Dossier Editorial: Reading Istanbul as a 'Palimpsest' City

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All the metropolises over the world, although with some differences, are growing in an accelerated way, with their restless and often chaotic characteristics, which always contain an aspect of contingency. Their elements are in a constant transformation, and the new urban spaces take form together with their citizens. Istanbul, embodying all these characteristics, has always been a 'laboratory' for architectural practice, research and studios, with its infinite potentials. In this context, 'informal' trainings and activities outside the scope of the programs applied in architecture schools have become more crucial, and the urban space of Istanbul is used in such activities. From this point of view, on the purpose of making a contribution to architectural research and education, under the framework of IKSV '*Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation*' Istanbul Design Biennial, IAPS-CS '*Culture and Space*' Network¹ has been organizing "*Culture and Space Meeting Series*" in Turkey for since 2012 . The aim of organizing these activities is mainly to focus on architectural issues in urban context using the concept and theories on culture and environment relations based on the *environment-behavior studies*. Following this, another important aim is to bring together graduate, postgraduate and PhD students from different schools and young researchers by correlating researches and theoretical works with different levels of architectural design education and also to provide a wide range discussion milieu by organizing such an activity on the part of an independent network. At the end of the all steps, to provide a discussion milieu including all the participants is one of the most important methodological steps of the activities.

IAPS-CS Network Activities that continued during the biennial, have composed of interrelated steps such as *design workshops, article anthology/ paper selection, student competition,*

exhibition/ colloquium/ symposium and publication. Within this context, the main aim is to bring on discussions on the palimpsest² character of Istanbul and to provoke students to question multi-layered city Istanbul. The students were expected to read and interpret the multi-layered and palimpsest state of Istanbul and imperfection (*the theme of the first Biennial*) of its layers; to discuss the manifest of "The Future is Not What it is Used to be in Istanbul" (*the theme of the second Biennial,2014*) and "Are we Human?:The Design of Species /Endless Layers of Design " (*the theme of the third Biennial,2016)* from their points of views and express their interpretations.

The palimpsest has been a crucible in cultural research about cities for a long time³. Among the first to use the concept, but not the term, in relation to the city, Bussa finds Sigmund Freud; in Civilization and its Discontents he builds a parallel between the layering of memory in the human psyche and in urban archaeology⁴. Botta utilize the palimpsest as spatial metaphor in a variety of historical contexts and in connection to a range of disciplines for instance history, architecture, literature, urban studies and musicology. This is an attempt to gain an interdisciplinary understanding of it as a viable instrument for all research dealing with issues of space. All "places" have layers, some of which are visible, some others partly visible, still others still visible, some easy to find, and some impossible to decipher⁵.

Istanbul, among all the other "palimpsest" cities of the world which are deeply connected and in interaction with each other via a complex system of networks, is constantly being woven with new layers, which change, bloom and overlap. Cities, which are supposed to have the potential to generate themselves in various ways each and every day, accumulate the traces of the past, today, and the future. Istanbul, with its multilayered structure, witness the generation and discussion of various premises from the past to the future. Here, we have to explore the concepts 'urban palimpsest', 'palimpsest identity', and 'palimpsest in architecture'. Palimpsest, when used as a metaphor

for spaces / cities, enables multidimensional readings, since it implies the reading the overlapping traces of the past and future altogether[6].

In the second compilation of articles for the series of events[7], the participants were required to present their projections, ideas and narratives on the future "*When Nothing is as It was Before*", and explore the concept "palimpsest". Six articles from that compilation were awarded by a scientific committee[8], and included in this present dossier.

The theme of the third compilation was "*Istanbul as a Palimpsest City and Endless Layers of Design*". The researchers were invited to contemplate on, dialogue with, and generate manifestos on Istanbul's ever transforming design layers, and consider contemporary ideas on design from a different angle. Three articles the third scientific committee[9] granted an award are included in the present book as the last three articles.

Şentürk participated to our series of events as a guest speaker, and explored the concept palimpsest with its various dimensions. He contributed the present volume with his article '*Towards a (Non-)Theory of the Architectural Palimpsests*'. His text consists of a questioning and redefinition of the concept, and constitutes a theoretical, experiential and open-ended discussion.

Yarımbaş, in her article "*Experiencing the city by walking: Communication elements*", focuses on visual communication elements such as signs, signboards and street names, and analyze them as crucial sources of perception and transformation of the city by a 'flaneur' pedestrian. The actions of walking and perception in the city are peculiar to each and every individual, and they have an open-ended potential for transforming the city and enhancing the awareness towards the environment.

Özkan and Özdemir, in their articles titled "*An Uncanny Vague Terrain: Yedikule Gasometer Complex*", suggest a reading of the city through the concept of palimpsest defined as collective memory. They start with Man Ray's 1929 photograph "Terrain Vague", and discuss architectural perspectives on former industrial zones, which lost their function and became uncanny vague terrains. The writers explore Yedikule Gasworks Complex via Catalan architect, De Sola-Morale's question: "How would architecture be mobilized unless it becomes the aggressive means of power and abstract reasoning in the vague terrain?"

Turgay's article "*Reviewing Istanbul's Urban Structure Through A Local Retail Shop: Neco Cornet Ice Cream Shop*" proposes that researches on small scale urban public and semi-public spaces would contribute to the critical approaches in urban studies. She focuses on a 25-year-old ice-cream shop in a distinctive neighborhood in Fatih district, Istanbul. Her literature review and observations show that long-termed service and consumption spaces in urban areas outside the scope of transformation constitute multilayered urban elements through which temporal, spatial, economical and social sections may well be explored. This multidimensionality can be considered to a proof of palimpsest structure of Istanbul, with its global and local variants.

