

AN HISTORICAL CREATIVE CLUSTER: BABIALI - ISTANBUL

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—Abstract—

Creative industries are among the most dynamic sectors of the world economy. The studies in regional and urban policies are being accepted and developed to attract creative economies and sustain their synergy. Istanbul, one of the most rapidly growing metropolises of the world, encapsulates these values and desires a circumspect planning agenda. Babiali is one of the historic clusters in Istanbul, until late 1990s, known and described as the capital city of Turkish (printed) media. It is the district named after the sublime port- high port - ottoman port: Babiali Port, where the printed media was settled since 1980s. The transformation of the area is a deductive example to observe an irreversible decision and a great loss for the emerging concept of creative city.

The question to be dealt with will be whether if the originality, uniqueness and value of this very special formation of Istanbul is a loss after the decentralization of the Historic Peninsula. The method of the study is to observe through the literature and through series of interviews to give an essence of a historic creative cluster and to understand the needs of the creative people. Especially to determine the spatial needs of this creative sector, the interviews were again pathfinder. Also the rich literature about Babiali enables us to realize the magnificent nascence of the district.

By surveying the area with the help the former workers, writers, artists and publishers, and analysing the secondary literature on this subject, we aim to contribute to the positive effects of clustering on creativity and the ongoing decentralization process from city centers to the peripheries, where various studies argue about the originality and diversity of the clusters are important to attract and sustain the competitiveness of the cities.

Key Words: *Creative Cluster, Media, Creative Economy, Babiali*

JEL Classification: L00 – General

1. CREATIVE ERA – ISTANBUL and BABIALI

New ideas, not money or machinery, are the source of success today, and the greatest source of personal satisfaction, too (Howkins, 2001).

Creative industries are among the most dynamic sectors of the world economy. The new indispensable values related to the panacea are knowledge, information, innovation, talent, transparency, trust, uniqueness, cultural heritage, tolerance, technology, new ideas, sustainability and the creativity power of human capital.

Istanbul, encapsulating these values as a mega metropolis struggles also to benefit the driving forces of the creative economies. One of the mainstream creative sectors, Turkish (printed) media was emerged on the historic peninsula, in Babiali.

The study is to observe the essence of this historic creative cluster, which is decentralized almost leaving any trace after 150 years presence.

1.1. The challenge of creative economy for planners

As creativity, knowledge and access to information are increasingly recognized as powerful engines which are driving regional and national growth and development, more and more studies in regional and urban policies are being accepted and developed to attract and sustain the synergy of creative economies.

Images, sounds, symbols, inventions, ideas are creating new jobs, wealth and a new stand and viewpoint.

The terms “cultural industries” and “creative industries” are often used interchangeably. We can consider the ‘creative and cultural economy’ as the interface between culture, economies and technology. Creative Industries are defined by the UK DCMS in 1998 as those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

According to the 2010 Creative Economy Report, after the last world economic crisis in 2008, it is accepted that knowledge based creative economies showed a positive development where the employment rate at these sectors are increased.

Creativity is being at the cornerstone of success for post-industrial cities, regions and nations in the globalised economy (Flew, 2011). It is also advocated that the creative economy is revitalizing the manufacturing, services, retailing and entertainment industries, and it also changes the areas where people want to live, work and learn, think, invent and produce. We as urban planners do have a great job and responsibility. Creative Studies, Faculties of Creative Industries, Creative Charters or the institutions, which are doing a lot of research, are showing the growing interest for the issue.

The ongoing debate about the importance of the creative sectors for the cities, that increase the attractiveness and challenge of the cities, and thus the value adding capacity of the creative industries are widely recognized as a leading aspect for urban planning. As the concept of the “creative economy” is gaining ground in contemporary thinking for economic development. More companies wish to be associated with cultural life and the social function of artistic and cultural creativity, where the urban planning policies again gain ground.

To understand the nature of creative and innovative cities and the creative ecology, many international monitoring organizations are following the data of the improvement of living and working conditions in so called ‘Creative Cities.’ A wide range of discussion took place also for Istanbul, as the city was chosen as the Cultural Capital of 2010, thus a broader interest is shown also during and after the progress period.

