

# Experiencing city by walking: Communication elements

**Duygu YARIMBAŞ**

duyguyarimbasm@gmail.com • Department of Architecture, Faculty of  
Architecture, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul, Turkey

*Received: December 2017 • Final Acceptance: July 2018*

## Abstract

Istanbul, a city ruled by various civilisations and governments, is quite important both historically, geographically and rich in culture. Cultural activities and spaces within which these activities took place, influenced the city's building stock, its landscape and organization. New buildings were constructed on top of the foundations of demolished ancestors. Traces of this foregoing layering, visible on the physical environment, has also spreaded to daily life, stories, imageries, culture, etc., while transforming them. These layers are not heterogeneous systems within which the latter covers the former completely in a chronological way; but, heterogenous formations consisting of various densities and dominancies. This process-based "becoming", explained with the notion of palimpsest, is one of the fundamental characteristics of the city of Istanbul.

Walking act that can potentially foster *dérive* and *détournement* practices, depends on semiotics of the city as well as its physicality. The communication elements of the city and its contents such as color, typography and imagery, can be very decisive in terms of drifting (*dérive*) and twisting (*détournement*) intentions of city resident.

In order for "transforming" cities by walking, residents have to be encouraged for making "discoveries". City planners and relevant units should take into consideration that open-endedness, flexibility, transformability, vagueness and openness to surprises can increase the awareness of the user about the environment, by ensuring the permanence of the reflexivity between the city and the pedestrian. The purpose of this paper, is to discuss the potentials which could make this awareness a useful tool for transforming the city.

## Keywords

Palimpsest, Walking, Flâneur, *Dérive*, *Détournement*.



## 1. Experiencing the city

“The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered.”

Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1988

City can be experienced with a variety of methods, such as: walking, by car, virtually, etc. (even from the air, like in “Tracing Istanbul [from the air]” Öner, 2009). A certain number of common and divergent data can be provided in every city experimentation. As a city that has various layers of time, functions and tendencies, Istanbul offers explicit or vague traces depending on the method which is used. There is a variety of methods to study the palimpsest of the city; however, pedestrian’s speed and vision can offer a very informative urban reading. The walker or the pedestrian, adds some “discoveries” to this reading, both with the speed he chooses (fast or slow) or his flâneur attitude. Reading of the city is not a passive behavior, since the one who is reading it, is also transforming it. This transformation is both theoretical through awareness, and practical through usage [Figure 1]. Situationists improved this practice, by publishing *dérive* maps, which add the subconscious to the flâneur urban experience and by triggering people to discover the city in different ways. *Détournement*, which is also another situationist approach, tries to further activate the individual, by twisting the existing data.

### 1.1. “Walking” and the significance of the street

“There is a circulatory landscape on the street, this is a pilgrim’s voyage, an advance and a formal parade, both a trip and a perfection, a walk serving as a progress towards the better.”

Lewis Mumford, *The Natural History of Urbanization*, 1956.

The act of “walking” can be fast or slow, individual or collective, depending on the mode and objective of the activity. Even if a slow walking helps to contemplate a city, a fast walking has different potentials. There has been a variety of studies that emphasize the importance of the mass and its speed within the context of revolution. Virilio explains: “The masses are not a population, a society, but the multitude of passersby. The revolutionary contingent attains its ideal form not in the place of production, but in the street, where for a moment it stops being a cog in the technical machine and itself becomes a motor (machine of attack), in other words a producer of speed.” (Virilio, 2007:29)

Explanations which suggest that the working class marches taking place on streets later served as a practice to win the power struggle (Pravda Newspaper, 1976) propose to benefit from the potentials of speed and masses. In this regard, the speedy and sporty activities of the 68 youth are considered as tactics. Also at the end of 1970s, the well-trained militant mass in Japan, well-equipped with aural-visual



**Figure 1.** The representation of “layering” (“Sichtung”) notion in two diverse metaphors (Resource: *Morphologie: City Metaphors*, O. M. Ungers, Walther König Publishing, Köln; 2011).

tools, cameras, tapes...etc. were gathering on streets which they would leave shortly after and were taking their own photos instantly before dispersing. Since they were forbidden to gather together or stand on the street, they were developing ways to come together with other passers-by as a way of practising for their future protests (Virilio, 1998).

