

Multi-directional Flows of People In One City: The Case of Istanbul

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1. Introduction

Istanbul as the largest economic and cultural centre of Turkey is an urban lab for varying flows of people. Due to its cosmopolitan structure, the city of Istanbul is a hotspot for analyzing the spatial, social, cultural, economic and political challenges occurring in parallel to the multi-dimensional flows of people. As a city of conflicts and composites, the dynamics within the city make it possible to have different analytical approaches to the city. For a better understanding of the city it is important to be aware of the heterogeneous structure of varying flows of people and their choice of space.

The relation of people and place was a hot topic as it is today and several studies have been done to understand the interaction with various different aspects (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994; Certeau, 2002; Cresswell, 2004; Simone, 2004). Their reflections into daily life, physically and politically, were also studied (Byrne, 2001; Crang, 2002; Amin and Thrift, 2002; Purcell, 2002; Simone, 2004).

While going through these concepts, there is a third dimension, space, to be considered and a fourth dimension that is the flows of people. Changing experiences and needs of people based on their different backgrounds, can be effective on differentiation of their preferences. The different perspectives of each individual will play a different role in the choice of place and act to move from one to another. The scale of the type of the flow can differ but in this study the flows investigated are the ones for relocation purposes.

There are many more things to understand by exploring the people living in particular places; in the way Thrift (1997) mentions places are the stages of intensity. There is more we can add with a proper approach, keeping in mind that, unique and not similar places with disparate residents adds to the richness of the city (Beyazli and Aydemir, 2008). These places become the spaces for different people from different educational, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to show their own life practices. This is one of the motivations for the flows. Since Istanbul is a vast dynamic city, it is not difficult to find many locations to talk about the various flow characteristics. Even though it is easy to explore different categories of flow in Istanbul, in order to have a better evaluation of different aspects of flows of people in Istanbul, some spatial representatives/places are selected.

Therefore, two opposing neighborhoods are chosen as sample areas to discuss the changing physical, social, cultural, economic and political patterns in Istanbul. First, Tarlabasi, an old central neighborhood on the agenda of the city/country for several different reasons, and second, Bahcesehir, a new award winning satellite neighborhood.

The forms and properties of the flows of people in these sample areas will be discussed with a qualitative perspective. While trying to understand the dynamics with a comprehensive approach within the concepts of ghost space, lost space, cost space and host spaces of the city, the research is also trying to find the answer for the questions the following questions;

What are the real needs in a dynamic city? What is the interaction between these flows if any at all?

Through the exploration of these relations and the pattern of the flows in the city, it is recognizable that new spatial cultures are added to the city cycle everyday. As a result of these, the terms and the concepts are changing in the city agenda and the city is becoming more complicated everyday. With this study - sensing the city of Istanbul with respect to the contradictions, similarities and complexness of the flows of people - the main purpose to contribute to our understanding of 'the city' or what forms 'the city'.

The organization of the study is as follows. After talking about the background of the flows of people, based on the selected sample areas in Istanbul, the topic will be discussed in depth. These sections will be followed by concluding remarks.

2. Background of Flows

After the basic relation of people, space and place there is the fourth dimension which is flows, the main focus of this study. Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey with a population of 12,573,836 (TUIK, 2007), 2042 p/km population density, living in 39 districts; 14 with an average population of 300.000. As a result, it is not difficult to talk about the spaces between places and/or places between spaces in the city itself. Moreover, it is easy to find various examples of flows in every category (physical, economical, social and cultural), in every stage and scale. Since, places are the sites that have various identities and histories and the processes as in the alternative approach of Massey (1994), it is possible to talk about the potential flows which are based on these places.

2.1 *Tarlabasi through the years*

In Tarlabasi, the residential settlement goes back to the 1850s when the country was in the state of re-form. Implementation of capitalism was the popular topic on the agenda and with a target of economic development. Also cultural and social transformations were ongoing in the country in those days. Physical developments were in the form of new constructions (residential areas, infrastructure, transportation, etc.). Partial plans were the popular solution to the rapid changes. After 1910s until the establishment of Republic, the country was in the top-down modernization process. Population was increasing, new reforms were being applied and the quality of life was changing. Tarlabasi at that period was more trying to gain some aesthetic values. The environment in the neighborhood was good and healthy. Mostly mid-income non-muslim families were living in and the quality of life was high.

After the establishment of Turkish Republic, until the 1950s, the country was facing a transformation into a nation-state. Modernity was the popular term. There were physical changes in the cities as well. Cities were becoming the places of modernity and new perspectives in urban planning were being discussed. Parallel to these developments, it was possible to talk about the differentiation in hierarchy. Tarlabasi in this period was facing an ownership change started by the social structure change. While the non-muslim inhabitants were leaving the neighborhood, new migrants were moving in.

