

## LOCATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF ISTANBUL

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**Guzin Yeliz Kahya**

Middle East Technical University  
e-mail: yelizkahya@gmail.com

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### **Abstract**

*Art and culture events, as well as enrich choices of leisure time activities in cities, they initiate change in layout of encountering through establishing new relations between urban locations which is partly not based on spatial propinquity and density. This paper studies locations of art and culture events in the area around Istiklal Avenue in Beyoglu, Istanbul in terms of 'transpatial' relations in order to explore intricate relation between spatial implications of categorized events and configuration of urban grid. Space syntax axial analysis in Depthmap is performed to get measures of integration and connectivity corresponding to the whole pattern of event locations. This information give an idea about potentials and limitations of urban grid whether or not it emphasizes encountering of people having different art and culture tastes and preferences. To identify difference in tastes and preferences, it is proposed to classify events realized between January 2011 and December 2012 according to in which categorized groups of online publication they are placed. For the purposes of initial analysis a distinction was drawn between publications mainstream and fringe, addressing internationally mobile audiences and local citizens, high art-specific and general, and other publications. Thus the whole pattern of event-mediated relations between urban locations can be conceptualized as discrete layers of relations each group of events constitute; and even more differentiation in values of integration and connectivity associated to them can be identified. The results indicate that worldwide oriented art and culture events addressing audiences having middle to highbrow tastes and worldwide oriented, but in particular addressing audiences having highbrow tastes are both hosted in venues on slightly less integrated urban locations than other events.*

**Keywords:** *cultural events, urban culture, publicity*

**Theme:** *Urban Space and Social, Economic and Cultural Phenomena*

## 1. Introduction

People's use of urban space reflects their tastes and preferences. Especially which particular spaces they prefer to frequent for their leisure time activities characterize their life style; the relevant choices are indicators of their status in society. The range of preferences regarding space increasingly expands in today's globalized and socially mobile societies; and there is a need of more choices to sustain this expanding demand. The artistic practices are seemingly assigned to sustain this demand.

However, in contemporary era, artistic practices are discussed in the content of both their potential to generate new ways of subjectivities in public space and being effective tools to be deployed for marketing cities (Seijdel and Liesbeth 2009). Their binary operations in urban space lead cities to confront both mediated spaces to be consumed by visitors and appropriated spaces through which emerging communities identify themselves.

Art and culture events, in this dialectical sense, can challenge the correspondence of social and spatial identities through generating new encountering schemes between urban locations and new commonalties among people. Their realizations would produce new relations between people spatially not in relation or socially not correspond.

In more explicit words, there are more diversified choices of urban locations housing common experiences oriented around artistic practices, and even these locations are more likely to accommodate people from different social status. So the question arises whether different trajectories, by the same of different individuals intersect by virtue of the density and connectivity of the urban environment or whether the environment itself becomes fragmented.

At the same time, the location of venues housing cultural events is subject to the dual economies of funding and identity. Central locations have the advantage of easier accessibility but quite often the disadvantage of higher rent. Similarly, central locations have greater exposure to a larger public; however, they also hinder the projection of a distinct identity in the context of neighboring events. Similar tensions apply to publicity through printed and digital media. Mixed content publications reaching larger audiences promise greater exposure, but specialized publications define their own public. Similarly, high status publications confer greater authority on mass public but are not easily accessible to new actors; fringe publications can more easily be accessed but often address limited audiences.

In this paper, I bring the locations of art and cultural events in the area around Istiklal Avenue in Beyoglu, Istanbul into dialogue with the categorized online publications each of which gives clues about audience profile of events they herald. The act of categorization decomposes the whole pattern of locations into discrete relations; this would be derived to compare measures of connectivity and integration associated to each of separate relational pattern and consequently to capture any arising differentiation among them. Beyond, the paper shows that the art and culture event distribution among urban locations reproduce the boundaries constituted by the spatial identities that refers to ones created through interaction and exchange based on spatial propinquity and spatial density.

