

The Role of Street Art in State-Led Gentrification

Case Study on Mural Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

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The main purpose of the research is to examine the role of public sponsored street art implications in gentrification. The research data was conducted through participatory observation and in-depth interviews in the on-going revitalization project area; the Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood in Istanbul, Turkey.

The analysis of the data presented that there is an on-going and avoided gentrification process in the neighbourhood. Moreover, it was understood that the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival is aimed by municipality to aestheticize the process as well as trigger gentrification in the streets. Outcome of the study represents that the festival serves as a tool to form the culture of the district without making any visibly destructive implementation in the long-term.

Apart from that, the interviews mirrored the motivation of artists and their position regarding the gentrification process. Whereas some preferred to remain silent, most artists stated that they acknowledge the instrumentalization of street art to trigger gentrification. Additionally, it was found that the action of transforming the city is understood as claiming the right to the city by both the artists and the municipality.

Key words: Street art, State-led Gentrification, Art Projects in Revitalization, Mural Istanbul

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Also known as Ak Parti meaning Justice and Development Party. It is the ruling party in Turkey.

BOK: A graffiti crew in Turkey

ÇEKÜL: Çevre ve Kültür Değerlerini Koruma ve Tanıtma Vakfı

TAK: Tasarım Atölyesi Kadıköy; Design Atelier Kadıköy

TEM: Stands for “Terörler Mücadele” which is the counter-terrorism unit in Turkey

Interview Participants

AR: Atelier owner artists in the district

CA: Café Owner

IN: Inhabitant

MU: Municipal Officers

MTN: Montana Colors

PA: Parking Lot Worker or Owner

SA: Street Artist

1. INTRODUCTION

Gentrification has different histories in different cities and countries.

(Lees, 2003, 2507)

There are variety of definitions on culture, offers different perspectives to see it from. I observe culture as a nest where individuals seeks comfort and the feeling of belonging in it. In this context, the way leading us to culture in life-style, value and behavioural level goes through the physical nest such as neighbourhoods or districts where it embodies within. Considering the connection between the physical space and culture, in other words, accepting culture as a nest, this case study on Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood, aims to examine state-led gentrification through street art.

During the last ten years, Istanbul has been a stage of big renewal, revitalization and gentrification projects supported by the government. Some communities such as Romani people in the historical Sulukule district suffered more than many others, in terms of displacement. Observing the damages that gentrification caused on communities in the European Side, the Municipality of Kadıköy claims that an historical district in the Asian Side, namely Yeldeğirmeni is revitalised without causing a gentrification in the area. In the scope of the Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project, variety of different scale projects from reconstruction of physical environment to creating new social spaces for inhabitants are implemented in the district since 2010. While the speed of the project slows down, the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival was given a start in 2012. Since then, the neighbourhood is a home for many murals that are painted by local and international street artists who are invited by the municipality.

Considering the linkage between culture & the physical space and acknowledging Mural Istanbul as a part of an urban revitalization project, the study is an attempt to understand the impacts of street art in gentrification. In consistent with that, artists' reasons to paint at the festival, the aims of the municipality for supporting the festival, inhabitants' experiences regarding the gentrification process in the neighbourhood occur as side issues explored in the scope of the research.

Inclusion is one of important principles for the researcher. Therefore, the study is built on the participatory observation and interviews with street artists, atelier owners, inhabitants, café

owners, parking-lot workers or owners, municipal officers as well as an architect who works for a significantly influential initiative in the neighbourhood. Hence, the study aims to offer an understanding on the perceptions and experiences of different actors regarding the process as well. The research data is analysed using thematic discourse analysis in deductive form.

The theoretical framework of the research is mainly formed through Zukin's concepts on gentrification, politics of fear, public culture, and also Harvey's revision on Lefebvre's concept of "the right to the city".

1.1 Study Rationale & Research Scope

Being the first part of the research, the aim of this chapter is to introduce the research motivation, the subject of the study and the limitations regarding the study subject. The research represented here is an attempt to explore the position of street art which created in legal conditions with the encouragement and financial support of the municipality, in the context of gentrification. The research analysis is geography specified and the field study is limited with the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival's impact in the Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood.

As Jennifer Craik states,

Although the traditional arts (opera, ballet, classical music, theatre) have been inscribed formally within the ambit of cultural policy, there is a growing uneasy tension between what counts as 'art' and what counts as 'culture' in terms of how practitioners and administrators view the competing domains and in terms of policy initiatives (2007, 26).

Thus, street art which includes interdisciplinary forms of artistic expression, is a complex and controversial way of exhibiting creativity. With that being said, graffiti and street art continue to be a subject of debates raised by the question whether or not these artistic expression forms should be accepted as art. Despite the illegality of painting the walls and extreme fines which come after getting caught (Iveson, 2010), street art techniques and supplies are consistently being evolved (Bates, 2014; Kramer, 2010). What's more is that there are now art & culture projects which involves street art and supported by public & private agencies (Costa & Lopes, 2015).

Seeing from a broader perspective, policies and institutional interventions regarding to the image of an urban unite might be driven by the purpose to construct a new local identity.

Related actions may also aim to partly eliminate social and cultural futures that are in common among urban residents and shared with daily users of this specific urban unit. In addition to this, any event or act that plays with the sense of belonging may directly or indirectly have a consequence of cracking urban dwellers' existent feeling of being belong to this urban unit. Most commonly, prementioned type of policy, intervention or an event might have a purpose of attracting urban tourists, financial investors & new residents in the local and global extend.

Yeldeğirmeni also named as Rasimpaşa is one of the oldest neighbourhoods of the Kadıköy district in Istanbul Turkey. The neighbourhood has been a stage for diverse urban transformation projects since 2010. From small to larger scales, variety of projects are managed by the Municipality of Kadıköy as a part the Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project. Any big scale or consistent implementation to the urban space could cause a change on the social structure. The Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project in this case, was not an exception. Together with the project, physical structure of the neighbourhood has changed as well as the social and cultural. The main motivation for the municipality on the other hand, stated to be achieving a successful urban transformation which could be pointed out as a sample for the future projects of other municipalities. It is worth acknowledging that the urban transformation projects which were managed by the Municipality of Istanbul have been very controversial and triggered gentrification in the project areas. In this context, successful urban transformation meant creating a sustainable urban revitalisation without triggering gentrification. The current research briefly includes the social and cultural influence that the on-going project in Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood creates. The research addresses the arguments on gentrification as a contemporary urban issue as well as the street art's and artists' position in this particular type of urban transformation category, acknowledging their potential for political use through cultural, urban strategies which were conducted by local governments.

As the scholars Costa & Lopes highlights in their study on alternative urban policy & institutionalisation of street art in Lisbon, an urban or local street art policy is unavoidably encountered with a broad diversity of recipients and therefore, it frequently contradicts with specific public interests (2015, 8). Agreeing with that, various actors who takes responsibility at the Mural Istanbul Project, would possibly be influenced by or have benefits from the festival are also seen worth interviewing when conducting the data.

It is also worth noting that the main curiosity behind the study was based on a critical stance on street art being instrumentalized to the purpose of aestheticizing gentrification. However,

the knowledge which was gained during the time spent at the research field caused my strong opposition about street artists' choice of working with the state in gentrification fields to change. As the opposition had softened, issue of using street art for a specific purpose was referred and explored within the aims & motivations of municipality. Moreover, aestheticization of street art was referred in the scope of previous studies. In consistent with that, the thesis does not stand on any strong opposition. Instead, it aims to present variety of aspects and a wide-angled photograph of the field. Appropriately, the study poses questions to understand, rather than being in a claim to produce certain answers on the research issue.

Some of the prior researchers (Cole, 1987; Ley, 2003; Zukin, 2010) deliberate the role of artists and the art in gentrification through examining the process of gentrification in different cities of the United States of America and England. In these studies, the scholars follow the footsteps of individual artists who had moved to old, declining neighbourhoods and attracted to & experienced gentrification in those districts.

Apart from innocent artists settling in a poor neighbourhood, there are scholars approaching to the art's role in gentrification from a different perspective as well. According to Stuart Cameron & Jon Coaffee there is a third model of gentrification to be discussed. Analysing the process which was experienced in the north-east of England, specifically Gateshead, Cameron & Coaffee draws the lines for a third model where the key driver of gentrification is public policy and art is situated at the heard of policy makers' agendas (2005). In this third model, gentrification is not necessarily intended, yet it might appear as result of a successfully created regeneration in the long-term.

In the case of Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project, among all different urban implementations, the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival continues to be the most vibrant project that was brought into life. The festival is the first and only street art festival where artists are given a chance to paint giant size murals for the public in Turkey. It is the only project in the whole country where a municipality provides a significant amount of financial budget for the street art. The project is situated in the long-term strategy plans of the local government.

Comparing the process that the researchers observe in Gateshead and what is going on in Yeldeğirmeni, one could easily claim that the scales of the art projects do not show similarity. Yet, even when the same project is applied in variety of districts, we observe that the impact come out differently. Each urban transformation process is as unique as an influence of a cultural policy implementation to diverse locations. The study discusses the issue

acknowledging the importance of specifying the case location, and keeping the debates regarding whether street art is art or not in mind.

Another issue which finds itself a place in this study is the paradox of street art's legality. There is a contrast between the meaning of street art in general, and in the context of state or private supported projects. In the scope of the Yeldeğirmeni Project, both local and foreign, more than thirty-five street artists were invited to paint their art to the walls in the neighbourhood between 2012 and 2017. The project budget mainly covers the costs of the walls, meal in working hours, and additionally the foreign artists' travel & accommodation expenses. In spite of the municipality's support to the street art festival, it is important to highlight that any attempt to paint a graffiti to public walls without permission is still a subject of a punishment. Therefore, legality is an issue to be discussed in the following chapters.

I acknowledge that the art is a powerful tool that carries a potential to strengthen the existing culture as well as to shape & transform it. The interpretation of an art piece is so flexible that it changes depending on what its created for, how its exhibited and where. Considering that an art piece's meaning is framed by the setting and context of it (Mathews, 2010), street art might reflect different meanings when created within an urban development project of a municipality. Given that intentions of the municipality to provide financial budget for street art in their urban strategy plans is in contrast with the illegal nature of street art, the study addresses the issues of the meaning of street art in general, and in the context of the neighbourhood revitalization project. Interview statements present that the definition of street art and the artist who creates it, has been very flexible. Due this flexibility, the issue is still open for discussions. Consequently, it is necessary to identify the scope of the art practice, the form that was referred in this study. Considering the demands of the research, meaning of the term has been narrowed down. Finally, the word street art was used to describe the practice of painting modern graffiti and murals. Hence, the artists who paints at the Mural Istanbul are mentioned as street artists.

It is noticeable that earlier research which focus on the artists' and art's place in gentrification are mostly conducted from the Western world. In addition to this, one could also say that there might still be studies based in the other parts of the world, which have not been transcribed to English or Turkish. In either case, seeing the lack of diversity, I think that the Mural Istanbul street art festival can be a unique case to examine the issue within a different cultural environment. Hence, it can be said that the rapid transformation of the neighbourhood and the

municipal support for the first street art festival as a part of the revitalization project was what make the neighbourhood worth studying for the thesis.

1.2 Previous Research

...different emphases and interests in gentrification research lead to different 'pictures' or 'stories' of the process (Lees, Slater, Wily, 2008, 34).

The aim of this chapter is to give a concise account of the gentrification literature to create a base for further discussions in the following chapters. It is essential to clarify that there are scientific research and articles on street art and on gentrification in Istanbul. The main concern of these studies varies from re-claiming the urban space via street art (Taş & Taş, 2014), street art's position in criminology (Alparslan, 2012), graffiti within the historical context (Koçak & Koçak, 2016; Küçüksayraç, 2011) to cultural transformation of Yeldeğirmeni (Türkmen, 2015), renewal of cultural heritage sites: Yeldeğirmeni (Şahin, 2013). However, there has not been any research positioned in the same field with this current research. After noting that, I would now like to explore the literature of gentrification.

The urbanisation process follows changing paths in different parts of the world. However, it does not diminish the need of improving new sociological perspectives regarding the unique socioeconomic issues caused by radically increasing urban population. Related to this matter, Ruth Glass (1964) coined the term of gentrification to describe the changing urban landscape of London. Gentrification as a process that observed to cause housing problems in a way of rising property values and obstructing the affordability of living in general in neighbourhood for low-income tenants. It occurs to be one of continuing challenges in urban life.

Previous research suggest that gentrification proceeds in varying phases which are commonly referred as waves (Lees, 2003; Zukin, 2016). In their study, Hackworth and Smith (2001, 467) even offers a “schematic history of gentrification” for north eastern USA and Western Europe. The model where the gentrification is divided into three waves, explains the period between the first-wave “sporadic gentrification” in 1968 and the third-wave reaching to the end of the 1990's.

According to Hackworth and Smith, gentrification spread in a broader scale by pulling smaller and non-global cities to the game in the second-wave. In New York they add, art communities

function as “a key correlate of residential gentrification” by easing the process, attracting the capital into neighbourhoods during this period (2001, 467). The second-wave overall, “...lasting almost to the end of the 1980s, was characterised by the integration of gentrification into a wider range of economic and cultural processes at the global and national scale” (2001, 467–468). The third-wave is being more connected to a larger-scale of capital it is also referred as state led or government sponsored gentrification, and it “was quickly included in discussions of neoliberal urbanism as both paid a great deal of attention to the role of local government in furthering the interests of local elites and developers rather than conceptualizing the local state as primarily interested in welfare” (Aalbers, 2018, 2).

The existing research of Hackworth and Smith is problematic in terms of offering general statements of causes and effects in a single model of the gentrification process for different cities, and Loretta Lees (2003) previously underlined the importance of addressing the specific location of gentrification. Acknowledging this struggle, it can be said that there are similar features in different gentrification processes. Cities, particularly the ones in the western part of the world have been transforming under large-scale urban regeneration, renewal projects and gentrification. Among all, gentrification, has been appeared as a more unintentional or in other words; less manageable processes in most cases.

As a consequence of this, some scholars had argued on the idea that there occurs to be two types of gentrification which are classified depending on the main factor that triggers the process and named as gentrification by “collective action”, and to its contrast gentrification by “capital” (Butler & Robson, 2001). Seeing from this perspective, it can be said that following the contemporary urban trends, neighbourhoods practically revolutionized into boutique investments in the hands of urban policy makers, in order to brand bigger urban units as districts and cities and eventually to make profit from the increasing value of lands. Additionally, first individuals who are after authenticity or just more affordable housing, students, artists; and after their friends, and young middle class entrepreneurs created the same process.

In the meantime, but from the other perspective, the street art has become a part of legal interventions supported by local urban strategies to polish lower-profile, problematic areas to be able to present them through varying mediums. In cases that mediation successfully functioned to present those areas as nicely decorated display windows, it is not surprising that the population & consumption flow have been attracted to the target urban districts. Regarding to the issue that street art has been popularised, institutionalised, gained a legal value in such

specific occasions and cases to rearrange the direction of attention & population flow, there has been number of studies (See Costa & Lopes, 2015; Ulmer, 2016; Insch & Walters, 2017) which were also prepared a ground for this research.

In this context, a recent study of Insch & Walters suggests that,

Forms of street art have been embraced by local government authorities around the world as a strategy to foster urban tourism. Often considered as a public good and a vehicle to beautify and revitalise neglected parts of the city, the potentially conflicting roles of street art as a vehicle for artistic expression and source of local pride and sense of place have not been adequately conceptualized (2017, 615).

Apart from aforementioned observations, this welcoming attitude together with financial investments coming from private companies and local governments to spread the street art in target urban districts has other consequences. These consequences can be explained through their link to street artists' and the art world's itself. Notable examples for that would be increasing the preference to tend toward some artistic expression forms in contrast to others among artists, influencing the definition and quality of street art works, effecting the artists' socio-cultural identity in long term. Moreover, the social, cultural and economic value that the art creates on the urban space can expressed to be under the influence of these factors.

Acknowledging this and also what Hackworth, Smith & Aalbers suggest about the state led or government sponsored gentrification, one could highlight that the position of cities has dramatically changed after deindustrialisation. Creative sectors and tourism developed to replace other industries due culture being commodified to brand the cities. As reported by Cameron & Coaffee,

Returning more directly to the linkage of art and gentrification, both art and culture, and gentrification have been extensively used in public policy as instruments of physical and economic regeneration of declining cities, and the two are often associated in a relationship of mutual dependence (2005, 46).

Therefore, "It is of critical importance to understand the gentrification process -and the art world's crucial role within it - if we are to avoid aligning ourselves with the forces behind this destruction" (Deutsche and Ryan, 1984, 94).

Considering the subject of this study, I would now like to focus more on literature questioning the role of art & artist in gentrification.

1.2.1 Art, Artist and Gentrification

“The concept of creativity and artists is quite vague and many different artistic groups and individual activities could be included or excluded from that classification” (Casellas, Dot-Jutgla, Pallares-Barbera, 2012, 111). Looking at previous research where the connection between art, artist, street art, graffiti, and gentrification and other forms of urban transformation is questioned, how art and artist positioned changes. Review of the literature based on this division can be analysed in two groups.

In the first group, artist is roughly represented as a creative worker who produce art in their creative work spaces such as studios or atelier. In the second group on the other hand, the focus is on the role of art rather than the artist. Furthermore, the art in this group of research is either illegally created or created under the name of public art. Artist who creates the illegal art works is mentioned in the study only because their illegal art works such as graffiti, stencil or any other art form on the street.

Highlighting particular features of an artist group or not including some art forms in a research causes the illusion that there is a thick, clear division between artists, even though in reality this is not always the case. Keeping this division in mind, related literature to this study mainly investigates following issues; artists’ role in gentrification as agents, aestheticisation of gentrification & gentrification of graffiti, gentrification through incorporation of arts into the public-policy. I will be exploring these studies in the following subchapters.

1.2.2 Artists as Agents of Urban Gentrification

Even though gentrification is a product of various drivers, the role of artists as initiators of the process is among the main concerns of many scholars in gentrification literature. In these studies, artists are represented as a creative, intellectual group of people who increase the neighbourhoods’ cultural and financial value by creating a safe, trendy environment for high income, potential tenants.

It was observed in vast amount of cases and underlined by long-established theories that individual artists, art communities and artistic spaces function as agents via creating preliminary conditions to trigger gentrification of decaying, working-class neighbourhoods (Zukin, 1989 & 2010; Ley, 2003; Cameron & Coaffee, 2005). “From the perspective of

consumption, the characteristics of artists' lifestyles and 'bohemia', have been discussed as a potential factor in attracting investment, as the characteristics of bohemia contributes to the gentrification of decayed urban centres" (Casellas, Dot-Jutgla, Pallares-Barbera, 2012, 105). Observing the first and the second phase, Cameron and Coaffee underlines a shift from "the creation by artists of a milieu for the production of art" to "the commodification and private consumption of this artistic milieu" (2005, 46).

In gentrification literature, the artist's role as a pioneer of urban gentrification is strongly associated with David Ley's work (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005, 40). Looking at the historic context where cultural capital had gained high symbolic value, Ley claims that "an economic valorisation of the aesthetic disposition has frequently led to an increase in property prices" and consequently, he describes the relationship between artists, and gentrification "not inevitable" yet "frequent" (2003, 2540). Agreeing with Ley's statement on the relation of artists & gentrification, Zukin underlines that artists are not sufficient to make gentrification possible on their own. According to her "a convergence toward geographically targeted investment on the part of private capital and public policy makers" is the element that makes gentrification come to existence (2016, 203).

Motivation behind an artist's decision to move into an old district is also questioned by some scholars. Speaking on their study focusing the district of the Lower East Side, New York being gentrified, Deutsche and Ryan highlights that "deprivation" and "the romanticization of poverty" are used to promote the area as an "adventures avant-garde setting" (1984, 93). Moreover, the study points out the media support of the art community for the gentrification process of the area in 1980's. Regarding this, referring to the Lower East Side the art press describes the district as a "unique blend of poverty, punk rock, drugs, prostitutes and dilapidated housing that garde setting of considerable cachet." (Walter Robinson & Carlo McCormick, 1984, as cited in Deutsche & Ryan, 1984, 93).

Apart from these characteristics, the scholars underlines that being "close to the center of the city", is what makes "lower-class neighbourhoods", "where gracious brownstone or redbrick houses have fallen on hard times" attractive for "artists and writers, and occasionally lawyers and professors or museum curators, indie band members, and graphic artists" who are looking for a place to live, have "the good life at a moderate price, as the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu says about the aspirational consumption of people who work in cultural jobs" (Zukin, 2010, 8).

