

The products of popular culture in urban space: Do they enrich or spoil?

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Abstract:

In current capitalist systems the urban surfaces are saturated with the attached images and objects which can be considered as tools of communication that support consumption. With the new technological innovations, the denizens live in real-virtual worlds and the metropolitan spaces are reshaped within the postindustrial relations. The people interpret their environment and contribute to the cities in a free manner. Thus the urban spaces always involve buildings, objects besides the people. They need to be scrutinized from the street level to develop a total understanding. The developing countries living in unstable conditions in many aspects encounter with so many **hybrid socio-spatial structures**. They experience the different types of modernities and try to understand the alternating contexts and experiences. The strict differentiations and contradictions direct people to create their own culture. The products of **popular culture** are formed via the struggles against the hegemonic groups. The passive **resistances** of subaltern groups succeed in the end and they not only achieve to exist in the system but also spread their tastes, values and ideologies. The subordinates living in the world city **Istanbul** try to adapt themselves to the city life by modifying the circumstancing places. They add their products -can be evaluated in varying categories, economic, socio-cultural and political- to the urban environment and become a component of the heterogeneous orders. The purpose of this work is to try to found an understanding on the popular culture by scrutinizing the products in detail as well as establishing an inquiry about the **socio-spatial orders**.

Keywords: *hybrid structures, popular culture, resistance, Istanbul, socio-spatial orders*

Introduction

In contemporary world it is nearly impossible to see the bare surfaces in urban areas. Mostly they are hidden behind the attached images, signs and symbols either transient or permanent. Sometimes these surfaces even become more crowded with three dimensional, parasite attachments. The multiple layers on the surfaces have become the realm of today's urban spaces. Actually, the images are encouraged by the capitalist system itself. Even some of the informal object/images are tolerated at some places as they support the operating systems.

The visual communication is one of the key factors that accelerate the consumption in the capitalist systems. Money economy dominates the contemporary big cities, metropolises. The commerce has become so dense and plural that everything, even the images are used as marketing tools. (Fiske, 1991) We understand that the possessed objects and the images are the source of the social difference. The production of signs and images determine the city. (Raban, 1974, Harvey, 1999) It is possible to speak about hyperreality and the eternally cloned images in the information age. (Leach, 1999, Baudrillard, 1997) In this occasion the hyperreality theory discusses the image/forms or the hypersurfaces, the real/virtual experiences and the other dualities that the developed world systems live in. (Perrella, 1998) These developments in global cultures are the products of the capitalist political economy and technological and communicative effects (King, 1990) The metropolitan space get reshaped within the postindustrial relations. The physical environment loses its importance and life continues through the virtual spaces. Television screens, cellular phones, digital photography have become the extensions of the human beings parallel to the abstraction related to physical environment.

However with the globalization the developed countries capture the power of making interest and controlling the other economies while the developing countries are in the position of applying what is defined by them. The countries at the center come together and protect themselves against socioeconomic competition. On the other side, the states of the peripheral countries get smaller. They loose their social identities and divide into groups which have different cultures. These varying social entities get into oppositions instead of evaluating their rich potential and benefiting from the diversity.

The “fragmented” urban areas and the “bordered” regions have been carried into the agenda of the peripheral countries parallel to the social divisions and the contradictions. In this context, the members of the subaltern groups make their own meanings out of their social relations and built the popular culture in opposition to the cultural industry. The people interpret and modify the environments in their every day lives. Struggling hard they achieve to differentiate the urban spaces and attach their identities. Their endeavors give them the opportunity to spread their tastes, values and ideologies. The products of popular culture come to the agenda of the urban space with different considerations. Economic, sociocultural and political issues urge people to find ways of diminishing the effects of the difficult and troubling positions. They sometimes build objects or tools to make their lives easier, sometimes place images to attract the others or sometimes decorate their circumstances to add some properties of their identities. At some occasions, the similar types of environmental modifications come from the municipal authorities. They realize some operations in the cities with the political purposes such as the trials of building mosques to the most significant points of the public spaces or planting millions of tulips and roses at every possible area in order to build good relations with the voters.