## **2. The symbolic order emerged within the sameness of art and culture event tastes and preferences**

The paper is constructed on the idea that realizations of events introduce procedure of 'transpatial' integration into spatial system. In this context, as long as art and culture events remain stationary for considerable time at specific urban locations, their realizations may construct transpatial integration between these locations, some of which are not spatially integrated. This integration introduces such a symbolic order in spatial processing of urban grid through creating categorized functional description of diverse urban locations (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 12-40).

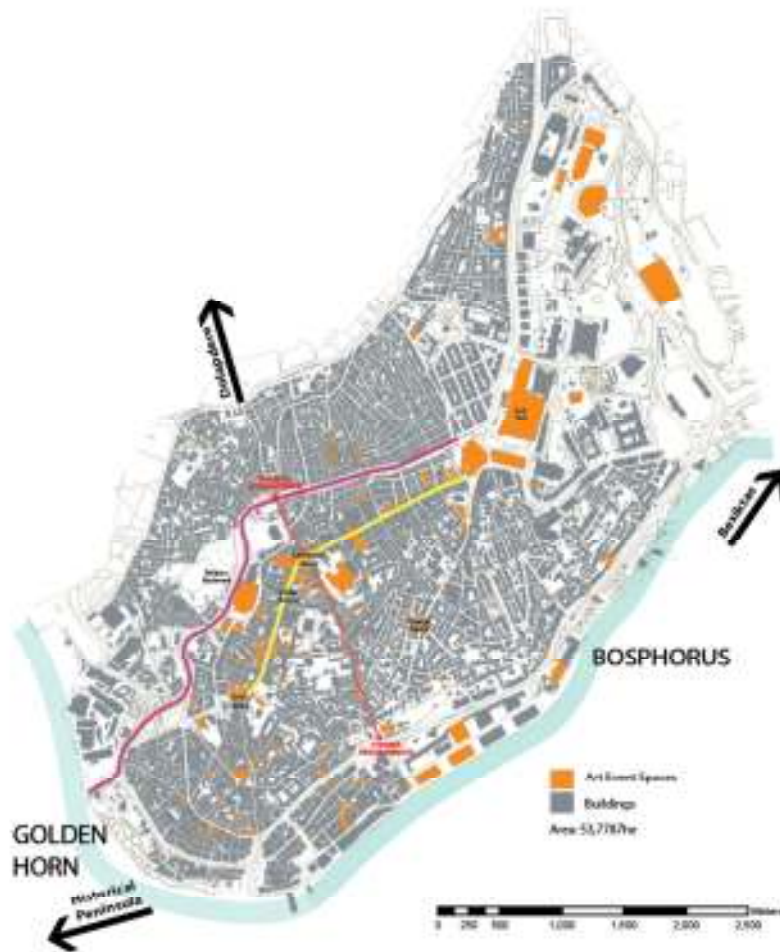
In particular, each relation art and culture event separately bringing in properties to urban spatial system differentiates in range of what extent the spatial and transpatial relations correspond. Some construct transpatial relations between people reinforcing spatial boundaries in relation or proximate to each other, the others construct transpatial relations between people across space.

Hiller and Hanson explain two pathways of development of system in which spaces and labels are in correspondence or noncorrespondence. In the correspondence system the encounters resulting from label sharing and physical proximity reinforce each other and this system tends to become locally strong, requires restrictions on encounters and defines strong spatial boundaries. However in noncorrespondence system transpatial grouping works across space, relating individuals from different spatial groups and causing them to encounter. Thus this system tends, insofar as it succeeds in reproducing itself, to be globally strong. (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 141)

It seems that there could be groups of events in more elementary forms proposing uses of urban space in the limits of spatial proximity. Besides that, the others promise spatially remote use of urban space through introducing more necessary relations between locations. The existence of both event types in city implies that urban locations are not occupied by people only adjacent to these urban locations; instead they are in partly occupied by people far from these locations; and making accessible these apart boundaries to people not being inhabitants, in Hiller and Hanson words, they are not only means of establishing identity of the inhabitant but also means of converting a stranger to visitor. (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 19)

## **3. The description of study area**

This study looks at a sample of 141 cultural events occurred between January 2011 and December 2012. The 201 venues associated with these events range from museums to jazz clubs and from theaters to public open spaces. While some have culture as their main programmatic function, others temporarily used for hosting events. Events are distributed over the 53.8 hectares area around Istiklal Avenue, shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Venues in The Study Area

Istiklal Avenue is one of the main walking arteries of Istanbul connecting Taksim and Tunel Squares. The avenue and its surrounding are identified as a cultural hub of city where local citizens and foreign visitors can find leisure time activities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of venues hosting cultural events are close to this avenue.

