost impossible to sustain the traditions of Hidrellez as it used to be because of the urbanization and proliferation of life in apartment buildings. However, gypsies insisted on celebrating Hidrellez. ...First of all, let’s make a correction from our point of view. In some expression that we come across in newspapers they say ‘Hidrellez, Holiday of the Gypsies’. However, it is an imperfect knowledge. Hidrellez is not merely the holiday of Gypsies. The traditions of Hidrellez don’t pertain to the Gypsies either. At the beginning of the century, Hidrellez celebrations were traditions that people all around Anatolia adopted one way or the other. Not only in Anatolia, but throughout the geography on which we live Hidrellez used to be celebrated. ... The biggest problem of the Gypsies has been being seen distanced. Distanced from me, distanced from us...However, the Gypsies never wanted to be seen distanced. They wanted to be accepted as citizens in the countries where they lived, and as part of the grand family of humanity in universal level; not the half! In essence, Hidrellez is a common value that makes it possible... (Mezarcıoğlu, 2013, translated by the author from Turkish)’.

4.3 Expansion of the Festival in Everyday Life: Gentrification in Ahırkapı

In 2009, a group of students from Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Tourism Management Department prepared a research inquiry about the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez festival under the supervision of Maria Dolores Alvarez for the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival association. Nedim Mazlıyah shared this survey about the Festival to let me have an idea about the participants (visitors) of the festival. According to this survey conducted by a group of researchers from Boğaziçi University⁹⁶ for the 2010 Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency, the majority of the participants mentioned that they are not superstitious, but they still believed that the wishes they made in the night of Hıdırellez would come true. In this survey, the motivations for attending the festival turned out to be enthusiasm, excitement, entertainment, the ambience, Roma music, being together with their families, meeting new people, nostalgia for a surviving tradition, learning and discovering, the historical peninsula, escaping from the routines, curiosity, consumption of food and beverages, being at the waterfront, the reputation of the festival, the feeling of belonging to a culture, the originality of the event, and becoming distant from stress. According to the results of this work, all the participants agreed that the contribution of the festival to the neighborhood would be the marketing of the place, and attracting the tourists. Other contributions assumed by the participants were to the local economy in terms of consumption of food and drinks.

In the evaluation of the results, the researchers inferred that the motivations of the participants coincided with the purposes of the festival organization – considering these purposes as “(attraction of) the atmosphere, escaping (from stress), cultural mo-

⁹⁶ Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Senlikleri 2009 Profil Arastırması (Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival Profile Research), Boğaziçi University, Department of Tourism Management. Moderator: Maria Dolores Alvarez, Members of the research group: Bengi Doralp Ezgi Tekkalmis Berkin Selen Düzgel Asli Deniz Torunoglu. Presented to 2010 Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency.

tivations and (attracting) curiosity”⁹⁷; that it might be necessary to attract the attention of local people; that people with lower levels of education and women cared about the matter of wishes coming true; that the crowd in food and drink sales obstructed the fun; and that the festival might transform into a hallmark event introducing the event to tourists and including Hidrellez in tour packages. The data collection of this work is concerned with the marketing of the festival striving to catch the motives to attend the festival leaving the inhabitants outside the picture, and coincides with the strategy of the Armada Hotel mentioned by Mazliyah in our interviews, which is “protecting and embracing the culture of life in Istanbul”. Both the way the survey was conducted (interviewing only the visitors with a list of questions concerning the perception of the event and reasons of attendance and presenting the results in categories as statistics) and the results revealed indicate that the festival was an attempt for place marketing (the experience of a place for the visitors) with the support of the authenticity attributed to the festival due to the presence of Roma ethnicity in Ahırkapı.

In the activity report of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency about the projects of city and culture, the purpose of the festival in Ahırkapı was explained as bringing the ritual of welcoming the spring, which is already common in “all the cultures”, back to the urban culture (Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency, Activity Reports, 2010). In the very short description of the event, it was emphasized that this festival brought many people from different social sections of the city to celebrate “life together” with diversity. However, the interpretation of the research results and the results themselves reveals in what ways the event was imagined and conducted through the 2010 Istanbul ECoC program.

⁹⁷ Ambiguity in these terms is caused by direct citation from the research. I used them directly as mentioned in the research.

tural Heritage and Economy of Culture of the agency⁹⁸, the importance of the festival in Ahırkapı was attributed to its attraction for the guests which provided a promotion for this part of the city other than the already very popular sites such as parts of Taksim and Kadıköy.

It is remarkable that the agency did not mention the Roma identity in particular, although its discourse on the festival revolved around “sharing the city culture” and “living together with all diversities”, and both in the event program and in the final reports the representations to promote the festival captured the stereotypical image of ‘gypsies’, such as the musicians, the clothing attributed to the Roma culture, and multifarious ornamentations in the festival area with a reference to the assigned Roma culture.

While Mazlıyah was justifying the position of the hotel as “standing for the benefit of these people”, Ahmet Saymadı insisted that the gentrification process around Ahırkapı had nothing to do with the festival; that it was already an impact of the hotels surrounding the area. Although early in our interview Saymadı defined the start of the festival as a marketing strategy of the Armada Hotel, according to him, the festival is a collective reaction of people against gentrification. When I informed him about the discomfort of the inhabitants that I interviewed, he insisted that even if they were not “aware of it yet” it was for their own benefit both in economic terms and in terms of getting rid of the stigma on the Roma ethnicity; they could “endure” the visitors “just for one night”; “it was not a big deal”; at the end “the municipality was cleaning the streets the day after the festival immediately”⁹⁹.

⁹⁸*Festivals of Istanbul*, Edited by Serhan Ada, Inventory of Cultural Heritage and Economy of Culture, 2010 Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency, published by Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Turkish Republic in April, 2011, p. 66-67.

⁹⁹Quoted from the interview with Ahmet Saymadı, on 07.05.2012, Kumbara Sanat Atölyesi, Istanbul.

Similar to Ahmet Saymadı, Burcu Yasemin Şeyben (2010) evaluates the Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival as a successful event against the threats of gentrification (including the state-led urban transformation). However, different from Saymadı, Şeyben attributes this success to Kasım Zoto considering him as a “persuasive and resistant activist” (ibid., p.119). She points out the results of the report about the festival of the years 2007, 2008, and 2009 in which most tourists from Turkey state that this festival was their motivation to come to Istanbul. Finally, Şeyben suggests that “(I)f Hıdırellez were promoted efficiently by the tourist industry as part of a tour package aimed at international and Turkish tourists, there could be an even greater increase in the numbers of tourists attending the event (ibid., p.118).”

Although Şeyben celebrates the festival as a tourist attraction and assesses it as a successful even against the gentrification, the analysis of gentrification processes in several cities since the 1980's such as the New York City analysis of Sharon Zukin reveals the political economy of the relation between the development of culture and tourism industries and urban gentrification. Pointing out the ethnicity becoming a commodity as an aesthetic category, Sharon Zukin (2004, p.116) states that “(O)n the streets, the vernacular culture of the powerless provides a currency of economic exchange and a language of social revival”. In *The Culture of Cities* (Zukin, 2005), Zukin conceptualizes the inclusion of the culture in the contemporary cultural production of cities as “symbolic economy”. After the impact of festival, Ahırkapı is now associated with “fun” and “authenticity” that the visitors enjoy. In Zukin's terms, the festival turned the reputation of Roma into a “symbolic economy”. Şeyben (2010, p.117-118) mentions that Kasım Zoto, the founder of the Ahırkapı Spring Festival “incorporated this rural communal ritual into an urban and ethnic international music festival”, together with the reputation of entire neighborhood associating “their culture” to the entertainment in the festival. However, the

experience of the inhabitants and the space itself as a social context rather than an economic value are left outside this picture of the incorporation; and both the “the rural communal ritual” and the ethnic music insinuate the authenticity of the festival. However, this authenticity does not satisfy the consumers alone, and the space continues to be produced according to their own consumption practices (Zukin, 2008). Sharon Zukin warns that “[i]nnovative consumption spaces suggest new products, ‘looks,’ and aesthetic codes that become grist for the mass consumption mill; the cutting edge becomes ‘the next new thing’ and soon enough, ‘the next neighborhood’ of gentrification” (ibid. p.745).