In this regard my goal is to call attention to the products of popular culture in urban spaces and to discuss their role in the socio-spatial orders. This work is going to develop a closer look to the struggle between power-bloc and subordinates besides formulating an inquiry about the consequential products. I will discuss them regarding to their production purposes, content, utilization and contextual relations and scrutinize the case in Istanbul.

Urban space –urban society, the reciprocal relations

We witness that the denizens restructure the urban spaces unendingly in their everyday practices. The diversified meanings accompany the physical transformations. The initial suggestions of the designers and planners are utilized in changing ways by the interest groups living in the city. They interpret on the once given forms and functions. The people either on the side of the power-bloc or the subordinates participate in making and remaking of urban spaces. They act according to their backgrounds and experience and built their own environments. (Moore, 1983) As Jonathan Raban says the city is an encyclopedia or a market place of the styles. The city looks like a series of stages that the people make their magic when they act. They are relatively free in their behavior and merge the real and the imagined in this space. (Raban, 1974, Harvey, 1999)

The “urban space” and “urban society” are two related concepts. In fact, every instant of human lives passes in certain places and become effective on the process of spatial construction. The phrase “urban space” consists of the buildings, objects and the people as well as the related events. Social space is a social product and reflects all the production relations of the capitalist order. The structures and agencies provide an insight into urban spaces and its transformation. (Madanipour, 1996, Lefebvre, 1997)

For this reason, Henri Lefebvre claims that to explain the space we need a unitary theory that gathers the mental, physical and social space. A theory that enables to give an overall view will help us to comprehend the socio-spatial orders better. It may bring together the formal abstractions and practico-sensory realm of social space. (Lefebvre, 1997) At this point, Ali Madanipour asserts that we may not arrive at unitary concept of space but negotiate with our social and physical environments in our everyday experience. According to him a closer look at the daily lives will reveal clearly the political and economic processes through which the urban spaces are structured and form a wider understanding. He shares the idea of Michel de Certeau who advises to leave the abstract position in which we only “see” things and to go down below to the street level where daily life is practiced in order to comprehend the social and spatial interactions. Only “the ordinary practitioners” of the city, “the walkers whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban text” can live the elementary form of this experience in the city. They are blind that they can not read but write the city text. The endeavor of understanding their activity makes the reality visible. (de Certeau, 1988)

If I rephrase the statements that have been put forward up to the point, related to the reciprocal relations of urban space and urban society in brief, I can assert the following points: First, the socioeconomic relations in the capitalist systems become effective in the transformation of the urban space while the differentiations accelerate by the technological developments. Second, the conflictions and social divisions which give rise to the fragmentations in urban space get intensified in the peripheral countries because of their relations with the developed economies. Third, these little and big, subordinating groups built alternate cultures by struggling with the power-bloc. Their experiences are valuable to understand and to evaluate the realities in the built environment that a detailed discussion can strengthen a unitary theory of space from a different perspective.

Diverse entities, hybrid structures and the heterogeneity in urban spaces

Today we can much speak about the heterogeneity in socio-spatial orders. Especially in developing countries the diverse entities –local-vernacular or imported, agricultural or industrial-post industrial, simple or high technology and hybrids as well- standing side by side besides interacting each other. According to N. Garcia Canclini, native, indigenous and scholarly, erudite are on the same coffee table. Canclini, even asks why the Latin American people should worry about post-modernity if all the modern advances have not arrived to their continent and not reached to every people and draws attention to the existing premodern situations, illiteracy, informal political alliances, religiosity and media manipulations guiding masses via several quotations. Thus he advocates that they conceive Latin America as a more complex articulation of traditions and modernities, a heterogeneous continent of countries in each of which coexist multiple logics of development. (Canclini, 2001) Renato Rosaldo in the forwarding text of Canclini's book states the difficulty of accepting the author's approach that places a distance between social and temporal. Rosaldo underlines the importance of Canclini's words on the cultural production that can never remain independent of the market place but entering and leaving modernity deconstructs and dissolves into hybridity while thinking that hybridity better to be understood as ongoing condition of all human cultures which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation. (Rosaldo, 2001)