Besides the political significance of speed, slowness also has some perceptual advantages. The awareness and analysis regarding the physical features, circulation networks, artifacts, indicators and images of the city require an individual "walk" at a relatively slower pace. Purposeful or purposeless walking practices became common for the first time as gatherings taking place in *mesire*<sup>1</sup> and countryside (instead of city centers) during the Ottoman period. *Mesire* gave the opportunity to walk and spend time in nature; however they were not places that can be reached on foot or one can wander around individually. In time, nature walks gave way to activities occurring in cities. The first example to this change in Istanbul was the tours made in *Direklerarası*. People who were walking around for the first time in mixed groups had the intention of interacting with the opposite sex. "Expectation to interact with the opposite sex which was not expressed publicly for hundreds of years was expressed here for the first time." (Tanyeli, 2002:6-7). However, these city-dwellers are not considered as "flâneur" that Baudelaire described as city idlers, since they were touring in groups and their purpose was social interaction rather than experiencing the city. After *Direklerarası* was partly demolished –during the construction the electric tramway in 1910- this district lost its former popularity and recently, public spaces formed in the early Republican period –which were mostly named as *Istasyon Street*- have become the areas where masses spend time (Tanyeli, 2002).

Streets and roads generally offer a continuous destination as an axis of circulation. Street is narrower and perceptually readable in a much easier way in comparison with roads. As the traffic makes it difficult and dangerous to cross from side to side and the in-

crease in speed separates the sides, the interaction between the environment and the pedestrians weakens. It can be said that in today's world where the public spaces diminish and disappear constantly due to being turned into construction areas, streets function as public spaces. Streets where the traffic is limited/restricted, one-sided or relatively light have been turning into a gathering and socializing space. Richard Sennett explains the impact of traffic upon the city life as "such streets are prized, we commonly say, as being full of life, in a way that traffic arteries, for all their rushing vehicular motion, are not. Street life is a symbol of urban provocation and arousal, provocation that comes in large part from experiences of the unexpected." (Sennett, 1992:170).

Transportation (on foot or by vehicle) is perceived as an important factor as it connects the street to the other parts of the city despite the negative impacts of intense traffic upon it. Although the city consists of stable "places;" the street, bringing life and dynamism to the city, is the circulatory essence of it. "Connecting the city's destiny to communication arteries, becomes a fundamental development principle." (Sennett, 1992:170). In that way, a transformation that starts on a particular street of the city spreads in time to the environment where the street is located. The street turns into a space on the move just as people who are present there wiggle (Paquot, 2011). The street, as an obviously public space, enables the communication between semi-public, public and private spaces. Ilhan Berk who particularly mentions Istanbul in his poems, describes the street as a rectangular scene where encounters, gossips, plays, conflicts, flirts and gestures of jealousy and pride are exhibited (Berk, 1990).

In addition to the significance of the street in terms of speed, its political significance has to be also referred. "It will be less a matter, when the time comes, of occupying a given building than of holding the streets."(Virilio, 2007:30). Also, during the struggle between National-Socialists and Marxists in 1930s, Patrick Goebbels published an article where he argued that whoever con-

<sup>1</sup>Large recreational areas of the city, usually integrated with a river or sea. People usually used to go *mesire* by horse carriage because they were in the periphery of the city.

quers the street would also conquer the state (Goebbels, 1931).

### 1.2. Concepts of flâneur and dérive

“Along the outskirts where, close-sheltering  
Hid lusts, dilapidated shutters swing,  
When the sun strikes, redoubling waves  
of heat  
On town, and field, and roof, and dusty  
street—  
I prowl to air my prowess and kill time,  
Stalking, in likely nooks, the odds of  
rhyme,  
Tripping on words like cobbles as I go  
And bumping into lines dreamed long  
ago.”  
Baudelaire, *Le Soleil* (The Sun), 1857.

Although the explanations regarding the origin of the word “flâneur” are controversial and ambiguous, the concept found its true expression in the descriptions of Baudelaire as the city/metropolis idler, who wanders around crowds on his/her own without getting into interaction with them. “Flâneur”, developed and conceptualized by Walter Benjamin, is a city dweller who feels at home in the public spaces of the city; s/he tries to determine all the things that capitalism has abolished while wandering around the passages and along the shop windows, and tries to decipher the meanings of the new life style and analyzes meanings in relation to the city (Citation: Morss, 2014). Flâneur is an individual in the metropolis who spends time in the passages that s/he likes very much –not with the aim of shopping though- and observes the shop windows. Ünal Oskay has translated flâneur into Turkish as “düşünür gezer” (thinking wanderer) (Oskay, 1981). “Flâneur he could exist only in the great city, the metropolis, since provincial towns would afford too restricted a stage for his strolling and too narrow a field for his observations” (Wilson, 2001). As Simmel also indicates, because the stimulants are too frequent and too much in the metropolis (Simmel, 2011), flâneur walks with a turtle to adjust his/her pace in Paris boulevards.

