

**TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY AND POSSIBILITIES OF ARTISTIC
EXPRESSION: THE ISTANBUL CASE**

&

TUMULUS

By

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences
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Abstract

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Serkan Taycan

MA Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

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Keywords: art, transformation of the city, urban transformation, built environment, Istanbul, Turkey, photography, periphery, walking, public space, squares

The city, with the advent of Modernism, and the medium- and small-scale components that form the city – which we will here refer to as the built environment – began to display an exponentially accelerating transformation. Although this transformation, at first sight and in a more general analysis, is subject to negative criticism; it also presents artists with new means of expression, which would not have been possible or conceivable in the earlier stages of Modernism, or at any other stage in the history of the city. This thesis will examine the transformation of the modern city in terms of the dynamics of historical processes and the physical environment. Within the context of the city of Istanbul, which forms the focal point of this work, this transformation will be tracked within a broader framework that goes as far back as the reform – or decline – period of the Ottoman Empire [1839-], but will select its examples mainly from the post-Republican era [1923-]. At the next step, the work will go on to analyse how the myriad and diverse transformations of the city are perceived and processed in the field of art – itself in constant struggle with a series of issues related to tradition, ‘the new’, locality, inter/transnationality - via various media and methods. A trilogy of my works [Shell, Between Two Seas, and Agora] will form the main trajectory of this analysis, which will be illustrated with both local and international works I have sensed a kinship with.

Özet

KENTİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ VE SANATSAL İFADE OLANAKLARI: İSTANBUL
ÖRNEĞİ

TÜMÜLÜS

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Anahtar kelimeler: Sanat, Kentin dönüşümü, kentsel dönüşüm, yapılı çevre, İstanbul, Türkiye, fotoğraf, periferi, yürüyüş, kamusal alan, meydanlar

Modernizmin başlangıcıyla kent ve yapılı çevre gittikçe hızlanan bir dönüşüm içerisine girdi. Bu dönüşüm ilk bakışta ve genel analizde negatif bir eleştirinin nesnesi olsa da, aynı zamanda sanatçılara sosyal ve fiziksel alanda, Modernizm'in daha önceki aşamalarında, veya şehrin özgül tarihinin herhangi bir noktasında mümkün olmayan yeni ifade biçimleri yarattı. Bu tez modern kentin dönüşümünü tarihsel sürecin ve fiziksel çevrenin dönüşüm dinamikleri açısından inceleyecektir. Bu dönüşümün izleri, tez çalışmanın odak noktasını oluşturan İstanbul şehri bağlamında sürülecek, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun reform –veya çöküş- yıllarına [1839-] kadar götürülecek, ancak asıl örneklerini Cumhuriyet sonrası [1923-] İstanbul'undan verecektir. Bir sonraki aşamada, şehrin bu sayısız ve çeşitli dönüşümünün kendisi de gelenek, 'yeni', yerellik, uluslararasılık/üstülük gibi bir dizi meseleyle çeşitli araç ve yöntemlerle sürekli bir hesaplaşma içerisinde bulunan sanat alanında nasıl algılandığına ve işlendiğine bakılacaktır. Bu analizin ana izleğini ürettiğim Tümülüs üçlemesi [Kabuk, İki Deniz Arası, ve Agora] oluşturacak, bu izlek yakınlık duyduğum yerel ve evrensel çalışmalarla desteklenecektir.

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INTRODUCTION

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY AND THE *URBAN MILLENNIUM* [as guiding concept]

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire.

David Harvey - The right to the city

The twenty-first century will quite probably witness an urban hegemony in an unprecedented manner. In 2007, for the first time in human history, the population living in cities surpassed rural population. This led to the introduction of the concept of the 'urban millennium'. The United Nations (UN) projects that world population will expand from 6.1 billion to 7.8 billion between 2000 and 2025—90 percent of this growth will occur in urban areas of less developed countries. By 2020, a majority of the population of less developed countries will live in urban areas.¹

On the other hand, cities display tremendous diversity, formed of a mix of their multilayered history and their current physical and social infra/super-structure. In addition to this, the massive advance in communication technologies brings closer, and connects these cities in previously unimaginable intensity. This, however, should not overshadow the numerous burning issues these [mega-hyper-...] cities face. The increase in population means the age-old problems of capitalism have taken on an even more inflated dimension: Shelter, unemployment, the lack of a qualified workforce, access to health and educational services, migration... the list is immediately recognizable, but

¹ United Nations, "World Urbanization Prospects: the 1999 Revision"
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/pubsarchive/urbanization/urbanization.pdf5> (accessed August 07, 2014).

evidently does not receive equal attention as the more politically exploitable issues of expansion and profitability. As the demand for democracy and the public space raises its voice, urban dwellers have increasingly taken matters into their own hands. Urban uprisings spontaneously emerging in various cities across the world – from Wall Street to Istanbul-, which are highly aware of and in solidarity with each other, bear witness to this dissident aspect, which is an inseparable part of the transformation of today's city.

CHAPTER 1.

GENERAL HISTORY OF THE CITY THROUGH THE AGES

A city is a;

*"Point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community."*² Lewis Mumford

*"Concentrations of many people located close together for residential and productive purposes."*³ Kingsley Davis

*"Relatively large dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogenous individuals."*⁴ Louis Wirth

*"...a relatively permanent and highly organized centre of population, of greater size or importance than a town or village."*⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica

a. Pre-modern times

Humankind achieved a degree of sedentary life during the Neolithic period, but for perhaps 5000 years the settlements throughout this period were more likely semi-permanent peasant villages. They were semi-permanent because, when the soil had been exhausted by the relatively primitive methods of

² Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (Orlando: Mariner, 1970), 03.

³ Kingsley Davis, "Cities: Their Origin, Growth and Human Impact" (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973), 01

⁴ Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life" *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jul., 1938), pp. 1-24, accessed August 01, 2014, URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768119>

⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "city", accessed August 07, 2014,<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/118952/city>.

cultivation, the entire village was usually compelled to pick up and move to another location.

Around 3500-5000 BC technological developments made it possible for humankind to live in urban places. These developments were at first mainly advances in agriculture. The improved methods of cultivation and stockbreeding eventually produced a surplus, making it possible to sustain a higher population density. Some members of the community acquired greater wealth and a more differentiated set of tasks and lifestyles, creating the necessity for an administrative system that would complement the family and the clan structure, providing the basis of social organization.

As human settlements increased in size, and irrigation and cultivation progressed; the need for transporting both goods and people became essential. With the domestication of animals, humankind used animals for transportation as well as hide and a food source - thus making it possible to travel great distances. The invention of the wheel, around 3500 BC in the land in and around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, required roads.

The first recognizable cities had emerged by approximately 3500 BC in the Nile valley and in Mesopotamia, which formed the area known as the Fertile Crescent. They first became significant as places of trade and governance. As the earliest urban populations, they were distinguished by literacy, technological progress (notably in metallurgy), and increasingly sophisticated forms of social and political organization.

It was in the Greek city-state, or *polis*, that the city idea reached its peak. The *polis* emerged as a small self-governing community of citizens. For citizens, the city and its laws constituted a moral order symbolized in an acropolis, magnificent buildings, and public assemblies. The Romans, heirs to the Hellenistic world, transplanted the city into the technologically underdeveloped areas beyond the Alps inhabited by pastoral-agricultural Celtic and Germanic peoples.