The unstable conditions in many aspects (sociocultural, economic political and etc.) increase the rate of mobilization in developing countries. The different groups, the hegemonic and subalterns contradict on many issues. The fluctuating social activities affect the spatial order and the hybrid species become an important reality of the urban space considerably. In the contemporary conditions of the world, these countries experience different modernities, unlike to the Western type. Nilüfer Göle, emphasizes the inclusive dynamics, borrowing, merging and hybridization instead of bipolar contradictions, isolations and conflicting civilizations as well as indicating the multiple modernities that increase the capacity of understanding the different fabrics and experiences. (Göle, 2000)

Making meanings and building spatial cultures: popular culture

Most of the times the hegemonic groups hold the necessary power to build the socio-spatial orders. Their ideas and values become decisive on the urban space. In other words, the people who belong to the power-bloc can purchase, use and direct the lands in the way they can benefit. This homogenous group of people has similar economic conditions and similar ethic, legal, aesthetic understandings. On the contrary, the subordinates are in a continuous transformation and have diverse social structures and interests. At first hand, the subordinating people who are economically and politically weak accept the conditions constituted by the power-bloc. Later, the members of the dominant group find themselves encountered by the others and all kinds of products of popular culture just like Gulliver among the dwarfs, finding himself kept hostage with little nails and pieces of strings.

However popular culture is always a culture of conflict. It is structured in opposition to the dominant ideology. (Fiske, 1990, Hall, 1981) The subordinates are in struggle of making their social meanings in opposition to the hegemonic groups that intend to impose their own values. In this process

the people build their culture out of their experiences. The ordinary people resent their situation. They can not produce their resources but use the resources of the current system to make their own culture. (Fiske, 1991) For this reason, it displays not only the signs of the governing relations and dominating powers but also the traces of resistance, in consequence they carry plural meanings. de Certeau uses the guerilla metaphor to explain the struggle of these powerless people in everyday life. They do not fight openly but resist to hegemonic powers by using guerilla tactics. These diverse groups of people do not leave the field but syringe their own values into the city life and start to affect the dominants. They know how to get along and operate with clever tactics which give them the chance of standing against the terminating attacks and continue to exist. (de Certeau, 1988)

Some of the theorists mitigate the role of popular culture and make an emphasis on the reconciliations of social diversities while the others evaluate the products under the concept of the mass culture and accentuate the stable recessive groups of people who have weak social relations and do not have any idea about social classes. On the contrary to these interpretations it is possible to bring another approach. According to Fiske, the popular culture represents the field of struggle. The subordinates accept the governmental powers of hegemonic groups but still show an effort to overcome them using the popular tactics. Researching the popular spirit and creativity will give the chance of understanding the resistances of everyday life. With an optimistic approach we can evaluate the evolutionary parts of the popular culture. (Fiske, 1991) It neither deals with finding consensual meanings and harmonizing social differences as the liberal pluralists defend nor massifying or commodifying people within the capitalist relations as the mass cultural theorists propose. (Fiske, 1990)

From this point of view, we can evaluate the position in Istanbul-Turkey and the relation between the products of popular culture and urban space. It is possible to say that the cases in the city are quite interesting and worth to report. Martin Stokes declares that after 80's in Istanbul, liberal economy gained victory over the reformist tradition of the state and the city became a cosmopolite melting pot where the Western and Eastern cultures met. Many people migrated to the city have begun to live the modernity as temporariness, hybridity and placelessness. They have been against the hegemonic race or culture that pushed them to the city by force and have displayed their resistance at least in one area, by making the synthesis of East and West music techniques and creating "arabesque" music. (Stokes, 2000) Parallel to Stokes, Nilüfer Göle, asserts that after 80's, the arabesque life styles and music besides the fundamental religious movements have become effective in Istanbul and Easternized the city once again. This process signifies the endeavor of the migrated people who have been trying to become citizens. However they have affected the elite life styles. These "New Ottomans" have started to show interest to traditional food and antiques. According to Gole this trend can be called as *alaturca* modernity. (Göle, 2000)