In time, the city idler or flâneur also started to have a place in Turkish literature. The character in Yusuf Atilgan’s book “Aylak Adam,” wanders alone

and idly among the crowds, observes the city, has a notebook that he writes down the names of the interesting street names and tries to guess how the street names are put. Similar flâneur motifs can also be seen in some of Yusuf Atilgan’s stories. For instance, in his story called “Atılmış,” the narrator who is alienated from the society expresses his feelings as such: “I found the road crowded. It was a thing to be surprised at that people looked after one another and all have two feet.” (Atilgan, 2002). İlhan Berk also wrote poems regarding Istanbul that he experienced like a flâneur in his books “İstanbul”, “Galata” and “Pera.”

In the following years, Letterists tried to develop the unplanned, spontaneous and astonishing city experience of the flâneur through a practice which they called “dérive.” The concept of dérive also emphasized the importance of the unconscious experience inherent in the concept of modern city idling. While serendipity refers to the surprising encounters of the city as a potential of the physical environment, dérive refers to the potentials of the unconscious. It can be said that the concept is a situationist reinterpretation of flâneur’s city experience. After dérive was published in the magazine of Letterist International called “Potlach,” Debord also defined the concept in his dictionary “Situationist Descriptions: “A mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. The term also designates a specific uninterrupted period of dériving” (Url-1). The concept originally has the meaning of going off the flow, changing the direction of the flow (in Latin); and in English it is related to the words “derive” and “river”. Dérive experience creates a particular intuition of time and space which is sometimes predictable, sometimes unsteady, fluid and on the move (Wark, 2011).

### 1.3. Détournement

“Flights of starlings have a way of flying which is theirs alone and seems as governed by uniform and regular tactics as a disciplined regiment would be, obeying a single leader’s voice with precision. The starlings obey the voice of

instinct, and their instinct leads them to bunch into the center of the squad while the speed of their flight bears them constantly beyond it..."

Lautréamont, *The Songs of Maldoror*, 1869.

The concept of "détournement" was first defended by Letterist International as a method discovered when Lautréamont was composing his songs/poems, however it was then revealed that many of the poetic expressions included in this well-known book was "stolen" from textbooks and encyclopedias. The concept means "manipulation/distortion" which is used as appropriating and changing, hijacking, misdirecting and acquiring. Letterists took on the task of systematizing this manipulation and for this purpose Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman published "A User's Guide to Détournement" in 1956. In "Situationist Descriptions", détournement is explained as "short for 'détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements.' The integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means. In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres (Url-2).

In 1954, Jacques Fillon based his manifesto, "New Games" upon another situationist concept which is the practice of *dérive*. In the manifesto which also includes the concept of play, it is indicated that "Big cities are favourable to the pastime which we call *dérive*. *Dérive* is the technique of locomotion without a goal. It depends upon the influence of the external environment. [...] The evaluation of leisure is something entirely serious. We will issue a reminder that the task is to invent new games." (Fillon, 1971) Jacques Fillon (1971). "To invent new games" or more accurately, to promote play and exploration within the city; doing research about the roads with different features can be informative. By comparing well-designed streets and streets without a creator/designer, Sennett inferred about the Richard-Lenoir Boulevard

which was planned by Haussmann that:

"The design makes clear exactly where to do what, a clarity new for Parisians of the time; the Boulevard Richard Lenoir was greeted as a great planning innovation. Feeding the Boulevard Richard Lenoir are older streets which were and remain more self-effacing. It isn't clear what is happening on them, who lives on them, and how to use them—at least not before spending some time on these byways and becoming involved in their secrets. In these streets people make discoveries as prosaic as an unexpected shop, an odd votive offering lodged in the cracks between two buildings, or a house of the deaf. The power of discovering something unexpected to the eye gives them their value". (Sennett, 1992:174)