As a result of this in the early 1940s, Tarlabasi acted as a lost space. After this short term - since its habitants (minority groups) moved out and new groups started to live in this neighborhood - it was again in the role of a host space. The first users at that stage were the rural migrants after industrialization, followed by the Kurds escaping from the southeastern part of the country and nowadays gypsies, foreign immigrants (African and Afghan) and transsexuals are the residents of this place (Saybasili, 2007; Candan and Kolluoglu, 2008; Islam, 2009).

The period between 1950s and 1980s was a period that the populist tendencies were active in the state. In economical aspects the investment was mostly in service and industry sectors and in new housing sites. Job opportunities in the big cities were increasing and so too was the population. Migration was the big social issue since it was the main reason of the emergence of slums in big cities, especially in Istanbul. Tarlabasi was struggling with the main road project going through the neighborhood, which separated the area from the lively parts of the city like Istiklal Street and its surroundings. By 1960s the number of the unoccupied buildings were quite high in Tarlabasi area.

After 1980s the country was in the direction of the neo-liberalism. Globalization, post-modernism and transformation were the popular concepts of this era. The important term was 'big' or 'more'. Big organizations, large capital investment, mass housing projects, huge conflicts and big privileges; more illegal settlements, more gentrification processes, more reconstructions are some of the subjects of this period. In Tarlabasi every concept found its reflection in different ways during this period. The proposed road was constructed by demolishing some of the buildings belonging this area, furthering the disconnection of Beyoglu and Tarlabasi. The spatial, social and economic structures in the neighborhood collapsed, triggering a cycle of new collapses. In 1993 Tarlabasi was an 'urban conservation area'. By the 2000s the neighborhood was more than a stepping-stone because half of the inhabitants were home owners. After 2000s with the 'big and more' trend Tarlabasi was the target for the urban transformation projects. Outflows of ethnic groups and inflows of newcomers led to general unstableness and the negative public perception following these resulted in spatial discrimination.

2.2 Bahcesehir

Bahcesehir, established as a satellite city, has a history of only 20 years. The first registered population in this area was 12915 in the year 1997 (Unsal, 2007). The fear of earthquakes, added to the fear of living in the city centre after becoming a globalized and metropolitan city, accelerated the construction of these and similar types of residential settlements, especially in the peripheries of the city. Security being the main promotional element in these housing complexes caused them to be successful in attracting large groups of people. The Bahcesehir project won awards from the United Nations Habitat Conference II in 1996, Canada for new urbanism in 1997 and The American Institute of Architects in 2000.

As Aksoy and Robins mentioned (1997) "their modern space was a clean and orderly environment, quiet and traffic-free, and with the clean air and unpolluted environment that an almost rural environment (located twenty kilometers from the centre of the city) could promise. It could accommodate a purified modern lifestyle, in retreat from everything that Istanbul had become as a consequence of its actual modernization".

Following the modernization and neo-liberal trends, this new modern satellite town was forming an edge city. Nowadays the population is around 50.000 since some other small towns joined to this neighborhood. The demographic structure of Bahcesehir is quite different to Tarlabasi. The inoccupation rate is 1.1%, the rate of having more than one car in the household is 87%, the house ownership rate is 68% and the rate of the inhabitants who have a higher degree diploma is 45%.

After all information given above, it is possible to talk about the different processes that these two different neighborhoods experienced based on the state's agenda and the popular concepts and trends of the era which can be followed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of the multi-dimensional structure

State Agenda	Politic	Physical	Social	Economic	Cultural
1850-1910	<i>Re-form</i>	<i>New constructions New housing areas</i>	<i>Formation of the classes</i>	<i>Target: development</i>	<i>Transformation of the traditions</i>
1910-1923	<i>Top-down modernization</i>	<i>Expansion</i>	<i>Change of quality of life</i>	<i>Improvement</i>	<i>Population growth-multi cultural</i>
1923-1950	<i>Transformation into a nation-state</i>	<i>Reshaping the cities</i>	<i>Migration of non-muslims</i>	<i>Small scale industries-Anatolian cities</i>	<i>Differentiation in hierarchy</i>
1950-1980	<i>Populist tendencies</i>	<i>Emergence of slums</i>	<i>Disintegration of rural class</i>	<i>Investments service-industry sector</i>	<i>Increasing population-hard to be part of city</i>
1980-2013	<i>Neo-liberal direction</i>	<i>Mass housing projects Illegal settlements</i>	<i>Gentrification Big privileges</i>	<i>From industry to information society Large capital investments</i>	<i>Conflicts</i>
Tarlabasi Agenda	Trends-concepts	Physical	Social	Economic	Cultural
1850-1910	<i>Modernism</i>	<i>Good environment</i>	<i>High quality of life</i>	<i>Mid-income families</i>	<i>Non-muslims</i>
1910-1923	<i>Aesthetic Values</i>				
1923-1950	<i>Transformation</i>	<i>Suggestions for the new road</i>	<i>Social structure change</i>	<i>New property tax</i>	<i>Ownership change</i>
1950-1980	<i>Restoration-renovation</i>	<i>Unoccupied buildings</i>	<i>Outflows-inflows</i>	<i>New job opportunities</i>	<i>Rural migrants</i>
1980-2013	<i>Collapse</i>	<i>Spatially collapse</i>	<i>Social collapse</i>	<i>Marginal sector</i>	<i>Cultural collapse</i>
Bahcesehir Agenda	Trends-concepts	Physical	Social	Economic	Cultural
1980-2013	<i>Satellite city - Comfort</i>	<i>New housing complexes</i>	<i>Integration in the borders</i>	<i>Mid-high income</i>	<i>Urban migrants</i>