In their article “Culture, tourism and regeneration process in Istanbul”, Ferhan Gezici and Ebru Kerimoglu suggest to the local government to

“emphasize the uniqueness of Istanbul’ in order to achieve a diversification of the economy for urban development, and indicate that ‘cultural tourism is no longer merely the visual consumption of high culture artifacts such as galleries, theaters and architecture, but is expanding to include simply allowing visitors the opportunity of soaking up the atmosphere of the place (Gezici and Kerimoğlu, 2010, p.2)”.

The symbolic economy derived from the celebration of a ritual referring to a certain ethnicity in Ahırkapı contributes in the development of a cultural tourism that surrounds the neighborhood and gradually narrows the area where Roma people can continue to reside.

Based on the land use and population data of 2002 in Cankurtaran Neighborhood, Nilgün Ergun (2010) states that the number of the inhabitants, especially the number of the worker inhabitants shows a decrease, and that the increasing number of touristic businesses around the neighborhood affects the inhabitants negatively (ibid, p.173), so that year by year the number of families having to leave the neighborhood increases mostly due to the increasing costs of living, and the housing stock has

gradually been transformed into businesses, which also triggers this drift (ibid, p.178). While many people from the working class left the area, the new inhabitants were mostly civil servants, engineers, lawyers, or people in tourism sector; and the land use shifted from housing towards touristic accommodation and trade such as textile, leather, and carpet sale (ibid, p.178). However, Ergun (ibid. p.179) suggests to produce plans for Cankurtaran regarding that the Neighborhood is convenient for more touristic development as long as it is kept as a 'living' area; an area in which an authentic everyday life provides "the liveliness for the area especially at nights" to save it from becoming a "city museum". Ergun's suggestion for keeping the authentic population to provide liveliness to the area to escape from the risk of becoming deserted is adopted by the Armada Hotel already by the way of the Ahırkapı Hidrellez Festival considering "authentic everyday life" as decor.

The opening of the Armada Hotel in 1997 has been an impact on Ahırkapı in several terms, defining the area both physically and discursively: The Hotel was now a physical power welcoming the visitor from the seaside, with several buildings in use of the hotel and restaurants as a block between the neighborhood and the sea (Figure 24); it was the biggest economic power in this specific area; it brought new work relationships and contacts to the area; it attributed a culture to the area benefiting from the local ethnic identity. The festival, organized by the hotel for the promotion of Ahırkapı to attract attention and to add value to the area, succeeded this object already as soon as the media attracted the attention to the opening party of the Armada Hotel.



Figure 24. Armada Hotel, Ahırkapı Street.

Ahmet Saymadı and the announcement in the social media for the festival in 2011 assume that the festival would bring some economic benefit to the inhabitants. The attribution of economic benefits of the festival to the inhabitants enables the visitors to have even more emotional satisfaction about their attendance. However, only some musicians and shopkeepers could make some temporary benefit; and in long term, rising costs and rents in the area bring disadvantages even in these terms. Moreover, costs and rents are rising also for those who do not even have these short-term benefits.

The shopkeepers oppose the idea that they earn more on the day of the Festival due to not being informed beforehand about the festival in 2011 and in 2012. This miscommunication indicates the lack of collaboration between the new organization and the inhabitants in these first two years after Armada Hotel resigned from the organization. In 2012 one of the shopkeepers on Ahırkapı, Sokak, was disappointed since his expectation about being informed was not fulfilled in 2012 either, thus he could not get prepared.

Contrary to the assumptions that entertainment would be the main occupation in Ahırkapı, the majority of the inhabitants are workers in publishing houses, or in other sectors such as tourism, mostly working seasonal and precarious (see also Ergun, 2010 and Aras, 2009). There are also musicians, and the two local organizations in the area actually represent two local groups of musicians in Ahırkapı.

In case of Ahırkapı Spring Festival 2011 and 2012, the participants (visitors) enjoyed satisfaction while they consumed the authenticity of the neighborhood. Although the benefits of the festival are also attributed to ‘the Roma’, Roma people in the neighborhood had a very limited attendance to the organization and the enjoyment. Moreover, such as I explained in terms of the Roma reforms of the government, the stigmatization creates disadvantageous conditions, and then these conditions turn back into stigmatization; such as the point of view that considers the small economic benefits as a grant for the community in Ahırkapı.

The Festival was attributed to the Roma culture. However, the inhabitants that I interviewed did not find anything to relate themselves to the festival; on the contrary, several inhabitants were disturbed by this unexpected delirious crowd. Thus, the only relation to Roma was the consumption of some cultural codes and the music.

The announcement for the festival in 2011 referred to the urban transformation projects in Sulukule and in Tarlabası, and warned that the festival might not happen anymore in the near future due to the gentrification or urban transformation. However, the festival itself seems to be an attraction for further gentrification in the neighborhood. The announcement states “Although it is celebrated by several communities throughout thousands of years with different rituals and different names, in Turkey Hidrellez is identified with Roma people.”¹⁰⁰ In what ways and through which motivation did this identification happen? The absence of this question allows the visitor not to think about the separation between the visitors and

the inhabitants during the festival, and about the further consequences of this festival in relation to the marketing of the area for tourism.

There is already a contrast in the physical conditions of the buildings in the area (Figure 25, 26 and 27) and there are several restaurants among the hotels, hostels, and residences that aim at tourists regarding the prices and the presentation including the names of the restaurants, such as the Ahhir Kapi Restaurant (Figure 31). The renovated buildings are turned into hostels, restaurants, and hotels, while the residences show poor physical conditions.



Figure 25. Keresteci Hakkı Street, 02.03.2015

100 This announcement can be found at <http://heyevent.com/event/b73hp4xfpule4a/hidrellezi-ahirkapida-romanlarla-kutluyoruz>, last accessed 12.06.2015.



Figure 26. A plot on the Cankurtaran Street 02.03.2015



Figure 27. Akbiyık Değirmeni Street, 02.03.2015, restored buildings (hotels and restaurants) and poorly groomed houses of inhabitants facing each other.



Figure 28. Ahhir Kapi Restaurant, Cankurtaran Street 02.03.2015

On 18th March 2015, in the office of Nevin Taş I coincidentally met an inhabitant in the neighborhood, Hakan Bilici, asking whether it would be possible to find a flat for a friend of his in Ahırkapı. However, Nevin Taş and the other two long-time inhabitants in the area, Aydın Kavuncu and Ayşe Yıldırım, told him that it was not very easy to find a flat in Ahırkapı due to the decreasing numbers of flats that are available. Taş told him that he could find a flat only through acquaintances, but he could still go and ask the Sultanahmet Real Estate Agency on Akbıyık Street that markets the majority of the properties including hotels and other touristic business places in Ahırkapı, and works frequently with international investors too.

So, I visited Sultanahmet Real Estate Agency the same day. Hüseyin Yetişoğlu, who has been in Ahırkapı since 1972, opened this real estate office in 1991. For a long time since, the real estate agency has been a franchise with a Middle Eastern branch. He is also involved with a glass making business in the neighborhood.