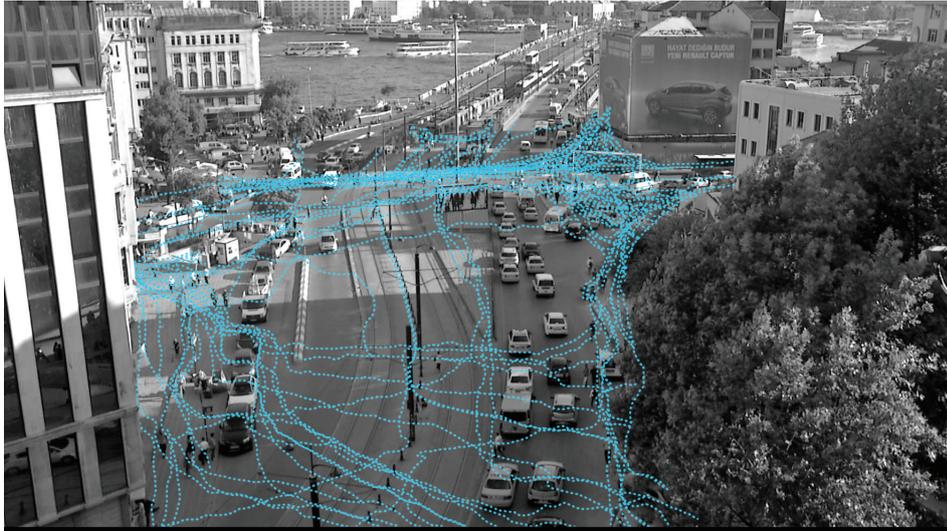
Although space organizes and brings together a number of possibilities, it is important that the wanderer selects from these possibilities and puts some of them into action, because "he makes them exist as well as emerge" (Certeau, 1988). By using shortcuts, improvising and walking in different styles, s/he transforms the elements of the space and renders them exclusive or secondary [Figure 2].

## 2. Elements of communication in the city

"All the visible universe is nothing but a shop of images and signs."  
Charles Baudelaire, *Le Soleil* (The Sun), 1850.

The palimpsest nature which can be perceived on the concrete and abstract elements of the city, can also be seen on urban communication tools. In Istanbul, communication elements, such as building inscriptions remained from the Byzantine era, building numbers from the Ottoman Empire, road or street signs with different colors and styles, mounted on different but close moments, are referring to different functions, purposes, cultural paradigms, and so forth, while existing within the city, in a synchronic way.

The wanderer is in a reciprocal relationship with the spaces of the city and, as s/he would put it, the "indicators" of its language. Although the wanderer is



*Figure 2. "Making Ways" pedestrian use diagram, Maria Lopez (Resource: İstanbul Biennial Booklet, 2013).*

directed by indicators and seduced by the billboards and the lighted shop windows with writings on; s/he can pacify these indicators by taking them out of their conventional uses and can create other coincidental or illegitimate spatial twists (De Certeau, 2009). For instance, on the face of the presence of a dominant and directive street sign, the wanderer can pass through the stairs that s/he saw between two apartments and revive the space of the stairs which would otherwise be secondary.

In the Ottoman cities, it was possible to turn the streets into dead ends if it was agreed by the households which have a right of passage on that street. Under this condition, people could choose to pass to the parallel streets through gardens or some explored shortcuts. It is possible to observe the traces of similar practices in dead ends which still exist today. However, most of these dead ends were later reorganized to open to other streets, as they were making it difficult to interfere with fire which could spread quickly to frame houses and neighborhoods, and also because during the modernization period they were considered to be causing traffic problems.

The signposts, billboards and advertisements which are placed at different times in various areas of the city present the history of the street life in layers: Communication elements like the Arabic epitaph of the fountain located at the beginning of the street, the partly meaningless English origin name of

a residence located on the same street, the plate with the old name of the street as its name has been changed, the "camalti"<sup>2</sup> of a shop which has already been closed or "foursquare" sign stuck to a newly opened cafe, all form the public aspect of the non-official archive of this history. The palimpsest characteristic, which is generally regarded to be inherent to the architectural elements of the city space, can actually be also traced in the visual communication elements.

## 2.1. Geographical communication elements

The geographical communication elements can be defined as significant in terms of geographical location determination and orientation. As well as geographical communication elements and labels, the digital geographical data systems such as geographic information systems (GIS) come into prominence. Independently from the geographic awareness methods- analog or digital- the location names (the geographic indicators) are the results of legal and public agreement. These agreements also provide cultural qualifications to verbal signifiers and empower the flaneur's urban experience in terms of subconscious.

### 2.1.1. Street and place names

"Three men standing in front of Taskisla, three of them standing and with fes Far off, there is Surg Agop Cemetery and the cypress

<sup>2</sup>A technique based on writing/painting the art work on the back of the (transparent) glass.

They are writing about the distance  
 A Street: Bagodaları Street (Its new  
 name is Tarik Zafer Tunaya)  
 Crashes with Cifte Vav Street.  
 And end in Agacciragi Street.”  
 Ilhan Berk, Pera, 1990.

