

# **The Appraisal of Istanbul through the Perspective on the Information City**

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## **Abstract**

In today's world, information has transformed the fundamental facts of the urbanization and architecture disciplines, as it has done in many other disciplines. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, information has continuously flowed between spaces and cities owing to the effects of the switch from analog communication to a digital one. As a result of this, the characteristics of today's spaces have changed and information cities in which the information gathers have emerged. These cities have been produced not only with an understanding focused on 'place', 'context', 'human', 'form,' and 'function' but also with the equipments of 'political, economical, and cultural information networks' as well.

Istanbul has been a city affected by the continuity of the flows of people, commodity, money and information throughout history. Since 1980s, the urban and architectural context of Istanbul has been affected by the transformation process which the flow created. This study, prepared by taking some questions into account such as how the city exposes the development of urban space and whether Istanbul is an information city or not, is important in terms of determining the route of the city's future visions. Putting forth the effect of information circulation on the concept of space and discussing the spatial characteristics of information cities have made up an important part of the study. Presenting these conceptual grounds has defined a methodology for evaluation of qualitative and quantitative datas specific to cities and has played a part in understanding the urban and architectural context.

## **Introduction**

Throughout history, the forces on societies have led to the dislocation of stereotyped ideas and have changed them in

the course of time. In today's world, information, as a power continuously growing while changing its environment, has transformed the fundamental facts of the urbanization and architecture disciplines, as it has done in many other disciplines. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, information was spread and lost its place of origin due to the transformation in the areas of communication and transportation. Since that period, information has continuously flowed and moved between spaces and cities owing to the effects of the switch from analog communication to a digital one. As a result of this, the characteristics of today's spaces have changed and information cities in which the information gathers have emerged.

This study examines the relations that affect the production of space in today's world within a perspective that focuses on the aggregation of information in cities and evaluates the parameters that are peculiar to Istanbul with regard to the definition of 'information city'. In this sense, it is important to understand the aggregation of information in cities in order to interpret the spatial and urban context of Istanbul that has been changing in the last few years. Istanbul, one of the important locations in the network of global flow today, has been a city affected by the continuity of the flows of people, commodity, money and information throughout history. Since 1980s in particular, the urban and architectural context of Istanbul has been affected by the transformation process which the flow created. Istanbul, where transnational capital heads for, is in a situation different from the other cities in Turkey. This study, prepared by taking some questions into account such as what Istanbul means in this process regarding space, how the city exposes the development of urban space and whether Istanbul is an information city or not, is important in terms of determining the route of the city's future visions. Putting forth the effect of information circulation on the concept of space, understanding how the information is processed in the course of spatial production, and discussing the spatial characteristics of information cities have made up an important part of the study. Presenting these conceptual grounds has defined a methodology for evaluation of qualitative and quantitative datas specific to cities and has played a part in understanding the urban and architectural context. Looking through this perspective, appraising the lately changed urban and spatial pattern of Istanbul and comparing it to information cities are the main purpose of this study. On the other hand, comprehending a world in which the flow of information happens at a great speed and intensity is also important as to reveal the historical connections of Istanbul. It is in this sense that the speed and fluidity that the flow of information indicates are avoided being shown as temporary and tricenarian values. These concepts are momentarily mentioned in the sense that they refer to the historical values of cities.

Owing to the multidimensional, interdisciplinary and questionable character of the flow of information, the difficulty of suggesting the effects of flow on space and cities is explicit. In this sense, the study has been limited to last 30 years period during which the aggregation in cities has started to change, and it has been based on the supposition that the speed of the circulation of information has changed in this period as its transparency and amount has also increased. This supposition puts emphasis on the multilayered character of cities throughout this study.

### **The Concept of Information and the Information Flow**

The concepts of 'information' and 'knowledge' which are generally considered to be the same differ from each other in some basic points. According to Peter Burke (2004, p. 12), knowledge is used to express what's 'processed and systematized by a thought', whereas information is full of potentials and takes the form of information only when it is interpreted in the recipient's perception. The recipient can be a person, society or city.