According to Yetişoğlu, until 1972, there were no hotels in the Cankurtaran Neighborhood. In the 1990's, the Orient Hotel and the Istanbul Hotel were opened on Akbıyık Avenue. Towards the 2000's many more touristic accommodation businesses started to spread in the area. Yetişoğlu mentioned that this development caused a migration of the inhabitants out of the area; and that especially investors from France, the USA, South Korea and Japan show interest in the area. In 2012, the rental prices finally become so high that the sales started to diminish distinguishably.

Knowing that the market values determined by the state do not indicate the actual prices and there are several other elements to measure such as the inflation rates, I still scanned the market value of rent on the three streets on which the festival takes place, just to see in which years there have been officially confirmed big rental value jumps, and whether this data of value jump coincides with the festivalization process in the area (Table 1).

| Year | Şadırvan Street (m2/TL) | Keresteci Street (m2/TL) | Ahırkapı Street (m2/TL) |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2015 | 3676,925 | 3676,925 | 4202 |
| 2014 | 3500 | 3500 | 4000 |
| 2013 | 888,75 | 888 | 1184,99 |
| 2012 | 824,44 | 824 | 1099,25 |
| 2011 | 747,72 | 747,72 | 996,96 |
| 2010 | 720 | 720 | 960 |
| 2009 | 142,63 | 142,63 | 285 |
| 2008 | 134,56 | 134,56 | 269 |
| 2007 | 129,88 | 129,88 | 259,75 |
| 2006 | 125 | 125 | 250 |
| 2005 | 54,68 | 54,68 | 78,12 |
| 2004 | 51,78 | 51,78 | 73,98 |
| 2003 | 45,32 | 45,32 | 64,75 |
| 2002 | 35 | 35 | 50 |
| 2001 | 8,74 | 11,65 | 14,57 |
| 2000 | 6,42 | 8,96 | 11,21 |
| 1999 | 5,33 | 7,11 | 8,89 |
| 1998 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1997 | 0,3 | 0,2 | 0,3 |
| 1996 | 0,3 | 0,2 | 0,3 |
| 1995 | 0,3 | 0,2 | 0,3 |

Table 1 : Market values of rent determined by the Fatih Municipality¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ The data is calculated on the official page of Fatih Municipality DATE!
<http://ebelediye.fatih.bel.tr/alfa/servlet/hariciprogramlar.online.rayic?caid=1449>

According to the officially recognized market values of rent, in all three streets there has been an exponential rise in 1998, in 2002, in 2010, and in 2014. Between 1986 and 1997, the values are constantly 0,2 or 0,3. Of course, besides not revealing the actual market prices, these results have several potential origins other than the festival, and it is important to take the scale of the surrounding context into account, too. However, obviously the festival does not contribute in the resistance against gentrification; on the contrary, it becomes a means for this process. Although Ahırkapı is very close to Sulukule and Balat, which now go through an urban transformation process; and although there is already a process that replaces the inhabitants with the tourism sector, my research results do not necessarily indicate any upcoming transformation projects in this area yet. However, when I first started this research in 2011, the gentrification due to the touristic attractions was already visible on certain streets. My approach on the gentrification in the area started with these first rough observations on the land use and the variety in the physical conditions of the environment.

Although the sporadic gentrified buildings among the houses of inhabitants shape the streets according to the taste of visitors, the streets are still a substantial part of the everyday life for inhabitants. Especially women spend most of the day outside their doors, being in contact with the rest of the inhabitants. There is no specific places, such as the coffee houses for men, where women gather and get organized. However, the communication in the streets already provides a venue for everyday life interactions that may amount to both peer-pressure and solidarity depending on the case. In a search for solidarity mechanisms that could turn into a network for resistance against the gentrification and discrimination, it is important to grasp the communication patterns in the area. However, in Ahırkapı none of the inhabitants that I interviewed came up with a mention of solidarity, nor they were fearing about

the gentrification as an overall threat, although the rising cost of living in the area and difficulty in finding flats (especially without knowing anybody from the area) were mentioned frequently. Hence, due to the words of the inhabitants and the local administration in my interviews, for me it was not clear whether there were everyday or other social relationships around and/or outside the existing neighborhood organizations in the area that could function as solidarity and resistance structures against the gentrification process, for example, in case an all-out pressuring situation like an urban transformation project threatens the area.

According to my observation during the Festival, people were not prepared or informed about the festival in 2012, and as soon as the crowd entered the *mahalle* from Ahırkapı Street, several inhabitants on the street went back to their houses. The festival might have attracted some inhabitants, especially young people and those who could get some economic benefits through sales or tips. However, as these benefits are shadowed by the long-term effects of the event in the area in terms of living costs, everyday life practices are also challenged by the unexpected crowd.

The Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival already turned into something that could be transferred to another place in terms of business with its know-how and the name, as happened in 2011 when the Armada Hotel transferred the festival to Park Orman. Moreover, the claim to keep the festival does not disrupt neither the businesses nor the governmental attempt to include the Roma identity in official discourse; it does not challenge the gentrification; on the contrary, contributes to the growth of capital in the area. Ahırkapı is not yet amongst the Renewal Areas that are subjected to urban transformation projects. Nevertheless, the rising numbers of touristic businesses and hotels, the decreasing number of housing, the attention of tourists and city marketing perspective implicate that gentrification already surrounded the area,

and the authenticizing discourse on the Roma people still feeds this process thanks to the Ahırkapı Spring Festival.

5 Imagining the Streets through Resistance in the Aftermath of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Event

The imaginations of the space in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event worked towards adding a surplus value to the streets and producing an image of the city that invites investment and tourism, taming the local conflicts over identity and urban development politics. Here, I again refer to the Lefebvrian space in my approach to the street. The surplus value added to the space through the public-private partnership is the extraction of economic value from space through the enclosure of commons. The definition of “commons” that are “expropriated by capital to generate surplus value” in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s ‘Commonwealth’ points at the surplus value added to the everyday life: “This common is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships, and so forth (Negri and Hardt, 2009, p.139).” Silvia Federici (2011) suggests a collective disposition and communal control over the commons; thus, calls for antagonizing the privatization and enclosure brought by the state-private sector collaboration.

The slogan of a ‘shared life together’ and the emphasis on the togetherness of different cultures and communities as a feature of Istanbul in the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event indicates the inclusion of the life in the city as a common that turns into a capital in urban market. I intend to join the discussion over reclaiming the cities as a common with an analysis of the post-Fordist policies of inclusion to problematize the hierarchies in the ‘we’ as the subject of the commoning process.

The analysis of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event and the urban policies afterwards point out that the urban development policies capitalize the human bodies and the urban commons attributing discourses, such as authenticity, criminality, security, or simply “beauty of the space” such as the discourse by the Mayor of Beyoğlu District that beautifies Tarlabaşı condemning the people in it. The ‘openness’ as a principle for the

urban policies amounts to an urge to position the city within the global order of cities in post-Fordist relations of global capitalism. The imagination of the government didn't reject the approach of openness; however, it imposed its own aesthetical imagination and finance-driven urban development policies to benefit from and control this principle unless it challenged the governmental policies based on the widespread construction projects. Moreover, the government kept its strong position to intervene the global city discourse in favor of the urban development projects through transformation. Alongside the new laws enacted in the AKP government's term to enable the transformation in the inner city areas of poverty and *gecekondu* areas, in terms of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC organization, this power was constructed through the representatives from government officials. Disregarding the legal process of interventions, the collaboration between the government and the private construction and real-estate sectors intervened in the space both on urban land, such as the case in Gezi Park in 27th May 2013, and in rural areas, such as the hydroelectric energy plant projects on the rivers. The urban land was imagined to be produced for a logic of expropriation for privatization, construction and large-scale dispossession (see Ünsal, 2015). Thus, through the attribution of the responsibility of poor social, cultural, economic, and material infrastructure, the urban population especially in inner city poverty areas and in *gecekondu* areas was imagined and employed in this discourse and practice of urban development as flexible masses due to their identities and economic situations.

