



# Re-Reading Dynamics of The City of Istanbul Through Critical Mapping

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to re-read and define differentiating layers of the city of Istanbul through critical mappings as an interrogative socio-spatial research. Through this form of a new city read, information on daily urban and social practices, global impacts and urban and economic effects of consumption over space would be exposed among five different thematic constellations rooted from Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. The author aims to clarify socio-spatial constellations over space, time and current trends by deconstructing the current city formation of Istanbul.

*Key words: Critical mapping, Istanbul, socio-spatial research*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Maps have been used to represent the urban environment as well as the representational structure of a city from geographical maps and measurements of ancient Babylon, Syria and Palestine, to the topographical representations and cadastral maps that were developed by Egyptians. Romans developed city maps similar to today's structure where the detailed construction plans for engineers and the formation of current city plans were developed.

Maps were also used as figures of authorities where the control of development and the growth of society were shown as guiding understanding of the environment [1]. As Harley and Woodward (1987) states, maps have always been an integral part of the simultaneous histories of art and of science as well as of the wider realms of the political and social activity [2]. Thus maps as representing of all information over a place and its environment provides not

only geographical conditions, but a hidden socio-political information as a tool of a hegemonic strategy.

Through this article maps as strategic tools of the ideology will therefore be used as a potential to criticize a social and spatial environment by using the potential of its representational techniques however reversing its top-down hegemonic approach by creating critical illustrations/representations/maps of a certain piece of environment. So classifying the new form of criticality as an alternative aims to expose socio-spatial diversities, eco-political dialectics and socio-spatial collisions. As a representation of power on a graphic level, maps became instruments of an idea or an ideological possession. In this manner developing an alternative mapping brings the case to a new way of deconstructing the relations, interconnections, power and its representation. This is one

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of the most important inputs of critical mapping for creating a new perspective over a case, and if it is used within the design and architectural field it reflects on place, spatial dynamics and its effects on people, space and power relationships.

Supporting this context while highlighting the potential of a map as a representative tool of the system, structure, power, interactions and economic reflections over space by zooming onto a cityscape, this article targets to overlay a new form of critical reading for the city of Istanbul as a case study, where new forms of representations creates new forms of socio-spatial datas over daily practices and situations. Hence by focusing on to the city of Istanbul and its urban features, social structures, demographic changes, economic conditions and political attitudes within different fragments, the research targeted to de-construct the city in bits and re-read the gained data and the urban frame accordingly. Through new forms of critical readings through collected datas and creating new constellations or forms of the urban scape as a psycho-geographical map, developed a new form of perceptiveness on the everyday life of the city.

In this manner this paper will start a path through the conceptually and perceptually manipulated maps as a narrative of International Situationists of 1960s with the terminology of 'derive' then structure will continue towards new forms of socio-spatial collisions as a deconstruction of the city of Istanbul as case study.

## **2. PRACTICE OF MANIPULATION AS PSYCHO-GEOGRAPHIC MAPS AND CRITICAL MAPPING AS A DECONSTRUCTIVE READING**

Cities had been read over different levels and formats. Several city maps have been drawn, many visual representations of urban environments have been produced to reflect the image of the city. Many of us experience the spatial environment from a window while passing through from a train window, while many others experience the space with its scale, sound and odor. Each of these experiences have a capacity to define a different visual or mental image on a specific location. Even through different days, experience of the very same physical spot may differ according to the personal mood, the weather, time, its density and etc. In this manner the readability and permeability of spatial environments and their reflective images may lead to questioning the methods of reading or

deconstructing/classifying the data.

As Michel de Certeau states in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, space is a practiced place [3]. These practices exposes many potentially differentiating values over space and time for each of its user. Therefore while talking about methods of deconstruction for perceiving the spatial environment, it is important to dismantle and unite differentiating effecting segments for a wholistic and critical spatial readability. New forms of observations and critical analysis aim to overlay the close relationship between human scale, physical environment and the use of space while critically comparing social, economic or political inputs over space, time, user and the place.