The transformations in Istanbul

Istanbul has always protected its importance though the population and economy had shrunk relatively for a while after the establishment of the Republic in 1923. Its physical properties and history have supported its splendor in every period. As a matter of fact in 80s, the global and national transformations have affected the city's fortune a great deal. The peripheral

countries in Black Sea, Caucasia and Balkans changed with the abandonment of the socialist regime. Turkey has opened its doors to the world economy and has liberated the flows of international funds. In this period, Istanbul has strengthened its place and has increased its share in the national income. From that time on, the main economic decisions have begun to be given in Istanbul. The industry has lost its primary role but the service sector and the construction business have improved. The private sector has invested in housing and tourism while the state has invested in transportation, communication and energy sectors. Istanbul has empowered its place as a meeting point for the international business. These inclinations have continued parallel to the other mega capitals over the world. The city itself has become an agent of capital growth. The project of marketing Istanbul has become very attractive. (Keyder, 2000, Sonmez, 1996)

Before the years of 80s, the industrial development was important for Istanbul. The businessmen were in demand of the cheap work power and the city appealed a lot of people from the other parts of Country. They became the workers in the factories and settled either in the squatter settlements or in the deteriorated quarters which also encouraged the urban growth. But today the spatial disorder and the fragmented urban space has become a handicap for those who want to market the city. Besides, the sharp differentiations between the adjacent settlements have mounted serious problems. The newcomers living in poverty try to adopt themselves to the city. They are in search of new identities. In everyday life they capture the opportunity of rebuilding their culture and get into interaction with the city culture.

The globalization efforts, the endeavor of becoming a world city and getting the benefit of the alternative financial resources such as the different types of tourism, constitute a polished face for Istanbul on one side and on the other, inadequate cultural and physical environmental conditions of the subordinating people and their spatial interpretations through the trials of integration to the city become an important base of the heterogeneity.

Popular culture in Istanbul

The heterogeneous sociocultural structure of Istanbul makes the everyday life in the city even more colorful. "The ordinary practitioners" as de Certeau calls reinterpret their environment and express themselves by installing the diverse products in the city that are representing the popular culture. In other words, they attach several images and objects as well as some spatial units to the urban surfaces in order to earn more, feel better or communicate with others.

The products of popular culture in Istanbul can be scrutinized in three categories: economic, sociocultural and political. They are the products of different concerns but in general carry the mutual goal of finding solutions or giving relief to certain difficulties. The decorative elements, equipments, objects or images that take place in the urban space have widespread consumption as they are usually cheap, easy to manage and use and delightful for a number of people. People who are in need of reaching more people, reflecting their tastes, expressing their feelings, beliefs, ideas and values and finding an easy way of getting in contact with corresponding groups use some adapted traditional forms, bizarre objects, attractive colors, written phrases and signs on the surfaces besides designing different equipments that assist them in their works.

THE PRODUCTS OF POPULAR CULTURE IN URBAN SPACE, ISTANBUL		
ECONOMIC THE EQUIPMENTS OF VENDORS SHOP DECORATIONS DECORATIONS OF ENTERTAINMENT PLACES	SOCIO-CULTURAL	
	RELIGIOUS SHRINES	DOMESTIC WINDOW , GARDEN , DECORATIONS BUILDING FINISHINGS
		POLITICAL (MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS) SPATIAL UNITS MOBILE OBJECTS (FURNITURES) CITY DECORATIONS

Table 1: The Categories of the Products of Popular Culture



Figure 1: The Scripts on the City Surfaces



Figure 2: Political Arrangements



Figure 3: The Window Decorations

1. The products produced with economic concerns

Most of the times people act with the motivation of improving their businesses. The street vendors and shop owners try to be one step further than the others and appeal more people. These people have small scaled businesses and with minimum capital struggle a lot to exist in the difficult market conditions. They use their naïve creativity and search for new ways to be recognized.