The majority of venues is either in the vicinity of Istiklal Avenue or distributed in the middle and southeast of study area. This distribution is partly related to the opening of Istanbul Modern Art Museum in the south part of area on the shores of Bosphorus. The coastal area also benefits from connections to other attraction points of city, like Historical Peninsula and Besiktas.

Tarlabasi Boulevard with its high traffic volume hinders the diffusion of events to the west. The slope downwards towards Dolapdere socially differs from the southern part of region. The neighborhood occupied by quite low-income people is isolated from the 24-hour living social life of Istiklal Avenue.

The architectural characteristics of venues are diverse. They range in size, age of structure and architectural style. The size of interior spaces differs from 300 m<sup>2</sup> gallery spaces to 23850 m<sup>2</sup> convention halls. The open spaces differ from narrow streets of 700 m<sup>2</sup> to larger squares and

urban parks of 29000 m<sup>2</sup>.

The venues are scattered among the region's historically attractive building stock. Most of them date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and turn-of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; there are only few 20<sup>th</sup> century modern buildings. Architectural styles include art nouveau, 19<sup>th</sup> industrial and 20<sup>th</sup> century modern structures.

Most of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings previously housing mixed-use facilities have been transformed into privately owned cultural venues in last 10 years. For example, 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman bank with its distinct neoclassical and oriental architectural style has been transformed into a new cultural venue named Salt Galata with redesigned interior. Similarly, formerly the Hotel Bristol has been transformed into a private museum named Pera Musuem.

The venues relatively larger in size dated to 20<sup>th</sup> century modern structures are originally designed to house big cultural events of new Turkish Republic. CRR, Harbiye Openair Theater, Lutfu Kirdar Convention Center, Taksim Square and Gezi Park are all planned by urban planning strategies of 1930s-50s aiming to transfer modernism to Turkish architecture. Although this structural pattern apparently differentiates from rest of small and middle size venues scattered around Istiklal Avenue, it is pedestrianly connected to Istiklal Avenue.

For last 10 years, three complexes of warehouse buildings located in the Salipazari Port on the shores of Bosphorus have hosted many contemporary art events. One of these buildings, rented by private local enterprises, has been transformed into the Istanbul Modern Art Museum in 2005. The other two within the same complex have functioned as the main venues of the Istanbul Biennale since 2005. They have become internationally recognizable venues for high-quality and well-publicized modern art events.

Few artist-run spaces locate on the entrance or upper floor studios in arcades and flat blocks. 10 out of 18 arcades in the study area, like Hazzopulo, Atlas and Halep Arcades house art-venues, music clubs or cinemas. The structures' multiple entrances and diffused passage corridors increase both the ground pedestrian circulation and the permeability of Istiklal Avenue.

The small-size venues are mostly distributed along the narrow and meandering pedestrian streets of Galata and Bogazkesen Street towards the Golden Horn. For instance, Gallery Mana and Depo accommodate in medium-scale 19th century old factory buildings; and the buildings have transformed into well-designed art spaces.

The few open spaces quite large -Taksim Square and Gezi Park- to rather small -Tunel and Galata Squares- in size accommodate mostly municipality oriented or self-initiated events. Additionally, some small squares and narrow streets work gathering points of self-initiated events. They all host events with unrestricted access for the public.

#### **4. Syntactic Locations of Venues**

The syntactic location values of venues in the urban fabric show which potentials of urban grid are preferred through locating events at particular venues. The distribution of venues implies that they often take advantage of the patterns of street connectivity and integration and, by inference, of exposure to high densities of background movement.