As maps transfer a three dimensional reality onto a two dimensional surface, the act of mapping has always forced the cartographer to simplify, which leads to an un-compromised form of authority as cartographers interpret of reality as the natural truth [4]. On the other hand maps as definitions of borders, boundaries and power plays a critical role in discrimination of space. Therefore as an opposing movement to this form of hierarchy within space, this research follows the notions of Guy Debord's 'derive' pscho-geographies as mental maps of spatial environments that depends of the walker's 'perception' and drowning into situations with a conscious aim.

With the second half of 1950s International Situationists (SI) began a shift in classical mapping towards a perceiving of a city as a subjective and multi layered organism. They start reflecting psycho-geographical mapping as a means of exploring and trying to change the city by wandering through the spaces of the everyday life, mapping the power in the city and trying to find out the potential openings to a new and richer life that they believed was currently suppressed by existing social relations [5]. According to Guy Debord, besides being an artistic avant-garde movement, works of SI were an experimental investigation of the free construction of daily life [6].

Debord believed that investigation of space would bring the 'walker' as the subject to a position of an urban explorer instead of an urban wanderer. By highlighting the subject and exploring the city through conscious aim targeted to create new and respective forms of various urban perceptions [7]. As one of the most known examples of this new form of urban readings, Guy Debord and Asger Jorn developed *The Naked City 'Psychogeographic graphic guide of Paris'* as a manipulated city map (Fig.1).

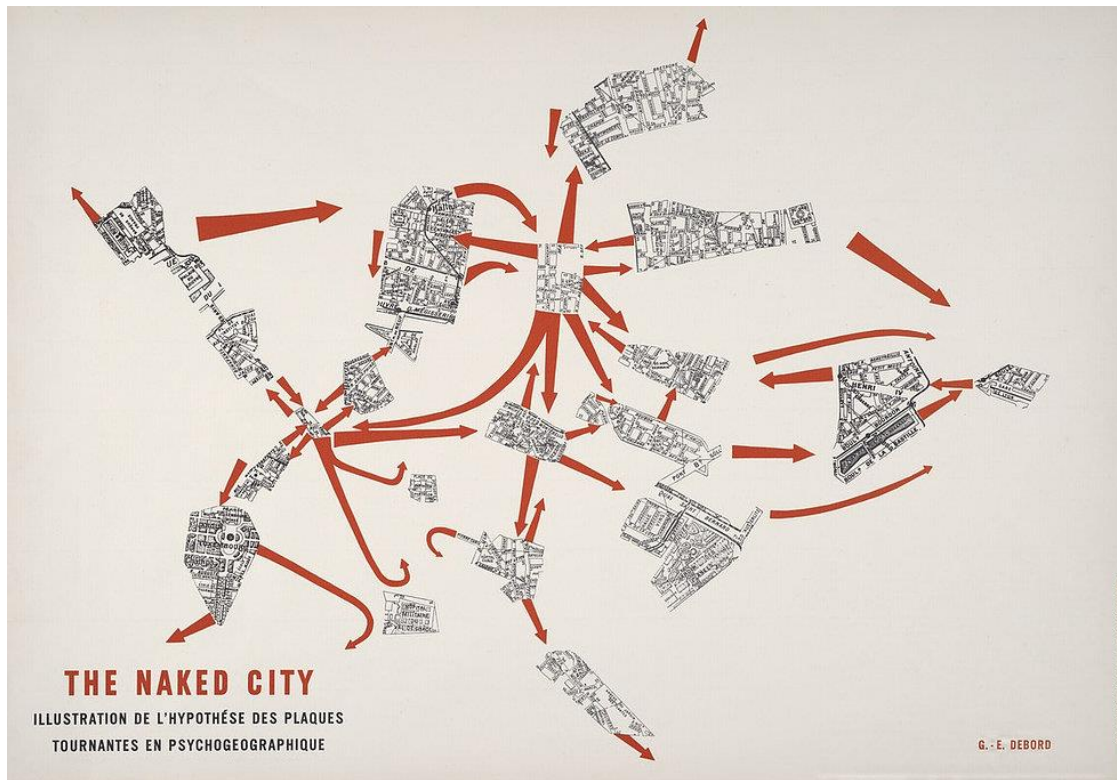


Figure 1: 'Psychogeographic graphic guide of Paris' by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, 1957 [8].