Despite the evidences showing that artist communities play a vital role in gentrification process, some scholars presents that artists could be observed as displaced inhabitants as well. Even though not always, in some cases artist communities are observed to be experienced re-gentrification. Looking at the gentrification process by the end of the 1980's in New York, Smith states that "...the marriage of convenience between art and real estate started to sour, and a wave of gallery closures was precipitated by massive rent increases demanded by landlords unconstrained by rent control" (1996, 18). Therefore, it is seen that together with re-rising financial value of properties; re-gentrification, affordability of a living in the same neighbourhood might become a problem for some individual artists.

As a consequence of that, artists too are displaced from the neighbourhood due the capital flow which they had attracted to the neighbourhood in the first place. As Kate Shaw put it in a paper that traced key contemporary debates on gentrification, the issue "...remains a sociological truism that 'early' gentrifiers not only help destroy the features that lured them to the inner city, but predicate their own displacement in turn" (2008, 4).

To sum up, we see that the reason behind the attraction of old neighbourhoods for higher income groups is explained through the influence of artist communities and other marginalized groups to the area as inhabitants. Artists who has or had work spaces in gentrified districts are mostly criticized for bringing attention to neighbourhoods and causing gentrification. Referring to my own memory from a state-led gentrification Roma district Sulukule in Istanbul, even walking in a gentrification field with a camera might provoke working-class inhabitants as gentrification's itself has a very intertwined image with artists and together with media, they are hold responsible from.¹ Similar to what I experienced, Cole shares his case study findings from Hoboken, USA saying; "...members of the low-income group perceive the artist not as an ally but as a symbol of change that will ultimately deprive them of their homes" (Cole, 1987, 407).

In the light of reported approaches to the position of the artist, it is conceivable that artists are portrayed as important agents but also victims of urban gentrification.

¹ In the time that I with my friend visited Sulukule, there were only a few old tenants left. New, modern apartments were already built. One of them has told that the neighbourhood was destroyed because of us, people with cameras, writers, media. He made it clear that people like us are not welcome in Sulukule. After that, other people who were sitting in the same kahvehane (traditional cafe) calmed him, and told us not to listen him.

1.2.3 Aestheticisation of Gentrification & Gentrification of Graffiti

The researcher who is known with her great contribution to the literature of gentrification, Sharon Zukin emphasises that “aesthetics always play a crucial role in constructing not just the habitat, but the habitus of gentrification” (2016, 203). She points out that, for a district to be “interesting” is what justifies new residents’ choice of moving there. Interesting could refer to the architecture, the neighbourhood’s history or already existing racial and ethnic “diversity” of long-time residents (2016, 203).

In contrary to the high number of studies questioning the linkage of the role of artists and gentrification in literature, aestheticisation of urban space & gentrification has only been carried out in a small number of discussions. This dynamic relation also includes the issue of gentrification of graffiti. Whereas gentrification is an urban process that involves different individual, public and private agents, aestheticization of gentrification is brilliantly expressed by Ley as, the journey of a place “from junk to art and then on to commodity” (2003, 2528).

What’s more, there is also the issue of aestheticization being a powerful tool to trigger oblivion. It is the urban artist’s eyes, “aesthetic eye that transforms ugliness into a source of admiration” (Ley, 1996, 301) and aestheticisation of gentrification could make the dirt, deprivation as well as homelessness get “mythologized, exploited, and finally ignored” (Deutsche & Ryan, 1984, 110). Therefore, as the scholars emphasise “Once the poor become aestheticized, poverty itself moves out of our field of vision” (1984, 110-111).

Another thing to mention is that, according to Smith, “The unprecedented commodification of art in the 1980s engendered an equally ubiquitous aestheticization of culture and politics: graffiti came off the trains and into the galleries, while the most outrageous punk and new-wave styles moved rapidly from the streets to full-page advertisements in the *New York Times*” (1996, 17). The “high art” mingled with a product of subculture; graffiti in some level and the border between two become relatively softer (Smith, 1996).

Owing to the situation of graffiti and street art entering to the galleries, graffiti’s position on the streets has also shifted. From causing an artist to be charged a fine, to be known as a financially supported street art / graffiti work, there is now a difference between legal and illegal street art pieces. For instance, there is the case of East London. The Canals Project in East London was a curated public art project, commissioned by The Legacy List and supported by Canal & River Trust as well as Bloomberg LP. International street artists have been invited

to paint murals on the walls for the project. Having said that, there is a story behind. Some walls have already had painted by local street artists until their works were covered due 2012 Olympic Games. That being said, public art body of the Canals Project which involves the former head of arts and cultural strategy of Olympics as a chief executive of the project, did not selected any local artists to exhibit their works. One could predict that this choice has given a birth to a controversy, not only because of artists being internationals but also due the fact that painting over another artists' work is a disrespectful act on the street.

Reflecting to this, a local street artist Sweet Toof described the situation as a “part of a whole culture of graffiti gentrification” and referring to the paint overs he said, “with the commercialisation of street art, it's becoming pay-as-you-go wall – every surface sold off to the highest bidder” (Wainwright, 2013).

With this in mind, let's look at the explanations given from the other side. According to the curator of the project the commission was “trying to make a museum-quality exhibition in a public space” (2013). The project's chief executive who was hoping to attract boat tours to the area expressed that, the aim is “to showcase the best international artists and transform this part of the canal into a destination for street art” and they wanted to imitate the energy that somewhere like Camden has (2013).

Considering Smiths' statement and the case of East London, one could say that the issues of where the graffiti is exhibited, where to draw a line as to what counts as art and which art work is worth being exhibited with the legal status on the streets became problematic, while the perception of graffiti changes. Journey of graffiti is not only from the streets to the galleries but also, there is a change in the meaning of its existence on the street level. There is a shift related to its application (commercial, public / private sponsored or illegal) and its culture, a change in the unwritten rules of street art. This is what makes the role of graffiti in the urban gentrification and the gentrification of graffiti worth questioning.

As claimed by Ley, economic value of an aesthetic disposition is due the cultural producer and this is natural in the cultural field (2003, 2541) Therefore, “...to blame artists for the gentrification that so often follows their residency in a district is a misplaced charge; it is the societal valorisation of the cultural competencies of the artist that brings followers richer in economic capital” (2003, 2541). Since the value of street art became a subject to discuss in the creative market as well as by cultural institutions, this statement also applies to street art.

Remembering the words of the Canals Project's curator, a district with attractive street art pieces on the wall can be thought as an open air art gallery which economic capital follows.

Related to the economic valorisation of aesthetic disposition and its influence in gentrification, there also policy makers appear as important actors. In order to "capitalize on the new economy" and gain attentions in the high competition between regions and cities, from national to international level, Richard Florida points out that "...policy makers must reach out to what he labels the 'creative class', that is gays, youth, bohemians, professors, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and the like." (Florida, 2003, as cited in Lees, Slater, Wyly, 2008, xix). According to Lees and the other scholars, "if we speak of a gentrification aesthetic, we must remember that this aesthetic is far from frozen, and leads to enormous profits as cultural capital becomes economic capital" (Lees, Slater, Wyly, 2008, 118).

In conclusion, one can say that debates on the aestheticisation of gentrification refers beautifying the process through art and attracting the economic capital via creative touch of the artists. The position of street art in a gentrification process cannot be discussed separately from the gentrification of graffiti, due prementioned reasons.

1.2.4 Gentrification through incorporation of arts into the public-policy

Referring to previous studies, we had an introduction to the issue of gentrification. The first and second waves of gentrification has also been briefly presented. In the first stage, artists are claimed to cause gentrification, and this is followed by the attraction of capital in the second stage. The remainder of the study will address the discussions and terminology on gentrification more. Before doing so, though, it is useful to point out another key issue; incorporation of arts into the public policy in the gentrification process.

Regarding of what cultural policy model is applied by a government, art is a significant concern and (in)direct instrument in national and international level. As Evans and Shaw states that, "...it is not unusual to hear references to 'the arts and culture' or the 'arts and cultural sector' or 'sectors' as though the arts are not part of 'culture'" (2004, 4). Thus, it is the evolution of the "relationship of mutual dependence" between two that led art become a subject of gentrification debates as well (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005).

Acknowledging the demand for a geography specified gentrification study, Stuart Cameron & Jon Coaffee suggests a third model of gentrification by examining the model through the case

of Gateshead in the north-east of England where arts-led regeneration strategy adopted. In their model, the key driver of gentrification occurs as public policy “which seeks to use ‘positive’ gentrification as an engine of urban renaissance” and “involves the use of public art and cultural facilities...sponsored by local government and other public agencies, as a promoter of regeneration and associated gentrification” (2005, 39-40). Looking at the connection between art and gentrification the scholars claim that there is a more specific public-policy engagement together with a link to regeneration in the third phase (2005). Furthermore, the emphasis on the linkage is shifted to “the public consumption of art” through “public art and artistic events and particularly through the creation of landmark physical infrastructure for the arts, such as galleries, museums and concert halls” (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005, 46).

As it was expressed by Jennifer Craik, potential success and efficiency are the decision-making factors for a support in arts and culture given by government (2007). Furthermore, it is open to discussion that the motivation behind this support is not developed through “ambitions to broaden awareness of culture more generally in the community, but by notions of ‘showcasing’ endorsed representations of elite culture” (2007, 49). In consequence of this, support is provided “to major signature institutions which constituted an oasis of culture, often situated in major cities” (2007, 49).

In this regard, the case of Gateshead shows how the urban life could be shaped when the cultural policy & art were given attention in the public policy strategies of the governments. Investigating the situation in Gateshead, Cameron & Coaffee presents that when the art is involved in “long-term”, “visionary”, “innovative” strategies and situated at the centre of local governments’ public policy agendas, it is possible to achieve regeneration. Yet, they also emphasise a “dilemma” that a successful regeneration projects could bring investments for housing market renewal, which then would create a direct impact on declining, disadvantaged neighbourhoods. That having been said, this would “utilize a combination of renewal and gentrification that involves the displacement of some residents of low-cost social and private housing” (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005, 54).

In contrast to the evidence that art can be a tool to create urban regeneration or artists could trigger gentrification, vast amount of studies approaches street art and graffiti as a counterculture. Moreover, considering the creative and cultural value of street art, whether it can be classified as a cultural heritage or not is among one of the recent debates.

Remembering the confusing questions which were highlighted at the beginning; what counts as art and which art work is worth investing, one could easily suggest to add a third question to the que. Could street art have a position to support regeneration if invested by the government, and trigger gentrification as in arts-led regeneration cases?

1.3 Research Questions

Qualitative research is driven by a main question accompanied by series of questions which makes it essential to define the connections within (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 85). The main question of the research occurs as “What is the role of street art in state-led gentrification?” In consistent with that, there are sub-questions which were developed during the research process.

By searching answers to the main question, it was anticipated that the field research is going to contribute new data on arts-led gentrification debates through the use of street art. In other words, the research question will guide me to examine the impact of government supported street art in the scope of a revitalisation project in a declining neighbourhood. Evoking an awareness on what is happening in this particular neighbourhood Yeldeğirmeni as an ongoing revitalization field, to observe the dynamics of urban transformation process that are distinctive for the neighbourhood but also the ones which are in common with already existed research fields are among the research expectations.

Looking from the most objective perspective one could express that the municipality is responsible of approving projects, preparing urban strategies that would contribute the highest benefits to the residents among its administration borders. Considering this and the prementioned issues, the research seeks to address the following sub-questions:

1. What is expected to be achieved by organising Mural Istanbul within the municipality’s urban strategy and plans for the neighbourhood?
2. What is the current impact of the street art festival as a cultural project created in Yeldeğirmeni?
3. What components of the current urban transformation would qualify the neighbourhood as an on-going gentrification field?

These sub-questions were expected to be stepping-stones to answering the main research question.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The purpose of the first subchapter occurs as to introduce a general acknowledgement of the study. The chapter of introduction includes study rationale, research scope as well as the presentation of previous studies. The subchapter on previous studies aims to offer discussions on the gentrification, the linkage between arts and gentrification, artists position in the process, aestheticisation of gentrification & gentrification of graffiti and last of all, the gentrification through incorporation of arts into the public-policy. Following the research questions part, this chapter concludes with the thesis structure.

In the second part, the cultural, economic and political landscape that had preceded gentrification in Turkey is represented. Apart from culture, neoliberalism themed discussions, it presents economic, political issues which (in)directly prepares a base for gentrification projects in the research field. The time period of events begins with 1950's. Regarding to this, it must be said that the periodical time frame on the subchapter was deliberately chosen, considering distinctive issues that triggered series of social and political results such as military coups and following neoliberal implementations in Turkey. Hence, second chapter contains the following sections; Culture, Political Context, Urban Politics on Istanbul, & last of all, Branding the City of Istanbul.

The third chapter is named as "Theory: Gentrification & Street Art". This part has a focus on the terms and theories regarding the issue of gentrification and street art. It consists from two main chapters. The former is "Gentrification". The latter one is named as "Street Art: Terms, Unwritten Rules & Legality". Additionally, the latter one includes a subchapter called "Street Art in Turkey". In this contexts, mural & graffiti as well as unwritten rules of this subculture, legality issues & the commodification of creative processes in terms of practicing street art is also discussed.

Following chapter contains the explanations on the method & methodology that were used in this current study, as well as the presentation of the research data. It consists from two main chapters, namely Overview and Data. The first one includes the following three subchapters, Methodological Approach, The Research Design and Methodological Limitations. The second one is on the other hand is all about data. It includes three subchapters called Introduction of the Data, Research Participants and Interviewee's Profile.

The study continues with the Analysis chapter, which introduces the following subjects: Yeldeğirmeni Revitalisation Project, the Inhabitants & Emerging Actors in the neighbourhood

and the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival. The third subchapter, Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival offers the issues of the Municipality's Aims to organize the festival as well as Artists' Motivation to participate it. The study then offers a discussion part on the research findings by considering the previous studies and ends with the Conclusion chapter.

2. CONTEXT

The city that we understand today has only began to take its current form together with the rapid rate of urbanization in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Observing the urbanization process more closely, Davis Kingsley (1955, 429) presents four elements as the reasons behind the attraction of urban phenomena for researchers working at the social sciences field. This includes urbanization to be a relatively recent issue comparing to other aspects of society, its' revolutionary character in terms of existing as a breaking point for following technological and economic developments, the importance of cities as power centers that affect both rural and urban societies; and lastly the fact that urbanization is an ongoing process which brings unsolved issues within. Nearly thirty years after Kingsley's study, immigration to cities caused by economic, social, cultural issues continues. Additionally, the population flow from rural areas to cities, and from cities to bigger cities paradoxically nourishes inequalities to discuss on. Therefore, four reasons remain still.

Looking back to the first century of urbanization, constantly increasing urban population did not only give a rise to physical improvements on the urban space or caused long working hours and physical diseases. Seeds of an alternative common culture were thrown at the same time. The culture of urban society has been formed almost as it was the contrast of rural culture. The influence of needs, which come together with rural work field and agricultural life, on the shared culture has decreased whereas new values and necessities rise within the urban life.

In light of prementioned issues, this chapter aims to clarify the study's approach to the term culture, economic & political events that prepared a base for today's gentrification process in Turkey, key arguments regarding the urban politics in Istanbul, and last of all the practice of branding the city Istanbul. In this regard, Culture, Political Context, Urban Politics on Istanbul and Branding the city of Istanbul were formed as the subchapters.

2.1. Culture

It is acknowledged that speaking on culture requires to clarify the meaning of the word. This requirement occurs as a result of four concerns. The application of culture to human societies and history reaches back to 1750's (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Over the period of time, culture has been examined from variety of perspectives and concepts. Hence, the four concern occurs to be the necessity to elucidate the matter that through which definition, culture is going to be approached within this study. Secondly, the clarification appears as a compulsory step to be able to investigate the position of culture in urban politics. Within the borders of this study, the position of culture refers to the value of culture and its' signification for urban policy. Moreover, it could be stated that understanding the position of culture and its' various definitions would allow one to analyse the ways which are used by policy makers to twist culture and form it. Last of all, the aim of representing the definitions and its position would be practical to see the challenges that urban policy makers face to achieve success in implication processes on the urban space.

In their comprehensive research which offers a critical review on culture and its concepts, Kroeber and Kluckhohn verifies one hundred and sixty-five formal definitions of culture. In addition to this, they observe these definitions in seven groups; descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural, genetic and incomplete. As a consequence of this broad study, the scholars share their own definition as it follows; "Culture is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based upon symbols; and is an abstraction from behaviour and the products of behaviour" (1952, 152).

In a recent study, scholars with a more complex academical background from various disciplines, describe culture as "A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, by which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life." (Coolen & Ozaki, 2004, 6). Despite the time gap and disciplinary differences between, the scholars focus on common features with Kroeber & Kluckhohn, as the influence of culture on forming the attitudes, behaviours, and symbolic forms as the medium of cultural expressions.

According to one of the ground-breaker researchers focusing on culture, Raymond Williams, the definitions of culture could be studied in three categories; ideal, documentary and social (1998, 48). The first one, "ideal" is formed around the idea of universal values or certain values and it presents the culture as a phase, a period to reach the human perfection. In the second

category which Williams names as “documentary”, culture appears “as the body of intellectual and imaginative work”. Last of all, he places the “social” definition of culture to the third category. Culture here is approached as the “description of a particular way of life” and it “...expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture” (1998, 48). Williams additionally states that there occurs a challenge about the idea of culture together with a constant tendency to stretch its inclusivity to reach the exactness with the whole common life (Williams, 2017).

Considering Williams’ definition, Terry Eagleton underlines the matter of exclusion, which culture as a way of life includes within. The scholar expresses that “To see one’s way of life as distinctive, for example, generally involves some sense of how it differs from other people’s, and thus perhaps a degree of suspicion of them” (2016, 6). Comparing the differentiation levels of symbolic practices from social and economic activities in premodern and modern societies, he emphasises the challenge about defining culture in the sense of a way of life for the latter one. Eagleton then agrees with Williams’ acknowledgement which is that the borders of “a way of life” can be extended to involve everything within “culture” (2016, 3).

Looking at Eagleton’s understanding of culture, one could see that he emphasises the idea of culture as a contrast and a sector of civilization. To the scholar, industrial civilization plays a significant role for the birth of the idea of culture, it occurs as the precondition. He situates culture almost as a spiritual tool to the opposite of “materialistic and soulless” civilization. Presenting culture as a specific sector of civilization as well as an antithesis of it, may sound contradictory at first. However, Eagleton makes a clarification for those who are confused, and to avoid possible conflicts in this matter. Referring to Auguste Comte’s statement that scientific rationalism needs religious practices to sell itself to common people, Eagleton claims that the idea of culture was invented and promoted to be a replacement for God after enlightenment (Firth lectures, 2012). What is more, the scholar emphasises the power of culture and culture as a tool to divide yet also unite individuals from different social and economic societal groups. Thus, he explains that culture could be and is used to fulfil the spiritual need of privileged groups, intellectuals and those who believe in science whereas the religion functions in an exact way for majority of the population. Both legitimate mechanisms are supported to keep societal order steady & to govern.

Another important feature that Eagleton specifies about the meaning of culture is social unconscious. Regarding to this definition, Eagleton highlights how intensely the culture intertwined within the everyday life. In this sense, culture "...constitutes the invisible color of everyday life, the taken-for-granted texture of our workday existence, too close to the eyeball to be fully objectified" (2016, 50). To him, Lacan's term "the Other", functions exactly the same with this definition of culture. Moreover, the scholar claims that an individual being constantly focused to be aware of this influence causes struggles to speak and operate in their daily life. It might even conclude with not being able to function, he adds (Eagleton, 2016).

With a broad sense of approach, Eagleton points out variety of far-reaching issues on culture, yet the scope of this study would not allow me to include it all. Hence, I would like to move forward after remarking his one last statement which is based on cultural relativeness and conveniently contributive for this research.

In the matter of cultural relativeness, Eagleton's opinion on tolerance for hybridity and plurality in culture comes out quite sharp. Reminding the culturalist approach that human is formed within the influence of their culture and there are no universal foundations to individuals' existence, he builds the foundation of his forthcoming statement. Eagleton acknowledges that cultural theory is under the risk of ignoring & purposely excluding the suffering which is caused by plurality and hybridity. Relatedly, he entitles the tolerance for plurality as a mistake. Eagleton's sense of plurality in this sense, includes extreme sample groups such as neo-Nazis and paedophiles (2016).