Analysis shows that cultural venues are associated with more integrated axial lines, globally (radius n) and locally (radius 3), and also with more connected lines (n= 6134, F=27.9066, p<0.0001; n= 6134, F=449.2434, p<0.0001; n= 6134, F=896.2471, p<0.0001 respectively). The

map comprises 5828 axial lines and covers an area of about 1800 hectares, bounded by Istanbul E5 freeway and Barbaros Avenue. Each venue is assigned to one or more adjacent axial lines as shown in Figure 3. Thus, 457 axial lines are assigned to venues, using an edited portion of the axial map created by Ayşe Sema Kubat and her team (2007) and kindly made available by the authors.



Figure 2 Axial Lines and Global Integration Values

## 5. Profiling cultural events

The 141 cultural events, occurred between January 2011 and December 2012, are all integral to the cultural and leisure-time industry of city. Some are professionally organized in response to cultural market demand; some are self-organized and their primary goal does not necessarily correspond to market demand. Some can be categorized as popular art events addressing the middlebrow public; some are high-cultural events addressing highbrow people and some only addresses people within specific interests in art. However the profiles of audiences for each

event are not explicitly distinct because of the diversified preferences of same individual. Thus, same audience can attend both art events appealing to highbrow, middlebrow and underground tastes.

As tastes and preferences become more fragmented and varied, the cultural industry generates a more diverse spectrum of events. Istanbul Biennales, Pera Fest, Istanbul Bicycle Film Fest and VJ Fest, 4 selected events of the sample, correspond to different tastes of cultural event category:

Istanbul Biennales have been organized by one of the mainstream art institutions of Istanbul since 1987. The warehouse buildings in Salipazari Port are identified with the event because of the consecutively usage of them for last 5 biennales. As all other biennales, the event offers prestigious meeting platform for art production and consumption professionals from all around. The three months duration of the event allows local citizens, including mostly students and middle to high-class people to occasionally visit the venues. Even as the entrance price is relatively low, the biennale mostly appeals to special kind of interest in contemporary art, which does not catch the attention of many citizens.

Pera Fest, an institutionally initiated event is organized each year to promote the district's multicultural authenticity and support socio-economic life. The enriched the daily program of a festival including varied kinds of performances is deployed to attract larger audiences. The event occurs at cafes, theaters, museums and galleries located around Istiklal Avenue.

Bicycle Film Fest, a self-organized event creates a meeting place for people who love to identify themselves with film and cycling. The conventional conception of an art event, whereby audiences are conceived as consumers of displays, is practically changed. Audiences literally become co-creators of events. Few small-size venues including one of the landmark oldest cinemas of district, small galleries and some cycling routes are used to host this event.