The new city read, proposed by Debord and his friends was an alternative image to the map of the city by dismantling the city into 19 sections and dislocating the pieces as distinct neighborhoods. Map let the person to urban drift and discover personal unities and construct situations about each piece through experience. Through this form of manifestation, Debord's intention was to promote a sort of subjective/personal attachment to the spatial environment. By bringing the society and the experience together in coherent foundations and through these new and concentrated form of struggles, the aim of SI's actions was to develop a critique of the existing world[9]. Through the framework of SI's main aim and their special concentration on urbanism, new forms of critical thinking with new forms of mapping has been developed since late 20th century and maps as representational forms of power and hierarchy, formed into a new tool into the deconstructive reading of space and by new form of implementation method they became a critical tool of the existing visible. Şenel (2014) transfers this phase as "a desire to transform a worldview that seeks a single objective and quantitative knowledge of place to one that embraces subjective and qualitative multiple knowledges of place" [10].

Pickles (2004) states that the realist ontologies of regional description to the deep anti-representational logics of the 1960s and 1970s that sought to redefine mapping in structural-mathematical of relevant political terms to the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s, mapping metaphors and mapping

practices have gained wide currency. He highlights the role of maps and mapping in the construction of socio-spatial identities has become an important area of new mapping studies particularly as digital mapping has begun to influence many more domains of social life [11].

On the case of difficulty on mapping Pile and Thrift (1995) give their opinions as "...something that cannot be counted as singular but only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is always on the move, culturally and in fact. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is only partially locatable in time-space. Then finally there is the difficulty of deploying the representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to an enlightenment logic in which everything can be surveyed and pinned down. There is however another way of thinking of mapping as wayfinding" [12].

In this context evolution of such critical thinking in the theory and research field of urban design, forces a development of comparative descriptions for urban scape, which questions the socio-political or spatial implementations and their reflections on sites and users, on perceived spatial environment and the image. This new form of representational data may be perceived as a re-structuring process, or a de-construction method to produce alternative images and understandings and experiences. By illustrating the invisible layers of social, political, economical and spatial datas, critical maps as

implementation of mappings, new tools of interventions are being developed in graphical forms about the invisible commons or perceived surveys.

Within this brief information of psycho-geographic maps and mapping as a deconstructive reading of perceived experiences, basing onto the SI's methodologies on critical thinking and of exposing contradictories of urbanscapes, the research aimed to focus on to the city of Istanbul for exposing a new perception over critical readings, reciprocal investigations and exposing socio-spatial dialectics over space, time and place via new and various forms of representations.

### 3. DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF THE CITY OF ISTANBUL AS A SOCIO-SPATIAL METHOD

The city of Istanbul facing rapid urban transformations, social and spatial changes, fragmentation, expansion and effects of globalization on site had been selected for a critical mapping research. The focus on the city of Istanbul targeted to unfold different layers of city through the society, identity, culture, locality, global reflections, environment, change and permeability, transformation of the pattern, silhouette, public spaces and simply to expose the potential of various cyclic images of the city within a limited time period which is in fact limited to this research's time span. The aim was to highlight the exposed/clean/touristic versus experienced/rusted/local controversial situations as a new perspectives of space and place. On the other hand to expose different palimpsests of the city of Istanbul especially highlighting what is unseen or neglected through daily practices of everyday life within the city.

In this manner the city of Istanbul chosen as a case study to re-read through distilled themes of Guy Debord's 1974 *The Society of the Spectacle* documentary. Debord published his *The Society of the Spectacle* book in 1967 which happen to become a key document for the 68 student demonstrations of France. As the provoking document through the text Debord aimed to reconsider contradictions in order to understand the modern society. To highlight contradictory atmosphere of daily lives, society, media, politics and urban environment Debord developed his text as a valuable and stirring argument. Additionally in 1973 he attempted to illustrate his ideas through images from the current timeline and produced the documentary of *The Society of the Spectacle*. As a visual and reflected manifestation his ideas were directly narrated by himself whilst being illustrated through daily images and scenes of social, political, urban, cultural environments. By talking on the contradictions over these fields, Debord's mission

was to highlight the importance of critical thinking by exposing juxtapositions of real life, local and global power, control and oppression through different perspectives [13].