Acknowledging the prementioned approaches to culture, this current study perceives culture as a nest where individuals feel being (not) belong to it. This also suggests that there is a linkage between culture and physical space. Physical space in the scope of this study could be interpreted as the city. Therefore, the culture is influenced by any implication on the urban space, whether it be an urban construction or a social application. As stated, "...people's beliefs and values are reflected in their evaluation of physical attributes of a dwelling, which they believe facilitate or hinder the achievement of their goals" (Coolen & Ozati, 2004, 5). Furthermore, social relationships between household members and guests in the home do not only categorize the space, but also display the form in which they attempt to give meanings to a place (Rapoport, 1981, as cited in Coolen & Ozaki, 2004).

How a city is organized, what elements could be found in a neighbourhood reflects a culture, and paradoxically it forms the relations of inhabitants. In other words, organisation of dwellings on urban space mirrors and forms social stratifications & relations in city.

Overall, culture in this study refers to three understandings,

1. Culture in the sense of a body of artistic and intellectual work; as an outcome of Mural Istanbul Festival, sprouts of cultivation
2. As a way of life that includes social values, traditions and habits which are sometimes connected to economic stratifications
3. Culture as a nest; in this context, culture is observed as a nest which is connected to the physical space where population dwells in. The concept presents a perspective that physical space where societal life occurs is the carrier of culture. In other words, culture is embodied within the physical space. Hence, any implication or a significant event that happen on a specific place, would leave a mark there on the nest. Nest here is used to refer both to the city and to the culture. Considering the previous studies on the definition of culture, it can also be said that culture is embodied within the behaviours and ideas of individuals. It influences the decisions of an individual, yet it is not permanent. In this sense, influencing a culture to change and reaching to the success in this matter means influencing the behaviours, decisions and the way of living of individuals.

In consequence of the mutual influential relation between culture and physical nest, there occurs a possibility to influence to change shared culture by reconstructing the city. On the other hand, any change that appears in shared culture would also cause a reconstruction on city. This mutual influence appears as an important feature in this relation. Consequently, the way to construct the culture is possible by reconstructing the physical nest; city.

2.2. Political Context

The city in 21st century is not just a center for citizens to participate in business trades anymore. It became a subject of re-construction both for financial growth and cultural investments. Applications that are done to create urban transformation, and the issue of gentrification today, is examined through their linkage with neoliberal politics which were built in 1980s. Therefore, this chapter aims to remind this linkage related background.

Period after the Second World War as a place where massive socio-economic and political events could be traced offers a window to discuss the early signals of today's gentrification & urban transformation cases in Turkey. In this regard, Marshall plans which was born from the idea of offering long-term loans for "economic reconstruction, stability and peace" (Truman, 1948) after the war, occur as a significant beginning point. Looking at the first statement on the Marshall plans one could see that the purpose is reported as:

...to assist in the preservation of conditions under which free institutions can survive in the world. I believe that the determination of the American people to work for conditions of enduring peace throughout the world, as demonstrated by this act, will encourage free men and women everywhere, and will give renewed hope to all mankind that there will one day be peace on earth, good will among men (Truman, 1948).

The amount of financial loan provided by fifty-six Marshall plans to developing countries just between 1980 and 2001 is calculated as \$4.5 billion (Millet & Toussaint, 2004, 87). Although the emphasis on peace and freedom is noteworthy, Marshall plans created long-term debts for receiving countries as any other external financial supports. Related to this, it is observed that domination strategies of The United States which were advanced versions of historical colonial strategies developed in the post-war period, played a determinative role to wire neoliberal networks across politically instable, financially disadvantaged countries. Strategies were based on providing economic and military assistance in exchange of having no resistance against the operations of US capital in the country, having support for & promotion of US interests, both in the country and in the region (Harvey, 2005, 27-28).

Moving forward from Marshall plans to 1960s, existential crises that were caused by consumption of everything in a constantly increasing speed, and global fiscal crises were there. Rising rate of unemployment affected many country and stagflation lasted throughout 1970s. 1968 Movement in between, became one of revolutionary events, spreading across many countries in different levels, including Turkey. While searching for a way out from collapsing economic policies, communist and socialist ideologies re-sprouted from the ground.

Another key factor to mention is that, in 70's it was discovered that gentrification could be a tool to produce cultural tourism. Preservation of heritages, ethnic groups and old layers of everything became the code of redevelopment. In other words, selected features of past were polished with contemporary tools to represent a fiction of reality. Additionally, together with rising symbolic economy, a competition between territories from state level to cities was

emerged in global level. In 1980's, the speed of the competition increased after the breaking point that United Kingdom with Thatcher's lead formed a dominating power with U.S.'s Reagan to advocate the free market ideology.

After a while as Stiglitz claims, The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank involved to the mission of dragging poor countries that would really use loans, and despite majority of sceptical government officials and society against it, governed by the eager ministries to receive funding (2002, 13). Just as an addiction, it was seen that project funds created a frequent need for higher amount of loans that were after evolved into vast amount of rescheduled debts. More importantly, rescheduling came with the price of applying required institutional reforms of neoliberalism and indebted countries were charged to stay in "developing" level with the invention of structural adjustment loans. Stiglitz describes the situation saying that "...the IMF was supposed to focus on crises; but developing countries were always in need of help, so the IMF became a permanent part of life in most of the developing world" (2002, 13).

There have been numerous publications written about neoliberalism. Ideologically, it was offered as a trail to overcome the crises of the 70's, some observed it as an interpretation of *laissez-faire*, others highlighted the difference between theory and its' practice. According to Harvey, it is a political economic practice of "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2005, 2). According to the theoretical framework, neoliberalism was built on the idea that strengthened private property, high competitiveness in the market and maximized frequency of market transactions against privileged minorities who holds the power and the option of enforcing their own views while obliterating others would ensure the best conditions for socioeconomic progress which is based on freedom of society (The Mont Pelerin Society, 1947; Harvey, 2005). In theory, neoliberalism decreases the power of the state. However, considering the state's responsibility of guaranteeing the integrity of money as well as making certain of markets' existence, strong state and administrators who has high moral values seem to be necessary for neoliberal policies to function in a way they were supposed to be (Harvey, 2005).

From the critical point of view, it is also worth mentioning that Brenner and Theodore recently coined the term of "actually existing neoliberalism" which suggests a stance against the tendency of previous political-economic contexts to conceptualise neoliberalism as an ideology where market forces are assumed to work in a portrayed way and cause same dynamics in

geographical or societal layers. In opposite to those conceptualisations, the term offered to analyse neoliberal restructuring projects as a process that has variations which,

...produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles. An understanding of actually existing neoliberalism must therefore explore the path-dependent, contextually specific interactions between inherited regulatory landscapes and emergent neoliberal, market-oriented restructuring projects at a broad range of geographical scales (2002, 351).

One could not claim that economic systems, struggles, social and cultural application occur in the same form and produce the same results for every society. However, there might be common experiences to be considered. It is clear that, 1973s' coup in Chile, the coup that emerged seven years after Chile in Turkey and thirty years later in Iraq shares similar features considering the background of it and what followed afterwards.

In the light of prementioned discussions regarding the role of Marshall plans and neoliberal advocacies, one might summarise the situation as that crises were created by hunting a vulnerability in politically weakened & lonely countries and through that vulnerabilities, financial domination was managed over those countries. Referring to Thatcher, it was their job "...to glory in inequality and see that talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all" (George, 1999).

Overall, while some countries including Turkey were being left with long-term impacts of Marshall plans, it is also observable that the culture became a tool participate the global competition under the roof of neoliberal policies.

2.3. Urban Politics on Istanbul

Previous discussions suggest that the city is a display window for socio-cultural elements, political conflicts, and power relations which occurs within the society. In fact, it is also claimed that the city, specifically Istanbul, is used as an instrument for socio-politic transformation projects of government (Bartu-Candan & Özbay, 2014; Eraydin & Tasan-Kok, 2013). In relation to this, beginning of neoliberal period after the 80s' military coup, is accepted as one of breaking points that first discourses on this practice, cities being an issue in politics appear.

Acknowledging the perspective on actually existing neoliberalism, it becomes necessary to analyse the cultural memory and primary political decisions that the present socio-political conflicts, and practices for the purpose of comprehending current urban policies & societal situations, emerge from. The question of ‘how the urban policies began to promote cities just as a commodification?’ can be answered through the acknowledgment of the period of the post-World War II.

Turkey is one of the countries that was funded by Marshall plans in 1950s. Although Turkey was not involved in the war, the request to have financial support coming from a twenty years old young and poor republic was not rejected. Loans were provided on a condition that the payment was going to be used for investment of agricultural sector. After a short period of time, a massive population of people searching for work, migrated from rural areas to bigger cities “due to the concentration of industrialisation efforts in major cities and the decreasing number of jobs in rural areas as a result of mechanisation in agriculture” (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok, 2013, 76).

As Kingsley states, the rate of urbanization shows an increase for European countries in the late 19th and early 20th century and slows down whereas it rises in recent decades for the late industrialised, economically less-developed countries such as Egypt and Mexico after 1920s, India from 40s and Asia from 50s (1955, 435). In parallel to the trend which was seen in the late industrialised, economically less-developed countries, urban population growth and the shift between rural & urban space continued after the first wave of labour migration in Turkey. Changing features of population with the newcomers exposed new vulnerabilities on urban space to politically manipulate. Moreover, it displayed the signals of future urban policies which would remake Istanbul for good.

One of the main results of accelerated urbanisation occurs as increasing need for housing in cities. This was also the case for Istanbul after first generation working class man arrived at the city with the reputation of “Made of pure gold from the soil to the stones”.² They encouraged their family, friends and relatives to join them. Even though the city was not made of gold, it still offered more financial investment and opportunities, comparing to the rest of the country. New residents wanted to take what was offered, and to share it with the others. As a consequent

² Legend about Istanbul was spread with a Turkish film, which is about a family moving into Istanbul with high hopes to improve their life quality. The film is called “The City Made of Pure Gold”. It’s an example of black humour genre.

of adaptation endeavour informal distributions of lands (in other words bribe), government tolerated “gecekondu”³ building tradition has arisen.

During the following years, gecekondu played an important role in contribution of appropriate conditions for urban space to get commodified step by step in the country. Starting from 50s, with rapidly increasing migration from Anatolia to Istanbul, every election campaign was boosted with the promise of ensuring land registering documents for gecekondu dwellers. Thus, votes were collected in the pool of underprivileged population’s “government father”. Even though urban space was not sold for money, it was promised to be given in exchange of votes, so for political power and indirectly for financial benefits. The practice continued approximately for thirty years.

Zukin reports that between 1970’s and 1980’s, there emerge a rise in symbolic economy as a defence of crises that industrial decline and financial speculation brought (1997, 8) Like other globalising cities of Third World, in Istanbul too, new stratification axis occurred due to the shock of fast integration to international markets. Consequently, the sectors of finance, real estate, advertising & media rapidly grew together with the status and income of people who work in sectors which are linked to global networks (Göktürk, Soysal, & Türeli, 2011, 50).

1980’s was also significant with Istanbul’s mayor Dalan, who represented the central right wing and approved a series of urban projects. Owing to the symbolic importance of restructuring projects’ target urban eras, hate speeches against non-Muslim communities that Dalan improved as a justification of demolitions⁴, and just in Tarlabaşı district over hundred historical building (total amount reaches over three hundred) were illegally destructed in his lead (Demircioğlu, 1987), his period remained as an important phase for urban studies literature. At the end, number of urban fields that were taken from or left by non-Muslim communities decreased and prementioned populist policies had to come to the end (Göktürk, Soysal & Türeli, 2011, 50).

³ Meaning “placed at night”, refers to illegally built settlements on an empty land, where mostly migrants from rural areas are inhabited. Gecekondu is a symbol of hope, new beginnings, and the start of integration process to urban life for migrants.

⁴ Beyoğlu is one of the oldest regions of Istanbul, where most buildings were owned by non-Muslim merchants; bourgeois during Ottoman Empire. The place also has a symbolic importance for labour class since 1977, the Bloody May 1.

Analyzing the period from an economic perspective, one could see some similar features with other countries in terms of how the neoliberal process occur. While creative industries, service sector, finance and real estate were moved into the heart of economy and replaced the industry which then shifted outside of the city; privatization, foreign investments & investments on urban space were encouraged, necessity to integrate with global economy became a part of political discourses (Bartu-Candan & Özbay, 2014).

2.4. Branding the City of Istanbul

It can be said that the emphasis on making Istanbul “a world city” appear in the same years (Yardımcı, 2014) with Dalan’s dream of “transforming Istanbul from a tired city whose glory resides in past history, into a metropolis full of promise for the 21st century” (Keyder, 1999, 34). Together with the promise of building shopping malls, culture centres, parks and mosques on demolished areas that were inherited from minorities, the city turned into a commodity for neoliberal politics. To put it another way, “with the highly publicised urban renewal projects of the 1980’s Istanbul became a *consumption spectacle*⁵” (Keyder, 1999, 34). Thus, cultural heritage, preservation and conservation became contested domains through which the past, present and future are (re)worked, and (re)formulated (Keyder, 1999, 43). Eventually, main focus evolved into attracting global financial investments through the implementation of cultural strategies. The aim was to push Istanbul into the global scale competition with other metropolitans. “Shoddy” neighbourhoods were sanitized, poor people and their *gecekondu*s were destroyed on live broadcasts of news, cultural institutions were moved into those districts to redefine the reputation. Similar to the cases in other countries, government supported luxury condos were built in the areas.

Acknowledging particular trends, Kurtuluş and Türkün describes three period to analyse urban renewal projects in Turkey. “Construction of Nation-state & Modernism Period, starts with 19th century”, “Self- Transformation, begins with the Second World War” and the third one which includes two periods namely “Neoliberal Policies’ Period, after the military coup of

⁵ He refers to Harvey’s suggestion, “under the speeded up circulation conditions of hypermodernity, where little escape commodification, there is nothing so big, so encompassing, so over shadowing, so enormous in its implications, that it cannot be commodified, that it cannot be represented as a consumption spectacle. Through imagery and massive architectural projects, even entire cities or metropolitan areas maybe served up as market objects and all-encompassing spectacles” (Harvey, 1989, as cited in Keyder, 1999).

1980” and “the renewals legitimated with safety based rhetoric, after 1999 earthquake” (Kurtuluş, 2005).

Understanding municipalities’ part in the process is also important. Since 1982, there is two-tier municipal structure which includes Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and thirty-nine district municipalities which are in service of only the inhabitants living in their districts.⁶ “In recent years, new legal regulations, which were also influenced by the European Union integration process, increased the authority and budget of municipalities’ and caused them to become main actors for the city management” (Göktürk, Soysal & Türeli, 2011, 35). Especially in the third period that Kurtuluş & Türkün defines, “safety” was played as a trump card “to empower some investors which after became the main actors of power coalitions to support ruling party’s political situation” (Bartu-Candan & Özbay, 2014, 53). 1980’s power coalitions which were made with economically disadvantaged, conservative working class in exchange of political support, evolved into coalitions that are clean, high class, urban “revitalising” and with real estate entrepreneurs.

Today the link between financial growth, political power and the manipulation potential over the urban coalitions are stronger than ever. “Big” projects are a significant part of AKP government’s statements whereas urban renewal projects are one of primary concerns of its politics.⁷ In this context, for the purpose of easing the application process of reconstruction plans to the city, controversial regulations, namely İstanbul Environmental Plan (2009), Law of Renovating, Conserving and Actively Using Historical Assets (Law No 5366, published on 05.07.2005) and The Law of Transformation of Areas under the Disaster Risks (Law No: 6306, published on 31.05.2012) were approved.

Considering recent events, I believe that there is a need to add another level to prementioned urban renewal periods. Within this forth stage, the city transformed into a political playground for its dwellers, as much as it was already for the government. Wide range of sociocultural and political groups claimed their rights to the city against destructive urban reconstruction plans of AKP government. Gezi Park protests in 2011, in this sense became a significant part of Turkish political history & set a model.

⁶ Data retrieved from İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s webpage, 19.04.2017: <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/en-US/Organization/MunicipalHistory/Pages/AnaSayfa.aspx>

⁷ “The Biggest” is Erdogan’s most common description for his urban projects together with the emphasis that “the West is jealous of”.

It was previously mentioned that urban transformation projects do not only aim to bring financial growth, aside from that any intervention on urban space is an instrument for shaping the cultural structure. Regarding to the cultural image of Istanbul, Bartu-Candan and Özbay analysis that there is a confusion in the rhetorical level;

...in the last years we were trying to make Istanbul an “Olympic city”, the “European Capital of Culture”, pushing its limits for transforming it into a “tourism center”, searching for the “cool” Istanbul while emphasising “Islamic city”, turning it into a kitsch rubbish which is far away from its own values, at the same time getting excited for attracting Arabic petrol-dollars, exaggerating the need for an improved air transportation, boosting the “crossroad for global transportation” like an obsession on “London- Beijing” railway connection, speaking on “brand city” when performing amateur merchant (2014, 12-13).

Acknowledging this, one could also say that “The European Capital of Culture” nomination is one of the elements that accelerated constructions in the city. The image that was drawn for the nominations was “historical, environmentally beautiful, authentic, yet a modern & increasingly globalising city”. Apart from that, webpage which was designed for this purpose included a particular section named “Istanbul, Safe City”. In the art and culture section the emphasise was on toleration and being a Muslim center as it follows,

Istanbul is the city which has held the title of capital city for three great civilizations with a deep culture of love and tolerance. Istanbul... The city of dialogue where religions, languages, and races have lived side by side in the same streets in peace and harmony. The city of freedom, opened by Sultan Fatih, has seen the end of one age and the beginning of another with its conquest. Istanbul has promised to give this experience to its visitors, and it has kept its promise (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2008).

It is important to underline that urban transformation projects in Istanbul can be read to analyse what is aimed for the whole country. Istanbul is a representative case for Turkey.

Another key point to mention is that, the fear against strangers evolved into another stage with the massive amount of immigration between 2011 and 2017. According to the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, estimated population of Syrian refugees “who are under temporary protection” and live outside the camp, reached to approximately 3 million in the country scale & five hundred thousand in Istanbul (İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017). The “guests” from the East are welcomed until they are not seen as a threat to “well-educated, modern, Western” culture for some inhabitants.

Looking at the everyday life practices, new shop signs either have Arabic translation or written purely in Arabic in some areas in Istanbul. Men are walking with women in burka & even kids have head scarves, especially in one of the most “modern” districts namely Beyoğlu. Considering the ruling party’s conservative discourses together with these changes, it is not even necessary for governmental body to produce *politics of fear* anymore.

Consequently, *public culture* is becoming more difficult to produce without divisions and political conflicts between different communities, and so holding the power to defend the right to Istanbul. There is a high competition to transform the city between different conflict groups, and a relatively silence resistance against which will explode sooner or later.

3. THEORY: GENTRIFICATION & STREET ART

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theories that is important for this study, make a clarification about street art terms that will be referred and the key discussions on street art. Theoretical framework of the research is mainly based on Zukin’s conceptualisations on *politics of fear* and public culture, and Harvey’s revision on the term of *the right to the city* that was coined by Lefebvre.

3.1 Gentrification

Gentrification is defined as a process that causes housing problems through increasing the property values causing a struggle in terms of financial affordability for economically disadvantaged inhabitants in neighbourhood. Therefore, it is a significant issue which requires more attention. In previous studies, gentrification was discussed within its relation to period that creative sectors and tourism developed to replace other industries. This process was analysed with the issue of art & culture being commodified for the sake of advertisement of the city after deindustrialisation.

It is also suggested that in the gentrified districts, hip, gritty⁸, cool atmosphere and practices replaces what is seen as dirty, industrial, dangerous and criminal. Moreover, as prementioned, the process was divided into periods or waves by scholars, depending on the specific features that are observed. The first wave of gentrifiers is described as "...the highly educated men and women of relatively modest means, often engaged in creative or intellectual work" (Zukin, 2016, 202). Consequently, it is observed that a cluster of art galleries, boutiques, cafes and anything which is labelled as cool, unique and design plays an important role in the process. According to the scholar, gentrification is supported by the creation of a simulation, dream places such as Disneyland (Zukin, 2010).

Those places which are clean, rich and safe are positioned against and far from the places with opposite values. Therefore, the politics of fear against the unknown, the one that is just outside of a security guarded condo, created and used to feed this opposition but also the demand for the Disneylandlike places. Public culture on the other hand, was defined by Zukin as a production of social encounters in the everyday life to claim belonging to and by the place (1997). It is defined by the scholar as the most powerful tool on urban space, an open-ended for occupation, yet influenced by the domination economic and politic power (Zukin, 1997). Consequently, looking at nicely decorated cafés managed by young urban professionals; new middle class workers usually couple of friends who resigned to open a business or just graduated students and hipster boutiques; observing the streets of Yeldeğirmeni would not be more possible to analyse if not with public culture and public fear concepts.