Narration is what spreads the mythical dimension of the city to masses, the oral description used with regards to the city by the locals turn into clues for describing places; these characteristic features are in time reflected on the names of the places and streets in the city. The street names have different origins: The opening date, a profession or work area recognized locally, the name of a reputable family residing there, a building nearby or neighborhood, the topographical and geographical features of the environment (like “Dik Yokuş Sokağı” – (Ing. “Steep Street”). It is possible to indicate that the same is true for districts. For instance, Çiftelavuzlar district is named after two swimming pools in which water is accumulated to irrigate the garden. Or names like “Çınar Sokağı” (Ing. “Plane Tree Street”) are oral proofs as to the existence of a tree on that street; even if the trees are not physically present on the street any more, the name of the street keeps traces of its history. When a street is referred as (...) Dead end, it can be inferred that the street used to be a dead end and was then turned into a street. However, this type of information and the relation of the names of the places with the physical environment and language should be researched and confirmed. The science of toponymy which determines and analyzes the existing names of places, their transformations and origins helps us to acquire information about the past. The names of the streets also give inspiration to literature pieces with their connotations. For instance, Ilhan Berk describes Mis Sokak (Street) located in Beyoğlu by referring to its physical features as “Mis Street which always wears black, always wanders with her umbrella and always looks in its front (Berk, 1994:188). In his novel “Aylak Adam,” Yusuf Atılgan speculates about the names of streets and also proposes new names to those streets: “Perhaps some of you have passed through ‘İki Öksüzler Sokağı,’ (Ing. ‘Two Orphans

Street’) but you wouldn’t know. Mostly two storey houses which are new or look new. Like the streets which Sarlo would call ‘Easy Street.’ I call it ‘Eli Paketliler Sokağı’ (Ing. ‘Hands Packed Street’). Ones who have no other problem but losing his neighbors’ respect live here. But its name... Who are these two orphans? What did they do to give their name to the street [...] There is one street ‘Aslan Yatağı Sokağı’ (Ing. ‘The Bed of the Lion Street’) with lots of bends. Once upon a time a real lion moved into one of its corners and all the city went to watch it, or was what they called lion one of the boasting vagrants of the neighborhood? What about ‘Sıra Selviler Sokağı’ (Ing. ‘Row of Cypresses Street’) which you would go till the end and not see even one cypress? Asphalt, concrete upon concrete, flock of cars, flock of people walking fast... Were people walking like these when there were cypress on this street?” (Atılgan, 2000:8)

For reasons of name similarities, giving a respected person’s name or political intentions, etc., the municipalities change the street names and higher administrative units change the names of the neighborhoods and districts. It is sometimes possible to see two different name plates on the same street. The change of the street names are informative in that they reflect the cultural tendencies of a particular period. For instance, around Kurtuluş (Old name: Tatavla, Greek: Τατάυλα) area, many Armenian names were replaced with Turkish ones. The name Papayanni was changed to Remzi Baba. Marki Kalfa became Dev Süleyman. It is possible to trace the oppressive policies against minorities during the period when the names were changed. In Istanbul, the stratification of place names is more intense and too much, compared to other cities, because Istanbul has gone through a series of cultural transformations many times and was subjected to migrations and replacements of different communities.

### 2.1.2. Signposts and traffic signs

“They pass beside a column, a street-light rather, on which is fixed, above their heads, a blue and white sign indicating by an a row: Cluny Museum. On the same column, another signal,

luminous and blinking, is the only one that attracts the glance of the passers-by. At regular intervals, for the pedestrians, the permission to go or the order to wait flashes. Gilles and Carole pass near the column without seeing it. Gilles waits, before crossing, for the cars to stop. Carole follows Gilles, who holds her by the nape of the neck. They take the direction indicated by the sign Cluny Museum, and skirt the railings of the garden of the museum.”

Michele Bernstein, Buchet-Chastel, La Nuit, 1961. (Citation: Wark, 2011:78)

When we need (and actually most of the time when we don't need), we find ourselves in the midst of geographical signs, traffic signs and plates of street names; and these direct our movement both as pedestrians and drivers. As opposed to a small town or village, it is not common to get lost completely in a big city –even if it is our first time there. The presence of others who we can ask for the way and other tools such as metro and bus stop signs, road plates, street numbers and plates help us (Lynch, 2010). Today, the type of communication that we build with the city is not a mythic relation based on narration as it used to be in the past; but a particular way of perception that is constructed by signs, signals and allegories which carry religious and metaphysical indicators. This enables us to continue our individual daily activities within the city. Unger describes this situation saying that “For instance, using a car is possible through the organizing impact of the traffic signals, signs and symbols; without these, driving a car would turn into a reckless and probably a destructive adventure (Unger, 2013:21).