Through Debord's and naturally SI's provoking inputs for critical thinking and exposing of contradictories, cities as focuses of urban transformation, juxtaposition, fragmentation, consumption and power struggles brought this research to a position of search the invisible patterns of the visible image of the surrounding environment. Therefore the critical mapping phase of the city of Istanbul aimed to illustrate these invisible potentials, values, or indisputably the side effects, dark sides of the promoted image of the city.

With this perspective during 2014-2015 academic year as part of a Bachelor degree course in Maltepe University Faculty of Architecture and Design, a new research was held by the author with the architectural degree bachelor participants to investigate the city's perceived and/or consumed fragments in respect to the discussed concepts from the *Society of the Spectacle* documentary. Five categories were concluded through the 1973 work of Debord and these categories were re-combined/clustered in order to form special constellations of sub themes like a focal lens to analyze the spatial environment and the daily experiences of the society for giving a potential to a new form of thinking on the city. These constellations are explained and their expositions will be criticized briefly as below:

C1: power + hierarchy + economy + regime + class constellation targeted to question the effects of the power of inhabitants, users, decision makers and the economy over the city. This form of investigation of power, led the researchers to question the citizens and city services as part of power and class categories. In this manner while collecting detailed population datas on the inhabitants of the city of Istanbul on homeland informations, the research aimed to expose actual roots of the city of Istanbul as part of an attachment critique over this city. As a query to the concept of attachment and belonging, this new way of perception of the city aims to expose the migration reality to the city over the time and space and asks "Who are these Istanbulites?" (Fig.2). Through the form of critical questioning, the researcher aimed to show the most migrated sections of the city of Ümraniye, Ataşehir, Çekmeköy, Sancaktepe and Sultanbeyli on Asian side and Sarıyer, Şişli, Kağıthane, Beyoğlu and Sultangazi on the European side of the city which significantly indicates both ends of the Bosphorus bridge. This form of exposition may carry a critical importance for an socio-spatial upgrading implementations, in terms of urban planning

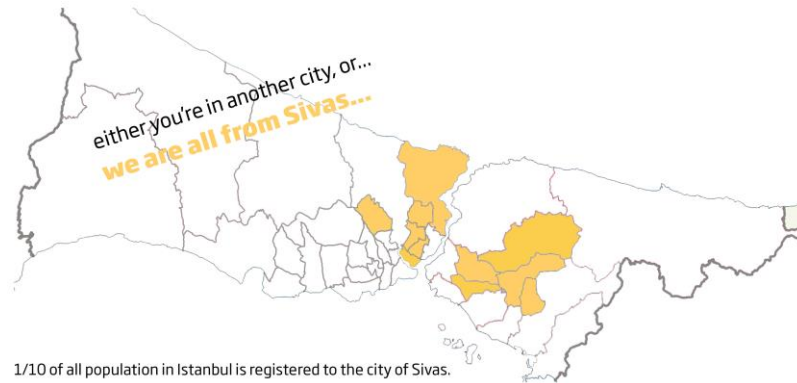


Figure 2: "Who are these Istanbulites? Sivashlılar!" researched by Mahmut Yanık

C2: image + illusion + memory + history + existence constellation targeted to analyze the image of the city, its promoted history and its relative existence. This exposed research aimed to investigate the realities behind the promoted touristic maps of the city where the historical peninsula would appear as a cultural and historical attraction zone for tourism. However the research by looking beyond the historical peninsula tries to expose the adjacent fragments of this promoted section of the city where crime rates are reasonably high.

Through detailed data investigation, the researcher wanted to expose the fragmented city pieces as a relative existence to the same map by collecting data over crime rates, drug use, abuse and theft through criminal reports and by scanning media articles of past fifteen years (Fig.3). The 'Illusion of the city' maps focuses on the tourism populated agenda of the city and questions what to get if we start seeing the existences over a new map of the promoted zone.