Regarding how gentrification process works, Lees' research in Brooklyn Heights neighbourhood of New York City occurs as another important study. The scholar remarks that following the footsteps of the first wave gentrifiers who needed mortgages to move to era, wealthy population "the second wave" who mostly works in corporate service industries and global finance business gains the insurance of entering a secure, clean and trendy urban space, and re-gentrifies the era (2003, 2489). Furthermore, the scholar highlights two important aspects regarding the issue of gentrification. Acknowledging that the process does not follow the same pattern in different districts occurs as the first one, whereas the second occurs as

⁸ Zukin observes the change in the media's representation of "gritty". It becomes a word that "...carries postindustrial spirit of the times and in the symbolic economy's ability to synthesize dirt and danger into new cultural commodities" (2010, 51) and "... depicts a desirable synergy between underground cultures and the creative energy they bring to both cultural consumption and real estate development, not as an alternative to but as a driver of the city's growth." (53).

follows. There is the risk of expanding the meaning of gentrification so much “to lose any conceptual sharpness and specificity” (Lees, 2003, 2491). After the warnings, Lees defines another period which named “super-gentrification”. Examining the case of Brooklyn Heights Lees says, super-gentrification emerges in already gentrified, mature neighbourhoods. As it is also reported, super-gentrification occurs when cities “...become the focus of intense investment and conspicuous consumption by a new generation of super-rich ‘financifiers’ fed by fortunes from the global finance and corporate service industries” (Lees, 2003, 2487). Last of all, Lees underlines the importance of geography specified analysis in gentrification process and emphasise that super-gentrification only occurs in a few selected areas with intense global investments such as London and New York.

Gentrification is also observed to have a connection with commodification of art & culture. Stating that the emerging power over space does not only represent financial character but it is significantly cultural (Zukin, 2010, 4), was consonant with this observation. Furthermore, by acknowledging the Bourdieuan approach on taste, it was said that “New tastes displace those of longtime residents because they reinforce the images in politicians’ rhetoric of growth, making the city a 24/7 entertainment zone with safe, clean, predictable space and modern, upscale neighborhoods” (Zukin, 2010, 4). Consequently, it means that the dominant culture displaces the other’s values in time, as it happens in the battle between trendy, hot places and small, traditional, local shops.

Another aspect about the urban transformation processes is that it might include the avoidance of poor socioeconomic conditions, unemployment, dirty streets and criminal issues. The famous Haussmann project is a significant example in this sense. In that case which occurred in the nineteenth-century, the city of Paris was literally reconstructed. Yet, it was not among the aims of the project to change socioeconomic inequality in society (Smith, 1996). Societal problems do not disappear when lower middle class, and then affluent urban dwellers replace unskilled tenants, factory laborers, domestic workers. Engels describes the situation as,

No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is always the same; the scandalous alleys disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise by the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else ... The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! The same economic necessity that produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place. (Engels, 1872, as cited in Harvey, 2012, 17).

There is one last concept worth noting before moving forward to the discussions on street art. A concept which could expand anyone's perspective on gentrification. It was coined by Lefebvre and called 'the right to the city' (1996). The right to the city is a "transformed and renewed right to urban life" for inhabitants who experience "the picture of generalised misery" which is hidden by "a picture of satisfactions" (Lefebvre, 1996, 158). By the picture of generalised misery, he refers to "the daily life of the one who runs from his dwelling to the station, near or far away, to the packed underground train, the office or the factory, to return the same way in the evening and come home to recuperate enough to start again the next day", whereas a picture of satisfactions refer to life of Olympians (1996, 159).

On the other hand, Harvey offers an interpretation for the concept of the right to the city. Its worth reminding that Harvey's interpretation will be the one to be referred in the current study. According to the scholar, the right to the city is "far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies", the freedom to "change and reinvent the city more after our hearts' desire" as "one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" which "depends upon collective power over the process of urbanization" in practice (Harvey, 2012, 4).

Since the concept of the right to the city has just been brought up, there is one last concept, a fresh perspective on the sense of belonging which I find worth to mention for this study. Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst remarks that the previous opinion about the belonging which suggests that 'the tension between locals and migrant incomers based on "born and bred" diversion is what gives a place its spirit' is no longer adequate to explain the sense of belonging (2005, 38). Instead it is claimed that the sense of belonging is linked to the satisfaction of reflexive processes which are related to the answer of through what agencies people happen to be living in where they currently live. Moreover, the scholars come up with a new term, "elective belonging",

...which articulates senses of spatial attachment, social position, and forms of connectivity to other places. Belonging is not to a fixed community, with the implication of closed boundaries, but is more fluid, seeing places as sites for performing identities. Individuals attach their own biography to their 'chosen' residential location, so that they tell stories that indicate how their arrival and subsequent settlement is appropriate to their sense of themselves (Savage et al. 2005, 29).

As the scholars observe, belonging to the area can be claimed through a link between the residence and the biographical life history even though there are no prior ties that connects

people to the area (2005, 38). Furthermore, they state that the elective belonging in this type is significantly dependent on the relational sense and ability to relate to the area due to its meaning, among other optional areas.

Therefore, one could claim that the sense of belonging can be created as long as elective belonging is being reached out. Social networks occur as a supportive factor to develop an elective belonging to an urban district. Thus, it is observed in some cases that gentrifiers' work or school networks provides them significant connections during the gentrification process (Koçak & Koçak, 2016). Furthermore, "The forms of belonging does not only present different groups' strategies to create spaces, but at the same time they present the processes of establishing societal borders" (2016, 101).

Seeing from this perspective, the idea of elective belonging offers a fresh perspective on the prementioned issue of playing with the sense of belonging in urban space, when thought with the concept of the right to the city. The linkage between these two concepts is worth noting considering the field data. Therefore, it could not be left out when analysing the data. However, it is not directly related to the main concern of this current study. Due to practical constraints this paper would not be able to provide a major scale analysis on this issue. Therefore, the question of "how the borders of social, cultural attachment or an attraction to this specific urban location is managed?" remains open for further discussions.

3.2 Street Art: Terms, Unwritten Rules & Legality

The question "Do you paint?" remains consistent, even though the street artists who are encountered with the question differs from each other through the art forms they choose to create. Under this circumstance, there appears a confusion regarding to the name of the artists and visual art forms implied to streets. The issue of distinction and interchangeability in related terminology plays a significant role when approaching the artists and analysing their position in or against the public & private supported projects. In addition to this Costa & Lopes states that,

Notions such as public art, urban art, street art or graffiti (among others) imply a multiplicity of discussions and subtle conceptual differences that have to be looked at from different perspectives, including: forms of public space appropriation; property rights management issues; commodification and market absorption of the arts; performativity issues; artistic

intentionality; artistic backgrounds; the role of informality; artistic training issues; or even the democracy and right to the city, for example (2015, 3).

The role of municipal cultural policy supported street art in gentrification is the main concern of this study. Correspondingly, a few of the issues that Costa & Lopes mentions, namely commodification, artistic intentionality, artistic backgrounds are the issues explored in the study.

In spite of that, we have not discussed how did mural art form which was a gun in one of its iconic representatives Diego Rivera's hands, to promote communism evolved to be an art form that was promoted by public & private partners to trigger & aestheticize urban transformation in declining neighbourhoods. In order to answer this question, it seems necessary to present a basic clarification of the terms if not the detailed history of street art.

Considering prementioned matters, this chapter aims to shed some light on the forms, controversial issues directly related to street art such as visibility, legality, artists' choice of distinguishing their art from other artists through owning a label (a specific art form's name), commodification of street art as well as how these issues come in sight in Turkey.

The term graffiti reaches back to 19th century, to the word "graffito" which means "a scratch" in Italian (In Oxford's Online Dictionary, 2018). Moreover, the current definition of the word is given as, writing or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in a public place. However, out of the books, graffiti is not limited just to be a writing or drawing.

Chasing the lineage of graffiti in the 1960's New York, Cooper and Chalfant stated that a new writer creates a new identity by choosing a nickname which then becomes a writer's public identity for the street (1984). As another scholar stated that nickname is necessary to "maintain anonymity from an action that is illegal, and therefore may lead to an indictment" (Campos, 2013, 16). Moreover, the nickname comes with new values and rules in a "crew" which is a writer's community. Correspondingly, "a graffiti has a territorial function" (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984, 14). In this regard, the illegality can be described as an element that supports a writer to accomplish this function. According to Macdonald, illegality "as a resource which writers can use to build, confirm and even amplify their masculine identities" (2001, 125) is the "backbone" of this subculture. "Without it, the threat, danger, challenge or test and the fame, respect and masculinity that writers earn from completing this, would be lost" (Macdonald, 2001, 126).

In contrary to the illegal characteristic of graffiti, there are illegal artists who creates commissioned murals or canvases. Depending on the frequency of “going to the street”⁹ showing commitment to graffiti they are not accepted as real writers by some illegal graffiti artists (SA4). “Graffiti writers demonstrate the same dedication and diligence to achieve the same status and standing as an individual does in any other profession.” (Macdonald, 2001, 93). Thus, as I heard for many times during the field research as well, the respect comes with dedication and style (SA4, SA5).

Apart from that, there is the matter of competition for fame beginning with a youth named Taki 183 (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984, 14). Due his “tag” s in public buildings and trains all over the city, Taki 183 was interviewed by the New York Times. Since then, writers search for the best places to leave their marks, to be the most visible. That’s to say, meaning of a graffiti art piece is not always as visible as an art piece for urban dwellers. “Public space consists multiple layers of encoded meanings that go unnoticed to the vast majority of passers-by, and even when they are visible, they may or may not be considered art, depending on the readability of the work’s message and on the cultural capital and skills of the decoder” (Costa & Lopes, 2015, 28). What’s more, “modern graffiti” and street art “lead to the emergence of new layer(s) of codification in the urban landscape often associated with the idea of subversion against imposed rules and defiance against capitalist society” (2015, 4).

Graffiti today as an enduring feature of the contemporary urban space, still seen as a vandalism by majority of governments and some citizens. The wars against graffiti have come to the point where “the diffusion of military technologies and operational techniques into the realm of urban policy and policing”¹⁰ have appeared (Iveson, 2010, 116). Methods to avoid or erase graffiti from the urban walls, varied from fences, dogs and chemical washes to CCTV’s. In his study where the state’s aggressive practices against graffiti was approached as a new military urbanism, Iveson reported that even NASA is involved in the war against Graffiti. By developing the smell sensor technologies which then adapted by its university based-inventors for a use against graffiti through an invention named graffiti-e-nose. Produced by the E-Nose company in Australia, the graffiti-e-nose detects aerosol paint fumes at a distance of 45 metres, and then informs security agencies via real-time SMS alerts (Iveson, 2010, 121). Moreover,

⁹ Going to out to street to create illegal art works

¹⁰ Iveson points out a significant war-like case from the 1980’s New York, “US\$1.5 million was spent to install double rows of fences topped with razor wire around one of the subway storage yards, with attack dogs patrolling in between the rows of fencing. Declaring this trial a success, in December Koch allocated a further \$22.4 million for more razor wire fences” (2010, 119).

the same university based-inventors “have now established a consortium to commercialize e-nose technologies for further security and military purposes” (2010, 121).

As another scholar, Mcauliffe expresses, “implicitly set as a challenge to urban relations, as the transgressive act of property crime, graffiti has become an emotionally charged public order issue. Attempts by urban managers to eradicate graffiti have resulted in spiralling costs as increasingly more sophisticated methods” (2012, 189).

Nevertheless, as also learned during the field study, the competition continues with evolving techniques and styles spreading in the international level due visual circulation of the actual works on social media in everyday life. In the competition, aesthetic complexity of a graffiti art piece, and where it is painted are keystone components, which also qualifies travelling canvases such as trains “nirvana”. These elements are followed by others, for example size and the height of the place from the ground. To summarise the situation, in the world of graffiti high risk means high reward.

Going back to the interchangeability of the terms graffiti, street art, and even mural, there are different perspectives. One argument is that the word of graffiti was increasingly criminalized while “street art” gained more power. Owing to the “valorization of the power of ‘street art’ by metropolitan agencies to activate space” (Mcauliffe, 2012, 190). In contrary, there are scholars highlighting that graffiti, street art and mural are separate art forms which has overlapping features. “Contemporary Mural came to the street art scene as a trend in 2000’s” (SA7), and among the other forms, it has been an art form which a writer could make profit. As Macdonald expresses (2001, 190), “With the skills and inclination, a writer can make an income, or certainly supplement one, from doing commercial graffiti work like mural commissions, selling canvas/gallery pieces or perhaps designing tee shirt and clothing prints”. Consequently, mural is shown as an example of the subculture’s commercialisation (Merrill, 2015).

Moreover, there is the legality that separates mural from the other forms. To create legal murals requires graffiti writers to ask for the consent of property owners and a graffiti writer may need to present their portfolio involving their variety of art works (Kramer, 2010, 243), maybe show their social media accounts to negotiate with the property owner. According to Kramer’s research in New York City, most legal graffiti writers would paint for free, and do not look for financial rewards from the property owners in cases where they have the control over the creative process (2010, 243). Thus, the scholar states that “it is not money that is necessary, but wall space, which affords the opportunity to paint on a large scale” (2010, 243).

Considering my research data in Istanbul on the other hand, I would say that painting is an expensive act. Due to this, some writers are only able to afford black sprays or markers. To put it another way, financial reward is out of negotiation only if the artist is in a need of a wall to create portfolio, or the wall space is larger enough to gain more recognition in the graffiti world.

If creating illegal graffiti is a dangerous yet playful act for a writer, painting murals is an opportunity for writers to mirror their artistic potential to wall without the pressure of time-limit and getting caught brings. Mural in this sense, offers more space for the artistic progress both in figurative and literal speech. Although the thrill and freedom of an illegal graffiti art production is missing, commercial murals propound a possibility to have an income for writers in exchange of doing the work that they are passionate about. In Macdonald's interview with "Proud 2" the writer explains this situation as, "you've got to take the only thing you know how to do best and say, "Maybe I can make a living out of this." Faced with the financial demands of 'real life', 'you just find ways of turning your hobby into something which will pay the rent" (Macdonald, 2001, 90). What's more, Macdonald highlights the label that producing commercial legal art leaves over the writers. Referring to this the scholar states that it positions the writers out of "the boundaries of the subculture" as writers paint for their "new audience, the person or business their work" instead of creating art for "their peers or themselves" (Macdonald, 2001, 90).

One can see that there is a constant evolution in the graffiti scene since 1980's. Owing the difference between techniques and stylistic expressions -such as old school, wild-style or 3D- that were used then and are now, terminology has given a birth to many phrases (SA2, SA5, SA6). Apart from graffiti and mural with commercial legal paintings, there comes a commonly used third term of "street art". Tristan Manco expresses the challenge of distinguishing street art and graffiti, emphasising the existence of more recent and rarely used terms such as "post-graffiti" and "neo-graffiti" as well. As reported by Manco, the term "street art was first used in the 1980's to describe any art in the urban environment not in the predominant hip-hop style" (2004, 9). It can be said that street art is a practical term which can be a roof for all artists creating on the street. However, "its 'fine-art' or 'trendy' associations leave some artists feeling uneasy with the label" (Manco, 2004, 9). On the other hand, for an artist who bring new materials, techniques to the street there is a chance that some old school writers may not classify them as a graffiti artist.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to say that graffiti continues to be associated with illegal art, mural with commercial collaborations, whereas street art is more contradictory within the graffiti subculture and related to post-modern art.

3.2.1 Street Art in Turkey

Although "...the "modern" graffiti and street art movements, which emerged in Philadelphia and New York in the late 60s and rapidly spread throughout Europe and other parts of the world" (Costa & Lopes, 2015, 4), it appears relatively late in Turkey.

In the beginning of 90's, the first oriental Rap band which sings in Turkish & German language, namely Cartel successfully attracts attentions at the music markets in Turkey and German speaking countries. Deadly racists attacks directed to Turkish immigrants and organised by neo-Nazis triggers the band to be born and except one Cuban, the band members come from working class Turkish families who immigrated to Germany. Lyrics aim to bring up the serious, life threatening problems in Turkish ghettos caused by racism as well as low education, immigrants' adaptation problems and financial issues. After almost thirty year, Kreuzberg district in Berlin which is also referred as "Little Istanbul" and where Cartel comes from is accepted as one of the most iconic street art districts. Moreover, it is also one of sister cities of the Kadıköy municipality. Another significant feature about the Kreuzberg is that some of its inhabitants had to leave because of rising land value after its popularization.

Going back to the development of street art in Turkey, as learned during the participatory observation, at the same time with Cartel, Blue Jean the famous youth magazine of that time in Turkey, starts publishing pages that one of first Turkish graffiti artist TURBO prepares to introduce Rap music and Hip-hop culture to youngsters. Under the influence of the pages, music and slowly increasing colour options to paint we see that street art culture begins to develop in the country. According to my interviews, worldwide famous Turkish graffiti artists who live in Germany, paint the streets during their visits to Turkey (SA5). Some of artists also teach the subtleties of graffiti art through sending photographs of finished art works via letters to their apprentices who lives in the homeland (SA5).

In the previous chapter, we have briefly reminded the political situation influenced by the 70's and 80's military coup in Turkey. Correspondingly, older street artists whom I interviewed underlined that exact same period occurs as another significant determinant on the perception

of graffiti in the country, even today. As Aksel and Olgun states, the city walls become the visual reflection of increasingly intense political conflicts of the everyday life, through slogan writings and posters in this period (Koçak & Koçak, 2016). Members of different political groups who write slogans against each other or the system, fight to harm, kill the other as well as the police.

This seems very important to remember that there is not much time passed after the coups. People still remember the memory of buying food with limited numbers, the pain & the fear of losing loved ones. For some people, the image of a graffiti writer is not any better than a political, scary or a mindless vandal who might bring harm to them by doing illegal works. One of the writers whom I talked during the field study, explains this situation with his personal experience. He with his crew go out to paint at night. They begin painting. A woman sees the crew and starts screaming them to stop, asks why they paint at night time if it is not harming anyone. Threatens to call the police. The writer laughs and explains to me,

How can we paint in the morning? The shopfront shutters are only closed at night time (SA4).

Regarding the attitude of policeman, the same writer states that police do not engage with writers in a negative way. He shares one of his memories with a world-wide known writer in Istanbul. Interviewee says,

That man came to Turkey, for example we paint streets together. I said ‘do whatever you want’ I said. Police was passing by. I said ‘Brother (referring to a policeman) we have guests’. He (referring to the foreign artist) couldn’t believe. Ya... He said, ‘There is nothing like this in any part of the world’. Really. It is utterly different to paint in Istanbul (SA4).

In order to be able to understand if this case represents the general attitude of the law enforcement agencies towards street art and writers, there was a need to question the influence that the writer being a popular artist. As it appears, not the popularity of an artist but spectator’s familiarity with street art in terms of seeing it as a danger or not, influences the scene which has been described. The interviewee says,

Now they know what graffiti is. Back in around 2003 TEM used to take us (SA4).

Following this conversation, and for the aim of learning learn more, I mention a story that I was told by other writers. The story of young writers getting caught, robbed and beaten by private securities of a mall in the Asian Side. Interviewee states that considering his age it is

not possible to attack him. However, going back to ten years ago and referring to very famous two street artists today, the interviewee adds,

Well... In 2008, security guys broke pipes on the back of writer X and writer Y. I know that too. They were beaten until 6 in the morning (SA4).

Despite the walls of Istanbul being covered with various forms, from small tags to colourful, enormous murals, it can be seen, fear and violence against graffiti writers continues to appear in different levels. Moreover, it can be said that factors such as age, fame of an artist in the popular culture and their visibility in public-private collaborations appear influential in terms of an artists' acceptance by outsiders of the graffiti world. These factors affect whether the response they receive is supportive or unsupportive, not to mention being violent.

Importantly, in 2013 street art gained whole different meaning owing to its mass use in the biggest protests in the history of Turkey which is Gezi Park resistance. As a form of creative resistance and a sign of 'carnavalesque', street art became a tool to mark the police brutality, ignorance of main stream media, diversity & inclusion of protestors to the city walls. For instance, the image of "The woman in red". During the protests, Reuters photographer Osman Orsal captured a scene where a woman in a red dress was sprayed tear gas from a very close distance (Orsal, 2013).



Image 1 The woman in red (Orsal,2013)

The photo immediately became a symbol of resistance. The woman on the photo was given a name: "The woman in red" and accepted as one of the heroines of the Gezi resistance. The scene spread all over the city, painted on the public space via using different street art forms.