The concept of information that forms the basis of this study is produced by a wide range of sub-concepts. Human, technology, money, ideas and images are all accepted as the sub concepts that produce information throughout this study. Yet, the distribution and replacement of each of these concepts are the same with the distribution and replacement of information.

In this part of the study, Arjun Appadurai's (1996) examination between the five dimensions of global cultural flow is worth analyzing. Appadurai states that the nature of the relations within the global cultural economies is affected by the flows. According to him, the dynamics of global cultural systems are determined by the relations between the flows of human, technology, money, ideology and image. The five flows that take place in the modern world are 'ethnoscape', 'technoscape', 'financescape', 'ideoscape' and 'mediascape'. The mutual 'scape' appendix in these terms indicates the fluid structures of these areas on the one hand, while on the other suggests spatiality within a broad perspective. In this sense, the things that evolve in the basis that is generated by the five flows can be read as 'information' throughout this study.

If we get to know these five areas briefly, 'ethnoscape' is the flow of people who move between nations; such as tourists, immigrants, exiles, guestworkers and refugees. 'Technoscape' is the flow of technology. Relations in many diverse areas such as the market economy and politics are governed by the technospace. 'Financescape' is the flow of global capital, currency markets and stock exchanges. 'Mediascape' is the flow of data that offers a large

repertoire of images and stories to the audiences worldwide by means of electronic media. 'Ideoscape' is the flow of official state ideologies and counter-ideologies and is generally formed by the components of political ideologies.

Human beings, technology, money, ideas and images are valued as 'capital' in today's world. Capital brings along information and in time, information becomes capital. According to Zygmunt Bauman (2006, p. 65), capital is no longer tied up to space. Capital was formerly represented as 'value', whereas now it is referred to as 'information'. Information used to be carried from one place to another by supporter bodies in the traditional world, while there is no such need in today's high speed world anymore. In addition, by means of easy communication, new information can now reach its place quicker than ever, cover and repress existing information and make place for itself there (Bauman, 2006, pp. 22-32).

### **City as the Place of Information Aggregation: Information City**

Throughout history, cities have always been exposed to the flow of information. They have been shaped by the aggregation of information. This aggregation which also used to exist in the past did not form a convenient basis for the multitransitivity in the old cities. Considering the last 30 years, it has undergone a great change, especially as parallel to the breaking points that go hand in hand with the transition from analog to digital. This period coincides with the phase that this study emphasizes as a threshold which can differ from one city to another. In some periods, less information has flown to the cities with less speed. Today, the amount of the information in cities is very much more and the flow of it is so fast and transparent. The flowing information is stacked one after the other, constantly changing form and circulating worldwide. The flow direction is determined by the dynamics of cities. Whereas the dissemination terminates in some cities, the speed, intensity and pattern of dissemination changes in others. These places in which dissemination is intensified are the 'information cities'. Information cities are produced not only with an understanding focused on 'place', 'context', 'human', 'form,' and 'function' but also with the equipments of political, economical, and cultural information networks as well. They are the places where diverse people, technologies, money resources, ideologies and images encounter.

Based on the thesis that a new city exists, but the concepts and definitions related to it are not clarified yet, a two phased route has been executed in the process of revealing the concepts related to information city. First of all, the literature related to contemporary urban theories

have been browsed and the table 1 has been generated. Other urban theories have also been evaluated in terms of the qualities that may be deterministic in the understanding of information cities. In this sense, the definition of 'information city' within the literature has also been examined. Secondly, some key concepts have been determined for the definition of 'new city' and table 2 has been formed upon these concepts.