From the 9th to 12th century, contacts with rich Byzantine and Islamic areas in the Levant had revitalized the mercantile power in Venice to develop into a city-state. Its command of the profitable route to the Holy Land during the crusades brought wealth to the city.

As the settled parts of the world grew in Europe, urban areas and cities became a feature of the landscape. Over time, they grew from small settlements for trade and fortification into grander political, economic and cultural centres. Many cities were city-states and, as such, wielded considerable economic and political power in the centuries before nation-states became the dominant geopolitical entities.⁶

Because of the absolutism in the early modern ages, centralization of the power economy and belief, large-scale projects could be realized. With the centralization of power, economy and belief it help the individuals to target their energies to a common end.

b. Modern times

The major transformation, that created the most rapid shift in patterns of settlement from the country to the city, was the rise, in the nineteenth century, of the modern industrial city. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ushered in the modern world where manufacturing production was the driving force of societies. It made possible to sustain denser concentrations of people. The first factories, and the industrialization of agriculture meant accelerated migration to cities, mostly around industrial facilities. Migration led to increasing problems of shelter and health in cities. Population increased, and perhaps for the first time in history, a visible, and potentially permanent damage caused to the natural environment became both a factual and practical issue.

In the 20th century, the development of transport technology allowed for settlement in less-populated and less-polluted suburbs. Yet this would create further problems of urban traffic, and more pollution created by motorized vehicles. In time, mass housing projects developed in the vicinity of the city were deemed not to be ideal social solutions. As trade and industry also moved away from the city centre, unemployment rates in the centre increased. Governments resorted to what we today recognize as the processes of gentrification, which amounted to the redesign and renovation of city centres.

⁶ David C. Thorns, *The Transformation of Cities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 03

David Harvey explains this event in his article on 'The right to the city' through the instrumentalization by capitalism of urban space in order to absorb the unstoppable accumulation of surplus production.⁷ (Harvey 2004)

He supports his argument with two examples from world history. In the 1840s Napoleon III appointed Georges-Eugene Haussmann to carry out a massive redesign of Paris, so that the over accumulation of capitalist surplus could be absorbed. This would both liquefy resources and create job opportunities that would contribute to the prevention of social uprisings. The intense renovation activity turned the centre of Paris into a massive construction site. The old city texture was almost completely renewed, and new, wide boulevards were built. This transformation, completed over a fifteen-year period, also changed the nature of urban life, and a new city and urban identity emerged. Paris became 'a city of lights', a great centre of consumption, tourism and entertainment. However, this financial system eventually collapsed, social disquiet spread, leading to the Paris Commune.

A similar process took place in the United States after World War II, in the second half of the 1940s. Robert Moses led a grand redesign of New York, building new motorways and infrastructure, which led to an acceleration in suburbanization, which in turn pioneered the spreading of a way of life that revolved around the automobile. However, these drastic interventions also triggered the process that eventually culminated in the civil rights movement of 1968.

David Harvey's perspective also provides us with many clues to understand the events that have taken place in Istanbul in the last few decades. Unbridled neoliberal policies applied to the Istanbul cityscape has caused increasing disquiet in Istanbul, leading to the emergence of a spectrum of dissident movements demanding civil rights, and most recently, the Gezi resistance.

⁷ David Harvey, "The Right to the City" *New Left Review* 53, September-October 2008

CHAPTER 2.

ISTANBUL, THE HISTORY OF ITS MODERNIZATION

For the last 2000 years Istanbul has been a world city. Situated between two continents, Europe and Asia, it has a highly important strategic and geographical position. It has served in succession as the capital of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Today it may no longer be the government seat of Turkey but it remains Turkey's largest city and its cultural and commercial capital; with over 14 million inhabitants, Istanbul is a megacity and the 5th largest city in the world.⁸

In the early 19th century, in the face of both land loss and economic decline, a series of reform movements started under Ottoman rule; and Istanbul has since undergone a substantial period of modernisation that has spanned more than 150 years. İlhan Tekeli outlines the metropolis' enduring development, characterising Istanbul's transformation into a modern city into four distinct periods. It is a story that bridges the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the reconstruction of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state, with the initial demise of the city in favour of Ankara; and continues with Istanbul regaining its status as a world city; as it has evolved from an industrial city to an urban region and global centre.⁹

⁸ Wikipedia, " List of cities proper by population " http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_proper_by_population (accessed August 07, 2014).

⁹ İlhan Tekeli, " The Story of Istanbul's Modernisation," *Architectural Design* 80 (2010): 32–39, accessed August 07, 2014, doi: 10.1002/ad.1007.

2.a Ottoman period post-Reformation

The expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the lands of which spanned a vast area across three continents at its pinnacle in the 16th century, entered a period of stagnation mostly because of the rise of modernity and industrialization in the West. The Empire had arrived at a crossroads: Would it dissolve into smaller states, or undergo a centralised modernisation? Sultan Mahmud II chose to modernize the empire.

The change took two main routes, the modernization of the central government and the initiation of large-scale infrastructure projects that would help integrate Ottoman economy into the capitalist world system. Ottoman economy opened up to the international market after signing the English Trade Agreement in 1838. The proclamation of the Gülhane Decree (Tanzimat Fermanı) is considered the starting point of the modernization of the Empire.

Changes in Istanbul influenced by these governmental implementations became apparent during the 1860s. Modern business districts started to take shape around the old markets. Banks, insurance companies and hotels started to open. New train lines, harbours, ports and post offices were built.

Another improvement was the development of inner-city public transportation. Tramlines, ferries and suburban train lines changed the way of transportation in the city, which previously was based on pedestrian transport. Settlement areas began to be distinguished by ethnicity and social class. This was the starting point of Istanbul's suburbanization.

The first urban planning attempts started in Istanbul around the 1850's, and the traditional city pattern began to change. Countless fires opened new plots to be planned, but they were just partial site plans rather than a master plan.

The city first expanded from Galata to Beyoğlu, and spread alongside main transportation lines (trams, rail and sea) in parallel with the rise of the urban population.

Istanbul's population had grown to 329,000 at 1829. By 1864 it had risen to 600,000, in 1877 it was 720,000, in 1885 it stood at 873,000, in 1897 1,059,000, in 1901 1,013,466, and in 1914 1,200,000.

2.b. Republican period

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the main motivation of the new ruling class was to form a new, strong nation. The process of radical Modernity that followed developed on two different levels: first, it focused on the transformation of the country into a nation-state; second, cities were to become places of modernity. Ankara, declared capital in 1923, became the centre of this new project. The next aim was the construction of railway networks to integrate the domestic market into smaller scale Anatolian cities, to be developed within the framework of the government's industrialisation policy.

These developments were not to the disadvantage of Istanbul. The city's population in 1923 had decreased to half the figure in 1914. The large-scale, and often forced migration of its non-Muslim population harmed the city's Istanbul cosmopolitan identity, a process that continues to some degree today.

The need to rethink the urban plan of Istanbul emerged. Léon-Henri Prost, the French architect and town planner was officially invited to design the Istanbul master plan. New apartment blocks were built around the newly opened Atatürk Boulevard and the surrounding areas of Taksim, Harbiye, Maçka, Nişantaşı and Şişli. The open countryside between Kadıkoy and Pendik turned into residential areas with the development of the neighbourhoods of Kızıltoprak, Göztepe, Erenköy, Bostancı, Maltepe and Suadiye.

When Turkey accepted a multiparty political regime after the Second World War the implementation of the modernist project accompanied by a social engineering program was heavily distorted by populist tendencies.