The interventions on the streets after the event challenged the acclaimed image of 'openness' in terms of the inviting image of the streets in the publicity. For instance, the tables in front of the cafés and restaurants in the Beyoğlu district were removed brutally by the city on the ground of the rejection of the extension of a three-month permit by the city. Likewise, street musicians were not allowed to perform for the same reason. Both the street musicians and businesses on these streets organized a demonstration against these repressive policies. The street musicians finally agreed on the extension of their

permit rather than demanding the termination of this regulation bringing them precarious working conditions.

Moreover, the mega urban projects such as the third bridge on the Bosphorus, the project of the development of the northern forests of Istanbul as a new center, and the projects of urban transformation targeted at the *mahalle* to produce gated communities were responded to by a wide range of oppositional movements from ecologists to migrant solidarity movements focusing on cases related to profit-oriented urban development practices by the government and working together as a network under the umbrella of the Our Commons Movement. Not only chambers of urban professions but several independent organizations such as IMECE (the Urbanism Movement for Society) ; defense movements such as Haydarpaşa Solidarity, the Defense of Northern Forests, and the Initiative for Life instead Third Bridge; but also *mahalle* solidarity and resistance organizations started to struggle against the projects (Ünsal, 2015). Ünsal (2015) interprets the expansion of oppositional movements against urban policies in the 2000's as a response to the expansion of the range urban transformation plans took in comparison to the land development policies of former governments.

This networking for oppositional urban movements accumulated around Taksim square in May 2013 through the protests against a shopping mall that was constructed on the plot of the Emek Movie Theater; protests against the closure of the Atatürk Cultural Center in Taksim Square, and the attack of the police against the 1st of May demonstrations and the murder of 17 years old Dilan Alp by police officers during this attack. On 27th May 2013, a group of around 30 people defended the Gezi Park against the bulldozers of the subconstructor companies working with the municipality. These bulldozers were uprooting trees in the park for the construction of a contested Project that was not officially approved yet. This project was part of the transformation of the entire Taksim area including the transformation area in Tarlabası. The bulldozers of the subcontractor had no permission or documents to prove that they were authorized

officially. The number of people staying in the park to prevent it increased, and on 30th May 2013, early in the morning, the police forces attacked the area with tear gas against the people putting their tents on fire. This news was spread in social media, and finally on 1st June 2013 there were thousands of people defending the Park, the Taksim Square, and the streets around the area against the police forces and the construction of the project (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Gezi Park

5.1 Producing Spaces of Resistance and Struggle in Istanbul

The intervention of the government on Gezi Park was not only a policy based on the surplus value extracted from the commons, but also a show of force due to the history of this specific place, and symbolized the reference to the historical conflict between the laicism of Kemalist nationalist identity politics and conservative post-Fordist politics with reference to the Islamic and Ottoman identities (see Güla, Deeb, Cünük, 2014). Mehmet Barış Kuymulu (2013) attracts the attention to the initial focus of the protests as a reclaim for the urban commons in terms of the concept of the right to the city

formulated by Henry Lefebvre “as a right of urbanites to radically transform the processes that orchestrate the production and use of urban space” (Kuyumlu, p.274). He interprets the intervention both as an attack on the “iconic” Taksim Square, and as a “regime of capital accumulation” (ibid, p.275). The plan on the park was declared as reconstruction of the Topçu Military Barrack that were partially destroyed during the battle between the Turkish nationalist movement split within the Ottoman army and the forces in support of the Empire. As symbol of this victory against the precursor of the Kemalist ideology, these barracks were considered as a cultural heritage¹⁰³. The nationalist and anti-government discourses quickly identified themselves with the protests around the

defence of the park, and took part in the Gezi Park riots. Nevertheless, the struggle over the commons continued on a neighborhood/local scale and in network structures after the protests in the park were terminated through police violence on 15th June 2013.

The protests and the construction of a short-term communal life in the park staged various creative practices on the space to bring in the visibility of the practices, ideas and identities searching for a struggle against the hegemonic construction of the city and everyday life. The voices in the park varied from those that opposed the politics directed at their ‘life-styles’ and/or identities, to those that directly antagonized capitalism (Figure 30).

¹⁰²The ruins of the barracks were later used as a stadium between 1921 and 1939, and then demolished for renovation of Taksim Square, as suggested by the city planner Henri Prost. However, the suggestion of Prost for the area was not fulfilled and Gezi Park succeeded the ruins.

¹⁰³ although after the barracks there have been first a stadium, and then the Gezi Park on this place, which is registered as a cultural asset due to the Law No. 2863.



Figure 30. Gezi park, 10.06.2015

The interventions in the park that made the space of resistance stood for antagonisms and demand of the protestors. For example, the ecological movement brought the demand for urban farming through *Gezi Bostanı* (Gezi Farm) (Figure 31), and the artifacts that symbolized the destruction of the park, such as the caterpillars, were appropriated through creative interventions. These creative interventions were mostly done anonymous, dedicated to the ‘Gezi Spirit’.



Figure. 31, The Caterpillar and the Gezi Farm

Derya Özkan (2015) interprets the term ‘becoming’ as a reference to the need for change imposed to the individuals and to the spaces in post-Fordist subjectivation processes, keeping in mind its potential for identifying oneself with resistance, too. Karakayalı and Yaka (2015) employ the term only in an affirmative way to define the affective construction of the identity in Gezi park protests as a search for a new

possibility. According to them, the Gezi spirit was the strength of the movement that was constructed through the search for ‘becoming’, opposition of the otherness, humor and the construction of the identity of the protests, such as the identification through the term *çapulcu* which unites the protestors without any ethnical, cultural, or religious references.

The practices of the production of space and the everyday life imaginations of Gezi Park during the protests can be read in terms of this search for abolishing repression through affective relations to the social production of space through collective resistance. Mikhail Bakhtin suggested the term of the carnivalesque as politics of laughter, collectivity, and even equality as an interrelationship between individuals that crossed over hierarchies between subjects produced in everyday life, since the spectator cannot be differentiated from the performer anymore (1984, p.184) The configuration of the solidarity practices, employment of humor and fun as political practices, and creative practices on the space that indicated the variety of cultural practices and imaginations in the city, associate this event to the concept of the carnivalesque asserted by Bakhtin: a moment of equality through the politics of laughter under unity against the hegemony. The affects binding the protestors together convinced them to defend and produce the space against the capital accumulation, as the affects generated by the discourse of enthusiasm in the Volunteers Project convinced the volunteers to contribute to the process of capital accumulation.

A signifier of affective labor in the production of the spaces of protest is the discourse of ‘Gezi Spirit’ that spread around during and after the protests. This term actually did not only refer to the period during the protests in the park, but also the politicization of the Gezi Park after the termination of the battle in the park. For instance, squats in Is-

tanbul and in Ankara, and local forums after the protests continued with reference to this ‘Gezi Spirit’. Part of this spirit was self-identification of the protestors to antagonize the discourse of the Prime Minister and the indifference in the mainstream media, especially prominent news channels such as CNN Turk. Participants and supporters of the Gezi Park protests identified themselves as *çapulcu*, referring to the insult attempt of the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan calling the protesters “a handful of *çapulcu* (looter)” (Figure 32); and used the image of penguins to symbolize protestors because the nationwide TV new channel CNN Turk kept broadcasting a documentary about penguins on the night of the 30th May 2013 instead of reporting the uprising.



Figure 32. “Çapulcus are here!”