Michael Storper (1997)	<b>Four theories</b> in order to understand contemporary urbanization: Global City World City Informational City Post-Fordist City
Edward Soja (2002)	<b>Six diverse urban theories</b> based on the Los Angeles example: Flexibility Cosmopolis Eksopolis Large City-Polarization (Metropolarization) Castle Cities (Prison Society) Cities of Affinity (Simcities)
David C. Thorns (2004)	<b>Global City</b> Key areas in the control and coordination of information, its processing and distribution.
John Friedmann (Thorns, 2004)	<b>Cities as centres from which money, workers, goods and economic variables pass through</b> Global accumulation areas Economic and political power Spatial variety and complexity
Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari (1993)	<b>City</b> Defined by exits and entrances Necessitates an intense periodicity
Saskia Sassen (2009)	<b>Global city</b> Cities create strategic areas for economies and cultures that are formed around capital, labour, good and passenger flows. They form the spaces for economic, political and cultural powers who may govern intersections.

Manuel Castells (1999)	<b>Informational City</b> The control point of economic, political and cultural relations
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Table 1: "Some definitions and explanations on today's urban theories and informational city."

Within the world literature, the definition of 'informational city' by Castells leads the way. Castells (1999) states that the effects of information technologies are evident on economy, society and spatial structures. In information cities, the system of the information flow is different from the others. In these cities, not only economic relations, but also political and cultural relations can be controlled. The images and the spatial symbols that environ these cities capture great attention. Beneath the images that cover urban spaces and architectural products; political, economic and social factors take place.

When we take a look at the Turkish literature, Selim Ökem's definition comes into prominence. Ökem (2006) states that however the concept of 'information city' is closely related to the concept of 'global city', it is used in his study in order to point out the harmony between economical infrastructure and cultural superstructure. Architecture is a reflection of economic infrastructure. Therefore, rarity, functionality and embodiment of energy as the specialties that define 'value' in economy correspond with the concept of 'value' in the discipline of architecture. However, in the information city, the value structure of economic and architectural formation differs from this model. Information city is a city in which information goods circulate. The general properties of this city can be defined in diverse contexts. The first factor is the geographical distribution of economic activities. Secondly, information cities are the areas of production for the leading information industries of today's world. Another denominator of these cities is the number of headquarters they accommodate. These cities are neither architectural intentions nor ends. They neither can be represented as the new trend of contemporary architecture agenda, nor are they alternatives or representatives for existing urban formations.

After the discussions related to contemporary cities and informational city within the literature are examined, three key concepts that can lead the way in order to understand the new city's specialties have been determined and the table 2 has been composed. These concepts (information, capital and space-city) lead the way in terms of highlighting the specialties that are considered within the scope of the study. This table can also be qualified as the summary of the main theme of the study.

INFORMATION CITY	
CENTRAL CONCEPTS	IDEAS ON CENTRAL CONCEPTS
<b>INFORMATION</b>	
Information	Unarranged, unassociated one that is shaped according to its receiver... Information: People, money, goods, ideas and images
Knowledge	One that is interpreted has been subject to historical process, categorized...
Flow	Information circulates around the world between cities as it is aggregated... It has influence on the formation of space and city...
Human	People move by conveying other types of information and changing the world...
Money	The flow of the global money is faster than it was in the past; large amounts of money circulate in enormous speeds.
Technology	Informational goods are used in cities by means of technological opportunities.
Idea	Cities can now operate as producers of information through the ideas that circulate in them.
Image	A large repertoire of images is offered to the audiences worldwide by means of new media.
<b>CAPITAL</b>	
Capital	It is not only in the form of financial capital: Human capital, technological capital, idea capital, the capital composed of images... All of these are raw materials. Information turns into capital while capital turns into

	information.
Economy	The economy of the information city has influence on other cities' economies as well.
Production	The scope of production is so wide. In addition to industrial and agricultural production, the production of technology exists mainly.
<b>SPACE-CITY</b>	
Space	The space of economic, political and cultural relations... Independent, flexible space that has no limits... Space has not a rigid form.
City	Strategic areas that are formed around human, technology, money, idea and image flows and that constitute the spaces of economic, political and cultural powers that are to govern these intersections.
Time	Time can not be isolated from space/place. Stereotyped thoughts are displaced over time. Constant flow defragments time and space.
Other definitions of modern city	The parameters that define other cities are limited; information city is more than this...

Table 2: "The definition of information city upon three concepts."