As happened during the industrial revolution before in UK, the transition of traditional agriculture to new technologies accelerated the disintegration of a large rural peasant class of farm labourers. Large number of migrants moved to the cities after extensive investment in the service and manufacturing industries, which provided new job opportunities. Turkey's capital accumulation was not ready for the required large-scale investment in housing and infrastructure. Rural migrants were also not ready to integrate into modern city life because of their general levels of education.

The population of Istanbul rose from 938.000 in 1950 to 1.476.000 in 1960, to 2.849.000 in 1970 and to 4.643.000 in 1980.

The construction of the Bosphorus Bridge and the connecting freeways in 1973, and the new industrial arrangement within the urban fabric identified the distribution of housing at that time. They not only connected Asia and Europe but also radically changed the way the various parts of the city were connected. The small and medium industrial facilities moved out of the ancient city walls around the arc between Eyüp and Zeytinburnu. The business district of Istanbul, which was located in the north of the Golden Horn, in the Taksim-Şişli area, expanded to and beyond Mecidiyeköy.

Small developers began to demolish existing buildings to replace them with apartment blocks. Modernization was thus emerging as a result of destruction rather than conservation.

2.c. Contemporary period, post-1980

The story of Istanbul took a dramatic turn after 1980. Turkey began to increasingly follow neo-liberal policies, and Istanbul changed from a city of the industrial age into a city of the information age, with an emphasis on international finance, services and increasing digitalization. Following the collapse of the socialist bloc in 1989 and the transformation of eastern European economies, new possibilities emerged for Istanbul and once again it seized the opportunity to become a world city. This change required vast improvements within the municipality and its approach to management. Over the last decade an increasing number of regeneration projects have been initiated. Illegal, or in view of how they were often officially overlooked, semi-legal *gecekondu* areas, the shanty towns similar to the Brazilian *favelas*, became the target of urban expansion and regeneration as witnessed most distinctly in Sulukule, Ayazma and Tarlabası. Older, more established neighbourhoods such as Kuzguncuk, Cihangir and Sultanahmet also became subject to continuing gentrification projects. In these gentrification processes, art itself plays an important role. As artists search for affordable spaces, and galleries and art spaces follow them, a new interest regarding these neighbourhoods is created. Such dynamics may accelerate the gentrification process.

In the 2000s, the neoliberal policies implemented by the ruling Justice and Development Party, the city became a veritable real estate market exploited by the wealthy elite with close and candid ties to both domestic and national government, as life in the city became increasingly unstable and precarious for masses living under more fragile social and economic conditions as the population of the city approached 15 million.¹⁰

On the other hand, large-scale projects such as Kanal Istanbul, 3. Airport and the new Istanbul Highway were announced. These projects were not decided upon by public debate, but were imposed by top down policies. Such antidemocratic implementations no doubt have a significant impact on the emergence of a mass of citizens who have no say in the change and transformation the city undergoes, and have been politically pacified.

¹⁰ Özlem Ünsal, "(Yıkılarak) Yeniden Kurulan Kent: 2000'li Yılların İstanbul'u", Betonart, Winter 2011

CHAPTER 3.

CASE STUDIES: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY AND ART

The TUMULUS Trilogy

In this section, I will describe and delineate the conceptual framework of three interrelated works in which I have attempted to develop an artistic grammar of the transformation of the city and its inhabitants.

The TUMULUS Trilogy:

The word tumulus was first used in its current meaning in 1727, and derives from the Latin *tumulosus*, meaning "full of hills," which in turn derives from the word *tumulus*, meaning "hill, mound, heap of earth".¹¹

I used the Tumulus allegory in the title of the trilogy to emphasize two aspects: The first is Istanbul the city itself, which has witnessed the layering of countless civilisations throughout history, and especially in the most recent period, a series of comprehensive demolitions. The layering referred to in this context indicates not only a physical but also cultural process, triggering simultaneously both construction and demolition to varying extents. The second involves the trilogy itself; my three projects overlap, intersect and form a matrix that both attempt to ascribe meaning to and criticize the aforementioned cultural layering.

¹¹ Online Etymology Dictionary,
http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=tumulous&allowed_in_frame=0,
(accessed August 07, 2014)

Tumulus is a trilogy that aims to form a new narrative by appropriating different media such as photography, text and the act of walking, and follows a trajectory from the outskirts of the city towards the centre, exploring the periphery of the city with *Shell*, then progressing through semi-rural areas targeted by development towards a minor early suburban centre with *Between Two Seas* and moving in on the city squares with *Agora*, thus tracing the expansion of the city in a reverse direction, and examining the cause and effects of the phenomenon of urbanization via an order of chronological transformation by directly involving the spatial experience of the viewer in the process. From a personal viewpoint, *Tumulus* is about how I became a *citizen* of Istanbul, and helped me confront, evaluate and develop ideas on my relationship with Istanbul, and examine how I realize myself in the urban space.

This work, which spans the period from 2010 to 2014, is formed of the three stages mentioned above:

1- Shell

2- Between Two Seas

3- Agora

3.a. Shell > Alteration of the Peripheral Landscape by Human Hand/Human Mechanic Process



Figure 1: Serkan Taycan, Shell # 13, Ağaçlı, 2012

The rural–urban fringe, also known as the outskirts or the urban hinterland, can be described as the "landscape interface between town and country" or also as the transition zone where urban and rural uses mix and often clash.¹²

The accelerated transformation of urban space in the modern age led to the emergence of new settlements around the city. Factories and industrial facilities grew with increasing industrial production, and they found more suitable spaces for their purpose outside of the city. Developing housing for workers closer to industrial facilities increased labour productivity. These zones that formed a transitory zone between the city and rural areas witnessed the construction of the first settlements that would cater for the housing needs of the new migrants.

¹² Wikipedia, "Rural–urban fringe"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rural%E2%80%93urban_fringe (accessed August 01, 2014)

Access to the peripheries of cities was made easier by the construction of new motorways as the role of the automobile in everyday life increased. The middle class displayed a preference to life on the periphery of the city since the city centre became a more condensed zone with aging infrastructure. The periphery offered housing more suitable to the 'new life' ideal of modernism.

Construction development along the periphery of Istanbul as a result of industrialization

In the context of Istanbul, urbanization began with the increase in rail and ferry services. In lands outside the city walls, and villages along the Bosphorus, which previously were home to a more rural way of life, saw the establishment of factories, followed by the development of residential settlements. The first examples of such expansion was witnessed around the Golden Horn, in Zeytinburnu and along the shores of the Bosphorus. The inability of administrations which had no clear urban policy also led to 'informal' settlement solutions, known in the context of Turkey as 'gecekondu'. Pardons issued by every new government to such technically illegal settlements with an aim to increase their voter basis served as an indirect incentive. Çağlar Keyder explains that Istanbul, with a rate of 50% 'illegal housing' is the leading city among third world countries.¹³ Eventually, such settlements increased rapidly in peripheral neighbourhoods such as Mecidiyekoy, Maltepe, Ümraniye, Halkalı, Gaziosmanpaşa where the new migrants settled.

Large neighbourhoods were established around transportation axes following infrastructure work such as new bridges and motorways carried out in the 1980s; these neighbourhoods would later acquire district status. Local administrative law was also constantly and superficially modified, allowing these settlements to grow with little or no control.