3. Flows of People in Istanbul: Discussion

Istanbul, as the largest economic and cultural centre of Turkey, is a city of dualities, refractions and polarizations (Keyder, 1999). The history and the users of the city and the preferences of the users change day by day. In addition, important locational points of the city change. New trends, new policies, new technological developments and followed by new types of flows add to the urban cycle. Economical behaviors and socio-cultural values change and as a result of all these, the terms taking place in the urban system change.

We started to talk about the place, space, time, people, flow, non-place, placeless, sense of place, urban space, extra-urban space, host space, ghost space, lost space. The relations, connections, interactions between all these terms gain importance.

With the background knowledge of the explored neighborhoods, this section of the study will focus on the flows happening in these areas (Figure 1). Tarlabasi is a transformed place. In the early settlement years it was one of the desirable locations for people. It was a satisfying host space for the people who are coming from other parts of the city as well as the other countries. After some time, the neighborhood turned into a lost space with the high number of unoccupied buildings and outflows of the non-muslim groups. In these transition years it again gained the host space title but this time from the inflows of people who were not familiar with the city life who prefer to live for a short while, thinking that they would be able to move somewhere better in the city in the later periods as they get used to the system. In the end, Tarlabasi turned into a “compulsory space for those who are excluded from the society” (Saybasili, 2007).

Although Tarlabasi is in a central location it is more like an isolated urban space compared to Bahcesehir, which is an ‘out of city’ settlement. Some projects done in mid 20th century, constructing a new road by destroying the buildings in this area, caused Tarlabasi to be physically separated from the rest of the city. This was not the only obstacle, after this physical edge/border, people/non-residents of this area imputed a socio-economic and socio-cultural border between Tarlabasi and its neighborhood. When you go beyond these borders, what you see will be no more than people trying to “squeeze their bodies into a tiny space in the city, a certain location, a certain geography in the city” (Saybasili, 2007).

In the Tarlabasi area, it is the case that people settle here coming from the other parts of the city, other cities and countries and after some time, these flows can turn into outflows. The other interesting side of these flows are those horizontal ones within the same neighborhood (Figure 1).

While Tarlabasi is struggling with these issues, Bahcesehir is being the host space in an optional way for those who want to form their own new society. In other words, while people living in the Tarlabasi are fighting against not being excluded, the people in Bahcesehir are trying to exclude ‘the others’ in these high cost places.

The situation of course, is a little bit different in Bahcesehir where there are not so many limiting factors. The only type of need referred to this situation can be the need for some differentiation/change (Ozgur, 2006). It is not possible to speak about the infrastructural problems or to notice water and electricity cuts in this rich urban space. The most important problem in Bahcesehir, which has a different built environment, family composition and urban pattern, will be the distance between car park and the apartment. Despite this, the flow types are limited. Most of the inhabitants are coming from other parts of the city. The inhabitants coming from the other cities and countries are relatively less compared to Tarlabasi.

Even though Bahcesehir does not currently have serious problems, the things recognized at first will be different than the things perceived later on. It can easily be described as “non-place; that place is lacking history or do not have distinguishable markers of identity and perhaps most importantly place that can be replicated endlessly in different spaces” (Candan and Kolluoglu, 2008). This can easily make Bahcesehir turn into a ghost space as the same ending Tarlabasi faces.