1.2. Media as a Creative Sector

The most successful economies and societies of our century will be creative ones. The belief on creativity which will make the difference, and will be the essential ingredient for success brought the long lasting debate what to include or exclude from the definition of creative industries (Galloway, Dunlop, 2007). Thus publishing and media are accepted within the all descriptions as one of the most traditional and historic creative industries, we are going to exclude this debate from our study.

Among the creative industries media with a fundamental redefinition with its new technology based transformation and the new communication infrastructure shows a spatial transition all around the world. Traditional media supply, production and distribution process and methods are being restructured.

Media became one of the main sectors of the creative industries. There are tendencies to overcome increased competition and desire to maintain the activity to ensure this creative industry, a future. A wide discussion and debate about the cluster policy in the sector is ongoing, as the fact that geographic or physical proximity is not enough for such developments.

2. ISTANBUL AS A CREATIVE HUB

The creative city phenomena became a global movement especially for planners and gave us a great opportunity to rethink the planning, development and management of our cities. Charles Landry defines the creative city concept and advocates that cities have a very crucial resource: their people. The capacity of each city differs by its transition character, where old industries are disappearing and the process is directed through the intellectual capital: the innovative creative people, who are changing the way to make and exchange goods, services and culture (Flew, 2010).

Istanbul, as one of the most rapid growing mega metropolises of the world, encapsulates the ascending values of the so called 'Creative Cities' and desires a circumspect planning agenda.

2.1. Istanbul in transition

Istanbul is a mega metro pole in transition. While unpacking the historical phases of the spatial development of the city, we aim to contribute by observing a very unique formation, evolution, transformation of a district of Istanbul, which is named after a creative sector: Babiali – Capital of Turkish Media over 150 Years.

Istanbul's implication of current development trends can only be described as disastrous (Lovering & Evren 2011). The planning vision for the city fails to recognize the importance of justice, of social inclusion, and of the sustainability and of the physical environment. The transition of the mega metro pole is so rapid and therefore the determination of one of the most important creative sectors transformation is instructive, as its actual task is information and creating public opinion.

2.2. Babiali – One of primer creative clusters in Istanbul

Babiali-Istanbul as an historical formation of Turkish Media for a very particular period will be a good example in Turkey. Through the secondary literature and the interviews we made, we observed the widely accepted principles of creative cluster concept which describes a particular urban complex, where cultural and creative activities and social life are integral components.

The relation between place and creativity is an acknowledgment. As an example of development of media clusters in particular for the role as place-making, spatial development, and the formation of creative cities, the case study Babiali displays and deserves a special intention. Media industry in Istanbul is one of the significant creative and cultural economies of Istanbul, where publishing, radio and television, advertising, film and video production, digital media and new media are the mainstream sectors.

Intentionally examining the cluster concept and media clusters guides us towards the need to observe the very unique development in the 19th and 20th century in Istanbul, Babiali, which was the capital of the Turkish media, offering the optimum empirical data.

The formerly classical and traditional printing and publishing center became at the end of 20th century the media capital of Turkey. We want to reveal the preliminary finding of this very unique development. In 1980 the decision of decentralization of the sector caused an irreversible movement of the whole creative cluster towards the periphery of the city.

Babiali area is known and accepted as the center of Turkish Journalism and Publishing since the beginning of the 19th century until 1990. Since 1840, the most newspapers, magazines, books or other publishing goods were written, published and distributed from this area. Although Ankara became the capital of the new republic after the Turkish War of Independence, Babiali being in the vicinity to the state and censorship mechanism, retained its function till 1985. The preference of the publishing sectors was to keep the existing settlement, and to play the role of the opposition (Topuz, 2003).

After 1985 Turkish journalism was developed incorporating publishing, distribution, broadcasting, television production and was called media industry. The need for vast development areas for corporate publishing was supported and subsidized by the state.

