# Contested Public Spaces vs. Conquered Public Spaces. Gentrification and its Reflections on Urban Public Space in Istanbul*

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Like its global counterparts, Istanbul has experienced gentrification processes in the last three decades. Observed to be scattered in particular areas of late-nineteenth century foreigners' neighborhoods, gentrification in Istanbul can be seen as a process whereby global shifts interact with local characteristics to produce a new spatial structure (Uzun 2001). As its process and outcomes vary from one city to another, gentrification marks important social and spatial changes in inner city neighborhoods, whereby not only the demographic, residential, and tenure characteristics, but also the social life in public spaces transform significantly. The role and place of public spaces in the process of gentrification are not a typical subject of analysis, yet public spaces – a residual and silent category – are victimized by stringent control and privatization, so that openness and accessibility, as main qualities of the public space, can be lost forever. This article takes a unique view of gentrification by conceiving public spaces as social constructs, i.e. describing the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict, and control. Additionally, the article will explore the everyday uses of public space in two of Istanbul's gentrified neighborhoods, Cihangir and Galata. By analyzing the everyday activities and spatial practices of old and new residents, public and private actors and institutions, this article advocates an alternative

perspective on gentrification process and a new understanding of the intersections between a city and its citizens.

Affecting mainly the historic/inner city districts, which are either abandoned industrial sites or deteriorated housing units, the term »gentrification« originally referred to the process of invasion of London's working class neighborhoods by the middle class; the transformation of the »modest mews and cottages« to »eloquent, expensive residences« initiated a process of displacement and a complete change of social character within some districts (Glass 1964 cited in Engels 1999: 1473). Most gentrification literature deals with understanding the origins and motives of this radical transformation of urban space. On the one hand, Smith (1979, 1996) characterizes gentrification by the concept of rent gap, which represents the difference between ground rent under present land use and potential rent under a more profitable use. Thus, gentrification is more a movement of capital than of people (Smith 1979). On the other hand, Ley (1996) puts more emphasis on the economic, demographic and cultural preferences of the gentrifiers and advocates the significance of cultural and lifestyle values of a new urban middle class, namely the gentrifiers, who admire historic conservation, urbanity, and cosmopolitanism. Likewise, Zukin (1995) claims that gentrification creates social space or habitus on the basis of cultural capital, as gentrifiers are motivated by an appreciation for aesthetics and history. In addition to economic preferences, which are based on a comparison of inner city and suburban housing in reference to the costs of commuting to work places and services, changes in the demographic structure of Western societies, i.e. increasing number of single or unmarried, childless, small family units among professional and managerial groups have accelerated the process, coupled with increasing number of professional and managerial jobs in the inner city. Rather recently, class analysis has incorporated an understanding of gentrification processes (Bridge 2001, Podmore 1998). Approached as a class strategy, gentrification is considered a new form of distinction, whereby a new middle class habitus is manifested spatially in the gentrified neighborhoods. In other words, gentrification is regarded as a strategy of distinction for an emerging middle class.

In urban studies literature, the displacement of economically marginal and working class by households of a high economic status as well as the refurbishment and revaluation of previously devalued housing, and change of tenure types signify a process which drastically transforms the face, composition and ambiance of inner city neighborhoods. Due to the boutique retailing, elite consumption, and high accessibility, attraction and allure have turned the public space in gentrified neighbor-

hoods into a rewarding economic asset. Intense emplacement of leisure-oriented developments in the gentrified urban areas, with an emphasis on high levels of protection and privatization, accelerates the loosening of public space from its original roots as well as alienation from public life and public experience in the city. In that sense, gentrification contributes largely to »the narrative of loss« or »the end of public space« (Sennett 1977, Sorkin 1992). Moreover, as Bickford (2000) states, racial and class segregation caused by gentrification significantly affects the public space. Displacement of marginal and working class citizens raises concerns over a »degraded right to the city« (Mitchell 2003).