Construction gained further momentum with the new ruling party, the Justice and Development Party setting itself the goal of transforming Istanbul into the financial centre of its region. TOKI, the Housing Development Administration

¹³ Çağlar Keyder, " Enformel Konut Piyasasından Küresel Konut Piyasasına," in İstanbul Küresel ile Yerel Arasında, ed. Çağlar Keyder (Istanbul: Metis yayınları, 1999) 171.

of Turkey, equipped with comprehensive, overarching powers that allowed it almost no accountability, and 'operating as developer, manager, contractor and inspector at one and the same time'¹⁴ became the main actor and defined the character of this period. The mass housing projects of TOKI built around cities, segregated social classes and eliminated the meeting points provided by public spaces and intercity interaction, which undoubtedly will cause even grimmer outcomes in the future.

As land on which large-scale construction projects could be developed ran scarce within the city, existing, developed areas were targeted and capitalist development now focused on neighbourhoods where the impoverished classes lived. The inhabitants of neighbourhoods such as Sulukule and Tarlabası, among the oldest in the city, often with hundreds of years of history, were either officially forced out, or surrendered to new financial pressures to abandon their homes. The new urban classes employed mostly in the services sector began to settle in the new residential tower blocks, and the gentrification of these neighbourhoods placed them at the mercy of capital.

Mass housing and shopping centres developed on public land often through highly suspect bureaucratic processes transformed the city into an open construction site. Luxury housing estates began to rise in suburbs like Kemerburgaz. With their own private security, these gated communities resemble palaces cut off from the city.

This transformation of the city is not unique to Istanbul, it is a global phenomenon that has been documented and interpreted by many photographers across the world. Sze Tsung Leong has photographed the dramatic urban transformation in China, the disappearance of traditional neighbourhoods and the rise of new construction sites.¹⁵ The Dutch photographer Bas Princen's series titled *Refuge*, highlights the acute growing pains of Middle East boomtowns old and new, and the cities of the Middle East

¹⁴ Banu Tomruk, "Medium-Scale Anatolian Cities: Conceptual and Physical Routes of Urban Transformation," *Architectural Design* 80 (2010): 46-51, accessed August 07, 2014, doi: 10.1002/ad.1009.

¹⁵ "History Images," Steidl, <http://www.steidl.de/flycms/en/Books/History-Images/0310164957.html> (accessed August 07, 2014).

including Istanbul, Beirut, Amman, Cairo and Dubai.¹⁶ Alexander Gronsky explores the suburbs between Moscow and the countryside that surrounds it, showing picnickers eating beside heavy industry, sunbathers lying next to construction sites, and people strolling past piles of urban detritus.¹⁷ Such examples from areas with different histories and cultural backgrounds display the global nature of problems created by urbanization.

Shell

Shell, as a project, began with my increasing curiosity about the transformation taking place along the urban periphery of Istanbul. These were places where brutal images of this transformation were visible. I started to walk around these areas and take photographs with an open mind, in order to carry out a loose form of research.

I took photographs in areas that can be categorized in three main groups:

- 1- **Zones between the city and rural areas:** In the beginning I was always outside of the city. This, in a sense, also resembled my position/location/relation with the city in terms of my personal history. A while later, I felt that it wasn't me approaching the city, but the city was coming towards me, and the country. So I began to gradually enter the urban texture.

¹⁶ "Bas Princen: Refuge: Five Cities," The L Magazine, <http://www.thelmagazine.com/newyork/bas-princen-refuge-five-cities/Event?oid=1686745> (accessed August 07, 2014).

¹⁷ Genevieve Fussell, "Russian Pastoral," New Yorker, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/russian-pastoral> (accessed August 07, 2014).



Figure 2: Serkan Taycan, Shell # 01, Küçükçekmece, 2012

- 2- Mass housing sites and gated communities: At this stage, I took photographs at various mass housing sites on both the European and Asian sides of Istanbul. These included both large-scale projects like Başakşehir [1995] and Kayaşehir [2011-] developed by TOKİ, and residential mass housing projects like Ataşehir [1993-]. The mass housing estate built in the Kayabaşı area in the north of the city close to the Olympic Stadium by TOKİ is the largest satellite city of Istanbul with a 65 thousand people capacity. Satellite cities, isolated both from their environment and the centre of the city, display a violent intervention carried out by human hand and paint a troublesome picture of the possible future.



Figure 3: Serkan Taycan, Kabuk # 03, Kayaşehir, 2012



Figure 4: Serkan Taycan, Shell # 20, Başakşehir, 2012

- 3- At the end of this stage, I took photographs at Bosphorus City where the construction craze assumes its most absurd state. This mass housing project, built on what was used as the Old Halkalı Landfill Site until 1994, is the most radical example of change in the built environment. In the centre of the estate, there is a large artificial waterway, which supposedly resembles the Bosphorus, from which the project takes its name. The waterside mansions along the waterway, an extension of this imitation of the Bosphorus, present a grotesque/ectopic appearance.



Figure 5: Serkan Taycan, Shell # 05, Bosphorus City - Halkalı, 2012

- 4- Quarries – Excavation Waste Disposal Areas: There are stone quarries in the Habipler district, close to the Gazi neighbourhood, which are both the largest in Istanbul, and the closest to the city centre. As the city grows, these quarries expand too. These areas, spreading like cancer cells, and bear an uncanny resemblance to Boticello’s Inferno.

The terminal destination of Istanbul’s construction waste, at the end of the construction and demolition circulation in the city, is the disposal sites in the north of the city. These pits are old lignite mines, used for this purpose since the early 20th century. They completely lost their function as the city began to use natural gas, and have been solely used for the disposal of construction debris from foundation excavations. This catastrophic state, where time, space and dimension meld, forms a Tumulus, in a sense like Istanbul itself, formed of one layer being piled upon another.



Figure 6: Serkan Taycan, Shell # 06, Sultangazi, 2012



Figure 7: Serkan Taycan, *Shell # 21, Ağaçlı*, 2012

Other artists have also explored and appropriated the transformation of excavation sites and mine pits as their subject matter.

The work titled *Asphalt Rundown*, by Robert Smithson, a project realized in Rome in 1969, was Smithson's first work described as a 'flow'. The work is situated in an abandoned and mundane section of a gravel and dirt quarry in Rome. A large dump-truck released a load of asphalt down a gutted and gullied cliff already marked by time. Smithson's flow works, in Nancy Holt's words, are 'entropy made visible'.¹⁸



Figure 8: Robert Smithson, *Asphalt Rundown*, 1969

¹⁸ <http://www.robertsmithson.com/films/txt/rundown.html> (accessed August 07, 2014).

Naoya Hatakeyama's series titled *Blast* is formed of photographs of explosions in an open-cast limestone mine. It is a combination of harmonious photographic compositions displaying the violently destructive power of dynamite. For Hatakeyama, who has created works that carefully and poetically examine nature, the cities that we have built, and the philosophies that give them form, the photographing of "Blast," which is coordinated with an explosives expert who accurately predicts where the shrapnel from the blasted boulders will fly, allows him to re-examine photography's appeal and the foundations of its technology.¹⁹



Figure 9: Naoya Hatakeyama, *Blast*, #5707, 1996

Edward Burtynsky is a Canadian photographer/artist whose works involve landscapes altered by mankind. Nature transformed through industry, sweeping views of landscapes altered by industry, such as mine tailings, quarries, scrap piles, recycling yards, refineries, highways form a predominant theme of his work. In his words, "These images are meant as metaphors to the dilemma of our modern existence; they search for a dialogue between attraction and repulsion, seduction and fear. We are drawn by desire - a chance at good

¹⁹ <http://www.takaishiigallery.com/en/archives/10231/> (accessed August 07, 2014).

living, yet we are consciously or unconsciously aware that the world is suffering for our success. Our dependence on nature to provide the materials for our consumption and our concern for the health of our planet sets us into an uneasy contradiction. For me, these images function as reflecting pools of our times.”²⁰



Figure 10: Edward Burtynsky, *Highway #1 Los Angeles, California, USA, 2003*

Mustafa Pancar, in his canvas painting titled *Hafriyat*, which also lent its name to the highly influential art collective, underlines, at a relatively early stage of Istanbul’s neo-liberal transformation, the transformation of the landscape by human hand.