*Image 2 "The woman in red" on the pavements. The text says, 'she gets bigger every time you spray (pepper gas)'.
(Anonymous street artist, 2013)*

During the Gezi Park protests, it must be said that humorous reflection of the social memory & the resistance defines the street art whereas it was increasingly seen as vandalism for the ruling party and its supporters. Additionally, reference to popular culture and the statements of Erdogan appeared as an important feature in the pieces.

Another important element in the Turkish graffiti scene, regarding to the perception & improvement of graffiti in Turkey is its popularization in the European Side, specifically the district Karaköy. Together with increasing number of graffiti, this historical district became one of the must visit areas on social media. Correspondingly, there appeared a vast number of boutique cafés, stylish art shops, galleries, café-bars and restaurants. The value of the properties was consequently increased. Finally, in 2015, the government approved another controversial urban transformation project which was called the Galataport Project and is now named Salı Pazarı Kurvaziyer Limanı, worth 4.5 billion Turkish Lira investment. Historic preservation district status of Karaköy has been changed into "touristic district" to build shopping malls, luxury hotels, cafés and more.

Speaking from the primary observation and experience in the neighbourhood, the same graffiti artist who paints in the European Side (SA4) explains the changing position of graffiti in there. As reported by him the development of Beyoğlu has begun with a German street artist Kripoe who had come to Istanbul as an Erasmus student and painted yellow fists to the area between

the tunnel and Karaköy district in 2009. The other writers he says, followed Kripoe in terms of using colors.

As it is told, the reign of colored graffiti begins with Kripoe in Turkey. Writers realize that colourful graffiti seen as beautiful whereas chrome- black ones look “vandalist”. To be sure, the interviewee’s crew “tests shop owner’s reactions”. He says,

We painted at night, went there in the morning. Men were like ‘My shopfront shutter looks better than yours’, ‘They wrote BOK¹¹ to mine, I wonder why?’, the other said ‘They made a skull to mine’. We saw that its good (SA4).

The same writers who were beaten and in the same city, begin to exhibit their art works on the walls, but this time with the owner’s permission.

We began to ask for their permissions. Said ‘Brother, we do this kind of work. Shall we paint your wall?’ and began to extend our limit from shopfront shutters to walls (SA4).

What is more surprising than the change that a colourful spray could create about how the writers are perceived, seems as the sociocultural development of the district. As the interviewee reports, “morning tourism” followed the appearance of graffiti on the walls (SA4). After that due the power of social media, bloggers came he says. When the bloggers started to photograph themselves with the walls, people followed them to Karaköy. They were asking for the directions of the walls, showing the photos that they see on social media. According to the interviewee that’s when more cafés which then evolved into bars, began to get opened, due the increasing population of visitors (SA4).

So, Karaköy was developed. When it was developed, celebrities began to show up. Those who have a certain number of followers on Twitter and Instagram, went to get photographed in front of some specific walls. Then their fans came. Fans were coming with photos & asking to shop owners where those walls are...Together with changing owners, people who had money but no vision began to come... Two three years ago, I used to go there every day...Now I only stop by once a week or in every two weeks, only to visit the people who I like... They displaced me from where I created... we are street kids at the end (SA4).

As it is seen, the artist acknowledges his role but also his displacement. He states that at the beginning, they like the attention and the increasing number of visitors coming to see their

¹¹ Dictionary meaning of the word is shit in Turkish language.

pieces. However, together with the changing business owners and opening cafés, bars, the interviewee began to “get sick” of the crowd. He feels that his freedom is restrained in his streets. Apart from that, in the same interview, the writer speaks about the issue of street art becoming a commodification in Istanbul,

Indoor graffiti got wanted as places opened. So, we began to ask for a budget...Saying that ‘brother this is not something that I want (to paint). If you want this, you must pay for its price’, we commercialized the work (SA4).

In light of prementioned issues, it can be said that the image of street art in Turkey remains rebellious, yet depending on the forms and colors used, it is commercialized in some districts.

4. METHOD, METHODOLOGY & DATA

4.1. Overview

Cultural policy is an interdisciplinary field, which adopts a wide repertoire of research methodologies and diverse methods from academia (Scullion & García, 2005). It represents similarities with history by providing information of existed policy to inspect its reflections over future implementations as well as on cultural studies from which come a concern with sign, representation, identity, definitions and experiences of culture and its role in society (2005, 122). The previous chapters of the study shed light on the past. Similar to a dentist who makes maneuvers to treat sensitive parts of a tooth, giving the less damage and pain to the patient, I acknowledged the cultural & economic and political context which the research subject is positioned within. Before discussing the research findings, there is one more step left which is to explain how the research data was conducted and why in such methods.

Therefore, the following subchapters aim to describe the research methodology by providing information on data collection methods of the research, methodological limitations, ethical considerations, research procedure and data introduction.

4.1.1 Methodological Approach

The main difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that the first one deals with the questions of “What?”, “How?” and “Who?” whereas the latter builds the reliability of

the research on relationships between variables and questions “Why?”. Buchanan explains the qualitative research as “the study of people in their natural settings; the study of people by directly interacting with them; and the understanding and validity of the social world and perspectives of the participants lead to the researcher's theorizing” (2000, 82). Among different epistemological spectrums and diverse perspectives, qualitative approach was chosen to collect data and analyse the findings for this research.

Looking at another description given by different scholars, qualitative research is “an umbrella term for a series of approaches” that has been used in pathbreaking studies to research in human disciplines varying from anthropology and sociology to education (Flick, 2018, 3; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It embraces phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, ethnography and it allows to combine multiple approaches to reflect different aspects of an issue within a research (Pring, 2004). Those multiple methodologies are “close-knit set of practices” that a researcher uses to understand or interpret meanings which people who are the subjects of a research offer to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

One of research perspectives that is significantly qualitative is theoretically rooted “in ethnomethodology and constructionism and interested in routines of everyday life and in the making of social reality” (Flick, 2018, 11). Correspondingly says Flick, “data are collected in focus groups, ethnography or (participant) observation and by recording interactions on audio- or videotape. These data are then analysed by using discourse or conversation analyses” (2018, 12). Looking at ethnography closer, Clifford Geertz describes it as “the intellectual effort, an elaborate venture in” instead of being “a matter of methods” (1973). Borrowing a notion “thick description” from Gilbert Ryle, Geertz states that “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” and it is “rather more of an observational and rather less of an interpretive activity than it really is” (1973, 9). Participatory observation, therefore, is a method to create “thick description” of meanings to mirror the self-representation of other people and situations. It is the most efficient method to answer the question of “what is happening?” by giving the finest details.

Nevertheless, “subjective nature” of *verstehen* (understanding) is pointed out as a struggle of constructivist and interpretivist approaches by neopositivist scholars (Schwandt, 1998, 226). However, the dichotomy between different research traditions which is echoed on the contrast between the physical things’ objective world & the meanings’ subjective world, between the public world of outer reality & the private world of inner thoughts, between the quantitative

methods rooted in a scientific model and the qualitative methods rooted in phenomenological exposure, is an ancient philosophical trap that reaches back to the dualism between mind & body, the publicly accessible & the privately privileged (Pring, 2004, 33). Acknowledging the trap, it is essential to clarify what *verstehen* means. Geertz states that it is not researchers' business to get into some "inner correspondence of spirit" with their research subjects but instead, "the trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to" and to perceive "what they perceive "with"—or "by means of," or "through" (1983, 58). The scholar's further explanation suggests that it is fundamental for researchers' to have fellow feelings as in "normal" capacity, "if we expect people to tolerate our intrusions into their lives at all and accept us as persons worth talking to" (Geertz, 1983, 70). Geertz asks, "What happens to *verstehen* when *einfühlen* disappears?" (1983, 56).

For a research that captures meanings & perceptions, thematic discourse analysis occurs as a foundational method to identify, analyse and report the patterns of meaning; interpret "themes" within qualitative data through systematic procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the scholars state, not being restricted with epistemological limitations makes thematic analysis a convenient method for a variety of theoretical approaches (2006). Moreover, it is a method coherent with the idea that our thoughts are governed in a two-directional process where discourses "are orientated towards action, aimed at establishing a particular prevailing view or social reality" and are actively engaged & formed by individuals (Singer & Hunter, 1999, 66). What is defined as a theme on the other hand, explained through its role in analysis. As stated by Braun & Clarke, "the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question, and themes or the patterns within data are classified either in an inductive or theoretical also named as deductive way (2006, 82-83). The former way describes data-driven thematic analysis, whereas in the latter analysis is driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the study field (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 83-84). Thematic DA allows us "to unravel the processes through which this discourse and the 'subject's internal world' is constructed" (Taylor & Ussher, 2001, 296).

4.1.2 The Research Design

In the light of explanatory previous section, the study represents an attempt to explore the role of municipality sponsored street art festival in gentrification, using qualitative field research design. Including the elements of constructivism, it is agreed in this study that there is the social construction of realities (Berger & Luckman, 1991). Consequently, “There is no search for a ‘singular, objective, empirically valid, universal truth, existing out there in the world’ waiting to be uncovered through the application of ‘the scientific method’” (Taylor & Ussher, 2001, 5). Analysing the research findings from a critical perspective with the attitude of looking for an institution or a specific group to point out, decreases researcher’s ability to see what is really going on in the field. Details vanish away due oversimplification of different elements’ impacts. To that end, instead of offering “a universal truth” the study offers an attempt of a sociological understanding on the research subject acknowledging the individual experiences of those who are involved with the process by painting, organizing the festival, controlling the process as a municipal officer, residing or working in the neighbourhood. In other words, it embraces the multiplicity of individual perceptions in the field. In consistency with this approach, thematic discourse analysis in deductive form was used to analyse the research data.

It is also discussed in academia that the place where the researcher stand in their life is an important information to mention in qualitative research. As it could create a struggle, paradox, or a motivation within the research experience. The discourses we choose to acknowledge for broader discussions and the way we analyse them is shaped by our positions & values (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Zukin highlights her own paradox through her analysis on authenticity & gentrification as follows:

I would like “origins” to speak for the politics of the underprivileged, to offer an objective standard of authenticity that defends their right to the city. I am all too aware, though, that I belong to the city’s “new beginnings.” I define my identity in terms of the same subjective kind of authenticity that Jane Jacobs admires, while seeing that it displaces the poor by constructing the habitus, latte by latte, of the new urban middle class (2010, 18).

Agreeing with the scholars, it must be acknowledged that I too am belong to *the new beginnings*. Visiting districts just to photograph street art or taste Instagram famous desserts are the kind of acts that I would do. However, I am also an inhabitant of Kadıköy who is genuinely worried about the gentrification process in Yeldeğirmeni. Thereupon, these values has impact on the current research.

The first stage of the research involved the literature review on theoretical conceptualizations concerning gentrification. While in that stage, conducting data through semi-structured interviews appeared as a method to be used in the study. In order to achieve a better understanding about the street art festival's impact in the neighbourhood, I began the interviews before the festival and continued afterwards. For the interviews, open ended questions were constructed to achieve a two-way dialogue. It is said that "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 10). Agreeing with the scholars, asking open ended questions allowed me to explore key themes for my research. It provided flexibility for participants to describe their own observations and experiences. Additionally, it led questions to be developed further. Questions have been edited at least for three times during the field study.

After spending some time in the field, I acknowledged the necessity for "elaborate venture" for this study. Thus, in addition to conducting interviews, participatory observation became a significantly important method for the research. The participatory observation took place in front of the walls in the Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood, during the Mural Istanbul Festival between the periods that the 4th & 11th of July and 26th and 29th of July in the summer 2017. Fifteen days gap between two periods was due the holiday break of the festival team.

In the analysis period, I followed the footsteps of scholars who previously used or studied thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Singer & Hunter, 1999; Taylor & Ussher, 2001). As the first step, the data sets were identified by particular analytic interests about emerging issues from the interviews, participatory observations, and informal conversations at the field and all samples in the data corpus where that issues are referred to were accepted as data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reason for this was the unique structure of the interviews. Some interviewees were able to share the details of their individual experience & knowledge, which no one else could, regarding street art. On the other hand, some participants were contacted to learn about the gentrification process in the neighbourhood and they did not have much knowledge about street art.

Using thematic discourse analysis allowed me to identify significant issues through repeating codes in the semi-structured interview data. Repeating codes led me to construct the themes. Then, the themes were grouped together to explore consistency, variability and connections within. The grouped themes were checked for the impacts of pre-discussed discourses. In

addition to this, reviewing the relevant literature contributed to this process. Categorization of the themes was achieved through a process of re-listening audio recordings & re-reading the field notes for multiple times. Any piece of information in my data set which exemplifies the themes was transcribed and categorised under related theme. The transcriptions which the report required its written representation was translated from Turkish. Except those which are belonged to the interviews already conducted in English.

4.1.3 Methodological Limitations

Being able to spend some time at the research field showed that the interview method was not adequate on its own to collect data for this study. The limitation regarding to the interview method appeared as not being an efficient method, in terms of offering space that both interviewee and researcher need for establishing an open communication. The struggle was to build the trust between me as a non-street artist researcher and street artists as interviewees in a very limited period of time. Considering that street artists forms one of the most important participant group for this study, it was a crucial decision to use multiple methods. By doing so, I believe that I achieved to build a healthy communication during my field research.

After revising the first interviews and informal conversations at the field, I was able to describe four main reasons that created an invisible blockage between me and the artists at the first place. Four cause appeared as it follows,

First of all, there is the politics of fear to underline. The fear which was constructed to be a protection mechanism against the other¹²and created by AKP during the last fifteen years. In consequence, some interviewees were very uncomfortable of being asked about graffiti and revitalization project related questions. Following dialogue which appeared at the very first interview in the field is one of the examples to the politics of fear (SA1).

SA1: Did someone give this idea to you?

Researcher: No

SA1: So, YOU found it yourself?

(The interviewee emphasizes the word “you” with a mocking voice tone).

Researcher: Yes

¹² Meaning any individual from the outside of one’s primary group.

SA1: How did you hear about Mural Istanbul, and then this subject attracted your attention (to research)?

Researcher: I am interested in Graffiti. However, I am not an artist. I wanted my study to include graffiti and that's how I decided on my thesis' subject.

SA1: So, what did make you think that it causes this?

(He refers to the role of graffiti in gentrification)

Although all the interview participants have been informed about the study subject and the terminology, after being asked about how the writers are chosen for the project and about the street artists, the interviewee suddenly became more distressed. Furthermore, this situation influenced the dialogue. As a researcher with only a limited field practice, I found myself in a situation where I experienced to become a subject whose trustability and profession was questioned. At that point, I almost had no control over the interview, and had to allow the writer (SA1) to direct the dialogue until he felt as he could answer the questions again. When the interview finished, I with my lowered self-confidence knew that interviewing writers as a stranger in Turkey and regarding to gentrification was not very likely to contribute raw data.

The first reason is followed by the fact that all the street artists who I communicated within the scope of research, creates illegal painting works beside legal art works. Although some of them does not hide their real identities, it was observed that artists prefer having a respect in terms of privacy regarding to their illegal artist identities. This attitude also appears for the safety reasons.

The third is the hesitation against a potential manipulation of participants' statements. Related to this, I was told that the street artists have experienced the misinterpretation or manipulation of their answers through previously published interviews or studies about the festival. Considering their previous negative experience, gentrification was a very sensitive topic to be in the same research for some of street artists at the field.

Last of all, there was a gender issue due the fact that I was the only woman at the festival area except people who stopped by occasionally to see the works around the last days of the festival. It must be said that after some weeks, another female researcher who was going to study about the festival began to come to the walls.

Looking through street artists' eyes, I as an only woman, a stranger whom they have never seen or heard her name before, was standing next to a group of their friends whom constantly draw

on a sketch book and observe the art techniques that has being used on the wall. After hearing the only person who willingly accepted to make the interview at the beginning saying that there have been miswritten interviews about the festival in previous years, and therefore, people need to be sure that their words will not be manipulated, I knew that there is a need for me to be at the field as much as possible to overcome the trust struggle.

Analyzing the problem and the reasons behind motivated me to use the participatory observation as a supportive method. Through the agency of participatory observation, the list of participants has grown. Besides the people I met and interviewed at the field, I have also used snowball sampling method. Healthy communication and constant presence at the field brought new connections, which I would not be able to meet in anywhere without the reference of street artists at the festival. Consequently, I now could say that participatory observation evolved from being a supportive method. In other words, observations from the field became as important as the data collected through the interviews.

In order to create a space for new information related to the issue & flexibility, interviews have been conducted through question guides for twenty-two participants in seven different groups (see Table 1: Interview Participants). Apart from that, one more interview has been held before the actual research began. This was about the urban transformation in the area and was held with an efficient public-private supported voluntary organisation in Kadıköy, namely TAK. This interview was not placed in any of groups. However, data was used in the study.

Dividing participants into different groups was beneficial for the research to be able to add or take out (un)related questions from the guide. Therefore, it has improved the quality of research in terms of time management during the interviews. Furthermore, the question guide has been transformed & evolved during the research process. Every interview which the participant gave their permission, was saved as audio recordings.

The significant characteristics of the research can be described as being the most detailed field based study on gentrification of Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood, and being the first study that examines the relation between the process & Mural Istanbul street art festival. On account of these matters and also that Erasmus student's role in the gentrification process could not be included in the study, it might be used as a guide for future research with a wider scope of field research in the long term.

Overall, it can be said that the study systematically analyses the latest data collected at the field research and provide observations on the changing sociocultural structure of the Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood aiming to answer research questions.

4.2. DATA

4.2.1 Introduction of the Data

The aim of this chapter is to present the data which was collected using the qualitative data collection techniques; through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participatory observation and informal conversations in the field work. The overall data gathering process involved undertaking a total of twenty-three interviews, with an input of about ten hours interviewing time. The interviews conducted mainly during the period that Mural Istanbul festival was held, between July and September 2017. One interview, which was with an architecture member of Design Atelier Kadıköy (TAK), held in January 2017.

Interview participants have been informed about the study and there has been no rejection regarding my interview request. Except two interviews which were held with international artists in English language, the interviews conducted in Turkish. Furthermore, interviews were recorded as audio recordings, unless a participant demanded not to. In those cases, taking notes manually during the interview and sometimes recording the researcher's own description of the interview after the interview ends were used as methods to archive the given information. In-depth interviews include the data regarding to participants' personal background as well as their observations, experiences regarding to the gentrification process and even their political stance in some cases.

Therefore, for the ethical reasons,

1. The identity of the participants kept anonymous. The interviewees were named considering their groups which will be explained in the following chapter
2. The gathered research data was kept private in the researcher's personal computer and its only open to her supervisor if required. The data will be deleted after the thesis has been submitted.
3. External agency, individual or a software were not used to transcribe the interviews.

4. The researcher worked with the audio data, listening it for multiple times, transcribing & translating the parts to be directly quoted. This method contributed more insight by recreating the interview atmosphere, bringing the ideas and emotions back.
5. Some of the interviewees shared stories of their friends who are also artists either have an atelier in the neighbourhood or paint on the street. These names were also kept anonymous and referred as artist x/y.

With these approaches and cautions the research made to be as ethical as possible.

In addition to the participatory observation experience during the festival time, my own experience as an inhabitant of Kadıköy who spent more than twenty years around Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood has contributed for the research. Moreover, I must say that the study has been enriched by out-of-record, informal conversations with my family and their long-term Kadıköy resident friends, observations from the time that my sister was a boutique owner in Yeldeğirmeni.

4.2.2 Research Participants

Looking at the interviews both informal and recorded, questions were formed for seven different groups of actors involved in different aspects and stages of the project or were influenced by. Considering the issues that were commonly emphasised by interview participants, questions restructured for multiple times.

Interview Participants	
Group I	Street Artists (SA)
Group II	Organisational Body (Includes some SA's)
Group III	Municipal Officers (MU)
Group IV	Parking-lot owners (PA)
Group V	Atelier Owner Artists (AR)
Group VI	Cafe Owners (CA)
Group VII	Inhabitants (IN)

Table 1: The table consists the groups of twenty-two participants. In addition to the groups defined, there is one prementioned interview, which was not positioned in any of the groups and conducted with TAK.

Detailed information regarding the groups can be described as it follows,

First and perhaps most importantly, there are street artists who have either painted at the festival or are expected to paint in the future. Regarding to this, we need to explain that the festival can be described as an excuse for recent and long-term respected artists to come together. Moreover, it creates a space for street artists who paint in different districts to connect.

Therefore, some street artists visit the festival walls, for the aim of building new networks or to watch the painting process. These visiting artists are also included within the first group.