In contrast to the vast literature on the emergence of gentrification, very little work has addressed the place of public spaces in this process. While some public spaces are redeveloped and privatized as part of renovation and upgrading of inner-city districts (Zukin 1995), they also become the object of a branding strategy for ever-expanding leisure and commerce development in central urban areas. The French Street in Istanbul is the foremost example of this intervention not only in terms of privatization and thematic marketing of public space, but also with regard to so-called »place-making« with public space refurbishment and name changes. Coupled with architectural and urban qualities, these new leisure and commerce infrastructures are subsumed to be the catalysts in attracting potential gentrifiers. By and large, as a process of spatial and social transformation which generally occurs in the historic city centers, gentrification brings a series of dualities in urban structure. On the one hand, a manifold struggle in the claiming of public space is observed in articulations of different actors and corporate agents' practices. On the other hand, with the arrival of new residents, the patterns of use, appropriation, and experience of public spaces – as an important part of residential atmosphere – change. Whether the public space becomes exclusive or embraces the different practices of public and private actors, institutions, and urban residents, it inevitably becomes a significant constituent in the gentrification process.

## Gentrified public space

In order to depict the role and place of public spaces in gentrification processes, this article employs a socially grounded approach to public space. In this perspective, the public space is considered a social construct which embodies a variety of social and spatial practices, contesting and conflicting interests and actions, identity displays and struggles. This view enables a multivalent representation of space, as Lefebvre

(1991) conceptualizes it; being active, porous, and inseparable from experience. In that sense, he connects the formation of subjects to space by gestures of occupation that are constitutive of both self and space (Liggett 2003). To Lefebvre (1991), the social construction of space involves constructing the rhythms of everyday life and (re)producing the social relations that frame it. Moreover, the social construction of space acts as a key process in conjunction with the concept of the »right to the city«. According to Lefebvre (2002), the right to the city is the right to urban life, »place of encounter, priority if use value, inscription in space of a time promoted to the rank of supreme resource among all resources« (p. 374). Accommodation of the right to the city in gentrification processes is particularly important. As Harvey (2003) points out, Lefebvre's concept is »not merely a right to access what already exists [in the city], but a right to change it after our heart's desire«. This view provides a significant framework in analyzing public space in gentrification processes. This way, different, conflicting, contesting hegemonic and hidden social constructions of public spaces by the old and new residents (as well as public and private actors and agencies) can be explored.

To start with, »representations of space« refer to the conceived space, i.e. the manner in which space is conceived of in a society by those who participate in the creation of the dominant discourses via control over symbolic characteristics, such as signs and codes, as well as spatial knowledge. As a strident critic of the domination of urban development by representations of space, Lefebvre warns that planning and the related design professions formulate and implement decisions about space without maintaining contact with existing spatial practices (Liggett 2003). Representations of space are not based on the everyday life in the city; instead, they operate on an abstract plane of professional codes. Secondly, »spatial practices« are both the medium and the outcome of individuals' activities, behavior, and experience in everyday life on a routine daily basis. Spatial practices involve activities, interactions, and perceptions, as well as changes in the everyday relationships with the built environment. »Actions are evaluated based (in part) on where they occur, and places are evaluated in part through the actions which are carried out there.« (Creswell 1999 cited in Modan 2007) Spatial practices can be congruent with or challenge representations of space, yet they persist. The overall spatial practices that people perform and evaluate in and about a particular space also sets the norm for societal assumptions about that place (Modan 2007), so that appropriateness can be defined and established with the mediation of cultural and social meanings, codes, and symbols. Lastly, »representational spaces« or »spaces of representation« function as a symbolic link to the participa-

tion in the production of meaning. In other words, it calls for the shared experience and interpretation of peoples' everyday spatial practices, where making space is very much a way of making meaning. »People not only live their space through its associated images and symbols, they actively construct its meaning through cognitive and hermeneutical processes« (Lefebvre 1991: 39). Elucidating not only the ways in which space shapes social life and vice versa, but also, and more importantly, the ways in which power operates through spatial structures, Lefebvre's framework provides a valuable insight to analyze the relations between space in use and identity in process. For the purposes of this article, the analysis of spatial practices has a revelatory importance. This analysis shows that different spatial practices, i.e. different patterns of use or appropriation of public spaces reflect different, sometimes contested and conflicted, constructions and possibilities/restrictions of further appropriation of public spaces.