Some of the dealers do formal business and have shops. They either own the places or rent them. From time to time, they tend to use the spaces around their shops, part of the pavement and the street though it is forbidden. They put the samples of their goods in front of their places in the morning and get them back when they close the shops. They try to do the best while designing their windows and doing front arrangements. The attractive materials that can be easily perceived and remembered are preferred. These types of dealers try to be in harmony with the regulations at most and not to have problems. The authorities can skip their disobedience.

Some of them are very clever at mixing the local and the global tastes and methods. One of the most remarkable examples is the *Simit Saray*, fast food shops in the city. *Simit*, is a traditional food which has been sold by the street vendors. Now it has been carried to the shops where it is cooked and served with some beverages. The decorations of the shops denote the rural atmosphere of the traditional *kahve's* (coffee shops) with their stone covered walls and low, wooden chairs and tables. This business has become very successful and franchised and even imitated with some similar names. Another example of this kind of entrepreneurship has come from the entertainment business. The recent *Turku Bar's* (the places where the traditional ethnic music are played) have become widespread in a short period in the city. Not only activities held in them but also decorations of these places reflect the hybrid tastes of users. In addition to these, some vendors settle at the centers or on the streets periodically with the permission of the municipalities. They intend to introduce regional or religious traditions and use some transient structures that can be identified with their deformed, weird styles.



Figure 4: The New Fast Food Shops



Figure 6: The New Entertainment Places



Figure 5: The New Entertainment Places



Figure 7: The Urban Surfaces

A great proportion of the street vendors do informal business. Some of them do not have any other possession but only the things they sell. Mostly they build their own display tools. They are quite talented in finding the extraordinary ways of conceiving the equipments that can be fold up, light in weight and transportable by using cheap or free materials. Some of the street vendors are mobile while some others use parts of the streets and the buildings illegally.



Figure 8: *The Attached Spatial Units*



Figure 9: *The Vendors*



Figure 10: *The Shoe Polishers*

2. The products produced with sociocultural concerns

The products in this category can be examined under two titles: “Domestic” and “Religious”. Arranging the social relations and empowering the communications these products play important roles in social and cultural lives.

Domestic: People express their sincere feelings by the arrangements that they do for their houses. Some families want to show the warm atmosphere in their homes by decorating their windows. They usually use some artificial flowers or little kitsch objects while some prefer to put garlands to their doors imitating the Western traditions. To redecorate both houses and their gardens is also very trendy among middle class families. They usually are not very selective and get the ideas from decoration magazines or catalogs and use ostentatious styles. There are also some low income people who also want to live in small, charming houses which are squeezed among the apartment blocks and sustain the “ideal home” legend. Gathering cheap materials and objects even from the litters they build their dwellings. Birdhouses, little sculptures, flowers planted in tin boxes may be enough to bring warmth to their place. However, they should be appreciated because of their courage and common sense for their resistance to live in tasteless blocks. These people identify the value of living in private small house that they can raise flowers in their garden and insist decisively on rejecting the concrete houses with polished faces.



Figure 11: *Decorated house elevations and gardens*

Religious: People show their religious attitudes in the urban spaces by constructing the religious buildings in some traditional forms. The domes, minarets, decorative elements and green color have become the symbol of the Islamic religion. The deformed proportions or the inharmonic forms do not bother them. They leave candle lights at the shrines and decorate the graves of the respected religious leaders and try to emphasize their strong belief and obedience.