In "*From Borders to Boundaries: The Land Walls of Istanbul*", Öksüz and Sarı take the concept "palimpsest" as a contributing element in comprehending the togetherness of the old and the new, generation of new identities in architecture by the transformation of the use / the user. In this study, the Land Walls of Istanbul are considered as the case of a transformation from visible borders to invisible boundaries, with all the temporal layers they include. The authors review a chronological literature and analyze recent photographs, and refer to concepts "border" and "boundary" as Richard Sennett defines in his *Quant: The Public Realm*.

Güzel, in her article "*Istanbul: A Landscape in-between the Virtual and the Real*", depicts the palimpsest city as a jungle of images, and claims that one should refer to a micro scale in order to understand it. She claims that authorities take decisions from a macro-scale perspective, while each and every citizen reproduce the city in micro-scale. Urban space is reflected in the virtual geography of any individual who moves and acts in space. According to

[3] Botta, G.," Berlin as Urban Palimpsest". In Villes invisibles et ecritures de la modernite, (Mullhouse: Orizons), pp:43-54, 2012. http://www.academia.edu/30151360/Berlin_as_Urban_Palimpsest.
[4] Quoted in: Alessandro Busà, « City of Memory », in Ray Hutchinson, Encyclopaedia of Urban Studies, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2010, p. 158.
[5] Botta, G., "Berlin as Urban Palimpsest". In: Villes invisibles et ecritures de la modernite, (Mullhouse: Orizons), pp:43-54, 2012. http://www.academia.edu/30151360/Berlin_as_Urban_Palimpsest.
[6] Turgut, H. (2018). Culture and Space Workshops as an Informel Activity in Architectural Design. In Hacıhasanoglu, O, Turgut, H, & Bayazıtoglu, C. (Eds.), Memory,Traces and the City . Pasifik Ofset, Özyegin Üniversitesi Yayınları, Mayıs, 2018.
[7] The first proceedings can be found here: "Istanbul as a palimpsest city and imperfection" Ed: Hülya Turgut, A/Z Journal, Spring 2013, Volume 10 No:1, ITU – Journal of the Faculty of Architecture, Istanbul http://www.az.itu.edu.tr/issue.htm

Güzel, a new, virtual micro-formation has emerged as an addition to the palimpsest texture of the city, in which citizens can experience encounters, express themselves freely, and generate new forms of spatiality in this trans-space.

In Anık and Çelenk's article "*Transformation of Mental Maps during Urban Reconstruction in Tahtakale District*" Istanbul, a palimpsest city, is considered to be a living organism, and recent spatial reconstruction in Istanbul is a reflection of economical and political conjuncture in the country. They claim that urban space is transformed in such a way that a real estate based culture is imposed. Discriminative discourse of politics is dominating each and every aspect of urban space, and the past and future imagination of the city is formed to determine collective memory. Their field study focuses on the social and physical transformation of Tahtakale neighborhood, and explores the impacts of events occurred in the recent past on cognitive maps in the context of urban security and gender.

In "*Recording the Landscape: Walking, Transforming, Designing*", Tümerdem deals with the act of walking as an architectural and aesthetic experience, a means of design, and a practice that constantly reconstructs the natural environment. Walking as a sensory and personal experience, she claims, creates a peculiar comprehension of urban environment. Tümerdem proposes a methodology for walking, with open-ended and experiential application of it with three walks in the northern part of Istanbul, in the region of the Third Bridge. Tümerdem considers these walks, which aim at comprehending, defining and designing the city, as minor signs and traces left on the world. These signs and traces, albeit their small-scale, add to the infinite number of layers that constitute the city. Walkers create an urban text, and the identity of the city is constructed with these layers of narratives, which in turn generate the architecture and meta-text of the city.

Özer's article "*The (Re)Production of Space with A Practice Of Everyday Life in the Layers of the City İstanbul*" focuses on the quotidian practice of conversation, how this practice reproduces 'living spaces of dialogue', and how it impacts the socio-cultural and social formations in urban layers. Ordinary actions in our daily lives and corresponding spatial practices remain vague in urban layers, Özer claims, and social and cultural influences of those can only be observed by analyzing these vague situations. Özer takes the case of Çorlulu Ali Paşa Madrasah as a space of dialogue, and investigates the dynamics that generate this space.

In "*Memory Layers, Porosity and Montage as Representative Interfaces of Anamnesis and Forgetting*", Tuğçe Gürleyen draw attention to the spaces of memory, which enable plural readings and relationships, and their representational interfaces. She discusses on how the past is experienced in the practices of the present, how it becomes continuous, and create the sense of time. She claims that the struggle to get rid of images, memories and experiences a lived space generate results in a mental destruction, and extreme oblivion. She analyzes how the forgotten can be remembered with the help of porosity and montage as the representative interfaces of anamnesis and forgetting.

All the articles presented here demonstrate that the palimpsest structure of Istanbul is not limited to a physical and historical stratification. It is a juxtaposition of many dimensions, which visibly or invisibly include temporal, social, cultural and economic sections. The authors trace different layers to understand the illegible, complex and multilayered character, and emphasize the importance of urban memory. In sum, for Istanbul, as for all the cities with a palimpsest identity, and with rich sources of experience and inspiration, researches to discover the multilayered nature of urban space are so crucial. Researches on palimpsest and urban palimpsest may well contribute to the comprehension of the complex relationships among time, space and memory.