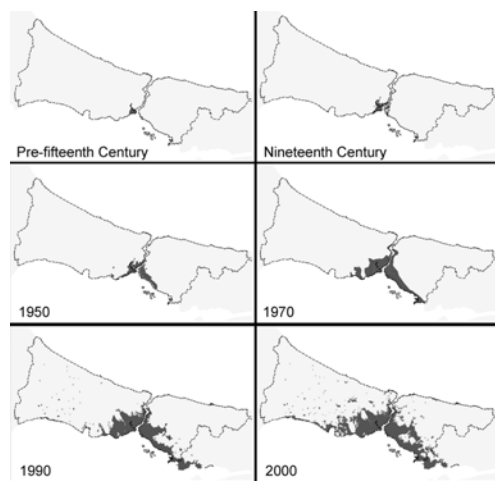
To sum up, a wide range of economic, political and cultural relations constantly pass through the information space. It is in this sense that the limits of information space are so flexible, soft and fluid as composed of foreign relations and concepts. The constant flow of people to cities changes the nature of relations that one establishes with the city. With constant flow of money, the production of spaces and cities with high image value increases. As a result of the flow of international capital between countries, the number of buildings that are constructed with foreign investments increase. Spatial and urban designs that were formerly governed by limited national resources are now afforded by international capital. The flow of goods triggers the development of the service sector while new kinds of

buildings that support this sector as well as new urban regions. With the flow of political ideas, the city can operate as a producer of information. The flow of images enables the rise of new technologies and this situation in turn generates improvements regarding the production and use of space. In today's world, these cities which produce information, accumulate capital and actively involve in politics preclude the system of nation-state and take the form of city-state over time.

### **An Evaluation of Istanbul through a Context of the Flows in the Modern World**

Throughout history, Istanbul has been the accumulator of information; that information has flown to this city for long years. As all other cities, Istanbul has been shaped by diverse accumulations that have taken place in different scales with different speeds. According to Yüksel Dinçer (2008), the period in which Istanbul has started to be transformed into a global city coincides with the descent of Beirut.

If we take a look at the figure 1, it is possible to see that Istanbul started to develop from the historical peninsula on the Bosphorus in the late Ottoman era. By 1950, the built-up area expanded along the east-west axis, covering the Marmara Sea's coast on the Anatolian side. Between 1950 and 1970, the migration from Anatolia to Istanbul brought with uncontrolled informal settlements on the peripheries. In 2000, the built up area spread further outwards on the European and Asian sides (Istanbul: City of Intersections, 2009, p. 24).

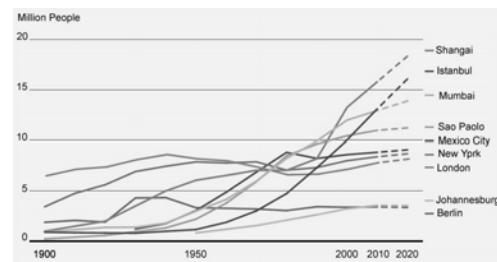


*Figure 1: Historical evolution of Istanbul's urban footprint. (Source: Istanbul: City of Intersections, 2009, p. 24).*

Sassen (2009) defines Istanbul as the intersection of diverse mobilities that move along east-west and north-

south axes. He also states that in order for this intersection to function as a network, some abilities must have been developed. These abilities have revealed three basic tendencies in today's world. The first is about the flow of capital that lies from east to west. Istanbul is placed just at the centre of this extension. The second tendency is about the circulation of people. There is a constant flow of people between Europe and Asia mutually. In this sense, the variety of people coming to and migrating via Istanbul is also of considerable value. As for the third tendency, the significant location of Istanbul within overall global political activities comes into prominence.

The Urban Age conference that has been organized in Istanbul on November 2009 as to evaluate the urban trends of the city has provided a discussion platform for the ascertainment of important urban findings. Istanbul has been chosen as the 9th city to host Urban Age. The former cities that hosted the conference were; New York, Shanghai and London in 2005, Mexico City, Johannesburg and Berlin in 2006, Mumbai in 2007 and Sao Paulo in 2008. With the datas it has collected, Urban Age presents an evaluation which compares these nine world cities upon basic indicators of performance. During the conference, cities have been emphasized as intersections in which people, cultures and goods constantly come across, whereas Istanbul has been represented as a city that has carried this function for thousands of years, more than any other participant cities of Urban Age. Examining Figure 2 and 3 under the topic of flow of people, Istanbul's location is worth analyzing.