²⁰ http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/site_contents/About/introAbout.html (accessed August 08, 2014)



Figure 11: Mustafa Pancar, Hafriyat, t.ii.y.b. 1996, 145x200cm

Another significant work I would like to mention about the transformation of Istanbul's urban texture is 'Million Dollar View' by the Nar Photos²¹ photo collective. The photographers of the collective documented neighbourhoods along the periphery of Istanbul in the period from January 2012 to March 2013. The photographers aimed to reveal the real scenery that lies behind stereotypical images with a photojournalistic approach. In their photographs the contrast and contradictions of the transformation of the urban land, and not only the physical, but humanistic and social impact is strongly visible.

²¹ Nar Photos is an independent collective established in 2003 by photographers for whom documentary photography is a visual tool of "understanding and expressing" the world.

"Nar Photos," <http://www.narphotos.net/Story/Thumbnail/million-dollar-view-urban-transformation/112/> (accessed september 04, 2014).



Figure 12: Saner Şen, Nar Photos, Million Dollar View, 2012

On the other hand, the transformation of urban land has also become a subject of video games. The best known example is perhaps SimCity, an open-ended city-building computer and console video game series. In SimCity, the player is given the task of founding and developing a city, or ‘simulating’ a city, while maintaining the happiness of its citizens and keeping a stable budget.

At a later stage, when I began editing and selecting images, I discovered two interlaced narratives in the series.

The first narrative, along a geographical line that progresses from the periphery towards the centre, looks at and produces a record of the newly emerging mass housing estates, and their relationship with the existing built environment.

The second narrative chronologically outlines the process of construction from areas that have not yet been exposed to construction towards intensely developed mass housing areas.

Another important and related issue is ecological change, a significant outcome of the transformation of the city.

Shell seeks to present, both as a series, and in individual photographs, all three spheres of transformation.

The places that I photographed for *Shell*:

European side – From north to south

- Abandoned lignite mines around the Ağaçlı village in the Eyüp District
- Sultangazi District – Cebeci Neighbourhood – Stone Quarries
- Kayabaşı – Kayakent Mass Housing Estate
- Başakşehir Mass Housing Estate
- Halkalı Mass Housing Estate, Bosphorus City Estate
- Başakşehir – Ispartakule Mass Housing Estate
- Küçükçekmece Lake Basin
- Maslak – Ayazağa village

Anatolian side – From north to south

- Ataşehir Mass Housing Estate
- Maltepe Başibüyük Mass Housing Estate

Exhibition Techniques

The *Shell* series was exhibited in December 2012 at Elipsis Gallery in Istanbul and at the Helsinki Photography Biennial in 2014.

Considering this the most suitable method for an emphasis on landscape, I planned the photographs in the series as diptychs, triptychs and quadriptychs. The panoramic photograph has been used extensively before to represent Istanbul, since as a technique it lends itself well to the topography of the city. The panorama engravings of Antoine Ignace Melling, produced in the early 19th century, and the late 19th century photographs of Robertson and Abdullah Frères are among the most renowned.



Figure 13: Sebah & Joaillier, Panorama de Constantinople, pris de La Tour de Galata, [188-?]



Figure 14: : Sebah & Joaillier, Panorama de Constantinople, pris de La Tour de Galata (detail) , [188-?]



Figure 15: 'Tophane', engraving from Antoine Melling's *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore* (1819)

Yet the panoramas in Shell are different from previously produced Istanbul panoramas in that they do not seek to capture a perfect panorama. Different frames do not combine to form a perfect panorama, the same scene is repeated to overlap in the next frame and thus the landscape is represented in all its inconsistencies. Finally, in one frame compiled from three different parts of the city, a hybrid panorama which does not correspond to a real scene is produced.

These panoramas, produced along the periphery of the city, underline the fact that it is no longer possible to define the city only with its historical areas. They are, in a sense, a proposal responding to what the panorama of this fragmentary new Istanbul could look like.

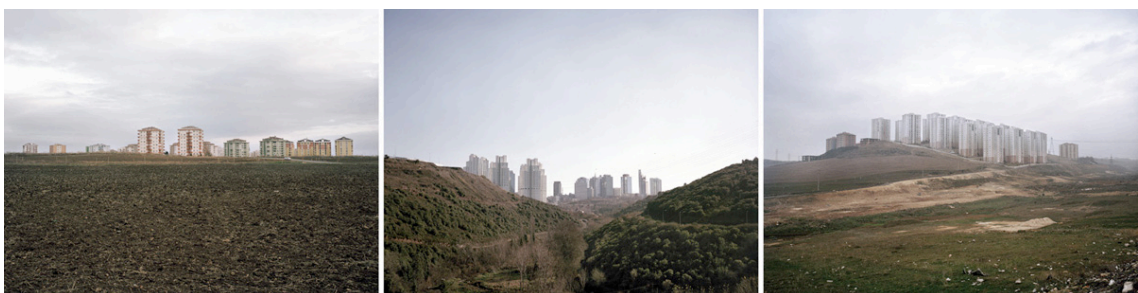


Figure 16: Serkan Taycan, *Shell # 08, Beylikdüzü, Ayazağa, Kayabaşı*, 2012



Figure 17: Installation view - Elipsis gallery, 2013

For the exhibition, the Superpool design office prepared a map that complements the photographs. The map displayed the historical transformation of the periphery of Istanbul, the sites where the photographs were taken, and public transport to access these sites. The texts that accompany this exhibition were written by Jean-François Perouse, whose research has focused on the periphery of Istanbul and artist/critic Merve Ünsal.



Figure 18: Exhibition brochure-map, Istanbul periphery and points where photographs were made. Elipsis Gallery, 2012



Figure 19: Exhibition brochure-map, Elipsis Gallery, 2012

3.b. Between Two Seas > Walking as a form of art

“Walking is a subversive activity. Walking is subversive and revolutionary because it is immediate, essential, and fiercely human.”²² Ben Jacks

Walking is the most physical, corporal method of going from one point to the next, it is the most important method of both transport and communication. For thousands of years, and in many parts of the world today, people walk to get from one point to another. Walking allows the human being to use all his or her senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, to form a deep relationship with nature. Since walking has a fixed, and today relatively slow tempo, it can also be perceived as a stance against modernism in a constantly accelerating world. Walking allows for introversion and active contemplation. ‘To think while sitting down is impossible’, claimed Nietzsche, and walking is an activity suitable to develop a philosophy on the seemingly insignificant aspects of life. It encourages the traveller to ask many, sometimes unexpected questions about himself or herself, about nature and about the relationship between individuals. Walking evokes a sense of simplicity and ease, it is possible to enjoy the passing

²² Ben Jacks, “Reimagining Walking Four Practices,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 57 (2006): 5–9, accessed August 07, 2014, doi: 10.1162/104648804772745193.

of time during the act of walking.