Interviewing street artists was the first brick of this research. Interviews continued during and after the festival period. Between tea breaks, during the painting time, after the work has finished, I was there. My constant appearance at the festival walls, supported me to build a trust as well as to get familiar with this alternative culture. The data was enriched in terms of first-hand knowledge on terminology, history and universal rules of street art as well as worldwide street art festivals & artists. Furthermore, the motive of street artists to be involved in a project which is financially supported by public or private institutions became clearer.

Speaking from the research observations, I could say that bringing an art project into life requires an emotional labour as much as physical effort. After realising that Mural Istanbul is a result of a collaborative work of an organizer, street artists, assistants, an art supply sponsor, lift operators and the municipal officers who is in charge of the project, I improved the profile of interview participants (See Table 1). Thus, the study became more inclusive. This was when I acknowledged a need of forming separate questions to collect data from all the actors who were involved in the project.

In consideration of that, the second group includes people who conceives the organisational body of the festival project. It includes the street artist who is the organiser of the festival, the owner of the DonutStore which is the official distributor of Montana Colors¹³ in Turkey, and two street artists as assistants. Participants of this group has extensive information about the festival as some of them have been involved with the festival since from the first year. The aim of forming this group was to improve an understanding about the organisational side of the festival, and to investigate the influential power as well as the limits of the Kadıköy Municipality over the project.

This is followed by the third group which symbolises the governmental face of the festival. The group members are the officers who work for the Kadıköy Municipality and either in charge of Mural Istanbul project or have a primary knowledge about the process. Two members of the Urban Design Management department and the social media manager of the municipality occurs to be the participants of this group. Interviews are conducted to the purpose of

¹³ MTN or Montana Colors is one of the biggest global paint manufacturer specializing in Graffiti and Fine Arts products since 1994.

understanding the aim of municipal support in the Mural Istanbul project from the municipality's eyes.

It needs to be said that there is a challenge occurred when interviewing a municipal officer from the Urban Design Management department. The interview has taken place in the Kadıköy Municipality and during the lunch break. Although it was not planned, a co-worker of the officer got involved to the conversation due interviewee's suggestion. The second officer was working for the municipality for a longer period of time. Thus, the challenge was the defensive attitude regarding the municipality's projects. Despite that, having an interview with two officers at the same time changed the form of the conversation. Interviewees neutrally began to answer questions as "the municipality" instead of being individual participants who works for the municipality. In order to preserve the unity of the conversation the interview will be referred as the group interview; and will be counted as one interview.

According to one of the interviews within the third group, it was said that walls to be painted at the festival are preferred to be chosen from a particular part of the neighbourhood, where the private parking lot areas takes place. The reason behind this decision was explained as to improve the downtown Yeldeğirmeni's image. As a consequence of this information, the fourth group was formed on parking lot owners.

Previous studies on gentrification presents the data that gentrification process occurs to be triggered by new opening art ateliers and boutique cafeterias. For this reason, it did not seem possible to exclude these agents from this research. Related to this, the fifth group was formed from atelier owner artists, sixth from owner of cafés at the neighbourhood and lastly the seventh group was formed from local dwellers of Yeldeğirmeni.

In addition to this, it must be said that students are claimed to be the other significant actors in gentrification process. In spite of the data that points out the students' importance also in the case of Yeldeğirmeni, students could not be interviewed due to the reason which will be elucidate in the last chapter of this research.

4.2.3. Interviewee's Profile

To begin with, seven out of twenty-three interviewees which included some of the street artists and work place owners as well, were inhabitants of Yeldeğirmeni. In addition to the questions

that were asked to learn about the gentrification process and the position of street art in the process, some personal questions were asked to understand research participants' attachment and role in the neighbourhood. Based on the personal questions that were asked, the following paragraphs represents interviewees' profile.

Street artists' ages ranged from twenty-one to thirty-two years and they all were male, whereas the atelier owners were specifically between forty-two and fifty-two. All atelier owners were male as well. Eight out of eleven artists both street artists and atelier owners, were studying in a fine arts university or had already graduated from one. Four of the artists were inhabitants of Yeldeğirmeni while the number is six for Kadıköy.

Municipal officers, parking-lot owners and café owners were between thirty-one and fifty. Except one café owner in nine interviewees none of the work owners and municipal officers were residing in Yeldeğirmeni. Looking at the interviewees closer, the café owner (CA1) reported that his parents had moved to the neighbourhood when he was five years old. Therefore, as a long-term inhabitant he had been a witness of all the urban transformation that occurred in the neighbourhood since 1972. He experiences the change both as an inhabitant and a business owner in the area. Hence, he recognises the profile of costumers as well as inhabitants and work owners. The second café owner is one of new comers. He opens the café with his friends just about a seven months ago and third one (CA3) has her café in Yeldeğirmeni for the last one year.

What's more I could say that parking-lot owners who do not reside in Yeldeğirmeni had significant observations about the neighbourhood due the reason that they both had their work place running in the area for a long period of time. As it was reported, a parking-lot owner (PA1) had his workplace for fifteen and the other parking-lot owner (PA2) had his workplace for twenty-five years. Thus, there are two results of taking a long-term part in the socioeconomic circle of Yeldeğirmeni for these interviewees. First of all, they are under the influence of any urban change in the neighbourhood as work owners. In other words, as insiders. In spite of this, they are relatively objective observers. This is the second result. The reason why they are good observers is that they are not inhabitants in the neighbourhood. As a consequence, they perceive the transformation of the neighbourhood also as outsiders. Therefore, one can say that they are both insiders and outsiders depending on the context.

In addition to the street artists and the café owner who were inhabitants of Yeldeğirmeni, three locals from the neighbourhood were interviewed for the study. Inhabitants (IN1, IN2 and IN3)

were respectively, twenty-nine, thirty-five and fifty years old. IN1 stated that she was living in the neighbourhood since her childhood. Moreover, the interviewee reported that even though she lives in a separate house together with her friends, her mother's long-term neighbours from Yeldeğirmeni still look after the interviewee. Such as stopping her on the street to have a conversation or informing her about free woods in the neighbourhood to heat her house in winter time. About the profession of IN1, it can be said that she is a sociology graduate who works at a women's shelter foundation.

The third inhabitant (IN3) was a retired music teacher who still gives private piano lessons in order to cover her life expenses in the neighbourhood. She is a mother of a twenty-four year old man and she shares the apartment with an international flatmate. Furthermore, the interviewee reported that she has been living in the neighbourhood for the last sixteen years. During this period of time, she moved her house for multiple times and lived in the different streets of Yeldeğirmeni.

Main objectives of the semi-structured interview questions were to identify each participants'

- Knowledge regarding Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project
- Attitude towards the project's impact to the neighbourhood
- Knowledge and attitude regarding Mural Istanbul festival
- Perceptions on street art
- Opinions on public & private supported street art projects

Data suggested that the number of street artists and atelier owners who were aware about the Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project was almost equal to the number of street artists and atelier owners who had no prior knowledge about the process. Five and six participants, respectively. Atelier owners were either in communication with street artists or each other. Therefore, they both knew about the Mural Istanbul festival. Apart from that, general approach to the public & private supported street art projects was smooth for the both groups. Another important point is that, the comparison between Kadıköy and Karaköy observed to be came out every time the linkage between gentrification and street art was questioned in the interviews.

Speaking for inhabitants, these interviewees were familiar about the revitalization project. Moreover, they had opinions to share about the process. In contrast to this, interviewees reported that they did not hear about the name of the Mural Istanbul festival, even though both of them stated that they had seen the painted walls in the neighbourhood. Regarding to the

number of ateliers in the neighbourhood they did not have any information. Yet, the increasing number of cafés were an issue that everyone was aware about.

5. ANALYSIS

In the previous chapters, the study presented the literature review on gentrification and its linkage with arts, we have given the street art terminology, approached the econo-political past of the country due the matter that current street art practices and cultural policies were built on social memory & history. By doing so, it was aimed to offer an understanding on the circumstances which the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival as a project of a revitalization plan emerged within.

In the light of prementioned issues, this chapter examines the on-going gentrification process in Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood & the role of the municipality supported street art festival in it. As explained in the data part, as the first step the research data has been examined for the codes and group of related codes. Some quotations were classified under more than one code. Such as the one about rising property values & the impact of the festival,

I don't think that there is such a big impact, yet there is still some...I have lost one of the butchers whom I really like for example... he can't stay in that shop due the high rent...This place (the neighbourhood) became so busy (SA6).

The themes were abstracted from the coded segments. This enabled to discover the underlying patterns. For the next step I refined the selected themes to be certain that they are “specific enough to be discrete (nonrepetitive)” and “broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, 392). Interview pieces within the same themes were rarely contradictory. Mural Istanbul attracting or not attracting more customer to the parking lots, which will be referred in the following pages is a good example for that. As a result of thematic discourse analysis, the main five themes, namely; street art in practice, the gentrification in Yeldeğirmeni, old & new neighbours, artists' role in gentrification, impacts of Mural Istanbul were generated.

In the following subchapters, I will be sharing my analysis under the headlines of Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project, New Neighbours, Artists & Art Galleries and lastly, the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival.

5.1 Yeldeğirmeni Revitalisation Project

A book written by the Kadıköy Municipality Plan & Project Management & ÇEKÜL, regarding the introduction of the “Yeldeğirmeni/Rasimpaşa Revitalisation Project” begins with the following words,

The culture of rascal which was created by the trending liberal market economy in 2000's and fake welfare period, chose cities as a habitat to be exist... The urge of cities to attract global investments and rapidly increasing number of traveller groups, caused an appetite for 'regeneration', 'transformation' and 'branding'... On the one hand, cities' historical past & cultural identity was professionally marketized. On the other hand, declining historical districts were cleaned from their inhabitants who were careless about the situation, same districts were put make up & presented to serve the new groups who had a delightful taste (2011, 14).

In opposite to urban transformation cases that are described in the paragraph, Yeldeğirmeni/Rasimpaşa Revitalisation Project is presented as an alternative, integrated urban revitalization project which was emerged from the collaboration of ÇEKÜL and Kadıköy Municipality in 2011. Sustainable revitalization offered as the goal to be achieved in the Kadıköy Rasimpaşa Neighbourhood and Yeldeğirmeni urban protection district.

According to ÇEKÜL the motivation of the project as to create “a neighbourhood that is self-sufficient enough against the social and economic problems which the neighbourhood will face in the near future” (2014, 20.). Going back to the municipality for the project details, there are four main aims presented (Kadıköy Municipality & ÇEKÜL, 2011, 14),

1. It is said that “maybe the most significant goal” is to preserve the historical characteristic of Yeldeğirmeni and the neighbourhood culture. Identity of the neighbourhood presented as “slow”, “traditional” and “being from the neighbourhood (mahalleli)” features comparing to others.
2. To apply economic, cultural, structural, social and management related integrated revitalization strategies takes place as the second aim.
3. Next goal is expressed as to create sustainability by triggering the organization of local, neighbourhood groups.
4. Finally, it is said that the project plans around Yeldeğirmeni, such as Haydarpaşa, Kadıköy-Üsküdar pier, Marmaray station is going to influence the area in near future. However, Yeldeğirmeni is a relevantly isolated district. Therefore, the last aim is to achieve an integration between the surroundings of Yeldeğirmeni and the city.

Moreover, the revitalization method which was aimed to be implemented is compared with “acupuncture” in terms of being applied only to “problematic areas”. Problematic areas are defined as the points where urban mobility is blocked. In addition to this, the importance of win-win collaborations between the local governments, civil society and investors is emphasised.

It is important to know that the book was lend me by one of the interviewees (IN1) who was given it by one of her mother’s friends, an inhabitant of Yeldeğirmeni as well. Inhabitants seem to be closely interested in the revitalization project & what it brings. Similar to what is explained in the project’s first aim, Zeynep Türkmen’s interview with one of project officers, Alp Arısoy underlines that the project focuses on the concept of neighbourhood owing the fact that inhabitants have a strong sense of belonging the place and they identify themselves from Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood instead of Kadıköy or Istanbul (Türkmen, 2015, 49).

Another point that I would like to refer from the book occurs to be the section which takes place at the end of the document and titled as “To Clean Out the Neighbourhood”. It is stated in this part that,

...functions that damages the life in the neighbourhood and its identity are eliminated with this project. In this regard, offal-houses (sakatathane) that cut meat in the neighbourhood, auto repair shops, pavyons¹⁴ and müzikhols¹⁵, building equipment storages are moved out of the district’s borders (Kadıköy Municipality & ÇEKÜL, 2011, 104).

Regarding the prioritized issues in the project, “safety and elimination” occur as focus points not only in the text but also in the interview which was held with one of municipal officers. Interviewee states that,

One of the main things regarding the revitalization project was to make this district safe and peaceful. Street lights were not enough, pavements were not enough... Then there were derelict places such and such which used to work without permit. These who knows what places had been inspected and eliminated... Briefly, it became a place that is safe for woman... (MU1)

Elimination does not only include the displacement of prementioned places such as offal-houses. Related to this, the officer shares a case of a children’s rehabilitation center which was

¹⁴ Entertainment place with music, food and konsomatrisis. Konsomatrise is a woman who serve the male audience with her emotional labour as well as depending on the different variants about the pavyon, sexual intimacy. Although a pavyon is a legal entertainment place, it is “a shame” to go there for most people.

¹⁵ A müzikhol as well is an entertainment place which has audience of socioeconomically lower status people.

displaced as a result of neighbours' request and within the scope of the project. The interviewee says that,

Another thing is... To say to you... There was... Children... The children protection center¹⁶ managed under the responsibility of the ministry. It was used to rehabilitate children who are addicted to drugs. Many children had help from it, the project was good, but locals of the neighbourhood were somehow scared as children were addicts (MU1).

After telling the story, the interviewee points out that due the increasing safety, the population could flow from the center to Yeldeğirmeni. What's more, "transportation choices were improved as well as the thing of the neighbourhood... the value" (MU1).

When the interviewee is asked about the current placement of those children, he reports that the ministry had separated them to different places in Istanbul. Moreover, he tells that they were replaced by immigrant children who came from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan and waiting to find their way to Europe. Considering the silent moments in our dialogue, and his hesitation on sharing about the issue, it appears to me that the interviewee feels disturbed, somehow ashamed due the displacement of the kids. He emphasises that it was a result of the locals' request and in order to create the "safe" feeling in the district within the revitalization project.

Apart from the safety, the officer respectively highlights the significance of "preservation" just as it was mentioned in the aims that were indirectly quoted from the report. Therefore, the interviewee says that it's the project's goal to "achieve revitalization without destroying" and what is important for them "is the bakery who has been working here for the last forty years" (MU1).

Last but not least, speaking on the other aims of the revitalization one could observe emerging local initiatives in the neighbourhood as well as arguably developed cultural and social facilities. In the scope of the project, the art and culture are supported through the foundation of new initiatives supported by the municipality and sometimes in collaboration with private organizations. In this context, art & cultural events, free educational workshops are organised for inhabitants. In addition to the Rasimpaşa Voluntary Centre which was established to promote civil initiatives & run by locals, two special education centers were opened for the local children's education. According to the interviewee, one of the main motivations behind

¹⁶ "Yeldeğirmeni Çocuk ve Gençlik Merkezi" meaning children and youth center was a controversial center due the complains came in 2007, from street children who stays at the center regarding of being raped there.

these free services is to influence children's decision to not to leave the neighbourhood when they grow up (MU1). In other words, to preserve the neighbourhood with its existing inhabitants.

The aims of the revitalization project and its key aspects appears as presented. Moving forward to how the process has started, the municipal officers who work at the Urban Design Management Department says that it began together with the establishment of Design Atelier Kadıköy (TAK) and Yeldeğirmeni Art. First of all, houses' exteriors were painted, then small green areas were built and owing to such changes on the visual face of the neighbourhood, the number of cafés increased (MU2). As a local who works in the bar located in Yeldeğirmeni says, "there are now ninety-three cafés" (IN2). Furthermore, officers say that not approving permits for the purpose of opening cafés is not an option for the municipality considering the regulations about the free entrepreneurship (MU2). She adds that,

This (referring to the increasing numbers of cafés) will stop at some point...This change or development is a natural result of innovations, although not planned. This was not the aim. Despite that, there is no possibility to avoid this at the moment (MU2).

Despite the rising number of cafés in the neighbourhood there is another observation which officers and locals agree on. The municipality does not provide alcohol license for Yeldeğirmeni anymore. There is only one bar at the moment. An officer clarifies that the main reason behind this decision is the high population of youth. As reported by the officer,

Except the licenses which were given by the ministries, the municipality does not provide any more license. Giving extra license in a district where the mobility of the young population is very high means the rise in rent incomes, the change of neighbourhood's profile, closing shops and bars that are replacing them. (MU1).

Provided that the interviewee who works in Yeldeğirmeni's only bar, points out the possible conflicts that the alcohol license might bring. He says that,

Alcohol license means profit. Workplaces which were not worth for even 500 Turkish Lira are rented for 2000-3000 TL now. Current cafés are owned by "retired students". However, if the alcohol license were given, the youth will be asked to leave, it would be the adults league. If youngsters act rebellious and say, 'we are not leaving', the neighbourhood would turn into a blood lake (IN2).

In light of this chapter, we have a better understanding of the project aims, some of its influences and briefly about the Yeldeğirmeni's profile. In order to discuss if the project

outcomes include gentrification & the street art's role in it, we will be focusing on the neighbourhood's profile and the emerging actors in Yeldeğirmeni in the following chapters.

5.2 Inhabitants & Emerging Actors

I moved to Istanbul in 2010...I knew the rumours about Yeldeğirmeni being called as Texas. Do you? (SA1).

Yeldeğirmeni is an old neighbourhood consisted by variety of social and cultural layers. Looking at the earlier periods of Turkish Republic, it can be said that it is one of the neighbourhoods in Istanbul where the major population of minorities such as Jewish, Greek and Armenian people used to reside. Considering its multicultural history and colourful surface, it was a surprise to repeatedly hear in the interviews that the neighbourhood is referred as Texas by its inhabitants¹⁷. During the research process those various layers were opened up as a blossoming flower to exhibit the core. In this regard, it was learned that many kahvehane in the downtown area of Yeldeğirmeni function as casinos. Furthermore, there are apartment flats used as brothels almost in every street (IN3). An interviewee who has been living in Yeldeğirmeni for the last sixteen years says that,

In this area, every street has a casino, a brothel and a kahvehane. Eighty year old women leave these places at 3-4 am... It's not visible (IN3).

In contrary to this, the neighbourhood stands out with its marginalised population. One of street artists who lives in the area explains the contrast as follows,

There are still pavyons in the downtown area of Yeldeğirmeni (but) my flatmate's hair was red, the other one had green hair and the other one was a rastaman. There was a risk. Everyone in the house was weird, and it attracted attentions (SA7).

Even though one might come to the neighbourhood and think that this contrast is what makes the neighbourhood unique and completely welcomed, another local claims the opposite. He mentions about his customers who are harassed by people from Yeldeğirmeni. Interviewee clarifies the harassment saying that some "new" stores are written texts on, which say that the store owner should leave the neighbourhood (IN2). The interviewee's wife adds that,

¹⁷ In the informal Turkish language, people refer to places where no law is applied as Texas. It might be used to refer the use of violence, drugs, prostitution or any other non-legitimate activity in a specific district.

People are so bigot here. I observe for the last four-five years that those who have a property to rent, accept newcomers due the *rant*, increasing income. Maybe they haven't changed but at least began to find a middle way. However, the others who don't have any gain continued to act as bigots (IN2).

Acknowledging the transformation in Yeldeğirmeni, the Interviewee 2 states that there is certainly no improvement about the safety in the neighbourhood. The following dialogue takes place with the same interviewee,

Researcher: I have heard that Yeldeğirmeni is used to be called as Texas.

IN2: Texas! It still is! People who turned this neighbourhood into Texas, still live here. I'm one of them at some level.

Focusing on the inhabitants' profile more, the neighbourhood includes significant number of associations for people who are coming from the Black Sea Region of Turkey, and the city Bingöl. It can be claimed that low social-economic status is a very important feature that defines this population. In opposite to this profile, interviewed inhabitants and café owners emphasise the influence of Erasmus population who used to reside in the neighbourhood.

It has been about ten years that... it feels like Erasmus students had let the world know and many people around the world came here during a specific period. It lasted about five years. Both me and my son, stayed with Erasmus people in order to ease the payment of our rents. Hence, there is this global side. People from all around the world come here. Because its central position... Secondly, this place is culturally, as any place that attracts immigration or is a subject of a forced settlement, we observe more welcoming communities (IN3).