## Spatial practices in gentrified public spaces

Spatial practices in public spaces are closely related to users' own definitions, conceptions, and meanings, the contextual nature of one's sense of one's place and others' place. This proposition is akin to Bourdieu's relational view of the practice;

»›I act because of who I am‹, not because of a rational interest or set of learned values. As a body and a biological individual, I am in the way that things are, situated in a place; I occupy a position in physical space and social space. I am not *atopos*, placeless.« (Bourdieu 2000: 131)

He defines topos, or place, as the site an agent »takes« place or exists, briefly, as a localization, or relationally as a position. In exploring the interdependence of human agency and social structure, Bourdieu defines a sense of one's place, an embodied sense of place, as the habitus, a system of dispositions to a certain practice. It refers to the »embodiment of individual actors of systems of social norms, understandings and patterns of behavior« (Painter 2000 cited in Hillier and Rooksby 2005: 21). Bourdieu (2000) introduces habitus as the mediating link between objective social structures and individual action. In this perspective, the analysis of spatial practices not only exposes contested and conflicted constructions of public space, but at the same time reveals the spatiality of different habitus. Analyzing spatial practices enables us to detect the appropriation of everyday public space; in this case, both old and new

inhabitants' and users' use and conception of public spaces. How do old and new inhabitants use and experience public spaces? In which ways do these public spaces function in their everyday lives? While the inhabitants appropriate public spaces, how do they conceptualize them and which social processes are influential?

Throughout this article, spatial practices are discussed in relation to the deciphering of their social spaces, spaces where their everyday social relationships are formed. These practices also reflect the forms of belonging to the space, an important ingredient for claiming the right to the city. These forms of belonging, such as avoidance and participation, withdrawal and placement, are articulated in the relational construction of public spaces, in which boundaries of use and appropriation are continuously constructed, negotiated, re-constructed, and expressed. Gentrification calls consequentially for privatization of public space, yet it is not the intention of this paper to (re)argue the issue of privatization of public space with all of its actors and processes in the neighborhoods. Nonetheless, privatization is reflected both by representations of space – the hegemonic discourse of the planners, developers, etc. – and the everyday spatial practices of inhabitants.

## Gentrification in Istanbul

This study was designed on the basis of diagnostic studies by Uzun (2001), Islam (2005), and Ergun (2004) on gentrification processes in Istanbul. Gentrification in Istanbul has, to a certain extent, followed a pattern similar to examples in other cities. Nevertheless, it is closely related to Turkey's experience with urban growth and change (Uzun 2001). On the one hand, the rise of new, environmentally-conscious, and community-oriented lifestyles, changing habitat preferences, and their close relationship with the urban heritage, and on the other hand economic proliferation after the 1980s have influenced the process in Istanbul. To İslam (2005), gentrification processes in Istanbul can be grouped into three successive waves in different parts of the city and successive time periods, each with different magnitudes and motives. The first and second wave have common characteristics, such as individual renovation of the housing units, whether late-nineteenth and early twentieth century two-or-three storey terrace houses along the coast of Bosporus in Kuzguncuk, Arnavutköy, and Ortaköy or nineteenth century apartments of Cihangir and Galata with close proximity to the cultural and leisure activities in Taksim and Beyoğlu. The third wave, however, can be observed in the Fener and Balat neighborhoods of the Historical Peninsula

and is mainly led by the interventions of national and international institutions. Due to their location and activities, demographic, cultural, and architectural characteristics, this study focuses on Cihangir and Galata, second wave gentrification areas, as the prevalent cases of residential gentrification processes in Istanbul. Each neighborhood represents different spatial practices regarding both gentrification and public space. Though a residential collective action can be described in both neighborhoods, Galata also represents gentrification by capital – an intense development effort by large stakeholders taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the dilapidated central city. It should also be noted that while the gentrification processes in these neighborhoods have lost their pace in the last years, the embers are still glowing.