Walking has been adopted as a form of resistance in many different ways throughout history. Gandhi's Salt March, a direct action against the British salt monopoly in colonial India and Mao's Long March are among significant examples.

In the 1950's, Guy Debord and the Situationists developed a walking-based psychogeography, an active and playful approach to geography also described as "a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities [...] just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape".²³ Charles Baudelaire's flâneur is often cited as a model for today's psychogeographer. The flâneur was something of a dandy who ambled through the Paris Arcades while ordinary people scurried to work all around him. (Walking and Mapping, Karen O'Rourke)

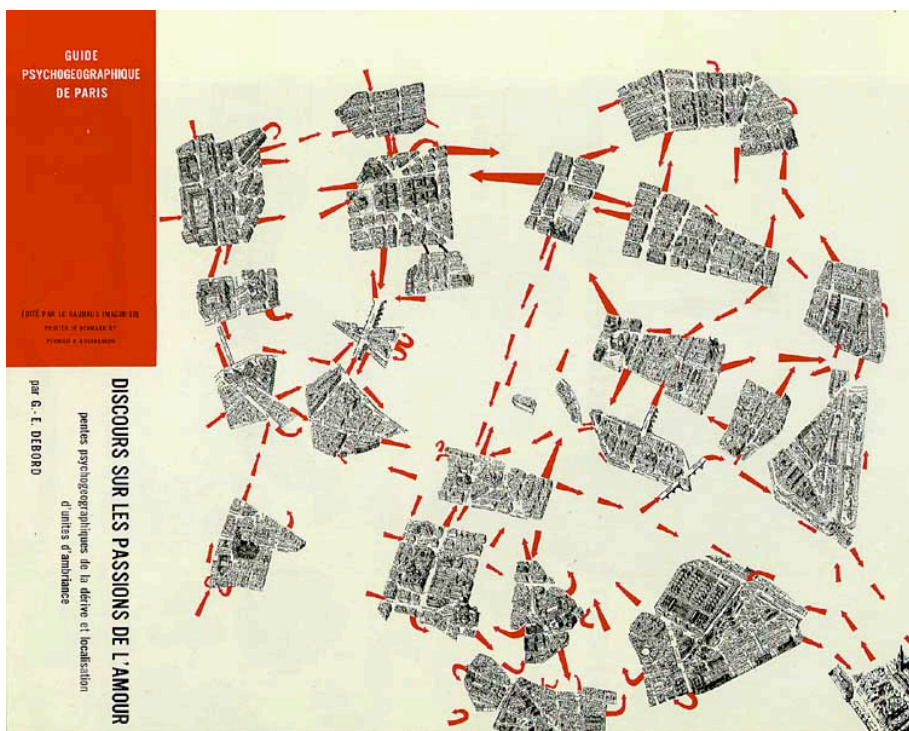


Figure 20: Guy Debord, *Naked City - Psychogeographic guide of Paris, 1957*

²³ Joseph Hart, "A New Way of Walking" Utne Reader, <http://www.utne.com/community/a-new-way-of-walking.aspx#axzz391F7AHBj> (accessed August 07, 2014)

The concept of walking as 'Walkscapes' was suggested by Francesco Careri, the Italian architect and member of the informal group 'Stalker'. 'Stalker' emerged in Rome around the mid 1990's on the impulse of urban activists with different backgrounds, but driven by the common will to explore undefined urban territories. 'Stalker's first action was a tour of Rome that consisted of walking across the city's marginal areas, as an act of breaking the frontiers.²⁴

Between Two Seas

I created Between Two Seas after Shell, with the experience and inspiration of the Gezi Resistance. I developed thought on how the collective spirit of Gezi could be transformed into an experience of urban space.

While I was working on Shell I discovered the strong bodily experience of being in the periphery. To actually see, before my eyes, the cause and effects of change, created an experience that could not be expressed in photography. The actual state of being there, at the site of transformation, made me realize that we, the inhabitants of this city, are directly responsible of this transformation. I decided that this experience urgently needed to be multiplied.

I already had an interest in walking routes that enabled one to experience a landscape by walking. I began to carry out research to prepare a walking route along the periphery of the city. During my research, I realized that the area along which the Kanal Istanbul project was planned corresponded to all the phenomena I wanted to highlight, and others to experience, and took the decision to transform this trajectory into a walking route. My research resulted in Between Two Seas.

Between Two Seas is a four-day walking route in the near west of Istanbul, between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, passing through Istanbul's outskirts under deep mutation which allows one to experience the threatening transformation of Istanbul on foot. The total length of the trail is 63 kilometres.

²⁴ "Between Two Seas: 'Walkscapes' by Serkan Taycan", Unpublished article by Sinan Logie

The route composed of four 15-kilometer parts can also be covered over four separate days.

Layer by layer, the route progresses from the outermost periphery of the city to its centre. It passes through rural and forest areas, and water basins to reach the centre of the city. The trajectory passes through lignite mines, the area earmarked for the new airport, the road leading to the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge, excavation dump sites, industrial sites and housing areas, and also sites of cultural and historical significance such as the Yarımburgaz Cave, which is the oldest settlement in Istanbul, and inner-city vegetable gardens.

Between Two Seas is both a proposal and an invitation. It is an action that consecrates the rhythm of walking which opens the soul to perceive the world. And this action is perhaps the most auspicious 'project' that will open a 'passage' between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, in contrast to the impending disaster of Kanal Istanbul.



Figure 21: Group walk photos from Between Two Seas, 2013

My main aim was to develop an easily accessible route so that every participant could experience it. I prepared a guide-map showing how the route would be traversed, including a detailed text on the sites, with an emphasis on the transformation of the city, and the history of these sites in this context. I sought the help of urban geographer Jean-François Perouse in preparing this text. This guide-map was distributed free of charge during the 13th Istanbul Biennial where my work was exhibited, and was later published as a supplement of Atlas magazine. This meant that a total of 30 thousand copies entered into circulation. This could be seen as a gesture on the side of social memory, and against severe and unbridled transformation. The route was also marked on the physical landscape itself to extend ease to access.



Figure 22: *Between Two Seas* guide-map, 2013



Figure 23: *way marking* *Between Two Seas* trail, 2013

For the installation of *Between Two Seas*, at the Greek Primary School, a space allocated for the 13th Istanbul Biennial, I used both photographs, and the guide-map. 62 photographs, each representing a kilometre-mark of the route, were put on display. This 'automatic' aspect of the choice of photographs refers to the fact that this is not the subjective work of the individual artist, but a work that will be realized by participants who walk this route. The person who enters into the work is not a viewer, but a participant, and an activist. The four-day route is also represented in the photographic display, where every line of photographs corresponds to a single day.



Figure 24: Between Two Seas installation view at 13th Istanbul Biennial, Galata Greek Primary School, 2013

The change along the route will continue to be documented in coming years with photographs taken at the sites annually. The data will be shared on the Internet via an online database.

My fundamental belief is that not only walking, but walking together, too, is a deeply spiritual experience. I formed collective walking programmes,

announced them via a public Facebook group to encourage participation. So far, I have organized 7 such walks, involving more than 100 participants. The work is composed of many elements: The initial idea, the designed route, the guide-map including the texts, the exhibition of photographs and the guide-map in conventional exhibition spaces, the distribution of the guide-map, and the walks, carried out by me in the preparatory stages, the organized walks, and individual attempts carried out with the help of the guide-map. This heterogeneous structure, with multiple references to art, engineering and social sciences, would allow the work to be studied in the framework of relational aesthetics, however this is a broader subject not to be dwelled on in the context of this paper.