Moreover, these symbols, iconic images from the resistance in the park such as the ‘women in red attacked by a police officer with tear gas’, and the production of an identity for the struggle over space spread the Gezi Spirit in a wider scale, and the protests in the park received further public support from those who were not in the park. For instance, in neighborhoods several households accompanied the protests through *cacer-*

*olada*¹⁰⁴, and/or preparing water, medicine, and shelter for protestors in the entrances of the apartment blocks in cases of battles with the police. When the Prime Minister underestimated these protests referring to them as “pots and pans, same old tune”, the music band Kardeş Türküler which attended the meetings in the Taksim Square during the Gezi Park protests responded to him with a song warning him against the power of the protests, thus, representing the ‘Gezi Spirit’: “we’ve had enough...what arrogance what hatred...come slowly, the ground is slippery”.

The configuration of the Gezi Park protest occupation was regarding the park as a *mahalle*, in which the structure of a main alley collected the clusters of tents around side streets directing the crowd towards the services such as the kitchen and the infirmary, which were agglomerated in the most accessible and protectable part of the park. The variety of political claims was represented through physically differentiated and integrated spaces as part of this arrangement of the park similar to a *mahalle*. For instance, Some of the ‘streets’ among the tents were named after people that symbolized the struggles of identity such as the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink who was assassinated on 19th January 2007 by Ogün Samast, who was motivated by nationalist groups, and Ahmet Yıldız, an LGBTI activist who was murdered on 15th July 2008 by his father after he came out as gay (Figure 33). In the meantime, the space was based on a pattern of several gathering areas leading the pedestrian movement to crucial service areas such as the kitchen and infirmary.

¹⁰⁴Protests through making noise with pots and pans.



Figure.36 Intersection between Hrant Dink Anevue and Ahmet Yıldız Street in Gezi Park, 11.06.2013

Soon after the protests in the park developed into a mass movement, several street vendors appeared inside and around the park selling food, gasmasks, and dust masks against the police attacks, and souvenirs from the Gezi Park protests (Figure 34). The souvenirs of Gezi Park resistance and supplies such as gas masks and the very popular Guy Fawkes masks sold by these vendors were indications of a market around the Gezi protests.



Figure 34. Taksim Square entrance of Istiklal Street, 08.06.2013, a Street vendor selling carpets in front of a Wall that is filled with slogans by the protestors.

After a while, the street vendors were banned from the park by the protestors due to security reasons (against possibilities of a leak of police spies) and due to the imagination of the park as a money-free system of solidarity. Supplies such as cigarettes and food were brought to the Park to be used by anybody in the park, and there was rarely scarcity of food, however the necessity for medicine and mask supplies was rather precarious because of the attacks of the police forces targeted at the side of the park where the infirmary was located.

However, the Gezi Park protests were part of the everyday life of other people than the protestors, too. The crowd during the protests provided a business for street vendors. Elmas Arus mentioned that she heard street vendors from the Roma community complaining about losing their business after the termination of the Gezi Park protests. Thus, although there was an attempt for an anti-capitalist imagination of community in the park fed by the affects searching for ways of solidarity through a 'gezi spirit', these practices did not detach the space or the ways of struggle from the complexity of capitalist relationships of material exchange. However, during and after the defense of Gezi

Park in June 2013, alternative economies of production and consumption took part in the agenda of neighborhood forums. For example, exchange markets without monetary terms was widely organized by people that defined themselves as Gezi Park protestors.

These practices and imaginations in the Park were not independent from the discourses that promoted Istanbul as a global and/or cool city either. Derya Özkan (2015) also attracts attention to the handicaps of the affects asserting that the production of symbolic artifacts, images, and identities during the protests with reference to Gezi Park constituted a “Gezi Cool”. He (ibid, p.32) warns that the ‘cool’ imagination of resistance in Gezi Park contributed to the “Cool Istanbul” imaginations, however, differentiates this way of production of cool as an “affirmative political moment in which cool took on new meanings” from “those intended predominantly for capitalist profit and/or conformist ends” such as the representation of cool Istanbul on the cover of Newsweek in 2005. One of the souvenirs sold by street vendors in front of the Park during the first days of the protests, a scarf which read “*Çapulcuyuz ama havamız yerinde* / We are çapulcu but we are cool”, was significant for “Imaginations of Istanbul from Oriental to Cool City” project because of the direct reference to the coolness of resistance in a souvenir form. The slogan stroke against the insulting tone of the Prime Minister towards the protestors, but also attributed an attitude to the participants of the event to let the owners of the scarf identify themselves with the event, rather than the cause. Moreover, when I visited the book stores on Istiklal Street in August 2013, the Gezi Commune was already a popular story to be remembered through purchase; the best-seller shelves were already filled with catalogues, memoirs and observations on the Gezi Park protests.

Indeed, this resistance over commons bringing several social movements, and different oppositional perspectives together opened a new page for resistance. On 24th June 2014, during the 22nd LBGTTI Pride Week events in Istanbul, the role of Gezi Park in

urban oppositional politics was formulated in terms of the ‘contacts’ the protests provided. In this panel discussion in the French Cultural Center in Beyoğlu, Begün Özden Fırat remarked that the term contact is not yet discussed in literature as concept to define these political relations, and affirmed contact for defining the outcome of the Gezi Park protests instead of attributing ambitious titles to this event through an emotional response to the police violence¹⁰⁵. According to Fırat, rather than concentrating Gezi Park protests as an event, what matters for urban oppositional politics, is to continue with organized action learning from the experiences in the Gezi Park protests. Therefore, Fırat called for common sense to keep up with the political potential that rose with this process.

This contact via protests around Gezi Park indicates the possibilities of intersecting various political demands through the struggle over the commons. Although the protest movement was partially dissolved due to the police violence after a while, and the emphasis shifted towards an anti-government objective, the organized reclaim on the city continued in neighborhood/park forums on a local scale, and through the networking among the causes. After the Gezi Park event, in 2013, three buildings in Istanbul and one building in Ankara were squatted by protestors and were dedicated to the Gezi movement. These squats aimed for a communal action of resistance and struggle in neighborhoods, and for a space of interaction and visibility in the city. Hence, the uprising that was started against the enclosure of Gezi Park contributed to the search for imaginations of another city, another possibility in the city.

My purpose in discussing the Gezi park protests and using pictures from the protests is not to create enthusiasm through the representations of an event; but to attempt an anal-

¹⁰⁵Part of the speech can be found at Yıldız Tar, Kaos GL, ‘LGBTİ Onur Haftası’nda “Temas” Paneli Yapıldı’, 24 June 2014. Retrieved from <http://kaosgl.org/sayfa.php?id=16950>.

ysis of the period in terms of the production of space as a practice of collective resistance. The creative practices of commoning the Gezi Park allows a potential for the further contacts in terms of resistance. Through the contact, the space turned into a means of communication and visibility of antagonisms. The streets, the square and the facades and walls of buildings were filled with writing and symbols by protestors (Figure 38). However, this explosion of anger and excitement in the form of anonymous writing revealed also the conflict over the social hierarchies among the protestors. For instance, on 3rd June 2013 several feminists got organized to intervene in the sexist content and words written around the protest area. In several cases, instead of censoring the words or the content, they played on it highlighting or changing the sexist references.



Figure 35. Taksim Square, 10.06.2013

As part of the resistance practices, individual actions against the oppression and police violence defined the gezi spirit too. On 16th June 2013, a man walked fully naked on the emptied Istiklal Street on which a substantial part of the protests took place. On

17th, performance artist Erdem Gündüz stood motionless against the Atatürk Cultural Center building in the square. The police noticed him after a while and did not know what to do about this man who did not move, and didn't talk at all. Gündüz kept standing silent and motionless in that point of the square while several other people joined him one by one standing in the square. The protest was performed also in Ankara and in Izmir afterwards.