Cihangir and Galata are located in Beyoğlu, one of the most distinctive residential, commercial, and leisure areas of Istanbul with its unique architectural, demographic and social qualities. Up until today, Beyoğlu stands as an example of cosmopolitanism, a mixture of all culture and ethnicities, and a symbolic birth place of the social and civil codes and norms of Westernized Turkish Society. Developed mainly in the nineteenth century, Beyoğlu housed mixed population groups; in the late nineteenth century, when half of the population consisted of foreigners, only 21,8% Muslim and 32% non-Muslim Ottomans lived in the Beyoğlu-Tophane area (Shaw 1979). Coupled with the district's commercial and leisure activities, this population composition enabled extensive exchange and interaction between different cultural and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the population composition changed drastically due to political, social, and economic processes, especially after WWII, the foundation of Israel and the events of the sixth and seventh of September in 1955. Most of the foreigners and non-Muslim inhabitants either migrated to their home countries or left the neighborhood and moved to the peripheral locations. Most of the houses changed tenants and/or became empty and – coupled with the rapid influx of migration from rural areas – squatted by the Turkish migrants from Anatolia. As a result, in the 1970s and early 1980s, Beyoğlu became a slum area.

From the beginning, the name Beyoğlu has been synonymous to the Westernization movement, as well as the first urban planning guided development in the late Ottoman period[1]. The housing stock represents a

1 The Sixth District, composed of the neighborhoods of Beyoğlu; Galata, Pera and Tophane, was the first municipal organization in the late Ottoman period. The Sixth District realized many important urban projects to modernize urban living in Istanbul: preparation of the first cadastral maps, enlargement of streets, lighting and paving the streets, opening up of new directions, construction of water and sewage systems, etc. The reconstruc-

peculiar architectural style, not resembling other parts of Istanbul. To Güvenç (2006), this distinct architectural style of the neighborhood is the rationale behind the gentrification processes in Istanbul. Therefore, the presence of unique housing stock in Cihangir and Galata, where restrictions on deed title registrations for exchange played an important role for preservation even as the neighborhood was in decay, paved the way to gentrification. As the influence of the economic restructuring process of the 1980s resulting from globalization unfolded in Istanbul, gentrification processes flourished in the neighborhoods of Beyoğlu: Asmalımescit, Cihangir, and Galata all experienced gentrification in varying scales, actors, competence, performance, and strength.

Since this study aims at exploring various spatial practices related to the use and appropriation of public space in gentrified neighborhoods, a contextual and exploratory analytical perspective, qualitative research methodology, is employed. It should be noted that this chapter reflects the study in progress. The empirical data on which this chapter is based consisted of observations and participatory observations and was conducted in spring and autumn 2006, and later in late spring 2007. It should be mentioned that due to the iterative In addition, visual and written documents from neighborhood organizations and municipal institutions, digital archives of two national newspapers, »Radikal« and »Hürriyet«, and weekly and monthly magazines of »Tempo« and »Istanbul« were investigated. It should be mentioned that due to the iterative nature of the research, emerging additional questions and unfolding new connections and developments have made their way into the analytic strategy as developing case studies.