The fact that *Between Two Seas* was both exhibited and practiced immediately after the Gezi resistance, allowed viewers and participants who had experienced Gezi to form a natural relationship with the work as action.

3.c. Agora > Regeneration/Degeneration of Public Space

After problematizing the transformation along the periphery in *Shell*, and tracing transformation through action in *Between Two Seas*, I decided to focus on city squares as sites that best describe the city centre. Squares present us with the richest source of information regarding how a society uses public space.

The definition of public space was first comprehensively described in Jürgen Habermas's 1962 work 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit)'. Habermas defines public space as a sphere defined by tools, processes and spaces by which private individuals carry out debate on a common issue, enter into a rational debate and form a common sense, or a public opinion on that issue as a result of such debate.²⁵

A healthy, functioning city and society needs organized public spaces. Spaces where individuals in society meet, enter into dialogue and influence each other

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989)

resolve tensions, and by constructing an environment of understanding enrich and sustain urban life. This is also a *sine qua non* of democracy; it is impossible for the public to make its voice and demands heard by the government.

The origins of public space can be traced back to the Agora of Ancient Greece. The agora was a place where citizens gathered to meet for public and political reasons, and also for trade. However, the agora as public space, allowed only free men to express their opinions, women, aliens and slaves were exempted. In this sense, the control of public space also has a direct link to political power, and often its site of representation.

The city square is a significant public space used by the inhabitants of the city for social, cultural, political and commercial reasons. Many sociological phenomena, for instance, how people move individually or in groups, their relationships, and also features of their social identity, like gender, are revealed in public space. In modern cities, squares are the focus of urban life.

City squares were designed as an extension of modern social life during the early period of the Republic, however, this idealist vision has faltered in many ways. City squares, especially in Istanbul, have largely lost their identity and become spaces locked between high-rise buildings, a development that has accelerated parallel to the rapid commercialization of public space.

Doğan Kuban, in his article titled 'City Squares' explains that in Islamic urban culture the concept of the public square does not exist, and that there are few exceptions to this. He attributes his thesis to the specific structure of Islamic society. In a political life where women are excluded, mosques and their courtyards function as the agora of the city. Friday Mosques are located in the center of the city, where also the market is located.²⁶

Istanbul, or Constantinople, however, presents a slightly different example, as its topography and cultural history meant that Istanbul mosques were built close to the ancient forums of the Greek, Roman and Byzantine periods. The Hagia Sophia was transformed into a mosque following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Sultanahmet Mosque was built close to the ancient

²⁶ Doğan Kuban, *İstanbul Yazıları* (İstanbul: YEM yayınları, 1998), 157-158

Hippodrome, the Beyazıt Mosque was built on the site of the Forum Tauri (Forum of Theodosius) and the Atik Ali Paşa Mosque was built on the site of the Forum of Constantine.

Thus, there were no distinct public squares in Istanbul until the 18th century. The first attempts to build public gathering points were fountains, like the Fountain of Ahmed III in the great square in front of the Imperial Gate of Topkapı Palace.

The first attempt to design a proper public square was carried out during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. The French architect Antoine Bouvard designed square plans for the Eminönü, Beyazıt and Sultanahmet squares, however the plans were never realized.

The first squares designed in the Republican period were Beyazıt and Taksim, however the outcome was more a traffic junction rather than a public square in the modern sense, a situation that has either remained unchanged, or worsened over time. In this sense there are very few squares in Istanbul, and my aim in the Agora project was to analyse both the form and use of these squares.

Public space and city squares have frequently become the subject matter of photography throughout the history of the medium. Here, I will adopt a broader scope for the analysis of square photographs, and examine cityscapes, in which the city is the main actor. The fundamental subject matter of such photography is the constantly changing physical appearance of the city. Its inhabitants and the physical city itself are of equal importance, this sets apart cityscapes from street photographs.

Cityscapes can also be referenced to different periods of the tradition of painting. Cities were described in the history of Western painting beginning with frescoes, and throughout the Renaissance, in the works of the Dutch Delft School and the Modern period. The Delft School, particularly Vermeer and the works of Canaletto would provide great inspiration for photographic production centuries later.

The Eastern miniature tradition depicts the city in quite a different manner compared to the Western tradition based on perspective. Matrakçı Nasuh's schematic city depictions devoid of human figures, created by assembling

different viewpoints are the most significant cityscapes produced in the Ottoman miniature art tradition.²⁷ The vastly changing city, and photography, two products of Modernity, have an interlaced history. The city is among the favourite topics of photography. As Graham Clarke explains in his book *The Photograph*: “In the nineteenth century the city became a central image for the camera. We need to remember that photography established itself in a period when the growth of the city and industry had already provoked a formidable literature and art in response to the increasing influence of urban areas, especially such cities as London, Paris, and New York. Photography takes its place in this process, but it does so in a consistently active sense, simultaneously responding to the variety and multiplicity of urban life and experience, and to the questions of how urban space was to be perceived and represented. In brief, its underlying response has always been in relation to the visual complexity of a city as both an image and experience.” It is no coincidence that the first photograph was a cityscape, marking photography as an art of the city.²⁸

Two important pioneers of cityscape photography are the French photographer Charles Marville and the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz, both producing visual documents of the “modern city”. Charles Marville was appointed by the City of Paris to photograph the old streets and new boulevards as part of the transformation the city underwent as Hausmann’s vision was implemented. However, his photographs are not only documents: “Marville’s images thus preserve an old city in the process of disappearing. They embody the image as a photographic record, but also reflect the city as a series of mysterious and enigmatic presences, of the kind we find.”²⁹

²⁷ Banu Mahir, *Osmanlı Minyatür Sanatı* (İstanbul: Kabcacı, 2000)

²⁸ First photograph in the history is Nicéphore Niépce's: *View from the Window at Le Gras* (Saint-Loup-de-Varenes, France), 1826 or 1827

²⁹ Graham Clarke, *The Photograph: A Visual and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 77



Figure 25: Charles Marville, "Rue de Constantine", 1865

As for the American photographer – and art gallery founder - Alfred Stieglitz, he documented the rapid change New York underwent at the turn of the 20th century, as the first skyscrapers were built. It is in his photographs that we first observe the emergence of New York's legendary silhouette, an indicator of the 'rise' of the city, and the 'new life' inhabiting these new heights. Clarke comments: "Stieglitz brought to the city an idealism which bordered on the spiritual, seeking to find in New York an image of America's promise as a dynamic and modern culture, aligning it with a romantic idealism in which the city was alive with spiritual possibility."³⁰

³⁰ Graham Clarke, *The Photograph: A Visual and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 79.



Figure 26: Alfred Stieglitz, From the Shelton, Looking West, 1935

How the transformation of the city and public space is photographically reflected in the context of Istanbul can be discussed via three examples that correspond to three distinct periods in the recent history of the city: Othmar Pferschy, Hilmi Şahenk and Kadir Can.