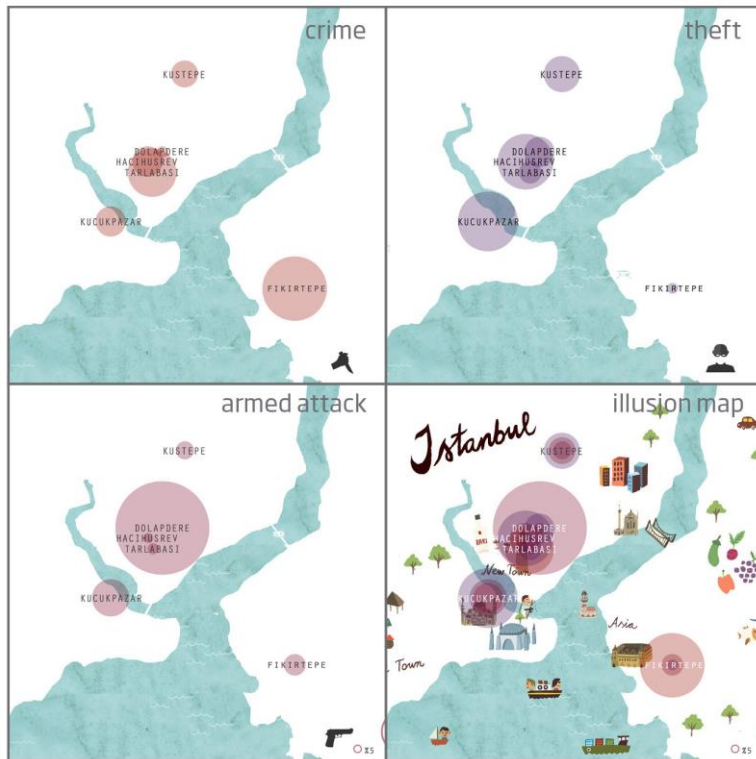


Figure 3: 'Illusion of the city' maps researched by İremnur Yaşar.



C3: production + reproduction + consumption + kitsch + identity constellation focused on the new forms of images, consumption culture and basically the reflection of the consuming society and their extensive needs over spatial environments. Basing their focal research over shopping malls as new age consumption sanctuaries and transformation trends of the city over space and time with the force of globalization trends below research maps were produced criticizing the strategy of the decision makers for how the unplanned urban texture is being dissolved through new uses and needs.

According to this research shopping culture with the neoliberal effects over the city has been taken into account and the spotting of each shopping mall and their strategic location pinnings were spotted in parallel to the fragmenting and diluting of the populated and unstructured urban textures of the city (Fig.4). In this manner this work exposes of shopping malls as a tool to catalyze an urban regeneration process over the cityscape whilst questioning and criticizing the driving forces of such an urban expansion.