The Interviewee 3 as well, acknowledges the marginalized groups existence in the neighbourhood. Saying that,

urban people; white collar, lesbians, bisexuals, gays, so-called LGBT people live more comfortably. Except trans people (IN3).

Looking at the sociocultural layers of the neighbourhood, another significant actor occurs as the Don Kışot Squat which was opened just after the Gezi Park protests. Locals say that the squat functioned as an important attraction for exchange students. Moreover, it is seen as a reason behind the cultural and economic transformation of the neighbourhood. As reported,

There was a lot of ateliers, painting, sculpture etc here. But after Don Kışot it peaked. I think the biggest reason behind cafés to be getting opened was Don Kışot. Community who came to Don Kışot were against cafés... There was also a Bienal held in Don Kışot. Erasmus people

supported the place because they saw it as a space to meet Turkish people. After that, flatmate thing, asking for more rent from Erasmus people etc. Then, the cafés which Erasmus students could go were opened. One followed another... (IN1).

From the municipal perspective, an officer disagrees with the idea of Don Kişot changing the neighbourhood. The interviewee says that the revitalization had already began before the Gezi Park protests. Therefore, he does not believe that the squat house has anything to do with the transformation in the neighbourhood (MU1). To that end, municipal officers point out TAK as the most significant change trigger in the neighbourhood (MU2).

TAK is an organisation founded in 2013 with the collaboration of public, private actors and a civil society institution, respectively the Kadıköy Municipality, Urban Strategy & ÇEKÜL. As reported in the interview with one of the architects who work at TAK, the organization promotes participatory design processes in the neighbourhood. It aims to create urban ateliers recognizing the complains and requests which are directed both to the municipality and TAK. Notably, the organization was established in the same year with the Gezi park protests although a month before. The interviewee expresses that TAK is a product of the same process that the Gezi Park protests was formed within, due the same need; “the right to the city”. Similar to TAK, there is also another organization, namely Kadıköy Academy established by the municipality in 2015. However, as it can be understood from its name this organization works on the research level. To put it another way, “Kadıköy Academy aims to produce publications that design the urban process” (Personal Interview with TAK).

Another key thing to mention about the collaboration between the municipality, ÇEKÜL and Urban Strategy is that the founder of Urban Strategy is in the board of ÇEKÜL and has a seat at the Union of Historical Towns. Moreover, it is said that Urban Strategy owned a mentor duty in the revitalization (Personal Interview with TAK).

Thus far, it was presented that Erasmus students, the squat house and Design Atelier Kadıköy appear as critical factors in the transformation of the neighbourhood. Yet, the presence of art ateliers and artists in the neighbourhood seems equally essential to acknowledge. As reported by a municipal officer there are around hundred and fifty ateliers in Yeldeğirmeni (MU1). Due to its close distance, “the neighbourhood has always had a structure that was fed by the Marmara University Fine Arts Faculty” (MU1). According to a street artist (SA7) who is friends with some of first atelier owners in Yeldeğirmeni, the neighbourhood was not used to be preferred by other people before. People were “noble”. However, the rents were cheap and

work places were suitable to be turned into ateliers. His friends noticed this. Yet, it was not without conflicts for artists to settle in the neighbourhood, referring to the acceptance process of the artists in the neighbourhood he says, “People were disturbing them a lot around 2011” (SA7).

As mentioned in the theory chapter, social groups are seen influential on the idea of belonging. This becomes observable in this case as well. The fine art students renting an atelier in Yeldeğirmeni as they hear about the place from their artist friends or at least having a notice in a case that an appropriate shop was evacuated in the neighbourhood. It is worth noting that, the same networks also simplify the research process in terms of applying the snowball sampling method.

Speaking with the artist who was mentioned by SA7 in the interview, the process of ateliers moving to Yeldeğirmeni becomes clearer. The artist lives in the neighbourhood since 1998 and has his atelier there for the last six years. Therefore, he explains that he was already living in the neighbourhood when he saw a good vacant store and rented it (AR1). The interviewee emphasises that when he met a real estate broker to rent the place, was asked so many questions regarding to his purpose. Including the reasons behind not painting at his home and renting a work space instead. After a year, he expresses that, the same real estate brokers who had no idea what a painter does, seemed to improve themselves to marketize stores by underlining the required features in a workspace to paint or create sculptures. The artist expresses that,

That one year changed everything here, very fast. I told my friend. They told their friends. This is how it happened in some level. The increasing number of ateliers... ‘Come see that this place is very good and suitable. There are big stores with high ceilings and close to the center.’ At the end, if you are painting, those factors are really important (AR1).

According to the interviewee rents rose about 50 percent in the last two years, as no store was available anymore. This affected the art students who used to share rental expenses with their few friends in order to have an atelier. Consequently, young artists slowly handed over those places to cafés or new ateliers and left.

Considering the influence of these “new ateliers” to the neighbourhood, a street artist who is also an inhabitant states that they contributed gentrification by settling to pay higher rents for ateliers and going to cafés even though they acted as they are oppose to it as intellectuals (SA7).

The interviewee (AR1) on the other hand, strongly emphasises that the cafés in the neighbourhood spread so quickly, and that they fasten the process. “There are around a hundred cafés opened in a year” he says.

Another artist who owned an atelier in Yeldeğirmeni now for six years, confirms that the property owners are willing to rent their place to cafés as cafés pay high rents. However, he says, except six or seven of cafés, there are no costumers going to cafés (AR2).

Although all of these interviewees agrees that cafés have been increased a lot, there occurs an opposition related to ateliers being closed. In contrary to what AR1 describes, Artist 2 states that not many ateliers have been closed. He says,

About a year ago, together with the crises, property owners wanted to raise the prices. Hence, they tried to convince some tenants, atelier owners to pay more rent. Some of them were convinced and stayed whereas some have left. Yet, this is not the majority (AR2).

In this regard, one of the municipal officers also reports that,

Ateliers are not decreasing, ateliers are coming back (MU2).

This can be understood as ateliers have left but they are now moving back to the neighbourhood. In other words, there is the observation of some of old ateliers not being able to afford the rents. In contrast to this, it is also said that there are not many ateliers closed. Additionally, the municipality expresses that they are coming “back”. This brings us to another important matter which is the visibility of ateliers. A municipal officer claim that,

They actually hide themselves. The reason for that is to avoid the rent increase. We visited them all, the friends in the ateliers. Organised meetings about the problems and how to solve them...Some don't want to be visible, some does (MU1).

From the perspective of one of atelier owners, the story about the municipality's visit to the “friends in ateliers” occurs as follows,

...two municipal officers came. Well, they asked if they could photograph the inside. I asked their purpose. They said ‘we are preparing a map of ateliers here. We will share on the internet’. So, I didn't give my permission... To the internet... I didn't let them place my atelier there, but they knew that there is an atelier here. They may not have shared it on the internet if people had reacted, asking the logic behind sharing the inside of a place on the internet (AR1).

When two other municipal officers who work at the Urban Design Management Department were asked about the map, they states that they are not informed about the project and they do not know which department of the municipality had such an attempt.

As reported by AR2, the popularity of Yeldeğirmeni began increasing five years ago with the process of Beyoğlu being transformed into an idle place due to government's new public policies. In opposite to the process in Beyoğlu, Kadıköy became a place where people feel comfortable owing the fact that "they can feel freer, drink, wander around, walk on the streets holding hands, consume culture and such" (AR2). Therefore, it can be said that the interviewee interprets the change in Yeldeğirmeni as a result of the government's policies over one of the most popular and certainly the most marginal district in Istanbul. The most significant move of the government over the district was the restriction of cafés to have outdoor seatings. The interviewee's idea regarding to this change and AR1's observation about cafés changing the neighbourhood complete each other, as well as the prementioned observation of inhabitants about cafés which were opened to serve alternative culture for Erasmus students.

In this matter, café owners point out other actors as the agencies of urban transformation. For instance, the café owner (CA1) who is also an inhabitant since 1972, claims that neighbourhood began changing as a result of students and ateliers. Secondly, he states that there is no neighbourhood culture left due the fact that property owners had move and most flats are constantly rented. This also means that he does not know any of his neighbours as they always change. Currently, the neighbourhood has an urban heritage district status. Having said that, thirdly and maybe the most significantly, the interviewee claims that Yeldeğirmeni will be classified as a tourism site in a few years as he was told by a municipal officer. That is to say, tourism license will bring alcohol license and the neighbourhood will get worse (CA1).

Notably, the café owner says that there is a habit of doing the same work that someone else does in the neighbourhood. As reported by him, he had renovated his shop where he produced billboards since 1994 and turned it into a café one and a half years ago. Moreover, he says, a friend of his who owned a shop in the same street also transformed it into a café just after CA1.

Another important feature the interviewee highlights is that most of cafés can't make profit. Therefore, real estate brokers hire actors to act as costumers and to make the cafés look crowded, so they can rent the place to someone else. Related to the revitalization project, the interviewee expresses that fights are still a part of neighbourhood's reality at night time, as well as women presenting themselves in windows. Despite that he says, there are improvements in

the neighbourhood & that its better. When CA1 was asked about the profile of his costumers, he answers that they offer a home atmosphere, an open stage and the costumers are “Volkswagen Beetle Association’s members, artists and poets” (CA1).

The interviewee’s (CA1) insights as previously a shop and a current café owner in the neighbourhood differs from other two café owners. CA2 lives in a close district whereas CA3 comes from the European side. They are a thirty-one years old engineer & a forty years old accountant respectively. CA2 explains the reason of opening a café in Yeldeğirmeni as it follows,

I resigned from my job due the family related reasons. They (his current work partners) made me this offer. It was so quick... I did not know about Yeldeğirmeni...We heard about the revitalization project from our friends and through the internet that this is a developing area, cafés are opened. I cannot say that I was aware about what the project is about. But this was the reason why we came here (CA2).

Comparing the other two, the café of CA2 ensures that people who has alternative lifestyles are welcomed. Hence, he says they have been spending effort for the municipality to place bicycle racks to their street, but the municipality postpones it. So, they ordered it on their own from their budget. The café also offers vegan menu and reading nights due their costumers’ request. Additionally, there is a corner where art works for sale are exhibited. CA2 says that, art works are brought by individual artists who do not have a place to show their works, so the café offer them a space. The costumer profile of the café includes many foreigners who live in the area as well (CA2).

Similar to what CA2 says, the third café owner observes that she has many foreign customers. This population includes people who live in Istanbul, tourists and Erasmus students.

We have regular customers, who are foreigners. Erasmus students. Even though the number is so low comparing to previous years, they are still here. They often come to see their friends here. You know that there are so many students here, dormitories. They visit the district (as a tourist) (CA3).

Her experience about relating to the neighbourhood culture appears as serving food and drinks to local shops and ateliers around. So, it is a business relation. It’s also worth noting that the participant highlights that majority of her costumers are outsiders who visit the district, and students (CA3).

The interviewee defines Kadıköy as a place where different personalities and diverse ethnicities come together. Last of all, regarding the revitalization project she believes that Mural Istanbul changes the environment in terms of improving the aesthetic value, modernizing the neighbourhood and setting a model for other places.

To sum up, it can be said that interviewees' impression on the change in Yeldeğirmeni and experiences regarding to this, present both common features and contradictions which need to be considered when analysing the process & street art's role in it.

5.3. Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival

The idea of organising a street art festival in Yeldeğirmeni emerges from an initiative of the architect Alp Arısoy. The street artist who leads the project says that,

There was a high socio-economic inequality in Kadıköy and he wanted to transform the area into a worth noticing, visitable place (SA7).

As reported in the interview with SA7, he and Arısoy were in the same socio-cultural circle as they both study at the same fine arts university. That's how Arısoy heard that SA7 is a writer. They met to discuss about what could be created in the neighbourhood. At the end, they agreed on a mural project which was then presented showing the world-wide wall-painting examples to the municipality. Mural Istanbul Street art Festival, previously called MURAL-IST, began in 2012. Since then, well-known street artists from Turkey and around the world such as Pixel Pancho, Arız, Fintan Magee, Treze and Rustam Qbic were invited to paint at the festival.

According to the interviews, artists are free to paint whatever composition they desire with the condition of being sensitive about Turkish values (SA7, MU1, MU2). Artists to be invited on the other hand are chosen and presented to the municipality by SA7, with an exception of one international artist in 2017. Moreover, they were sent the photos of the wall as this gives the artist an idea about where their design is going to be painted on. Some of artists come with a design to paint whereas some prefers to observe the district and make a design considering the environment after the arrival (SA7, SA3).

Walls to be painted are chosen considering its visibility in terms of offering an enough space to photograph the piece (SA7, MU1). The position of the apartment is also considered in terms of easy-access for visitors.

Significantly, majority of the pieces are painted to the apartment walls' which are next to private parking-lots areas. This also means that there is a car with a lift for an artist to paint the building. Therefore, there is a place occupied by the lift during the working hours of the parking lot for days. Considering that the parking lots belong to private individuals, it was stated in an informal dialogue with a municipal officer that the owners are paid an occupation fee. Having said that, a parking lot worker whom I met during the festival, claims that they lose profit because there is no such a payment offered (PA1). Despite this, he says, they did not request any payment anyways as the walls look good. He explains it as,

A ten year old boy might get inspired by seeing this wall! We might have a financial lost for 3-4 days, but I believe that this will bring benefits in the future (PA1).

Interviewee from the parking lot area where one of the first graffities in Mural Istanbul was painted shares his experience as follows,

The municipality sent an ordinary paper declaring that there is going to be such a work and that we need to evacuate the place in a specific period which they say. So, of course we didn't accept this. Then they improved the conditions. They said that 'let us have at least a part of this place'. It was very challenging for us. We lost our business. We couldn't work. We couldn't earn money. But at the end, the work (referring to mural) turned out good (PA2).

Despite the very positive attitude of PA2, street artists and a municipal officer at the festival area informs me that he was completely a different man during the period when his walls were being painted. After the media attention they say, he has changed. Similar to what was experienced before the media came, there was another parking lot where it was showed to the festival team that they are not welcomed during the research. Therefore, it was not even possible to interview people who works for the parking lot.

Looking at the budget of the festival, first, the artists do not get paid. Secondly, it was told that the municipality has just began making a symbolic payment to the street artists who are in the organisation team of Mural Istanbul. However, the amount of payment was not asked to interviewees. Last of all, a wall costs approximately 10.000 Turkish Lira. This includes the expenses of a lift, supplies, paints, international artists' accommodation & travel expenses as well as everyone's lunch in working days. It is also stated that the municipality covers most of these expenses on its own (SA7).

5.3.1. The Municipality's Aims

In the previous chapters, perception about the street art in Turkey was presented. Acknowledging this, it was said by the municipality that the Mural project was approved “for street art to be respected more as an art branch” and the municipality “prioritized it” (MU1).

Besides that, from the municipal perspective, the project is seen as an opportunity due the context of the art's visibility in the public space (MU1). An officer states that the project was thought to be an exposition of what is created in the ateliers of Yeldeğirmeni (MU1). That's to say, one of the repetitive statements in the activity plans of the Kadıköy Municipality is that, “Kadıköy with its opera, culture centers, galleries, libraries, festivals and events became a city of art and culture” (Kadıköy Municipality 2013 Activity Report. 2013, 5) In this regard, one of the aims of the festival is stated as to improve Kadıköy to be a center of art (2013, 176).

With this in mind, the main goal seems to be changing the profile of the neighbourhood. According to the municipality, there are some shops and areas in Yeldeğirmeni, owned by mafia and different groups (MU1). Approving the visible yet hidden conflict between parking lot owners and the municipality it is expressed that,

We (referring to the festival team) used to discuss with parking lot owners, they used to say that they didn't want (street art). That area is a bit... By doing this, we are changing the profile in the area. Otherwise, we cannot do... We cannot say that 'you! shut this (business/shop) down. You! Shut down!' Through this kind of implementations, we change the life there to be more congruous with the rest of the neighbourhood (MU1).

Regarding the aim of making Kadıköy art and culture center, it is seen that the festival achieved more than just gaining public interest as the first mural festival of the county. This occurred as a reaction against political interventions of the ruling party in terms of art and culture. The story of rainbow stairs in this regard appear as a significant case.

In 2013, pictures of stairs which were painted to rainbow colours immediately began spreading on the internet. The story behind was that stairs were painted by an old forest engineer and his son, both are inhabitants, to “make people smile”. People began visiting the “rainbow stairs” to take a photograph and it attracted tourists' attention.

Despite the increasing interest, one morning people woke up and seen that the stairs were covered with grey colour at night time. Stairs were in a quarter of Beyoğlu Municipality which is administrated by AKP. At first, the municipality of Beyoğlu denied that they covered the

rainbow. However, after a while, the mayor made a statement through media that the neighbours were complaining about the issue, due that the municipal workers were told to paint the stairs to their normal colour.

The rainbow stairs were mirroring the idea of diversity therefore, they were perceived as a symbol of Gezi Park. Painting them to grey on the other hand, seen as an attack against freedom. Hence, it triggered new protests such as writing colour related texts; “grey”, “until your grey paint runs out”, “you are grey” to the walls and illegally painting stairs in different districts & even cities.

As a result of media pressure, original stairs were painted to rainbow colours once again, under the supervision of the municipality. At the end, in 2015, the stairs were destroyed (Kundakçı, 2015).



Image 3 Rainbow stairs were destroyed (Kundakçı, 2015).

The impact of stairs to the Mural Istanbul is reported by the municipal officer as it follows,

The walls began attracting more attention, when the story of painted & then covered stairs spread through media. Kadıköy on the other hand, became one of the symbols of these (he refers to art works). However, our work had been here even before the oppression of the government on the public space growing to its current state (MU1).

In consist with that, the concept of the right to the city emerges again. A message from Aykurt Nuhoğlu (2016), the Mayor of Kadıköy on the official website of the municipality is a significant example in terms of implementing street art as a part of local governments’ urban

projects which are supported by the right to the city based urban policies. The mayor's speech occur as it follows;

We can create endless possibilities if Kadıköy in our minds, dreams is more humane, more contemporary, freer district... We know that giving the will to the district locals having the right to speak in local government will make everyone take responsibility for the management of Kadıköy. In this sense, it will not be difficult to establish a life from our neighbourhood, our town that will be strengthened with democratic values and its solidarity. If we have the right of use of the space we live in, we will also have the right and freedom of conversion and reorganizing (2016).

Looking at the speech it is possible to say that the idea of claiming the rights to the city is used to promote the municipality. Moreover, it is used to build a legitimate ground to support revitalisation without triggering a gentrification. When the urban strategy reports, speeches are observed, it is also seen that the mayor frequently highlights the aim of achieving an inclusive, participatory and democratic way of management in the local government. Although the right to the city seems as a common ground for inhabitants and the municipality in the prementioned speech, it is also observed that "... the city, as a place of constant interactions and multiple experiences, will never be a transversal space, as what is the basis for identity and common interest for some, is not valid for others" (Costa & Lopes, 2015, 9).

Apart from prementioned aims, the festival is considered as the mediatic face of the revitalization project (MU1). Looking at the Kadıköy Municipality's action reports, the festival project appears for the first time in the activity report of the year 2013. In this report, aim is explained as to attract different artists around the world and from Turkey to Kadıköy by organising the street art festival in Yeldeğirmeni (*Kadıköy Belediyesi 2013 Faliyet Raporu*. 2013, 176). Through the year, the emphasis on the project changes whereas the aim remains more or less the same in the reports.

In 2014, the festival was organised in collaboration with COMMON EXPERIENCE from Poland and the supplies were covered by them (SA7). The international street artist M-City's work which shows an UFO abducting or placing military looking cars, was listed as one of the best street art works of the year. However, it does not take place in the activity report 2014 (*Kadıköy Belediyesi 2014 Faliyet Raporu*. 2014).

A year later, the project is mentioned more than once in the different sections of the report and purposes are described as "to bring identity and colour to the streets; make public spaces

attractive; to create new attraction spots in the city. All artists who participated, volunteered to create their art works in order to contribute more recognition for the street art. In the meantime, the project brought local and foreign artists together, it contributed for the share of experience and culture” (*Kadıköy Belediyesi 2015 Faliyet Raporu*. 2015, 110). Significantly, in 2015, the Municipality participated to the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) with the Mural Istanbul Festival project. The theme of ELDW was “Living together in multicultural societies: respect, dialogue, interaction” (2015, 72). Moreover, it was stated in the report that the target budget for art to be created on the street, to support street artists & organise street art festivals in Kadıköy, is 100.000 TL. The responsible department on the other hand is reported to be the Department of Culture and Social Works.