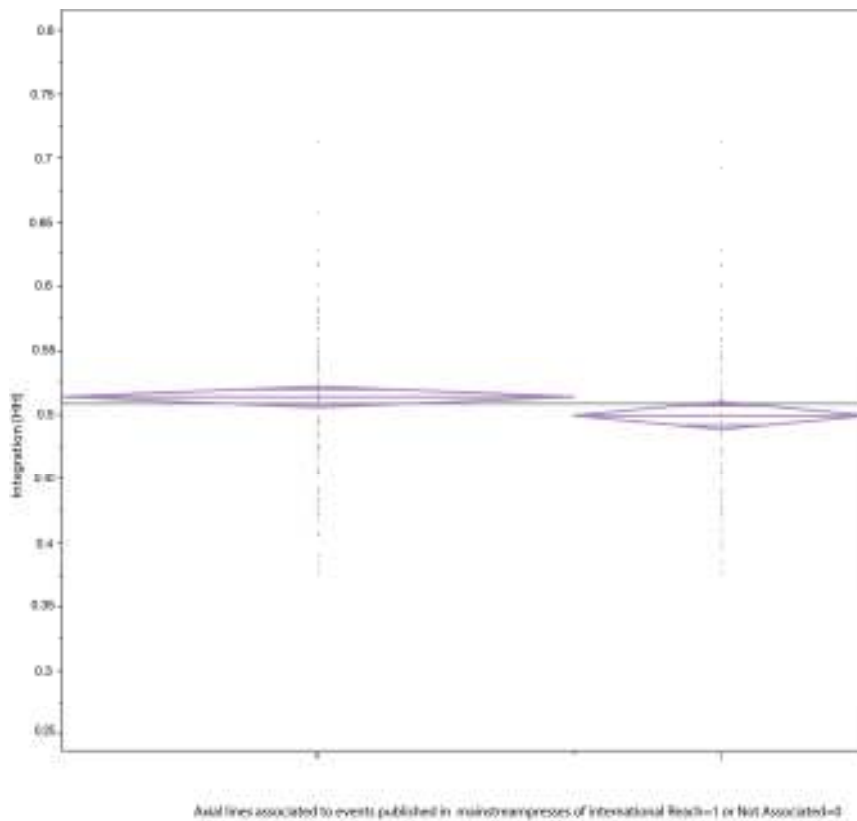
VJ Fest, a small-size artist-initiated event aims to turn public's attention to urban blight in the Tarlabasi neighborhood through street art, music and visual art. It gives artists a chance to present their work of art in unconventional spaces. The temporary usage of streets as art space addresses alternative tastes and preferences. However, this event, instead of attracting local residents who have first-hand experiences of urban blight and decay, get noticed by creative city dwellers, gallery owners, curators or event organizers rather than the general public. Local residents accidentally come into contact with the event. This does not provide them with sufficient motivation to inculcate new tastes and to induce regular attendance of performances.

## **6. Events and publicity: a cultural-spatial analysis**

The categorization of online presses used for tracking art and culture events in cities reflect different nature and in turn the audience profile of events. The 141 events under consideration are published in a chosen sample of 37 publications and 163 blogs. They range from mainstream presses to fringe blogs, from high profile art-specific publications to self-initiated local publications. For the purposes of initial analysis a distinction was drawn between mainstream online publications addressing internationally-mobile audiences, publications addressing audiences tracking particularly high cultural worldwide art event and other publications.

According to this distinction, events publicized in the mainstream online publications, that are GuardianTravel, NYtimes, Frommer's, Frieze, Art forum, Art daily heralding high or popular art events addresses internationally mobile audiences whose tastes ranges from middle to highbrow. 457 axial lines associated to venues hosting art events are classified into two groups

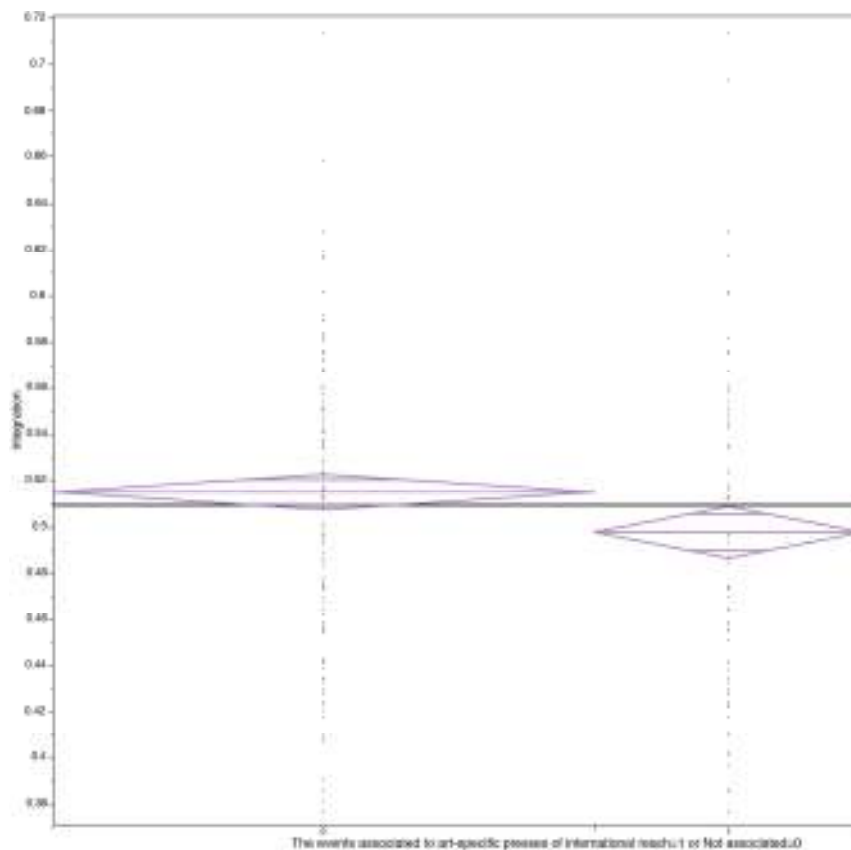
based on they accommodate or not the events published in any of these publications. The mean global integration value of 167 axial lines accommodating these events equals to 0.498907. The remaining 260 lines correspond to 0.513424. The statistical comparison between values show that the 167 events tend to be hosted in venues of relatively weaker global integration ( $n= 457$ ,  $F=4.4809$ ,  $p=0.0348$ ), even though there is no discernible difference with respect to local integration ( $n=457$ ,  $F=0.3363$ ,  $p=0.5623$ ) or connectivity ( $n= 457$ ,  $F=0.1174$ ,  $p=0.7320$ ). Figure 4 shows differentiation in global integration values associated to this categorized events.