In relation to the geographical communication elements; just like the street names, which the users relate to the most, the plates that relay these names have also gone through a similar transformation period. The street signs of Istanbul have been changed many times. After the standardization of street and road plates, the city was initially furnished with plates that are designed as white writings upon red background; in the following years the colors of red-white are changed to blue-white and then the tone of the

blue color is amended. The plates that are being used currently are the ones designed by Bülent Erkmen and Aykut Köksal –in 2007- containing a composition of 3 differently colored blocks. For all the neighborhoods, the first two blocks are red and white, however the other block changes depending on the neighborhood. While the red block (Pantone 1945) contains information regarding street and road name, the white block (Ral 3001) contains information about the neighborhood and the last block has district information [Figure 3]. Also a typography which could be associated with Istanbul is designed to be put in the plates [Figure 4]. In addition to a healthy communication that the design can establish with the city dwellers, it is also aimed to include the informative element as a determining factor of the city identity (Köksal, 2007).

## 2.2. Commercial communication elements

The commercial communication forms and their physical representations mainly aim to create and impose their own terms and conditions rather than using existing geographical communication elements and reconciled urban semiotics. The physicalization and legalization of commercial communication (commercial names, commercial advertisements, etc.) in the city becomes possible and visible through the legal permissions with the use of “urban surfaces” (building facades, advertisement areas, billboards, etc.).



**Figure 3.** The street plates of Istanbul, designed by Bülent Erkmen and Aykut Köksal (Resource: Reading Istanbul from signs, Exhibition Booklet, Garanti Galerisi, İstanbul).



**Figure 4.** The typography of street plates designed by Bülent Erkmen and Aykut Köksal. (Resource: *Reading Istanbul from signs, Exhibition Booklet, Garanti Galeri, Istanbul.*)

### 2.2.1. Advertisements

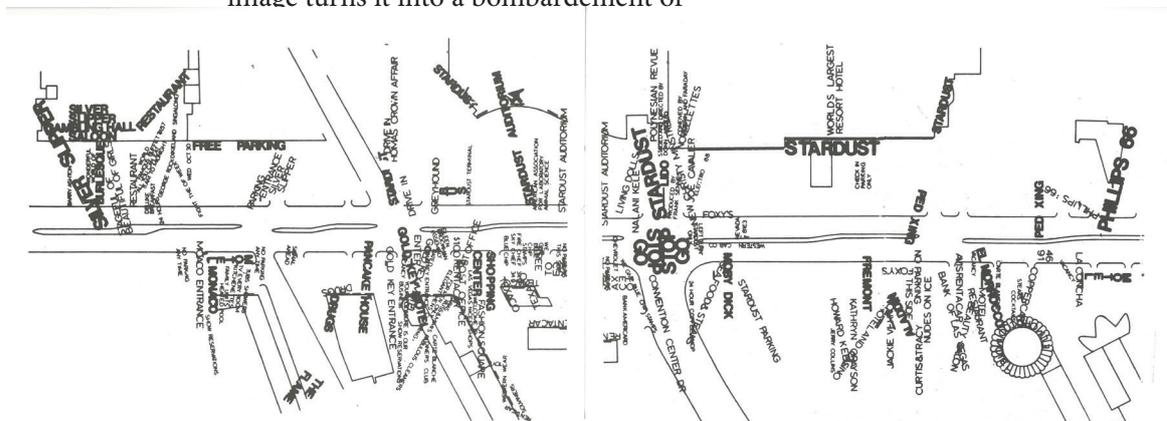
“In the modern city, as in the ur-forests of another era, ‘threatening and alluring face’ of myth was alive and everywhere. It peered out of wall posters advertising “toothpaste for giants,” and whispered its presence in the most rationalized urban plans that, “with their uniform streets and endless rows of buildings, have realized the dreamed- of architecture of the ancients: the labyrinth.”

Susan Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 1989.