3. The products produced with municipal intentions

The municipal authorities also participate in city decoration activities with political intentions. They use the urban spaces for celebrating the national days, New Year, important events and political elections. The “highest” the “biggest” and the “most ostentatious” can signify the prestige and wealth of

the governmental institutions. Nobody cares for their design quality and after a while they become a part of city pollution. On the other hand, the municipalities locate some “nice” spatial units and some “appealing” objects in the public places in order to please their voters. These kinds of investments usually attract the new comers who stay inbetween the city and the town culture.

Conclusions

The mega capitals over the world intensify on information and stop giving the primary role to industrial production. They invest in technology and make great developments in communication and transportation. Especially the visual communication systems carry the people into different social realms besides its economical consequences. All these transformations can be witnessed in the urban spaces. The attached images and objects cover the urban surfaces and have become a part of everyday life.



Figure 12: The Grave of a Religious Leader



Figure 13: The Municipal Police



Figure 14: The Electric Power Units





Figure 15: The Display Unit of a Simit Vendor Designed by the Municipality



Figure 16: City Decorations by the Municipality

On the other side, the developing countries try to evolve their socioeconomic systems but they have not achieved to obtain an extended development in industry and agriculture. The coexisting different structures become the source of the heterogeneity in socio-spatial orders. The diverse and plural entities can be accepted as the signs of the unstable milieu. The people living in the contradicting conditions make their meanings and build their own culture by using the resources of the imposed culture. They find a way of existing in the current system as well as using the proper tactics to change in a certain time interval. Their struggle can be traced at urban surfaces in the form of the products of popular culture and the dominants accept and evaluate them as the objects that can increase the consumption.

Istanbul is on the way of becoming a world city under the effect of global influences but at the same time lives the problems of the developing economies. The sharp social differentiations can be followed in the spatial orders also. The newcomers, the people that carry the traditional values recognize the new trends of the global culture and the foreign life styles in the city as well. The different structures can be in conflict with each other. Reinterpreting the urban spaces the people who try hard to become citizens build varying hybrid structures. However, adding different tastes and values to the urban space these products change the whole life in Istanbul. Additionally, they urge all the inhabitants to raise questions on the notions such as shareholders of urban spaces, democratic plurality in the city, cultural participation and aesthetic tastes of the others.

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Popüler kültür ürünleri şehir mekanını zenginleştiriyorlar mı, bozuyorlar mı?

Çağdaş kapitalist sistemlerde, şehir yüzeyleri tüketimi desteklemenin bir aracı olarak kabul edilen imge ve nesnelerle doludur. Metropollerde para ekonomisi etkindir ve imgeler dahi alınıp satılmaktadır. İşaret ve imgeler sonsuz kere kopyalanabilmekte, şehri işaret ve imgelerin üretimi belirlemektedir. Fiziksel çevre giderek önemini yitirirken sanal dünya değer kazanmaktadır.

Öte yandan küreselleşme ile birlikte gelişmiş bazı ülkeler dünya ekonomisini iyiden iyiye kontrol etmeye başlamış, çevre ülkeleri ise güç kaybederek parçalanma süreci içine girmiştir. Bu bağlamda parçalanmalar ve sınırlar gündeme gelmekte, güçsüzler gündelik yaşam içinde yürüttükleri edilgen mücadele le kendi kültürlerini, popüler kültürü yapılandırmaktadırlar. Gruplar çevrelerini yorumlayarak mekansal düzene kendi özelliklerini katmaktadırlar. Böylelikle şehir mekanı önemli ölçüde değişmektedir.

Bu makalenin amacı, şehir mekanında yer alan popüler kültür ürünlerine dikkat çekmek ve onları içerik kullanılış biçimleri ve bağlamsal ilişkileri doğrultusunda sorgulamaktır.

Şehirde yaşayan herkes, şehrin yeniden yapılanmasında yer almakta, kişilikleri doğrultusunda özgürce mekanı yorumlayabilmektedirler. "Şehir mekanı" ve "şehir toplumu" ilişkili kavramlardır. Şehir mekanı, binalar, nesneler kadar insanları ve ilgili olguları da içermektedir. Bu nedenle, bütünleştirici bir kuramın gerekliliği ifade edilmektedir. Sosyal ve mekansal etkileşimi daha iyi anlayabilmek için gündelik yaşam daha yakından gözlemlenmelidir.