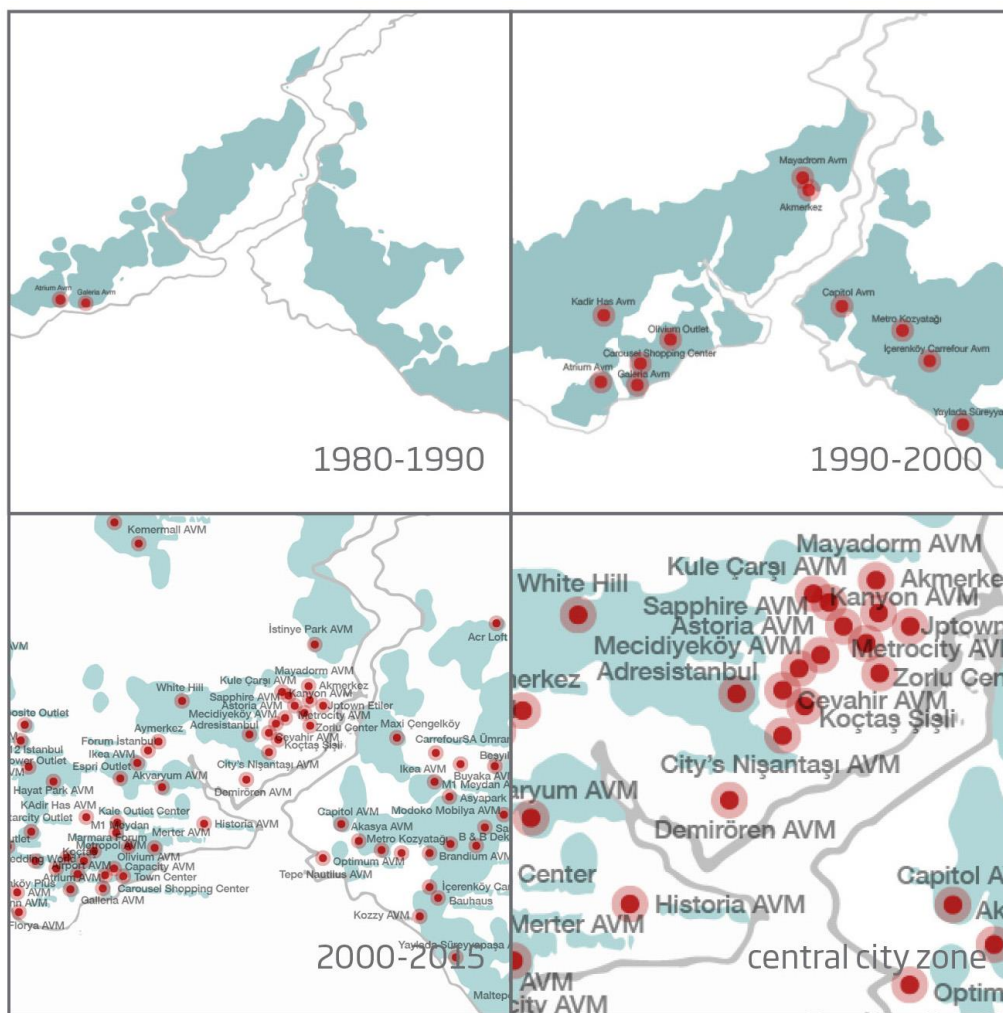


Figure 4: Shopping malls as a tool of urban regeneration by İpek Kandaz and Serpil Öz maps out 1980-90, 2000 and 2015 processes with a final zoom into the central city.

C4: reality of space + transportation + interaction + information constellation focused more onto the actual and

relative forms of spatial interaction. According to the researchers focus, the city would define an image in the memories that would be relative and individual perception of space. It would derives from various experiences, reflected expectations and outer inputs which in this manner would define a new experienced path within a whole. Therefore as a similar attempt of Debord's division of Paris this research focused on exposing the limits of the city according to hundred inhabitants located around the city. The aim of exposed maps were to question the reality

of space, and limits of 'each' city, referring to various consistencies of the city of Istanbul (Fig.5). Within this article only six different perceived Istanbul's (pointed as p1, p2, p3, p4, p5 and p6 at the below figure) will be presented accordingly. Whilst exposing different perceived segments of the city this approach criticized the limits of our own cities, to allude each inhabitant's own fragmented zones within the whole and asks "where is the city of Istanbul"?