In the cities that we live in, all of us are subjected to hundreds of commercial images every day. There is no other image in our urban experience that appear as much as the commercial images [Figure 5]. The intensity of the image turns it into a bombardement of

messages. Because the commercial image is constantly changed and renewed depending on expectations and consumption tendencies and is perceived swiftly, it is momentary and for the same reason volatile. John Berger also emphasizes on this characteristic of the commercial image: “Usually it is we who pass the image -walking, traveling, turning a page; on the TV screen it is somewhat different but even then we are theoretically the active agent- we can look away, turn down the sound, make some coffee. Yet despite this, one has the impression that publicity images continually passing us, like express trains on their way to some distant terminus. We are static; they are dynamic -until the newspaper thrown away, the television programme continues or the poster posted over.” (Berger, 1977:130)

Since the advertisements in the city can remain (legally) only if the rental cost is paid, the expired advertisements after being replaced with the other ones do not leave any trace behind. However, many advertisements which are placed in various locations illegally and irregularly are stuck on top of one another and they overlap. Sometimes also the layers might get torn apart and therefore the poster of a concert taking place next month and that of an activity that happened last month mix with each other, or notices of political nature are trivialized among the daily advertisements. İlhan Berk’s description of “And a board is saying with capital letters that there is a strike in Banco Commerciale Italiano” (Berk,1990:188) is an example to that. Flâneur-poet, perceives the strike



**Figure 5.** The “Strip” map of Las Vegas, R. Venturi & D. S. Brown & S. Izenour,1972 (Resource: *Las Vegas’in Öğrettikleri*, R. Venturi & D. S. Brown & S. Izenour, Şevki Vanlı Yayıncılık, Ankara, 1994).

as a text and blends it with the other images of the city. In that sense, strike is not an activity any more, but rather it is noticed and skipped like an ordinary commercial text.

### 2.2.2. Shop and workplace plates

Different from the commercial posters which are spreaded all over the city, shop and workplace plates are placed close to the shops/workplaces –mainly in the side of or above the front facade of the place [Figure 6]. A workplace plate can remind of an old business which was closed long time ago; or even if a known store, shop or confectionery... etc. is changed to be used for a different purpose, a plate relating to the former use might still be present. For instance, although today Markiz Pastanesi (confectionery) has become a restaurant and provides services with a totally different understanding than the past, the writing of “pastane” (confectionery) is left as if nothing has changed. These communication elements which carry the traces of past uses, sometimes become the sign of “loss.” The wanderer is able to acquire information regarding the amusements, tendencies and fashions of old days and also experience today’s street life synchronically through commercial communication elements.

### 3. Conclusion

“City overflows with the alphabetical signs that de facto transforms the pedestrian into a reader. The city is read every day with its lighted and lightless plates, posters, advertisements, announcements, menu plates hung on the windows of restaurants and pubs and leaflets distributed by “sandwich man” or skater young girls dressed like majorettes in front of the terminals or bus stops, signposts, street signs, namings specific to bus and metro stations, graffiti and tags. Thierry Paquot, *Des Corps Urbains*, 2011.

For an individual, the city is not only a text to be read but also a text to be written at the same time, if s/he experiences the city of Istanbul on foot by using the tactics of *dérive* and *détournement* as suggested by situationists during this practice and with the awareness that the communication elements of the city predominantly have a



**Figure 6.** The commercial sign of Kelebek corset store (Resource: Photo taken by the author).

palimpsest like the city itself. However, “it is not easy to trace the clues and decipher the codes of the city, because the things that are shown hustle and the ones who show them lose their integrity” (Paquot, 2011:70). Also, because in Istanbul there is an intense temporal and functional stratification, contradictions and fragmentations are a lot. For the communication images—which are directive, informative, seductive (particularly the commercial communication elements), in fragments and complicated— to be enhanced in favor of the city; the observer should take on an active role.

For the observer to be active or as Fillon puts it, for new plays to be encouraged, the experience of exploration should create unexpected incidents and situations. The power holders over urban planning, both individuals and institutions (municipalities, city planners, architects...etc.) should consider creating astonishing and ambiguous-urban experiences: “Like vivid prose, street life needs to find a structure. There are a class of clarities we want to avoid.” (Sennett, 1992) As a researcher who particularly focuses on urban images, Richard Sennett emphasizes on the significance of the image for a vivid urban life. The image as an element that is susceptible to change, should be in a flexible relation with its surroundings and should be considered as open-ended (Lynch, 2010).