The Austrian photographer Othmar Pferschy was one of the most important representatives of documentary photography in the early Republican period. He was appointed by the Directorate General of Press and Information to produce the visual image of Turkey during its transition from being an Empire to a Republic, devoting years to photographing large buildings, modern

factories, schools, universities, hospitals, streets, stadiums, parks and squares in Turkey's towns and cities.³¹

An examination of all the photographs Othmar Pferschy took in Turkey reveals that only a small portion are of Istanbul. The ones that he took mostly feature the Historical Peninsula and the Bosphorus, monumental structures like mosques and fountains, and everyday life. Parallel to government policy during the early years of the Republic, Pferschy did not ascribe great importance to the changing aspects of Istanbul.



Figure 27: Othmar Pferschy, Taksim Square, circa 1945

The next stage in Istanbul's transformation took place in the 1950s, parallel to industrialization and waves of migration from rural areas to cities. The Menderes governments (1950-1960) backed by US subsidy used construction for political and symbolic aims, creating a new Istanbul that had a much weaker relationship with historical Istanbul. Hilmi Şahenk (1903-1972), who worked as a photojournalist for newspapers and later became the director of a photography workshop of the Istanbul Municipality, documented this transformation in its entirety. *Bir Zamanlar İstanbul*, a book on Şahenk's photographs, displays in unaestheticized and detailed variety the newly

³¹ Engin Özendes, "In the light of the Republic : photographs of the Othmar Pferschy" (Istanbul : Istanbul Modern, 2006), 29.

constructed motorways, viaducts and bridges, the demolished parts of the old city, neighbourhoods undergoing industrialization, the transformation of the shores of the Bosphorus and the life of the newly settled inhabitants of the city suffering the pains of rapid urbanization. His objective, cold and distant approach can be observed especially in his cityscapes, becoming even more striking in city square photographs taken from higher vantage points.



Figure 28: Hilmi Şahenk, Taksim Square, circa 1950

The photographs of photojournalist Kadir Can reveal an Istanbul, which has completely surrendered to liberal policies of the post-1980 period. Great urban interventions such as the relocation of industrial facilities along the shores of the Golden Horn, which by that point resembled marshland more than anything else, the construction of multi-lane motorways, and the great demolition of the Tarlabaşı neighbourhood in Beyoğlu for the construction of the Tarlabaşı Boulevard are documented in his works. Migration and the spreading of 'gecekondu' neighbourhoods spiral out of control after 1980, creating acute problems of transportation, employment and health, the tension of which is visible in Can's photographs.



Figure 29: Kadir Can, Taksim Square, circa 1970

All the three photographers mentioned above use the photographic medium for a specific end, the utilitarian function of photography takes precedence over the independent will of the photographer/artist. However, their work methods and the way they position themselves in relation to their subject matter, distinguishes their work from other photographers, adding a personal dimension to their work, although this doesn't appear as their immediate intention.

Agora investigates how squares are used as the most important public spaces of the city, and how the city's inhabitants express themselves here. The work also allows the viewer to see how squares that emerged in different historical periods were designed, intentionally or not, and the relationships that exist between architectural elements.

Istanbul's expansion began in the Historical Peninsula, continuing towards Pera, and then along a line extending towards the north, to Şişli, and along Büyükdere Street. This line also functions as an open-air museum where we can observe the modernist interventions the city underwent as part of a policy of Westernisation.

The 6 city square photographs in the series were produced in squares located

along this trajectory. According to order and period, they are:

Sultanahmet Square (Byzantine and Ottoman periods)

Galata (Genovese Colony)

Taksim (early Republican period)

Beşiktaş (early Republican period)

Şişli (1950s)

Cevahir (contemporary)

An elevated vantage point allows the inclusion of both the square and its users, therefore a crane was used. This viewpoint helps the viewer to perceive the built environment and its users from the same distance, thus ascribing them equal importance, organic, natural elements of urban space. The photographs are displayed as large prints in the exhibition space, allowing a clear observation of the physical character of individuals inhabiting the squares and analysis of their relationship in public space. In order to make large prints a large-format camera was used. 4x5 inch colour negative films provided enough resolution to print 2x1.5 meters prints. And the shift movement made it possible to control the appearance of perspective in the image without moving the camera back.

The city is formed of layers, layers between buildings constructed in different periods. A further relationship exists between people and the buildings. Each building has a user profile, reflected to a certain extent in the squares they surround. For instance, Sultanahmet Square, in other words, the Hippodrome, the oldest square of the city, is today used mostly by tourists; whereas Galata Square displays the characteristics of a Medieval city, and is shaped around the monumental Galata Tower.



Figure 30: Serkan Taycan, Agora #01, Sultanahmet Square (Hippodrome), 2014



Figure 31: Serkan Taycan, Agora #02 Galata Square, 2014

Taksim, on the other hand, is the first square of the Republican Period. It has been the scene of public demonstrations especially after the 1960s, where struggles for civil rights took to as a place of public gathering. Most recently, during the Gezi resistance, Gezi Park and Taksim Square became the focus of

the voicing of demands, which rapidly spread nationwide, reinforcing the square's place as a symbol in public consciousness.



Figure 32: Serkan Taycan, Agora # 04, Taksim Square, 2014

Despite a large flow of people, Beşiktaş is first and foremost a location of transition; gap not used for any specific purpose during the daytime.



Figure 33: Serkan Taycan, Agora # 03, Beşiktaş Square, 2014

Şişli Square takes shape around Şişli Mosque, the first large mosque built in Istanbul after the foundation of the Republic, in 1946. Since it is located between two main streets, it also fails to fulfil the function of public space in the true sense of the word.



Figure 34: Serkan Taycan, Agora # 05, Şişli Square, 2014

The area in front of Cevahir Shopping Centre is a zone between residential buildings; shopping centers and a cemetery built in different periods, and acquired functionality mostly because it is located at the intersection of public transport axes. Despite its lack of elements unique to conventional public spaces, it has become a square used by people, provoking the viewer to ask whether a shopping centre, or its courtyard, can be considered public space.



Figure 35: Serkan Taycan, Agora # 06 Cevahir Mall, 2014

However, none of the squares I photographed within the scope of Agora function as public space in the real sense. They are mostly areas of transition. Political power displays great anxiety when it comes to large numbers of people gathering in public space, and voicing their demands. Thus Agora is a work that occupies the crux of the debate over public space, that has increasingly occupied the agenda of Turkey after the Gezi Resistance.

CONCLUSION

The work of art, despite all the challenges of commodification and the age of information, retains an essential transformative power. Interactive works of art, sourced from the dynamics of the *zeitgeist*, give birth to forms of expression open to participation and experience. The ability of photographic material to interpret actual reality paves the way for more objective readings.

Turkey has been undergoing significant social changes in recent years; the political and economic change of the country has had a profound impact on all spheres of life. Urbanization is the field in which the pangs of change are felt in the most acute manner. As a result of this, urban movements function as a magnetic field where struggles for rights accumulate, independently of class and ethnic associations. This trilogy records the transformation of Istanbul at a period of time when tension has reached a critical point, and almost a breaking point. It is my wish for it to serve as both data and a critical discourse on this important period for decades to come. It will remind future generations of not only how urban space was transformed, but also of our responsibilities as conscious individuals immersed in this process, and the stance we took.

In connection with this, and perhaps more significantly, this trilogy is my form of confrontation, self-investigation and expression as an individual and artist who grew up in peripheral communities catering for industrial development sites located at some distance to smaller cities across Anatolia and moved to this great diverse, historical and contemporary metropolis. The sensibility I have developed in this way, and have witnessed in many other individuals, forms the basis of both my artistic approach and our collective demand for the right to the city.

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APPENDIX

Between Two Seas Guide-Map (70x100 cm)



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