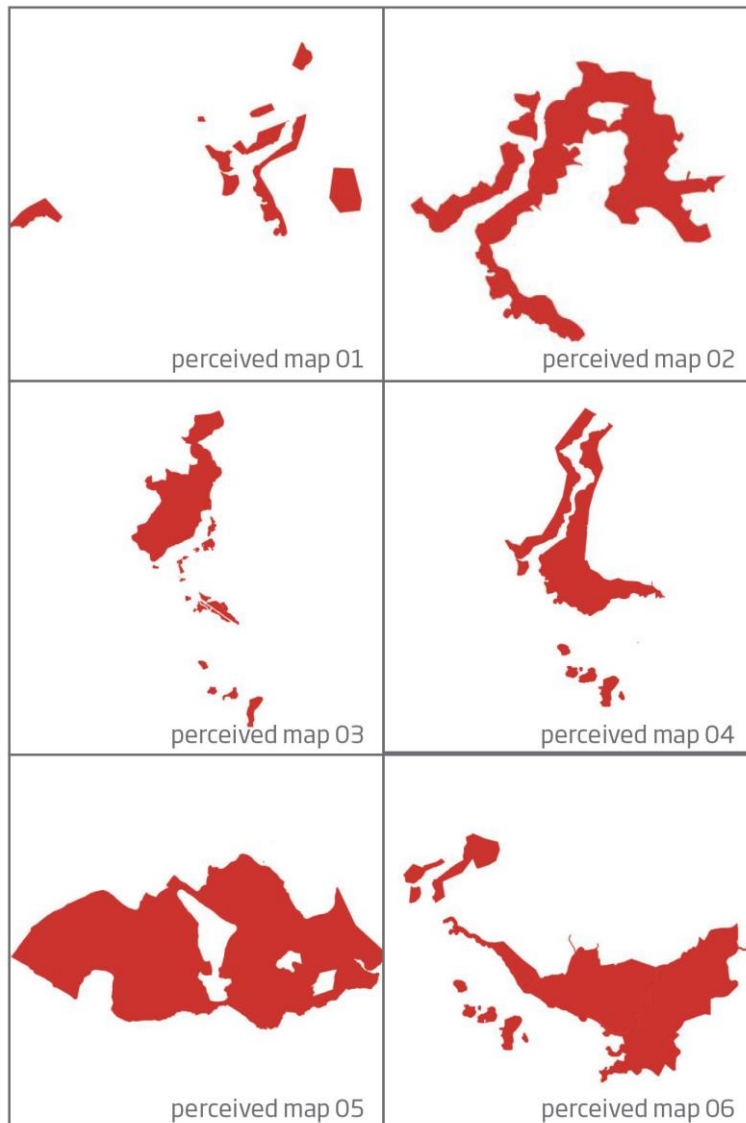


Figure 5: Maps by Ece Yurdakul exposes various perceived segments of the city of Istanbul.

C5: participation + division + segregation + transformation

+ resistance constellation aimed to highlight the fragmentation of space over time by users, socio political and economic conditions as driving forces. Through this constellation the latter exposed research and map used



economic conditions as a leading force of a segregation throughout an urban corridor. The continuous corridor as a one wholistic line chosen to be the 500T the longest public transportation line starting from Tuzla on the asian side and

ends at Cevizlibağ at the European side of the city as a tool to investigate socio-political and economic divisions among the city (Fig.6).

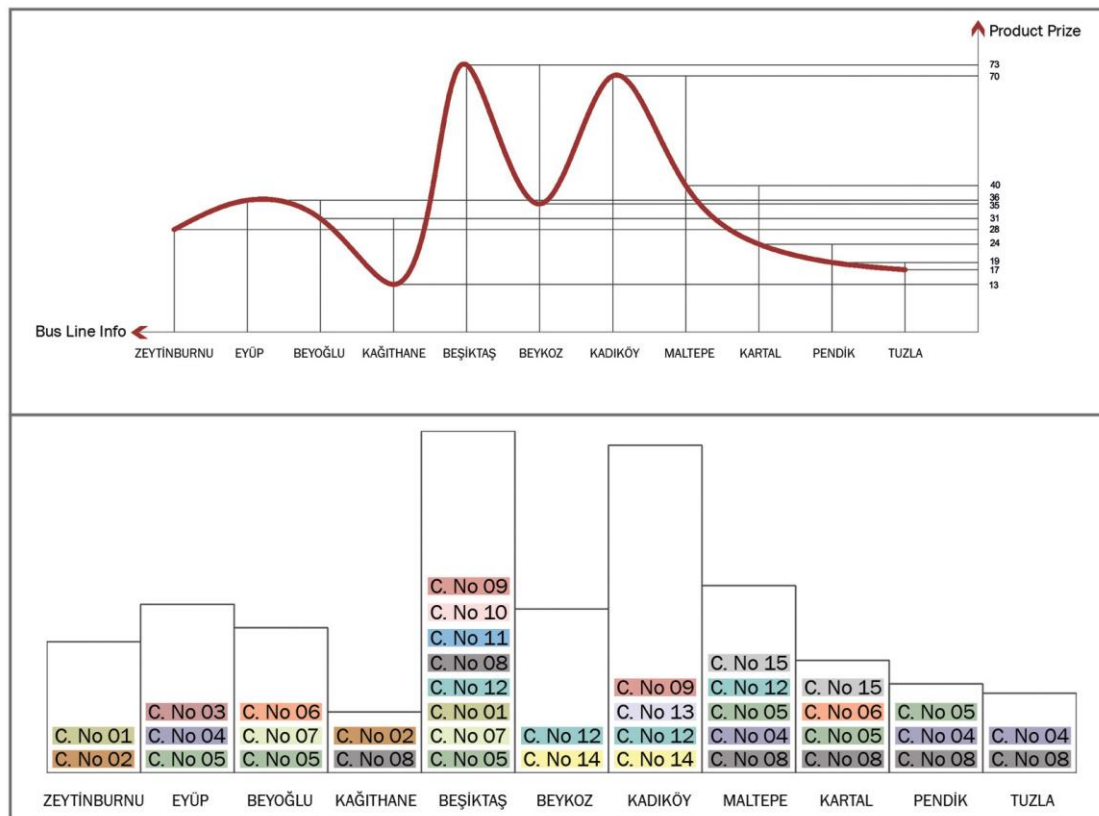


Figure 6: Research by Seda Uras, A. Tuğba Süberk, G. Sena Aslan exposes the socio-economic waves of an urban corridor of 500T bus line.