## Cihangir: Public space as community area and collective place

In conjunction with the late 1980's economic and spatial transformation in the city at large and in Beyoğlu in particular, Cihangir, with its favorable topography – located on the slope of a hill with the panorama of entrance of the Bosporus and the Historic Peninsula – and proximity to the center, came into high demand as a residential neighborhood (Uzun 2001). Because of the unique nostalgic ambiance of the historical build-

tion of neighborhoods and urban structure went hand in hand with the works of The Sixth District. Built mainly in the 19th century, the housing stock in Beyoğlu is comprised of apartments, hotels, and commercial buildings with their peculiar architecture. They were the first examples of such urban development in Turkish cities.

ings and the neighborhood, artists, academics, and writers had a specific interest in living in Cihangir. Beginning in the 1990s the area became more popular and the population started to change rapidly leading to gentrification (ibid). Beginning with the individual renovation of apartments, artists and architects pioneered the neighborhood of Cihangir. However, in the following years, young professionals and investors have also become attracted to the area. Today, as there are no more empty plots in the neighborhood for the construction of new apartment houses and since the neighborhood can not expand due to its location, the old apartment houses are gaining more importance and value. To real-estate experts, the neighborhood is very profitable for investment: owners may gain a premium of up to and over a hundred percent, which is more than the average for Istanbul (Elmas 1999 cited in Uzun 2001). There are several newly build apartment houses on Akarsu Street, which has become the most commercialized street of the neighborhood as services such as cafes, pubs, and restaurants have gone up in demand among visitors.

*Figure 1and 2: Akarsu Street and Havyar Street*[2]

The individual gentrifiers, pioneers in Cihangir were interested not only in the physical upgrading of the buildings that they renovated, but also in the improvement of the social and cultural environment. Though the renovation activities were individual and it was not possible to observe common activities in the neighborhood regarding the transformation of the entire area, social and cultural improvement has been accelerated due to more organized communal activities since the establishment of the Cihangir Beautification Foundation in 1995. The members of the organization were mostly architects and professionals, i.e. the new residents of the neighborhood. In the beginning, as their name suggests, activities were mainly directed toward the rehabilitation and reconstruction

2 All photographs in this text are taken by the author.

of Cihangir, as well as the revival of the area's old identity and historic value. Therefore, the first activities were designed to secure the order and neatness of the streets and open areas. To realize the vision of restoration of the neighborhood's old image, a group of pioneers launched a project called »Integrating streets into the urban design and the life of the city starting at Havyar Street[3]«. Rebirth of the neighborhood was achieved by institutionalized beautification: maintaining order for car parking, garbage, and advertisements. The facades of the apartment houses were painted up to the first story. Additional help came from the security department, the district municipality, and the Historical Foundation (Uzun 2001: 113). In addition to the redecoration of the streets, the neighborhood park that was once demolished to create a parking lot was re-constructed as a park again. Conceived as a social space, the park has provided a setting for all Cihangir residents to come together not only during the holidays and childrens' activities, but also as an everyday hang-out and gossip place.

Creation of communal places for community participation was the main motive for Cihangir gentrifiers. Because of the amorphous, individual-driven character of the gentrification process, creation of public space as the community area and collective place was expected for the formation of a new community, whereby neighborhood social ties can only be established and traditional community/neighborhood alliances can only be achieved through a shared space. A recent activity designed for children aims at integrating the children of Cihangir from a common value of *Cihangirlilik*[4] pride and raising awareness of their living environment[5]. This is an attempt to bring together the new and old residents of Cihangir and building common values of belonging to the neighborhood. In that sense, these activities also aim at realizing a distinction, developing a habitus based on living in a specific locale or habitat.

While the first-comers, the pioneers, have an affection for and commitment to the neighborhood and urban life, particularly after some refurbishment of the housing stock, the second wave of gentrifiers, referred to as the followers, have been attracted to Cihangir mainly for the prestige and social distinction established by the pioneers. The pioneers

3 Havyar Street is the street where gentrification process is considered to have begun, with the purchase of an apartment house in 1993 by an artist couple, who favored proximity to workplace and cultural activities in the centre (Uzun 2001).