Bugün sosyal mekansal düzen gözönüne alındığında, daha çok "heterojenlik" kavramı üzerinde durulabilir. Özellikle gelişmekte olan ülkelerde farklı gruplar, yerel-

vernaküler, ya da dışarıdan alınmış; basit ya da yüksek teknolojiye sahip; tarımsal ya da endüstri-endüstri sonrası düzene ait yapılar ve hatta melezleşmiş unsurlar birarada bulunmaktadır. Bu durum, bir yandan hareketliliği artırırken bir yandan da baskın olanlarla güçsüzler arasındaki çatışma nedenlerini çoğaltmaktadır. Değişken unsurlar mekansal düzeni etkilemekte ve melez oluşumları bugünün gerçeği haline getirmektedir. Bu ülkeler Batı'dakinden farklı tipteki modernlikleri yaşamaktadırlar. Çoklu modernlik kavramı, değişik yaşam deneyimlerini ve melezlikleri anlama kapasitesini artırmaktadır.

Çok renkli, karışık ve devingen bir dünya içinde yaşamlarına devam eden güçsüzler, yaşam ve düşünce biçimleri farklı olmasına karşın hegemonik grupların yönlendirdikleri sosyal mekansal düzeni, başlangıçta kabullenmekte, sistem içinde kalmakta ancak pasif dirençlerini sürdürmektedirler. Bu nedenle popüler kültür, bir dizi çelişkiyi barındırır. Alt gruplar kendi kaynaklarını üretemez, başkalarının ürettiklerini biraraya getirerek yorumlarlar. Gündelik yaşamlarında devamlı mücadele veren güçsüzler, sonunda var olmayı ve kendi kültürlerini alttan alta yaymayı başarırlar. Popüler kültür nesneleri, bir süreç içinde ve başkalarıyla girilen ilişkiler çerçevesinde var olabilirler. Anlam ancak ürünün dolaşımı ile sürdürülebilir. Doğu ve Batı kültürlerinin birleştiği noktada yeralan Türkiye-İstanbul bu anlamda önemli deneyimlere sahiptir. İstanbul'daki mekansal düzeni ve yaşamı doğrudan etkileyen alt gruplar ve meydana getirdikleri ürünler ayrıntılı bir biçimde incelenmelidir.

Küresel ve ulusal farklılaşmalarla birlikte 80 sonrası, İstanbul'un bir dünya kenti olarak önemi artmıştır. Sanayileşme hız kesmiş, hizmet sektörü, konut yapımı ve turizm güçlenmiştir. Buna karşın, Anadolu'dan yapılan göçlerle nüfus artmış ve pek çok sorunu beraberinde getirmiştir. Keskinleşen kültür farklılıkları, gelir dağılımındaki dengesizlikler, yönetim boşlukları bir çok ara oluşumun ya da melez yapının ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Anadolu'nun kentleşmesi sözkonudur. "Alaturka modernlik"ler yaşanmaya başlanmıştır.

Güçsüzlerin oluşturdukları popüler kültüre ait ürünler, şehir mekanı içinde değişik kategoriler altında incelenebilirler. Ekonomik sosyokültürel ve politik açılardan getirileri düşünülerek bilinçli ve/veya bilinçaltı biçimde oluşturulan nesne ve imgeler, yapılan düzenlemeler şehirdeki yaşam kalitesini büyük ölçüde etkilemektedir. Baskın güçler popüler kültür ürünlerini yadırgasa da çoğu kere kabullenmek zorunda kalmakta, hatta kendi yaşamları içinde, ucuzluk, kolay erişilip tüketilebilme gibi nedenlerle destek unsuru olarak kullanılmaktadırlar.