*Figure 2: Population growth in the Urban Age cities. (Source: Istanbul: City of Intersections, 2009, p. 19).*



Figure 3: Graphics of urban density composed with regard to the population densities of nine Urban Age cities. (Source: *Istanbul: City of Intersections*, 2009, p. 29).

Urban density is illustrated in figure 3 in terms of the number of people living in each km<sup>2</sup> of a 100x100 km urban area. According to figure 3, density levels in Istanbul are high, particularly when compared to other European cities. The average within a radius of 10 kms is at least 30 per cent higher than that of any of the other American and European Urban Age cities (Istanbul, *City of Intersections*, 2009, p. 28).

According to Kearney's research that has been realized upon 'human capital' variable on 60 cities in 2009, Istanbul is one of the 15 cities among which Tokyo, Chicago and London take place. The research defines Istanbul as a magnet that attracts different groups of people (Sassen, 2009).

Istanbul as a city that has a rapid rise of population within the overall country (it still is exposed to a great migration from Anatolia) creates a large proportion of the added value of Turkey's budget. Turkey's population is recorded as 70.586.256 by the end of 2007, whereas it has reached 71.517.100 by the end of 2008. The city which has the highest population within the overall country is Istanbul with its population that has reached 12.57 million in 2007 and 12.69 million in 2008.

Throughout this period, local and foreign investments in Turkey operated decisions as hand in hand with central management and created the necessary infrastructure in order to render the city an important point of destination. One of the most important decisions among these is rendering Istanbul a city of finance first in Turkey and then within the global scale. In order to invest in Istanbul which was thought to be a desirable market for multinational companies, large amounts of hot money have flown to the city. Examining the responses of this flow under 'real estate investments' topic, we come to see the table below:

The real estate investments in Istanbul are subjected to development and investment foresights as well as risk evaluations that take place in the annual reports of PW Coopers and ULI over time. According to these, within overall countries that are subjected to research, in 2008, we come to see Istanbul in the second rank in terms of investment and development foresights. In 2009, it ranks first in the development foresights and third in the investment foresights.

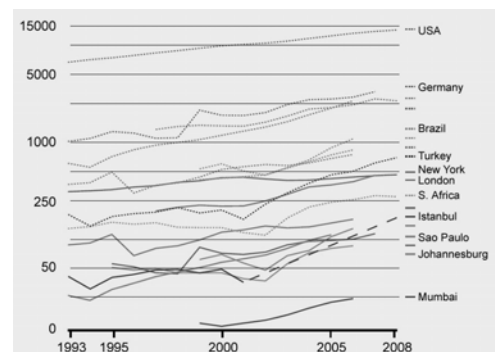


Figure 4: GDP of cities and countries (US\$ billion). (Source: *Istanbul: City of Intersections*, 2009, p. 23).

Figure 4 shows how the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured in billion of current US\$ has changed from 1993 to 2008 for the Urban Age cities. Istanbul contributed 22 per cent of Turkey's GDP in 2008. The economic weight of New York ve London is clearly visible in figure 4. Shanghai and Istanbul are the fastest growing economies (Istanbul: *City of Intersections*, 2009, p. 23).

On the other hand, the city has become a mutual shopping centre of politics. In the research that Kearney has developed upon 'political connections' variable, Istanbul has become one of the 10 cities along with Washington and London. The research defines political connections variable as 'the production of global policy'.