4 Cihangirlilik means belonging and feeling attached to Cihangir.

5 Children of Cihangir Project comprises of 30 children selected from three primary schools within the neighborhood borders, plus 12 children who live in the neighborhood but attend schools in another neighborhood.

have to a certain degree collaborated with the neighborhood's marginal groups, among which the only homosexual agglomeration in Istanbul can be found. However, with the second group, safety concerns have been more pronounced and forced displacement has even taken place. Today, the neighborhood experiences a new flux of residents and visitors, to whom living in a small flat, chatting with the grocery, looking at passersby – eventually a writer, photographer, painter, or an artist would show up – while sitting in as sidewalk café, or just being around in the so-called »Republic of Cihangir« is a distinction.

## Galata: Privatized public space vs. shared space

Galata, an old Genoese Quarter located on the north shore of the Golden Horn, has been the trade center of Istanbul since the thirteenth century. Due to the shift of administrative and finance affairs to the new Capital city of Ankara in 1923, Galata was affected sharply by the transformations in the inner city after this period and became a dilapidated area following the 1970's. Gentrification in Galata, like in Cihangir, began in the late 1980's. Nevertheless only a small part of the district has been gentrified while most of the building stock is still in a deteriorated condition.[6] The gentrification processes in Galata and Cihangir are comparable, in the sense that they had started at the same time and had similar actors as individual gentrifiers. Like in Cihangir, but at a comparatively small scale, gentrification began with the arrival of the artists and architects, who bought and mostly rented architecturally distinct but dilapidated properties with high ceilings, which were very appropriate for them to use as studios. However, in the course of the following years, gentrification in Galata has gained a new momentum (Islam/Enlil 2006).

6 Gentrification in Galata was not as much of a boom as it was in Cihangir. The majority of residents are still migrants (Islam 2002). Until the mid 1990's, together with the art sector members, a few other professionals moved to the area for residential purposes, but the real influx of gentrifiers occurred only after 1995. According to Islam (2002), only 17.3 percent of the gentrifiers moved to the area before 1995 while most moved in after 1995 (60.8 percent) Architects and journalists, forming 42 percent of the gentrifiers respectively, were the key actors in the process probably because they were more aware of the neighborhood's historic value. On the other hand, people holding managerial positions were still not interested in moving to the area, one indicator showing that the process was still proceeding at the initial level after almost 15 years since the first signs of gentrification were seen.

Instead of individual gentrifiers, this new phase of gentrification is directed by private large-scale investment companies, who seek to make greater investments, such as purchasing a few buildings along one street and then renovating them primarily for commercial uses (boutique hotels, restaurants, private clubs, etc.) rather than residential purposes. Besides the change in scale of gentrification from individual units to groups of buildings, the local and central government become more involved in the process of allowing[7] regeneration projects. These initiatives put more pressure on the already heated real estate market. In turn, many pioneers have moved out of the neighborhood.

Similar to Cihangir, Galata has its own neighborhood organization since 1994. Galata Association was also established by a group of architects and professionals to do away with dilapidation in the physical, cultural and social environment and work on the rehabilitation and redevelopment of Galata in cooperation with other public and private actors and agencies. They define »consuming the space« as the main reason for dilapidation:

»[…] those who squatted the vacant houses or found a place to live here (in Galata) had no intention to keep their living place, the neighborhood well, they destroyed it habitually. Because there is no sense of responsibility, no sense of belonging, it is just use, destroy, meanwhile raise the economic position a little and use the neighborhood as a springboard and move to another neighborhood. We recognize the fact that there should be a sense of belonging, we should live here, we sleep and wake up here.« (E. Avdel, member of Galata Association in Behar/Islam 2006: 160)

*Figure 3 and 4: Gentrification in Galata*

7 To this date, there are six projects with international partners declared in and around Galata.

Though the association rejects the idea that they long for the old Galata as a lost paradise, they have a sound interest in an urban renaissance in Galata, which is mainly concerned with urban design improvements. In addition, the association aims for social improvement in the neighborhood: »by improvement we mean that the existing residents would gain new skills, positive values, they also would understand being an urbanite« (ebd.). In order to raise the sense of belonging and attract attention to the salvation of Galata, the association organized an annual festival beginning in 1989, and with the year 2001, these festivals changed to have a more international focus.