The TMMOB Chamber of Jeology Engineers (2013) reported this protest of Gündüz as an act of “civil disobedience”. However, civil disobedience is an act that rejects the legal obligations to change the governmental policies or laws (Rawls, 2001, p56). Hence, civil disobedience defines an illegal act by the law. The occupation in Gezi Park and the protest of Gündüz actually does not contain any illegal acts; thus, these are not aimed at challenging the law. On the contrary, the caterpillar had no legal permissions to intervene and the construction project in the park did not have legal status for implementation yet. The streets, the square, and the park were all public spaces in which people did not need any permission to stay, stand, and protest without violence according to the 34th Article of the constitutional law. This justification of the legally legitimate position of the protests was part of the ‘Gezi spirit’ together with the emphasis on non-violence. Therefore, the state needed to declare ‘state of exception’ to intervene in the park¹⁰⁶.

The tents in the park, and the protest of Gündüz were actually resistance against the biopolitics of the government targeted at human bodies, at the body of the population through police violence; misogynic, homophobic-transphobic and racist discourses; economic and spatial enclosures; regulations on consumption such as alcohol regulations or intervention during the fasting time Ramadan, etc. Actually, the enclosures created by these governmental policies were not simply the policies of one party, but gov-

¹⁰⁶The state of exception was declared later also on 31st May 2014 concerning the anniversary of Gezi Park protests, and on 1st May 2014.

ernmentality of a post-Fordist relationship between the state and the market supported by a conservative discourse that produces subjectivities. Following this discourse, other than the police officers that tried to challenge the act, a group of men performed the same standing act on the square on 18th June 2013 against the ‘Standing Man’ Gündüz for 45 minutes carrying t-shirts which read “The man who stands against the Standing Man”¹⁰⁷. Hence, the creative interpretation of the commons was not adopted by the ideas that claim enclosure of commons due to identities, etc., such as nationalism.

The tension between the state forces and the protestors, and the political potential that rose together with the Gezi protests, was carried out in spatial interactions after the park was evicted. On 27th August 2013, the stairs between the Cihangir and Fındıklı parts of the Beyoğlu district (Salıpazarı Yokuşu) were anonymously painted in colors of the rainbow (Figure 36). In social media this action was attributed to the LGBTTI movement. On the next day, the stairs were painted in grey by the City. However, it turned out that the stairs were painted by Hüseyin Çetinel, the shopkeeper from the shop at the corner of the stairs, since he wanted to make them look beautiful¹⁰⁸. In the meantime, the intervention of the City was responded by an opposition that called for painting stairs in other cities. In several cities, such as Diyarbakır and Ankara, several stairs and streets were painted in rainbow colors as a response, as well as several other stairs in Istanbul. Due to this growing movement, Ahmet Misbah Demircan, the Mayor of Beyoğlu, stated that such creative projects were welcomed by the City if they were submitted officially¹⁰⁹. Just like the call of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Council of

107 Duran Adama Karşı Duran Adama, Milliyet, 19.06.2013. Retrieved from <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-duran-adam-a-karsi-duran-adam-/gundem/detay/1725086/default.htm>. Last visited on 10.06.2015.

108 The story can be found at Huffingtonpost, 09.10.2013, The Heartwarming Story Behind Turkey's Rainbow Staircase, Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/10/turkey-rainbow-stairs_n_3895082.html

109 Merdiven boyamayı en iyi belediye biliyor!, Radikal. 31/08/2013. Retrieved from <http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/merdiven-boyamayi-en-iyi-belediye-biliyor-1148628>. Last visited on 10.06.2015.

Youth for street artists to work with official institutions to perform their ‘art’ in the city on legal terms, the colorful stairs would not have been antagonized by the Municipality if they did not challenge their authority. The state was ready to include any creative actions as long as they did not threaten the state authority, and added value to the space. Finally, the stairs in Fındıklı were painted back to the rainbow colors by the City.



Figure 36. The stairs in Fındıklı¹¹⁰ 27.08.2013.

Just like the ‘The man standing against the Standing Man’ act was, the movement of reclaiming the streets through painting the stairs was interpreted in form of a counter-protest by a nationalist group. The stairs in front of Agos Newspaper Building in Harbiye, Istanbul, was painted anonymously to maroon and blue, the color of Trabzonspor Football Club (Figure 37). The colors were significant because Hrant Dink, the editor in chief of Agos, was murdered at that point by a young Turkish nationalist who was from Trabzon. The trial about the murder revealed that the murder had further connections to nationalist groups in Trabzon. After the stairs were painted, on 11th September 2013, the Trabzon Club of Ideas (Trabzon Fikri Kulübü) a group from Trabzon, gave a press

¹¹⁰ Alpuğra Bahadır Gültekin, Fındıklı'da Merdivenler LGBT renklerine boyandı, 27/08/2013. Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/findiklida_merdivenler_lgbt_renklerine_boyandi-1148052, Last visited, 06.06.2015.

statement about these stairs condemning the murder of Hrant Dink and this act celebrating the association between Trabzon and his murder¹¹¹.



Figure 37. The stairs in front of the Office of Agos, painted in maroon and blue.
08.09.2013¹¹²

Alongside bringing a moment of visibility to the conflicts in space, the movement spread around Turkey, and made other conflicts among the protestors visible. For example, Medeni Yıldırım was murdered by the police during the demonstration against the additional construction of a police station while he was walking unarmed with the banner that read ‘We don’t want war anymore’. He was considered among the ‘Gezi Martyrs’ although it was not welcomed among the supporters movement that followed a nationalist discourse against the Kurdish community in Turkey.

Other than the direct physical violence through police forces, the government employed a discourse related to ethnical divisions and security to deal with the Gezi Park protests. For instance, on 11th June 2013, Hüseyin Avni Mutlu, the governor of Istanbul, declared that there will not be any police attacks on the park, but warned at the same time

¹¹¹ Trabzon Fikir Kulübü’nden anlamlı tepki, Agos, 11.09.2013. Retrieved from <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/5639/trabzon-fikir-kulubunden-anlamli-tepki>. Last visited on 10.06.2015.

¹¹² Retrieved from gazeteciler.com Last visited on 01.06.2015.

that the lives of people were not safe in the park. Although the threat of violence was based on police attacks in the park, the discourse of the government officials attributed the insecurity to the protests.

In the aftermath of the Gezi park protests, the social unrest turned visible on the streets through the opposition that united on cases, such as the death of 15 years old Berkin Elvan who was shot in the head with a gas grenade by the police during the Gezi Park protests; the death of 301 miners in Soma, because of the unsafe working conditions caused by the privatization of the sector through sub-contractors; the allegations of corruption involving Government officials, the involvement of the Government with the war in Syria, and violence of mega-projects such as the destruction of the forests for the construction of a third bridge on Bosphorus. The visibility of this opposition on the streets was growing as the violent tactics of the state forces did. Finally, the so-called Inland Security Package that brought fundamental changes in the Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations limited the rights on the streets. For example, the change in the Article 33/1-b of the law criminalized shouting slogans and hanging posters on the street, although the 34th Article of the Constitution Law of Turkey states that “[e]verybody has the right to organize unarmed and non-violent meetings and demonstrations without permission”.

On 1st April 2015, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu gave a press statement on the event in Istanbul at Çağlayan Justice Palace which ended up with the death of the Public Prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz and two people who kept him as hostage, because of the unsolved case of the murder of Berkin Elvan. In this speech, Davutoğlu mentioned on the one hand, that freedom would be protected, on the other hand that it will not be tolerated at all in case anybody “goes out” without permission through the changes in the Inland Security Law. In this discourse, the precautions for the sake of security as

extreme as banning the streets were justified as the guarantee of freedom, regardless of this oxymoron.