In this manner the research team based their starting point to Jenkins and Yadin's (2000) book of Advertising statement as the current modern life structures itself on advertisements [14]. The team based on a linear section of the city through the bus line, focused on each bus stop's advertisements. Through the collection of ads among the 500Tcity section, the aim of the team was to expose the socio-economic waves among the section and highlighting a new path of use of space-user's socio-economic levels and potential of place for different aged users. At sum, the analysis revealed that firstly thru their average price levels, an intended socio-economic group of population on site and on the other hand thru the variety of options among ads, one could start pointing out much crowded locations or nodes of the city section. In this manner the mapping of socio-economic waves brought out a social segregation from an economic perspective by following an urban corridor.

All in all through the exemplary cases of this article and through the potentials of the gathered and represented data over the city of Istanbul, resolution of the networks of relations were made possible. In such a manner the raised questions through mappings may lead or have a potential to lead the inhabitants, decision makers or short term visitors to observe, realize and to re-act over.

#### 4. FINAL DISCUSSION

Pickles (2004) underlines that maps and mappings precede the territory they 'represent' and territories are produced by the overlaying of inscriptions we call mappings [15]. In this context Kitchin, Gleeson and Dodge (2012) defines mappings as re-conceptualized maps rather than map making practice are ceaselessly unfolding through contingent, citational, habitual, negotiated, reflexive and

playful practices, embedded within regional contexts [16].

As such overlaid negotiated inscriptions of experiences mapping practice could be analyzed through two different paths. On one side mapping practice can be examined as in this very article as the base of knowledge, stands the collected data, questioning, distributing and re-combining the information for a meaningful constellation, a framework according to the intellectual backgrounds, expectations, experiences or practices of the researcher as the subject. On the other side mapping practice could be questioned through its representational forms of the negotiated data as the exposed/questioned/highlighted outcome.

Through this article the author significantly focused onto the mapping experiences as a form of revelation, new read, excavation of the hidden layers, thus forms of representations of data may be defined as experimental depending on to its subject and its scribe. However the collection of data through cross referencing, socio-spatial comparisons and critical readings through time scans reflect site and theme oriented research findings. In this sense the deconstruction of data or experiences for a specific time period aimed to expose a new form of space-time-user correlation by mainly focusing on the deconstruction of the seen, revealing the un-seen, highlighting the neglected sides of the city and discussing new forms of socio-spatial readings of the city. From this point of view as an attempt of disperse the city through power, image, production, interaction and transformation aimed to create new forms of visual representations of the urban and social spaces. Through these forms of constellations and their possible interactions, and through differentiated forms of mappings presented and described in this article the mission of the author among this research was exposing various layers of the city as 'city as a representational form of power structure', 'cities as ambiguous and entwined images', 'the city as a cluttering space of continual RE-production', 'cities as interactive and relative spaces' and 'cities as indistinct spaces of nolation and resistance'.

Scanning and de-constructing the city through these five different perceived and experienced paths as well as analyzed and researched data, helped the research find a new way of communication and constructing on urban and social-scapes of the city. By critically peeling the effects of each constellation, the de-constructed pattern of each layer would purely define new generators of data. Through the whole investigation process, the aim of the process and this article was to expose the effects of recent dynamics of economical, global, cultural and social levels over the city and its users and to highlight the 'mediated images among people' or the city promoters as an attribution to Debord's statements.

The outcomes of critical readings were reflected on new forms of representational mappings which are interrelating the space with the above mentioned constellations and

therefore inviting their observers for looking at what is invisible within everyday's experience of Istanbul. Eventually through this form of methodology and mapping, the observer unintentionally moves forward to experience and see the unseen during a daily routine and practice of the city and ultimately de-form his/her own images on the social, physical, political and economic reflections over the city of Istanbul.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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