Due to the rural background of immigrant residents, a special social atmosphere in Galata has been identified by İslam and Enlil (2006) as a village, comparable to Gans' (1982) description of Italian Americans in Boston's West End as »urban villagers«. The urban villager is almost a reverse position of an urbanite. An urban village is described by Lofland (1973) as a neighborhood, »a home territory writ large« (Lofland 1973: 132). As ethnicity and *hemşehrilik*[8] act as catalyzers for the formation of urban villages, limited spatial mobility, homogenous peer groups, and confinement to the neighborhood for daily chores provide the social context. Though urban villages are supportive for the new immigrants in the urban area, this conception has significant influence upon the use and appropriation of public spaces. For those who want to keep their traditions and customs, the urban villages are the perfect places to continue the habitual-traditional social environment. The patriarchal lines continue and the newcomers or offspring are not alienated from traditional values and norms, which are represented, continued, and strengthened by the elderly. Ethnic networks, especially kin-related ones, which originally functioned as support mechanisms, prevent offspring from testing alternative life-styles in the urban context and perpetuate the traditional norms of gender interaction. In that sense, the urban village has its »own« traditions, customs and values, sometimes quite distinct from the one that immigrants brought with them.

Since the open spaces for social interaction are limited in Galata, some pioneers used their property as a place to meet with the residents of the neighborhood. »Oda Projesi« is worth mention not only because a group of artists created a multi-purpose meeting place together with other artists, children, and all people in the neighborhood, a public ground, but more importantly because »Oda Projesi« stemmed from everyday banal

8 *Hemşehrilik* is a concept that implies a tie presumed to exist between people from the same village, town, province, and in some cases, the same region. The direct English translation is »same-townsmanship«.

and routine spatial practices of Galata's residents and was based on the experience of the participants. Conceptualized as an artist collective, a place for informal and spontaneous artist meetings, it became an experiential space: a communal space for the neighbors in the apartment, stairs, corridors, and other parts of the apartment as well as an exhibition space for video installations, a performance arena for amateur music groups, and a playground for neighborhood children. Besides the apartment, the courtyard, surrounding streets, and the small square nearby were also enacted in other projects of »Oda Projesi«.

In contrast to projects developed gradually by old and new residents and based upon their spatial experiences, large-scale commercial activities have started to be injected in Galata. Galata is an attractive location for these projects largely due to its relatively central location in Beyoğlu, and proximity to Istiklal Street, the main pedestrian street with approximately 50.000 users per hour. Beginning with the French Street, the refurbishment of a highly dilapidated building in a street and adjacent alleys into a commercial area with a variety of sidewalk cafes and restaurants with a French ambiance, a persistent development of simulation and thematization of public space has begun. Thus, public space has become a contested space, torn between two gentrifying groups: pioneers vs. large stakeholders. Investors are backed by local authorities, who see the salvation of the area in terms of tourist-industry investments, and favor thematized, commercial gentrification. Thus, while pioneers and followers offer opportunities for people to explore urban activities and identities and create shared spaces, as well as grounds to flourish, commercial gentrification tends to prescribe the spatial structure, placing people solely as passive consumers, as well as social spacing and interaction patterns.

*Figure 5 and 6: Non-gentrified streets of Galata*

Gentrification redefines activities and places. Though the actual activities, such as a group of women sitting on the entrance of the apartment

drinking tea and gossiping, do not change, they should not seem foreign to the activity of sidewalk café visitors. Yet, the context is different, and there are reserved, prescribed zones of acceptable activities. Since the public/private relationship in the street has changed, the former may be considered an inappropriate activity. With the new activities and places defined due to the nature of the new activities, the traditions of boundaries and activities of public/private relationships, such as gathering in the entrance with neighbors, children playing in the street, watching the street for control, are abandoned. The relatively slow replacement process of residential uses and high potential for public/private enterprise with high profit expectations paved the way for Galata in terms of commercial and tourist-oriented gentrification. Because of the scattered commercial enclaves, the area resembles an archipelago of security zones. Not only the use and appropriation patterns are changing. With the abrupt injection of new activities, the long established public-private continuum of spheres and activities in the urban space perishes.