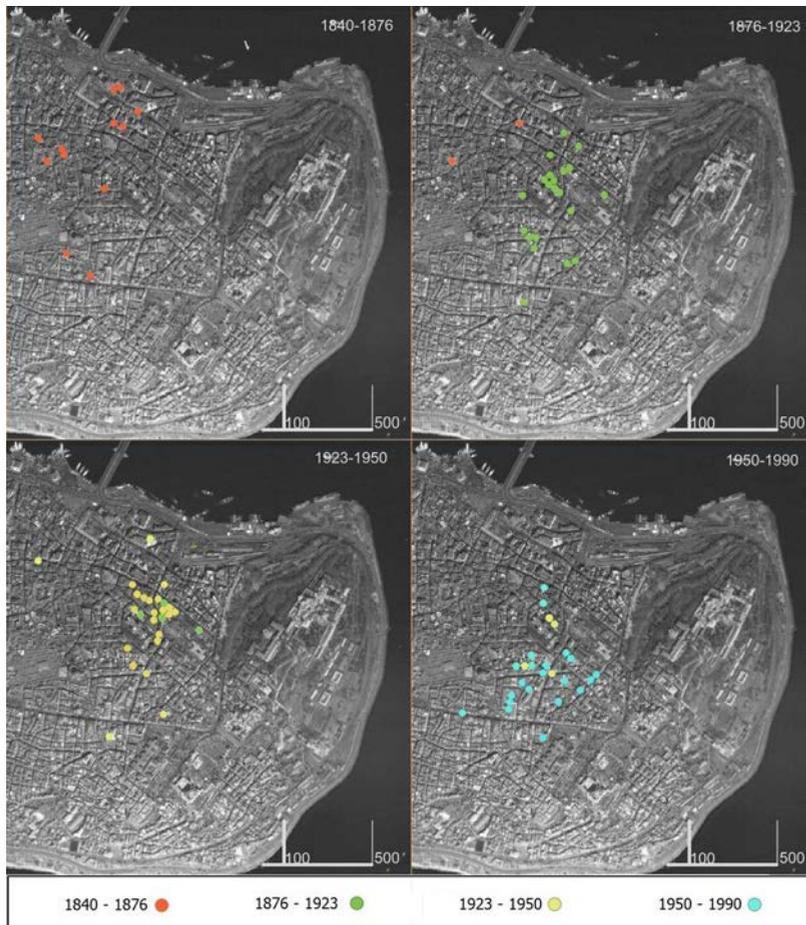
While analyzing the history of Turkish media, the rupture of the development is very much influenced by the change of institutional structure, the progressive improvement of the technology, organization of distribution and the new communication platforms like new television platforms, internet providers (Baytar, 2010). Socio-political structure of Turkey in the post 1980 era influenced the media sector constitutionally and structurally, which led at the end to a spatial deployment. The relocation decision of the publishing sector from Babiali to new Media District İkitelli was executed within 5 years (Şahin, 2004).

Till to the relocation, Babiali used to host the most popular writers, editors, journalists, poets and graphic artists for more than 150 years (Karaca, 2003). We understand the importance of the area for the Turkish Media History after the reception of the secondary literature and interviews with the sector workers, who used to work before 1990 at the area better. From 1840 until the beginning of 1990s the area was a cultural quarter district not only for the publishing and printing sector, but also the meeting point for creative people as well as media

was one of the major distribution of arts, crafts and literature (Koloğlu, 1998, Yücesoy, 2011).