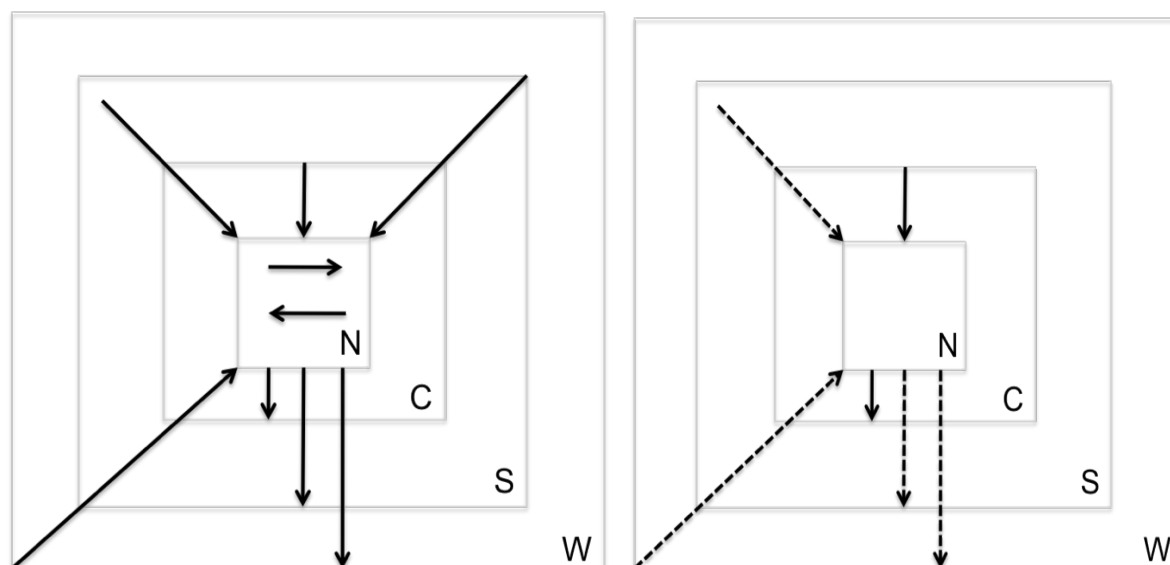


Figure 1 – Multi-directional flows of people in Tarlabasi and Bahcesehir
(N-neighborhood C-city S-state W-world)

According to Byrne (2001) “urban spaces are evolving and changing complex systems”. This cycle will never stop and will go on with all the new flows added to urban system not as an outcome of the city itself but also of the world as well. As the scale or type of the flows change, the cycle of the multi-directional flow will gain a different dimension in the city. The content of the flow which is based on the content of the place will turn into a new spatial concept in the experienced urban life.

The lesson here is that separating into two categories as good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, perfect or defective and even tolerable or intolerable is not the answer or the solution for the city’s needs.

4. Conclusion

By taking two different examples of urban spaces of Istanbul into account, we can easily agree on the multidirectional flows of people based on the need of relocation and the varying procedures during the movements.

With the city’s changing complicated structure, a new and rich urban space and an old and poor one, which seem to have remarkable differences can actually be considered not different than each other. In the city centre or in the outskirts of the city, in the urban or extra-urban space, they are trying to cover their necessities, permanently or temporarily. The question to be asked is; is it what the city needs?

Each place has its own characteristics and dynamics based on the people, place and flow interactions and we should be able to use the advantages of this mosaic pattern of the urban space. As Cresswell (2004) stated “writing about and researching place involves a multi-faceted understanding of the coming together of physical world (both natural and cultural), the processes of meaning production and the practices of power that mark relations between social groups”.

Historical and social dynamics alter the place-time-flow relations. If we try to understand today’s cities, which include the complexities and contradictions, with this aspect we can easily comprehend the confictions forming the monolithic. If we can manage to use the

combination of these differentiations then we can discuss about the different level of spaces and flows in the same city, acting as part of the city dynamism.

According to Amin and Thrift (2002) city is “an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions”. A more heterogeneous approach to city would take into account the multiple perspectives that make up ‘the city’. A singular approach to the city fails to account for urban complexity. In Hansen and Vekaaik (2009) perspective, “The urban is also a way of being in the world and must be understood as a dense and complex cultural repertoire of imagination, fear and desire”.

Following Massey’s (1994) argument, places are not static and they have their own processes. According to Byrne (2001) “urban spaces are evolving and changing complex systems”. This cycle never will stop and will go on with all the new flows added to urban system not as an outcome of the city itself but also of the world as well.

With new flows, it is not easy to say what is right, what is good and what the necessity is. When you try to understand the condition of these different urban spaces including different groups of people existing in the same city border at the same time, you can only have new question marks in your mind. Which one is for the real needs, which is the needed one, which of them is the valid solution? As we all agree, getting an answer for these questions will not be easy as place, space and people are all connected and they affect each other in the form of flows; also the answers we get will be subjective and relative as the type of flow change.

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