## What's next?

Public spaces are important parts of the city for framing a vision of social life in the city: a vision both for those who live in the city and interact in public spaces every day, a meeting place and social staging ground. Diversity and difference are represented in the public spaces with the variety of rhythms and patterns of use, as public spaces are occupied at different times by different groups. In that sense, public spaces are the only arenas in the city where conflicting groups and even countercultures, which compete with each other in the urban environment, are co-present at the same time. This co-presence is not passive, even if it might seem so. There is a constant struggle for use and appropriation, whereby different actors and interests are at stake and boundaries of exclusion and inclusion are continuously constructed, negotiated, reconstructed, and enacted. On the other hand, gentrification is a process of socio-spatial transformation, profoundly changing patterns of use, appropriation and social life in the public space. Nevertheless, public space is hardly investigated as an important constituent of the process, yet alone as a consequence. More empirically grounded research is needed to investigate the role that public space plays in the process of gentrification as well as the potentials of public space in future transformations. Further work can explore the compelling question of how new social relations, identities, and practices emerge in the broader framework of gentrification processes. Strategies and tactics in changing practices, the

habits of use and appropriation of space, the place of habitat and social relations therein for both the potential displaced and replaced need to be examined instead of just dismissing them as the »other«.

The case studies of Galata and Cihangir as two examples of gentrified neighborhoods of Istanbul reveal how public spaces mediate between social and spatial changes and various public and private actors and institutions, and communicate between old and new land-uses and residents. In some instances, public space acts as a potential binding field, facilitating interaction and offering a ground for public activities in a way that at least visibility – seeing and being seen – and »exchange« in Hajer and Reijndorp's (2001) sense of the word, are accommodated. Visibility on the one hand enables stereotypical categorizations: we are migrants, poor, religious, etc. and they are not: on the other hand, visibility offers citizens a chance to inform themselves about each other, i.e. various inhabitants of the city who had lived for a long time without any contact have a chance of active or passive interaction. In addition, public space articulates social and spatial fragmentation; such as marking territories of »us« and »them«; of »new, clean, tidy, neat« and »old wild, messy«, various styles of identification with space, and forms of making sense of place.

Gentrification, by definition, presumes privatization and exclusion, however, even in smaller degrees, as the case studies of Galata and Cihangir present, various community actions and activities enhance the public life and the sharing of public space. Approaching gentrification as a relational process rather than demonizing it, encompassing its multiple territories, actors, and processes, offers valuable perspectives and a new understanding of changing social and spatial practices. This way, we can learn to recognize and mobilize the potentials of public spaces where new forms of social life and identity formations are enacted. Concentration of highly privatized public spaces, as in the case of leisure developments in Galata, creates contested spaces so that competing groups, in this case gentrification pioneers and commercial enterprises strengthen and legitimize themselves by adopting new spatial practices, organizing festivals, art displays, thematic uses, etc. The problem is especially grave for marginal, vulnerable groups and alternative cultures, which have no or limited claim on or access to public space. Recognizing the role and place of public spaces in gentrification processes with all their varieties and differences of scales, actors, contexts, and competences supports policymakers and planners in assuring inclusive and equitable practices that secure the rights to the city, the right to flourish in urban space.

When approached from a relational perspective, the gentrification process and the place of public space in gentrified or gentrifying neighborhoods is worthy of study not only in terms of observing the different effects of gentrification on urban space, but also gaining an understanding of the different attitudes, conceptions, and interpretations of public space among different social, cultural, and ethnic groups. Recognizing a relational understanding of gentrification fosters the possibility of »nuanced planning practices« (Shaw 2005), which can contribute greatly to the diversity of uses and meanings in the city.

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