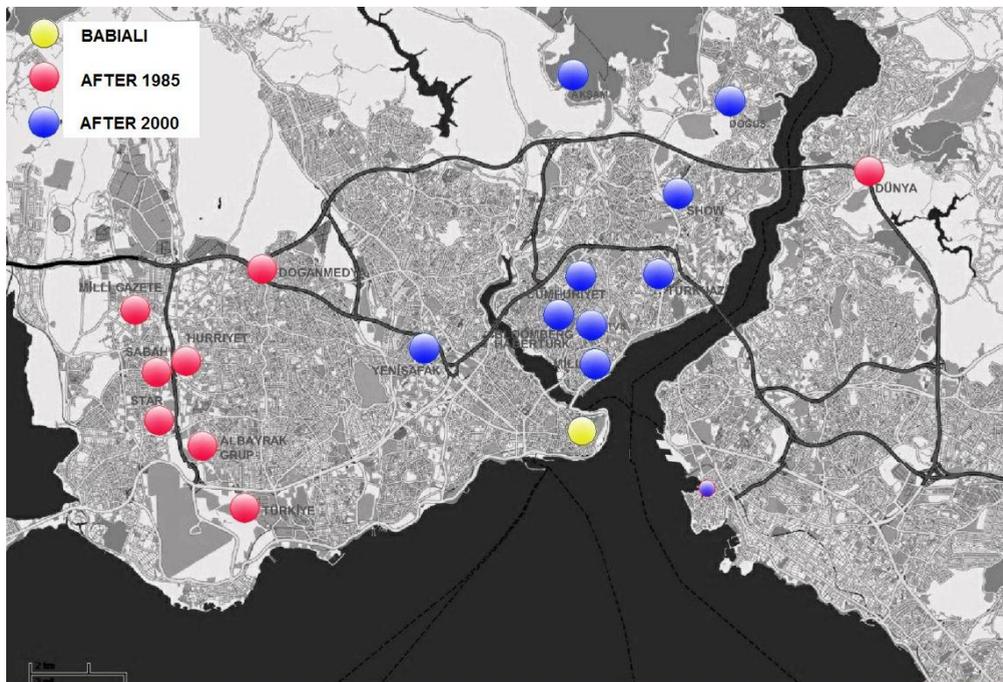
We have done a series of interviews with the former writers, publicists, editors, producers and journalists. Most of them were unhappy with the transformation, with the decentralization, but mostly about the disappearance of the sector, from the area without a trace. The new settlement for the media in Ikitelli was a total wrong decision, as we see in the last 10 years period all the sector moving back to the inner city, where a clustering is not possible anymore.

Figure-1: The spatial transformation of Babiali 1840-1990 (Hansoy, 2012)



The interviews hold with former journalists, writers, editors or other sector workers intend to show a great affliction, moving to a totally new development area, outside the city center. The cohesion to the new areas for most of them who used to work at Babiali, was uneasy. Beside the traditional, conventional way of operations, the technological and infrastructural changes overlapped with the long lasting driving, travelling difficulties. Compared to the historical peninsula, where the change and development took place over 150 years, the move to the new media plazas seem to be fast, sudden and unexpected. Beside the technological change, computerizing the system, the security system or administrative dispositions took place collateral. The transformation took not only at the place but also through the whole operational system.

Figure-1: The spatial transformation of Media Firms in Istanbul 1840-2013 (Hansoy, 2012).



The young generation of media workers took the transformation as a gift, as they were working suddenly in high-tech buildings, and modern infrastructures. But the main issue and need of the sector, as a creative one, to be in the city center,

within a face-to-face communication, able to reach cultural, educational or intellectual scene were failed. After a very short time, the new modern environment transformed to discontent.

3. EPILOGUE

Since a couple of years; almost after 20 years of decentralization from Babiali, there is a strong tendency shown amongst the Turkish Media Groups moving back towards the inner city. Most of the giant media firms have returned and settled again in the city center.

Today the usage of former Babiali publishing area is more a touristic one, such as carpet and gold stores, restaurants or even park houses. Thus coming back to the historical Peninsula seems nearly impossible for the media firms, The Babiali Festival, which is yearly organized at Babiali is seen a wider interest. The participation of the former workers and seems improved.

If this nostalgia for the former traditional Babiali cluster makes it possible for a retransformation of the area remains as a question or more a wish. There are proposals for the abandoned newspaper building like transforming into contact offices of media firms, news studios, media museums, seminar centers for journalists or media workers.

For a sustainable, creative urban regeneration it is important to understand and respect the social, cultural economic complexities remains further as main substance.

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