**Figure 3** Difference in Means of Global Integration

The events in particular publicized in art-specific publications that are Frieze, Art forum, Art daily, e-flux, artslang, artclue address audiences internationally mobile and having taste of high art. The same 457 axial lines similarly categorized based on they accommodate or not the ones publicized in these publications. 151 lines accommodates them have 0,496298 mean global integration value; the others have 0,513697. Consequently comparison between values show that these events were similarly associated with venues of weaker global integration ( $n=457$ ,  $F=6.4025$ ,  $p=0.0117$ ), but not with a significantly higher local integration ( $n= 457$ ,  $F=0.1341$ ,  $p=0.7144$ ) or connectivity ( $n=457$ ,  $F=0.0163$ ,  $p=0.8983$ ), corroborating the previous finding. Figure 5 shows the differentiation in global integration values of associated to this categorized events.





**Figure 4** Difference in Mean of Global Integration

The distribution of venues associated with each event also varies in number and distance. For instance, Istanbul Street Art Event occurs at 2 venues and the mean network distance is 120.78 meters. However, Art Istanbul occurs in 28 venues whose mean network distance length is almost 912.72 meters. Although there is no statistically significant difference in mean network distance values associated to the categorized events, the events appealing to audiences internationally mobile and having high art tastes tend to be more compactly distributed than others ( $n=139$ ,  $F=2.0027$ ,  $p=0.1593$ ).

## 7. Conclusion

The venues housing cultural events in the study area gravitate towards globally more integrated streets and are so distributed as to offer a rich range of proximate and more distant destination choices to those moving around the city. Within the overall density of events over Beyoglu, the evidence suggests a balance between overall publicity of events and global syntactic accessibility. Whereas events that are published in worldwide recognizable and in particular high status art-specific publications are located in less globally integrated locations and tend towards more compactly distributed venues.

One interpretation would be that the creation of cultural identities with greater potential international reach is associated with slightly more exclusive locations or with locations of special value. The alternative interpretation, namely that those cultural identities that have greater potential international reach cannot afford the central locations afforded by cultural identities with lesser potential reach does not seem *prima facie* plausible.

In the language of the *Social Logic of Space*, realization of cultural events constitutes a layer operated through 'transpatial' relations. This layer more ignores spatial identities and creates transpatial identities across space. However, this analysis confirms that the events appeal to audiences internationally mobile and having middlebrow to highbrow tastes tend to constitute stronger and more isolated spatial boundaries. This particular pattern of locations tends to become locally strong and will require restrictions on encounters. Stated alternatively, the location of these events is such that either one gets to them based on a prior decision and prior information, or one "discovers" them after slightly more intense exploration than is needed to get to the more popular or more local events; and one has less possibility to encounter people from other labeled group audiences in these patterns' circulation paths.

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