For the city to be experienced on foot, the requirements of pedestrian access should be taken into consideration. That the pedestrian access

is continuous, secure and within the bounds of human scale emphasizes the significance of the street concept for the pedestrian. The publicity of the street enables the individual to observe and to take action without apprehension. The idler who feels at home on the street then appropriates the street like her/his home and gains courage to change and transform it like he/she would do in his/her house. Benjamin wrote in his notes taken between 1927-1929 for his book *Passages* that “Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally restless, eternally moving essence that, among the facades of buildings endures (erlebt), experiences (erfährt), learns, and senses as much as individuals in the protection of their four walls. For this collective the shiny enameled store signs are as good and even better a wall decoration as a salon oil painting is for the bourgeoisie. Walls with the “*défense d’afficher*” are its writing desk, newspapers are its libraries, letterboxes its bronzes, benches its bedroom furniture and café terraces the balcony from which it looks down on its domestic concerns after work is done.” (Citation: Buck-Morss, 2014:304-305)

Nowadays, compared to the past we have more tools within our reach to convey our experiences within the city. Among these tools, when we consider the ones related to the communication elements; even if not as dominant as it used to be in the past, the oral advices we make to our acquaintances are the first to come to mind. However, today we are able to use the potential of virtual spaces intensely for similar purposes. We are able to announce our presence on a street or in a commercial store to others through “share location” application; while some tools share this information with only our “acquaintances,” some of our posts can be viewed by anyone using the application. Also we can share not only our presence in a certain location, but also our thoughts and feelings about the place. Someone who we don’t know personally can reach our comments when passing by the same location. The individual relationship established between the city dweller and communication elements has been evolving

into a relationship in between the city dwellers. The “QR codes” placed on the walls of the street and the doors of shops and stores can become a public platform where data regarding that geographical region come together and be accessed by the mass. It is crucial to investigate the communication elements, because reading the communication elements and forms of the city vis-à-vis the physical environment, its analysis and change is much easier and immediate. A walking practice –which is not passive- that endeavours to read the city, contains a great potential to produce tactics that could change and transform the city in line with and in favour of the public’s will through the use of physical and virtual means.

## References

- Aragon, L. (1926), *Le Paysan de Paris*, Editions Gallimard, Paris.
- Atılgan, Y. (2000), *Aylak Adam*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Atılgan, Y. (2002), *Bütün Öyküleri*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Berger, J. (1977), *The Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, New York.
- Berk, İ. (1990), *Pera*, Adam Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Berk, İ. (1994), *İstanbul Kitabı*, Adam Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Berk, İ. (1997), *Galata*, Adam Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Bernstein, M. (1961), *La Nuit*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris.
- Buck-Morss, S. (1991), *The Dialectics of Seeing*, MIT Publishing.
- Campbell R. (1952). *Poems of Baudelaire*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Certeau M. (1988). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Fillon J. (1971). *New Games. Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-century Architecture*. Ulrich Conrads. Ulrich Conrads (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.155.
- Goebbels, P. (1934), *Kampf um Berlin*, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Münih.
- Koçak, O. (1992). Kalmak imkansız, İlhan Berk’in Şiiri ve Poetikası Üzerine Bir Deneme. *Defter Dergisi*, Nr 19/ 11, Pp. 158-175.
- Köksal, A. (2007), “*İstanbul’u Tabeladan Okumak*” Exhibition Booklet, Garanti Galeri, İstanbul.

- Lynch, K. (2010), *Kent İmgesi*, İş Bankası, İstanbul.
- Mumford, L. (1956), *The Natural History of Urbanization: Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, Symposium under the chairmanship of Carl Sauer, Marston Bates, and Lewis Mumford, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Pp. 382-98.
- Öner M. (2009), *Tracing Istanbul [from the air]*, Garanti Galeri Publishing, İstanbul.
- Oskay, U. (1981), "Benjamin'in Baudelaire üzerine çalışmalarında Yükselme Dönemi Kapitalizminin Sanat ve Kültür Yaşamları", SBF Basın Yayın Yüksek Okulu yıllığı, Ankara.
- Paquot, T. (2011), *Şehirsel Bedenler, Beton ile Asfalt Arasında Hassasiyetler*, Everest Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Sennett, R. (1992). *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company. p.152.
- Simmel, G. (2011), *Modern Kültürde Çatışma*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Tanyeli, U. (2002), "Türkiye'de Flâneur: *Arredamento Mimarlık*, Sayı. 100+53, Nr.11, 6-7.
- Ungers, O.M. (2013), *Morphologie - Kent Metaforları*, Lemis Yayın, 2013.
- Virilio, P. (2007), *Speed and Politics*, MIT Press, London.
- Wark, M. (2011), *The Beach Beneath the Street*, Verso Books, London.
- Wilson, E. (2001), *The Contradictions of Culture*, Sage Publications, California.
- Url-1 < <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/1.definitions.htm>>
- Url-2 < <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm>>