This discourse on security did not only repress oppositional acts through official regulations, but also reproduced divisions in society. Especially the statements of government officials revealed the imagination of the hegemonic identity. For instance, on 10th June 2011, in the joint broadcasting of NTV and Star TV, Prime Minister Erdoğan reproached that in some of the books written about him and about President of Republic Abdullah Gül, they were mentioned as “Jews, Armenians, Greeks”. Together with this discourse, expropriation and privatization of the minority properties continued, such as the sale of Kamp Armen, The Tuzla Armenian Orphanage that has been home to many Armenian children, as it was for the young Hrant Dink in the past. On 6th May 2015, bulldozers demolished the building partially until people gathered to defend the building.

In the article on the defence of Kamp Armen, Joris Leverink¹¹³ shows the slogan written on the banners “We didn’t give the park, and we won’t give our school!”, and quotes Özgür Atlagan, one of the activists that defended the park:

“We reacted so quickly because of the experience that we acquired during Gezi. Everything we do here, cooking, cleaning, organizing forums, they are the habits that we learned in the park.”

In defense of Kamp Armen, the reference to the practices in the Gezi Park protests affirms the potential of the contacts made through encounters during this period. Cases of solidarity like this defense of the Orphanage interprets the Gezi spirit through the antagonisms against the added value to the public properties urban commons through privatization, and against the construction of a nationalist discourse that aims at dividing the society.

¹¹³“The genocide continues”: Kamp Armen under threat. by Joris Leverink, June 3, 2015, Roarmag. Retrieved from <http://roarmag.org/2015/06/kamp-armen-turkey-istanbul/>

Moreover, the public-private collaboration for the privatization of commons does not only aim at the urban commons, but also the commons in rural areas, such as the rivers and villages under the threat of hydroelectric energy plant projects. Therefore, the struggle against violation of the commons needs to challenge the discursive division between the ‘urban’ and ‘nature’ too. The initial ecological reference in Gezi Protest that led to solidarity between the urban social movements and ecological movements indicate the connection of the different scales and geographies of commons.

5.2 *Mahalle* as an Urban Common

The aftermath of the Gezi Park protests introduced new self-organized solidarity organizations in neighborhoods not only in Istanbul, but to a wider range of urban spaces in Turkey. Throughout the summer and autumn of 2013 parks in several neighborhoods were defined with a reference to the local forum that gathers in the park to discuss the local agenda of resistance, such as the Abbasağa Forum in Abbasağa Park Beşiktaş. The Taksim Solidarity Platform formed as a consensus mechanism during the protests in Gezi Park continued to gather as forums in Gezi Park during this time. The former local organizations for resistance also took part in these local forums. Finally, some of these forums survived as local solidarity organizations, and revealed the local conflicts over space. For instance, in the squat in Kadıköy which was dedicated to the Gezi Park protests there have been debates over the use of the space such as accommodation at night for visitors, or for those who need a shelter for that moment. Although the squat was a commoning attempt, the conflicts related to the different political approaches were still awaiting for methods of discussing the reappropriation of the commons against the con-

ceptualization of it based on the law of property. Initially, another debate over how to name or refer to the squat in event invitations was solved in the weekly Forum discussion with reference to the ‘Gezi spirit’, according to the closing of this discussion, that allowed everybody to imagine the space in their own terms; so that the squat could be named in several different ways without a reference to any certain group, organization, or ‘ideology’.

However, the policies of the government towards the neighborhood scale of resistance continued with larger repression such as the Inland Security Package enacted in 2015¹¹⁴. After the Gezi uprising, urban transformation attempts by the government continued to target *mahalles* like the one in Okmeydanı, which is related to the Alevite identity and Marxist Leninist politics, both opposed by the government. In such cases, the employment of the discourse on identities is evident as a means for the practice of power of the government and market collaboration.

The approach of the governmental discourse to the Kurdish community in Tarlabası was similar to the case in Okmeydanı. The area was stigmatized through discourses based on marginality, criminality and terror. Nevertheless, the pilot urban transformation project in Tarlabası received a substantial amount of criticism and opposition in Tarlabası. However, other than the state-led gentrification plans, the attention to the area already brought gentrification in southern part of the area along the Tarlabası Boulevard. As Ceren Suntekin from Tarlabası Society Center explained during our interview (29 September 2013, TTM Office, Tarlabası, Istanbul) , even the activist attention to the area brings value, so that the land rents rise accordingly. Nevertheless, in 2015, the billboards shielding the urban transformation area were changed into new ones that specified the imaginations of the Tarlabası inhabitants in the project.

114 The law of these security reforms can be found at the official website of the Turkish Parliament: <http://web.tbmm.gov.tr/gelenkagitlar/metinler/354189.pdf>

These imaginations strived for justifying the project against the common criticism before the upcoming general election in June 2015. The billboards read “New Tarlabası is a renewal movement: New Tarlabası is a renewal movement in which nobody suffers including the tenants, and which is realized upon the common agreement of the stakeholders”. Although the billboard was just covering the living conditions of current and former inhabitants after the demolition, at the same time it was representing the image of a content Tarlabası inhabitant who somehow could afford the new costs of living in the area after the urban transformation (Figure 38).

Another part of the billboard employs the discourse of security and freedom, and compares “the new Tarlabası” to the former one in terms of the environment that enables these freedoms: “In new Tarlabası the streets will be safer and more vivid, children will be freer.”(Figure 39)

In Tarlabası, there are two organizations that focus on the matter of migration while approaching the social resistance: The Tarlabası Society Center in Zerdali Street was brought to the area as a project of the Bilgi University Migration Studies in 2006; and the Migrant Solidarity Kitchen in Sakız Ağacı Street is an initiative of the Migrant Solidarity Network since March 2012. Both organizations are concerned with the children in the area that suffer discrimination, poverty, and poor social, economic, and physical infrastructure in terms of their migration background. According to Ceren Suntekin of the Tarlabası Society Center, the displacement through urban transformation is the biggest threat for the children who already struggle with the consequences of migration. Moreover, the physical conditions of the construction works in the area and blockage of streets for this construction add further difficulties to the everyday life of the children who do not only play and spend time on the street for long hours, but from time to time work or sleep on the streets too. The billboards do not mention anything about ways to let the children already residing in Tarlabası benefit from

these new secure conditions. However, the following billboard gives a hint about the ways to bring this social transformation: “New Tarlabası will produce business and abundance for the shopkeepers; and employment for the youth.” This imagination of the space encourages people to take out a loan to benefit from these future opportunities of the New Tarlabası as an alternative of displacement.



Figure 38. ‘New Tarlabası is a renewal movement: New Tarlabası is a renewal movement in which nobody suffers including the tenants, and which is realized upon the common agreement of the stake holders.’ 28.03.2015



Figure 39. ‘In new Tarlabası the streets will be safer and more vivid, children will be freer.’ and ‘New Tarlabası will produce business and abundance for the shopkeepers; and employment for the youth.’ 28.03.2015.