In the last two years, the purpose is defined just as “to create an innovative approach to the public space” (*Kadıköy Belediyesi 2016 Faliyet Raporu*. 2016, 132. & *Kadıköy Belediyesi 2017 Faliyet Raporu*. 2017, 147)

Considering both the municipal reports and interviews, it can be observed that the focus on the Mural Istanbul Street Art Project decreases from time to time in the reports although the municipality offers a significant budget.

For the further discussions, I will be ending this chapter with a municipal officer’s words,

The story of Nuh¹⁸ made it clear that whatever we do we are stuck between the borders which were placed by the sovereign, we cannot go out of what bigger politics demand (MU2).

5.3.2 Artists’ Motivation

All the street artists whom were interviewed during the research, without an exception, stated that it is not very likely for them to paint huge murals on their own. There are two reasons behind. Firstly, there is the struggle of finding suitable apartment where tenants give their permission to an artist, in order for a mural to be painted on their building. It was presented in the previous chapters that painting murals on high walls, require a high financial investment. Higher the wall gets and more the canvas expands; more the budget increases. Therefore, the

¹⁸ Journalist and a writer Nuh Köklü was murdered while playing snowball with his friends in Yeldeğirmeni due “a snowball hitting the shop window”. Köklü was a member of the Solidarity House in Yel değirmeni (Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışması, 2015). The murdered shopkeeper defended himself by writing a letter to Erdoğan and saying that Köklü was from the Gezi & he was against AKP.

second challenge appear as to cover the wall expenses. So, participating as an artist to the Mural Istanbul offers an opportunity of painting large size murals. As an artist says:

For people who paint walls, artists... How to explain... It is everyone's dream to paint a big wall, at least for once. Motivation is always high when there is a chance to paint a big wall (SA2).

Another artist remarks the feeling of self-development or achievement which is linked to the scale of the work,

You are doing a work, you like it and want to improve it. Same thing... The reason why I want to paint in a festival like this is the feeling of development. Mural is a big scale work. Not everyone could handle it (SA8).

Regarding the meaning of painting high walls and financial aspect of the issue, one of the youngest artists who works as an assistant at the festival says:

It would make me so happy to have such a big scale of work like this. Left-over paints and such... I am having a hard time about paints (SA9).

Another key point about the street artists who paint in the festival in 2017, with an exception of one occur as that they do not aim to give any message through their pieces. Considering the informal dialogues and participatory observation in the field, it can be said that asking a street artist regarding the message of their artwork was almost on the taboo level of a "no, no". People who coincidentally saw a mural while it is on the painting process, and asked street artists who happen to be there to watch the work about the meaning of the work, received sarcasm or jokes as an answer. According to the only street artist who expresses that his murals have a message, the negative attitude regarding the meaning of an art work, was born as a reaction to highbrow & low art conflicts (SA3).

Related to the message of an art work, it also appears that most Turkish street artists who take part in the festival prefer having distance with politics. When they are asked about protest graffiti writers, they respond saying that there is no one who really create protest street art works in Turkey. Regarding to this issue, one of artists who studies at a fine arts university says,

Everyone has a different kind of emotional bound with their work...I am a little bit devoted. How to say...I am looking at it from a different perspective. I want to paint as I wish, and I don't believe that I could reach what I want through the context of street art, illegal or protest

works. Due that one needs to have a more emotional approach and have a good relationship with the society (SA2).

On the other hand, only artist who was invited to paint at the festival from the European Side states that, he created his first protest work about the years 2006-2007 during the Palestine-Israel War, for Palestinian kids (SA4). Additionally, he says that he does not create works to send a direct message to someone, but somehow, he shows his reaction.

Provided that, some local street artists who paint at the festival expresses that they do not have any information regarding the Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project (SA2).

In comparison to this, one of international artists (SA3) who is always invited to paint in different countries, shows curiosity about the districts where he paints murals. He replies the question of if there is any common feature about those neighbourhoods as,

It varies from project to project... Well sometimes its gentrification sometimes its other social initiatives but often it leads to gentrification. The other neighbourhood is generally left wing. Kind of creative neighbourhoods (SA3).

That's to say, he describes his own observation regarding the gentrification processes which street art is used as a tool by private agents as it follows,

...you have property developers buying up basically cheap properties, cheap lands in kind of like run down inner city neighbourhoods, making street art projects and trying to bring like colour and that kind of stuff to the neighbourhood. And that this in turn makes city look more safe. Kind of like young, trendy, white people and particularly like inner city urban professionals. There is a term like if they can change the image, make the neighbourhood look safe that means the young urban professionals move in and the value of the properties go up (S3).

Regarding to the outcome of street art taking part in gentrification processes he expresses that,

You know your intention as an artist isn't to push poor people out of their home... that kind of sucks because like when you are going to a neighbourhood, trying to create a message and tell a story or talk about an issue... even though like you are talking about an issue your actions are kind of like doing the opposite of what you wanna do. So that's kind of like something that you should be aware of (SA3).

In addition to the prementioned aims, one of the main reasons behind painting in this kind of projects is reported by the other international artist as,

Oh wait! Somebody invited to a place that I have never been before? It's the motivation to go (SA10).

Last of all, it is said for several times by different local artists that the paints are very expensive. Therefore, it is especially a difficulty for young artists who do not have any good income to afford paints, especially the colourful ones. Due that, tradition to share paints occur as an important part of this culture. It is observed that old-school artists support beginners in this matter, when its possible. Hence, paints which are left after a commercial mural is finished are told to be shared with friends to paint illegal works. As an artist says,

If I make a legal work, this means I have a lot of paint left. I make tones of bombing in a night with those left overs (SA4).

Another participant who study fine arts at a university explains the situation as follows,

Let's say I'm drawing the painting of Raphael, carrying Jesus. If I draw this to the wall, on the street it would be street art. But if draw this on the paper... It doesn't work. I want to ee this kind of things on the wall... In order to do this, you either have to be so rich to buy the paints, or you have to paint for the market. Thus, sponsored paintings plays a financial role as well as it's important for self-development (SA8).

To conclude this chapter, it can be said that the opportunity to paint large size murals occurs as the main & common aim of the artists whereas what follows this such as sharing a message, travelling or having the left over paints after the work varies from artist to artist.

6. DISCUSSION

The urban transformation process which the current social, cultural and economic dynamics were emerged through, in Yeldeğirmeni comes to the sight in 2010. In the last five years, this accelerated transformation begins to display common features with what researchers call as gentrification. As it was explained in the previous chapters, gentrification process of decaying, lower-class neighbourhoods is associated with the emerging population of people who usually are engaged with creative and intellectual works, boutique & alternative cafés, as well as young middle class entrepreneurs. With this in mind, we can look at the study findings once again to see how the features compare.

Istanbul is the biggest city with many university options, and the largest job market in Turkey. Apart from this common knowledge, it is constantly marketized through television shows by presenting its most glorious urban views, high life standards, & young, rich, beautiful inhabitants. Considering these factors, the city attracts especially the young population who is ambitious to improve their lives for the best. However, as any other mega-cities, it is the most expensive city to live. Acknowledging that, the biggest visible change in Yeldeğirmeni is told to be began with student population who chose to live in this cheap neighbourhood. In order to compensate the need of students' accommodation in relatively a safer and cheaper way, student dormitories started to be opened in the area.

In addition to the student population, what was not belong to the neighbourhood can be named as artists. Artists have a significant presence which is acknowledged by the municipality and real estate brokers. Moreover, there appears the combination of both, which is art students. It is told that art students used to prefer the neighbourhood due its affordability. They used to find a place and transform it into an atelier in the neighbourhood. An atelier which could be afforded by splitting its rent and sharing the space with a few other artists.

Significantly, real estate brokers play a role in the growing number of ateliers by improving themselves in terms of their perception regarding the need of an artist in a working space, detecting suitable vacant shops and marketing them through addressing those needs.

Apart from the rising student & artist population, increasing number of daily visitors in the neighbourhood occur as an important issue to be mentioned. It is told that the number of people who come to explore the neighbourhood continuously increases, due the constantly growing number of cafés in Yeldeğirmeni. This is a paradox when it is thought that the number of cafés increases as the neighbourhood has a circulation of potential customers, local tourists. While the number of cafés that are opened in the neighbourhood is told to be reached about a hundred in a year, local retailers continues to be replaced by the alternative shops, boutique cafés.

In contrast to intellectuals, artists, students who still live in the neighbourhood there are even more marginalised groups who had settled far before these cultural groups' arrival. Those disadvantaged inhabitants are the members of lowest social and economic classes, excluded ones from the society. It includes drug dealers, old or immigrant sex-workers, gamblers. They, together with the loud nights, in-secure streets, mafia workers and right-wing brothers are the reason why the neighbourhood is named Texas among its inhabitants. In spite of its being called

as Texas, affordability & location of Yeldeğirmeni occur as the main reasons for various groups to move there, during the survival process of engaging the mega-city.

What's more, due the neighbourhood's location, it is preferred by Erasmus students. Considering what was said before, Erasmus students are geese that laid the golden eggs for some locals. As it was also reported by an interviewee, there is a high demand to find students who come with the exchange program from Europe. The demand comes both from the house owners and the potential flatmates who are from Turkey. In order to rent the properties for more than its value and to split the rent in-equally, in respectively. Thinking Erasmus students as regular customers, temporary yet constant inhabitants of the neighbourhood, it could be understood why locals see them as a driving force of the neighbourhood's transformation. The inhabitants see Erasmus students as the triggering factor for cafés & shops which provide alternative culture on top of a vegan meal or a double priced second-hand dress to be opened in the area.

Acknowledging these dynamics, analysing Yeldeğirmeni's declining streets which are home to sex-workers, pavyons, hidden gambling houses (kahvehanes) as much as immigrants, students and Erasmus students, Kadıköy Municipality began to implement small and larger scale urban projects within the scope of Rasimpaşa-Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project starting from the year 2010. The project not only includes urban implementations such as creating green areas, renovating historical buildings but also has social, cultural and economic concerns. As it was mentioned by the officers and written in the reports, the municipality aims to fix the in-secure image of the neighbourhood, improve the life quality, and to prepare it for the large scale future investments which are planned to be implemented in Kadıköy.

In this regard, the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival occurs as one of the social & cultural implementations of the Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project. It began in 2012 and since than many international and local street artists came to the neighbourhood to paint murals. According to one of the names behind the project, the architect Alp Arısoy, "Mural-ist had an impact on the prominence of Yeldeğirmeni as an art space" (Türkmen, 2015, 51).

A street art project would most commonly be expected to bring festivity to the urban district that it is organised at. Furthermore, it creates a similar, a colourful, clean effect that Disneyland would offer to the costumers. Consequently, one can observe that, the neighbourhood before & after Mural Istanbul and even the specific districts that were painted within the festival would not look same. In consistent with that, the street artist who is the main organiser of the festival,

describes the aim of Mural Istanbul as “to add festivity to the city” (SA7). Following the signs of festivity, fashion bloggers, trend hunter Instagrammers, press, photographers can be observed during and especially shortly after, around the festival area, hanging out in cafés where they have probably never considered spending time before.

Related to this, it can be said that the festival beautifies the neighbourhood. It aestheticizes mostly the walls of apartment buildings which are just next to the parking-lot areas. In contrast to the photographed, colourful buildings, an inhabitant (IN1) claims that the neighbourhood is a stage for unwritten & not published crimes such as rape, just a few parallel streets away from the walls.

There are pros and cons of transformation here. On the one hand, its bad that it was gentrified but on the other hand, it became liveable. It became a place where we can find food (the participant is vegetarian). There are bad things happening from time to time as well. They raped someone. Synagogue. (She refers to the street next to a specific Synagogue). Synagogue is for instance still... A place to be scared when passing by after some time at nights. (Sexual) Harassments occur there from time to time, again. So, it's not so...(She means that the change is not so dramatic from some aspects) (IN1).

A municipal officer reports that the walls are just the last part of the revitalization project and therefore, the festival cannot be considered as a decision-maker factor for people to live in Yeldeğirmeni. He says,

Mobility and safety influence people's decision to live in somewhere. Nobody lives in a place just because there are paintings done (MU1).

However, as previously analysed through the research data, the main motivation behind the festival appears as to transform the neighbourhood to a centre of attraction, a place where people do not feel fear to visit. Hence, as stated by the same officer in the different part of the interview, the parking lot-areas and their surroundings are what municipality would like to change about the neighbourhood. Those down-town streets of the neighbourhood, which are used by the excluded groups of the society. Coupled with that, it was also stated that these areas are legally not possible to shut down and this is the reason why the murals are painted in these areas.

In consistent with the municipal officer's statement of nobody choosing to live in a place just because there are paintings done, one of the street artists describes the impact of the festival over the neighbourhood as follows,

I don't think that there is such a big impact, yet there is still some. There has been improvements boosting each other...and I have lost one of the butchers whom I really like for example. Not there anymore. He can't work there because he can't stay in that shop due the high rent... There are such disadvantages. This place (the neighbourhood) became so busy (SA6).

It is understood from the both interviews that murals may not be the main reason behind the neighbourhood's transformation. Yet, it might have an impact on the financial value of the neighbourhood as it will be discussed in the following page.

Related to "murals being an attraction", a parking-lot worker states that there is no increase in their costumers (PA1), while after a conflict with the parking-lot owners a street artist says that "He has no idea that I dropped a bomb here. The real thing will start after people begin to come here, to see the work, take its pictures" (SA7). In other words, Mural Istanbul appears as an effective tool for aestheticizing the streets. Even if not by the street artists who paint at the festival, the walls are expected to provide gentrification for unwanted layers of the neighbourhood. In contrast with what the interviewee (PA1) states, some of the street artists express that the parking lots with the walls that are painted in the festival attracts more customers due to the safe, clean, artsy and the richer image which the painted walls present (Participatory observation notes). Street artists share their experience saying that some of the parking-lot owners connected them to have their walls painted as they had observed the impact of painted walls on costumers.

Considering the fact that the name Texas was given to the neighbourhood by its own inhabitants, this is not surprising that the parking-lot workers observes the festival as an investment for children and youth of the neighbourhood to get inspired and be better in their lives. A participant says,

I like it (Mural Istanbul) because murals make the neighbourhood look more beautiful, they give joy and also murals may safe children from getting interested in various bad activities, they may inspire small kids to get education and be an artist (PA1).

The festival's possible impact on the neighbourhood's children could have been discussed more as a positive outcome if such a study have been available.

Overall, the revitalization project shows similarities with the arts-led regeneration strategy adopted, state-led gentrification areas which were discussed in the first chapter. Acknowledging that, motivations of Kadıköy Municipality to support street art as a part of revitalization project will be presented in the following paragraphs.

The main aim can be named either as to develop the area or gentrify it. In the light of prementioned analysis regarding the linkage between regeneration and its undesired, yet common result of gentrification, it changes. In the interviews municipality officers define the aim of the project exactly as gentrification without naming it or calling it as development.

The situation becomes visible for anyone who is careful about the current study's findings.

One of the officers reports that the revitalization project has started "in the time that 'gentrification' was not in the academic language yet" (MU1), whereas an inhabitant says rents were increased about fifty percent just in two years (IN3). Another inhabitant who is also a street artist says,

I used to find a house to rent for 900 TL and would say 'what's that! I don't want to pay 900. I don't pay that'. Now it's about 1600-2000 (SA6).

On the other hand, the situation looks promising for property owners. One participant explains the transformation in the neighbourhood as,

Property value is rising. As I am a property owner, the value of my house is increasing (IN2).

Although only the outside of the buildings were painted, and therefore it is not possible for a resident to enjoy the wall painting sitting inside of their flats, murals double the apartment values. Another property owner exemplifies the dramatic increase in the value of real estates in Yeldeğirmeni as follows:

We bought our home, which has 3 balcony and a view of Bosphorus etc., just for 160.000 Turkish Lira, but its current value is 600.000 TL for example (IN1).

Another goal appear as to sustain and promote the image of Kadıköy as an art and culture center. In the scope of the revitalization project Mural Istanbul can be recognized as one of projects that is related to arts & culture, although not the only one. This as well, explains why the expected outcome from Mural Istanbul is not named as gentrification but seen as an improvement. An investment made to the culture of street art and to the neighbourhood.

As observed, urban dwellers from opposite sides of the political positions choose to enjoy at the same human designed district with no natural beauty in it. Considering the social media data about the population flow to Kadıköy, it is essential to emphasise that the new visitors are not just defined as creative new middle class, but they are described with their belonging to a very conservative population continuing their daily lives in another district. In this context,

Mural Istanbul can also be positioned as more of a grass-root oriented creative project on the urban space. Therefore, it may be also said that the target population to be attracted also varies from the ones aimed in other projects such as opening a tennis court or an environment friendly preschool. Elective belonging in this context, seems to be worked on through urban strategies. Certainly, the festival improves the creative image of the neighbourhood as well as its visibility and popularity among local tourists. These results could also be considered as positive impacts when its long-term influence on inhabitants is not seen as priority.

7. CONCLUSION

The research data suggests that there is an on-going gentrification process in the neighbourhood and the Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival is used as a tool to gentrify the neighbourhood by aestheticizing its' problematic streets as well as to improve Kadıköy's image as a center of art & culture.

Furthermore, the process in the neighbourhood indicates features of third-wave gentrification which is more linked to large-scale capital and government support aiming to transform the whole neighbourhood. It is seen that the property values in the area has been increasing, first as a result of students moving to the area, then the shops being rented as art ateliers. Interviews present that this was followed by re-rising financial value of properties. In other words, re-gentrification that creates the struggle of financial affordability for individual artists and inhabitants to continue their lives in Yeldeğirmeni.

What makes the case Yeldeğirmeni different occurs as the social, cultural and economic impact of Erasmus students and internationals moving to the area. From the shop names to the menus and the indoor architecture, emerging cafés observed to be serving alternative and the European culture to customers. Regarding to this, the increasing number of cafés are also seen to be an important indicator of gentrification as it was claimed in the literature.

In the current state, there is the Rasimpaşa-Yeldeğirmeni Revitalization Project, that aims to transform the neighbourhood, and to clean it from its marginalized inhabitants, work places. It was seen that the implementations of Kadıköy Municipality aims to trigger a social, cultural, and economic development in the neighbourhood through the revitalization. The projects

address the neighbourhood's glorious, multicultural history as well as the possibility to create a democratic, innovative future for its inhabitants. It aims to form the culture in the neighbourhood, by eliminating the layers that are not appropriate for the mindset of Kadıköy Municipality. Participatory democracy occurs to be an important emphasis of the municipality which also explains the perception of street art as a claim of right to city. However, it is important to remind that this perception is only valid when street art is exhibited under the permission of the municipality.

It is worth noting for the case of Mural Istanbul that the right to the city may break the idea that the street art is an illegal, vandal art form and it can create the social affirmation for street artists. Yet, it might also be the concrete of a colourful urban project that involves painting walls and increasing the value of districts, replacing people. The right to the city might mean extinguishing social, cultural and economic inequalities by relocating the disadvantaged groups out of a particular urban administration realm.

In the scope of Mural Istanbul, the street artists are given a freedom to create what their heart desires without any censorship coming from the municipality. Yet, it is also important to clarify that the artists are chosen based on their portfolio. Although, there is always a flexibility, it is known what kind of an art piece the chosen artists could possibly create in the festival.

From the artists' perspective, painting in a public or private supported project means being able to earn their lives by doing the work that they are passionate about. It was observed that the artists paint for the municipality in day time and then go out to paint graffiti at night. Therefore, one could be thought as a day job while the other remains as the main purpose.

Painting graffiti is a way for artists to claim their rights to the city. As long as the financial supporter does not limit their creativity. Some of the artists prefer to create only illegal works due to the prementioned outcomes of painting in such events. On the other hand, some who are aware about the situation still participate these events with an additional motivation to spread messages regarding the local and global struggles. There is a controversial field where writers who produce only illegal works do not appreciate the ones who create in public-private supported projects. In that controversial field, the latter group is called as graffiti gentrifiers.

At the end, the open air exhibition; Mural Istanbul Street Art Festival brings festivity to the city. It creates an attraction center for local and a little bit of international tourists in Kadıköy. It was told that there was even graffiti tours, before it was blocked by the festival organisers. Even though it is not discussed in the study as the written resource could not be found by me,

it was claimed by the organizer of the festival (SA7) that Mural Istanbul has brought an international award to Kadıköy Municipality as well.

As the gentrification literature represents, state-led gentrification processes through the arts require more time to be completed comparing to other cases. Therefore, last of all, the current study offers a starting point for future studies regarding the case of Yeldeğirmeni neighbourhood.

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