However, the living conditions for the inhabitants in Tarlabası who face the threat of displacement due to the gentrification worsen as the demolition and construction works in the pilot urban transformation area continues. Moreover, after the Gezi Park protests which took place around Tarlabası, the police surveillance agglomerated around Tarlabası Police Station and Taksim square which are just few hundred meters away from the urban transformation area. The political and ethnical identities in the area are instrumentalized through a discourse of security, such as the attribution of ‘terrorism’ to the demonstrations in Tarlabası against the attack to Kobane in 7th, 8th and 9th of October 2014. Likewise, on 6th April 2013, in his speech for the celebration of the mass demolition of several urban transformation areas around Turkey, Erdoğan, as the Prime Minister of the time, explicitly mentioned this connection made through urban transformation between the discourse of terrorism and the inhabitants who suffer the conditions of the transformation: “On the one hand we struggled against terrorism decidedly, however, on the other hand, we struggled for drying out the spaces of abuse for terrorism and its swamps.”¹¹⁵,

Although Tarlabası is surrounded by the pressure of the urban rental market on the land prices, urban transformation plans, and the surveillance and repression of state forces, it still gives shelter to newcomers who are forced to struggle with the city both in economic and social terms, such as the migrants that escaped from the war in Syria receiving official ‘guest’ status in Turkey. Landlords of the properties on the northern and eastern side of Tarlabası prefer to rent out the small flats to a crowded group of people from

¹¹⁵ Translated by the author from Turkish. The speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBd9roU5Gf0>, last visited 10.06.2015.

Syria¹¹⁶, and share a higher rent for the flat, than the rent paid by single persons or small families. Hence, the rents rise; people from Syria are forced to survive under poor conditions while it becomes harder for other immigrants to afford the rents in the area. Although the conditions for survival have become poorer after the demolition for the urban transformation project, this area is still a refuge for those who have no access to social or economic capital to survive, just like after the pogroms (in 1955) and the demolition of part of the area after the construction of Tarlabası Boulevard in 1989 due to the depreciation. However, the renovation wave in the other end of the area signals the plot-based gentrification that narrows down the area for this refuge.

Although the slogan of ‘sharing life together’ promoted by the Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency affirmed the politics about minorities in Istanbul, the discourse of the government officials focused on an imagination of Turkish identity taking aim at the minorities. While the ethnical reforms of the first two periods of the AKP Government did not turn out to bring any rest to the society, the repressive nationalist identity politics continued to repress communities such as the Roma. The demands of the Roma movement, such as equal citizenship, do not challenge the national identity of the Turkish. However, attacks to the community such as the lynch attempt against the Roma community in Selendi on 5th January 2010 after which the community was exiled by the Governor of Manisa, and the march of a group of police officers shouting “how happy is he who says I’m a Turk” in *mahalles* where Roma people live in Keşan Edirne on 1st July 2015 reveal that national identity politics accompany the discourse of security, as is the case in Tarlabası.

¹¹⁶Sometimes several families come together to rent a flat since the rents are too high to be afforded by one family.

The discourse of the global city and openness position this conflict over national and ethnical identities within the criticism on international identity politics, such as Europeaness, and integration politics of multiculturalism, such as the cultural diversity and social inclusion discourses. However, the response of the people that reclaim their city through the protests challenges the discourses of integration with visibility through contact and conflict. These moments of contact in which the space is produced through the dialectical encounters refute the imagination of a conflict-free integration in society; and instead of integration, indicate the need for the rejection of dominance of any identities.

6 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I related the principles of culture-led regeneration, social inclusion and cultural diversity in European Capital of Culture program to urban development processes in Istanbul through an analysis of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC event focusing on the connections between identity politics, urban gentrification and resistance against enclosures of space. In my critique of the concept of openness that is emphasized and promoted by some of the members of the initiative group of the Istanbul 2010 ECoC candidacy process as a key concept against the “loss of the character of the city”, I questioned the concept in terms of the subjects of the city that it defines, and the imagination of the city that lies behind the suggestion of this concept.

What kind of social and economic relationships in the city were suggested as the subject to the openness? And to where and how should Istanbul be opened? In the discourse of these initiative group members, the search for openness against the urban transformation projects of the government stood for a vision that employed a persona for the city to produce the city for the taste of those who are not there yet, or for those who oppose the aesthetics and conservative politics of the government. What did the loss of this civic persona because of the urban transformation policies of the government stand for? According to Aksoy (2012), the social actors of openness was the citizens of Istanbul, while the “Achilles heel” of the civic democratic movement was the diversity in the city. In Aksoy’s call for openness of the city concerning about the civic persona of Istanbul, it was ambiguous whether the pogroms, poverty, exploitation of people in work place and in everyday life, the precarious conditions of the people in Istanbul in terms of housing and employment, and stigmatization of people due to migration backgrounds, ethnical origins and gender identity would be part of this persona. This concern lacked the analysis of relations between the local and the global; the everyday and the event.

To follow the construction of the identity of space in relation to the identity of communities, I didn't only analyse the ways the imagination serving to the gentrification is produced, but also the way that it is opposed and adopted by the communities or individuals from the communities. Organizer of Ahırkapı Hidrellez Festival after 2011 and the members of the civil initiative in Istanbul 2010 ECoC event address actors that represent power in the urban development processes as the subjects of their antagonism. For example, some of civil initiative members base their criticism on the conservatism of the government; Kumbara Sanat base their discourse of struggle against capitalism on the power of Armada Hotel in Ahırkapı. Likewise, a major part of the Gezi Park protests addressed merely the government responsible for bringing in the capitalist exploitation of urban commons. However, the power to oppose against the enclosures of the commons is immanent in the the relationships between these actors and the mechanisms of urban enclosures which continue in form of space branding and stigmatization of ethnic minorities in Tarlabası and Ahırkapı. The culture ascribed to the local context alienates the subjects of the cultural identity from each other and from the rest of the society. This ascription of culture and tradition for the sake of the discourses of social inclusion and cultural diversity blends in the gentrification processes adding a value to space in terms of authenticity.

An important part of the struggle over the urban commons appears to be opposing the production of hegemonic knowledge and producing the knowledge of resistance. Representation of Tarlabası as an unsafe area because of its inhabitants was instilled through the biopolitics based on the marginalization of identities. Several research studies, reports and media representations about the area supported the urban transformation project in terms of its social and physical goals. Moreover, the government kept stigmatizing the inhabitants through a discourse of security, and personified the space detaching it from the people that were part of the space, employing their identities both

in the discourse of ‘sharing life together’ and in the discourse that attributes the poor living condition to the responsibility of inhabitants themselves.

The relations of event organizers, photographers and artists in Tarlabası Street art festival to Tarlabası was based on their concern for the prestige of their work in the market. Approaches to space through the value of its authenticity or its reputation that makes it attractive for the audience culminated in exploitation of conditions of poverty; a value extracted from affective relations to space; and the consolidation of the existing power hierarchies in the production of space. Likewise, the festival that was allegedly organized as an attempt for reclaiming the ‘culture’ and urban space against the capitalist powers didn’t challenge the imaginations of urban gentrification process. Ahırkapı Hıdırellez Festival was already a project of the Hotel in the neighborhood to brand the area through the authenticity ascribed to it based on a discourse of Roma culture and traditions. However, without a critical assessment of this discourse, the festival organization after 2011 reclaims the space in connection with a fictional culture that is nothing, but the imagination produced by the powers that are allegedly opposed through this event.

The case of Gezi Park reminds us that the affective attachment to a cause and space strengthens the collective resistance for the defense of urban commons. However, the strife for relating oneself to the space by means of individual experience and/or ties to justify the involvement with the commons lacks the consideration of the politics of these personal relations in terms of the social hierarchies. Likewise, the personification of space in discourse detaches the space from its social context that is connected to the contested politics of everyday life in the communities.

Rather than reclaiming the street in terms of access to the urban space or due to its cognitive functions, I followed an ethnographical approach to space as a social context that produces and is produced by the everyday life encounters and practices, biopolitics and

imaginations. Finally, as a result of my critical investigation on the production of urban space in Istanbul, I intend to open up further discussions on commoning the city instead of planning the city within the existing power relationships.

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