### **Evaluation of Istanbul's Spatial and Urban Transformation through the Perspective of Information City**

Considering the flows that Appadurai (1996) suggests as the five circulations of the modern world, Istanbul's position that Sassen (2009) evaluates upon urban dynamics and the spatial and urban transformation it has undergone; here is the portrait that occurs:

- Istanbul is going through a period in which social and political distinction has reached an enormous speed, urban lands have gained great importance and a struggle of share has originated as parallel to these developments.
- Global capital and the real estate market have resulted in the emergence of new functional areas and building typologies. New shopping centres, offices, residences and multifunctional buildings aim to transform the life culture, shopping habits and traditional spaces of people. These new urban spaces which are marketed by media become widespread in all parts of Turkey, starting from Istanbul. The investments could not be afforded with one functional area merely and therefore, multifunctional buildings have been transformed into a model that has been imposed from the West.
- Along with globalization and the hot money that is specifically flown to a particular part of society, poor people who establish their lives at the centre of the city are forced to leave their places, mostly in order to make place for social groups who climb the social ladder. Especially spaces with historical significance change hands and go into the period of gentrification as in the examples of rehabilitation of Fener and Balat. In addition, these people who migrate and settle in the city are removed from the shanties they live in. In these areas, some patterns that have to be protected are destroyed in the name of urban transformation as to be delivered to the multi storied raw buildings of Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ).
- The Metropolitan Planning Bureau of Istanbul Municipality had announced international urban design competitions for two development areas in Istanbul and invited worldwide famous architects in 2005. Those projects were proposed for Küçükçekmece on the western and for Kartal on the eastern end of the urban area. Zaha

Hadid's proposal won the competition for Kartal and Ken Yeang's proposal won the competition for Küçükçekmece.

- The pioneer architectural companies of Istanbul that determine the architectural agenda have been subjected to a survey in order to evaluate the changing urban formation of Istanbul. In this survey, questions related to which building types and countries those firms have been working on mainly have been asked. According to the answers from the offices, the foreign executions of architectural firms gain importance in the Arabian countries, Russia, Azerbaijan, India, Balkan countries and Italy mainly. This result reveals that Turkey cooperates with some foreign architectural groups and its field of action is intensified in the countries that have declared their independence with the dispersion of Soviet Socialist Republics. Considering the scope of recently built projects; offices, houses, shopping centres and multi functional buildings come into prominence as structures that global capital needs the most (Görgülü and Koca, 2009).

### **Conclusions**

In today's world, the tools for acquiring and producing information has eased the free circulation and sharing of architectural forms, new kinds of structures and urban trends. The formations of cities are now molded and shaped by information. The spaces that occur in this sense have deep informational meanings. Definition of the information city is related to the flows that are spread within the city and the relations that get through it. Every new relationship carries its own special history and culture.

In this sense, cities can be perceived as strategic areas that are formed around human, technology, money, idea and image flows and that create spaces for economic, political and cultural powers that are to govern these intersections. In this point, one can argue that the historical and geographical location of Istanbul increases this strategic importance even more and the flows have important effects on the spatial and urban formation of the city. Istanbul is a point of intersection between diverse economies, policies, goods and people. In today's world that is becoming more interconnected as days go by, this role that Istanbul has borne upon attains great importance.

Considering the origins of the flows that are intensified in Istanbul; we come to see the concept of 'power' that has started to show its effects starting from 1980's, a power that established itself upon the trial of becoming integrated with the West. In this sense, it is an undeniable fact that in the context of the process of globalization it has undergone a great change in economic and social areas apart from urbanization in the last 10 years in Turkey. With the

political changes that have taken place in neighbour countries on one hand (the dispersion of Soviet Socialist Republics, Iraq war and the role America has casted on Turkey in this context) and the important location of Turkey and particularly Istanbul on the other, the direction of flows has started to rotate towards Istanbul with its central location.

In the last 10 years, Turkey's integration with the world has failed in cultural, legal and social dimensions unfortunately, that it has been effective only in terms of opening its public investments and lands to foreign investments in the economic sense. One can argue that Istanbul has enriched itself with the flows in terms of information, however it is an undeniable fact that it has not yet reached the statue of 'governing city' which is one of the most important necessities of becoming a global city.

Despite all these, Istanbul is one of the most important cities all over the world in terms of the economic circulation it creates, the synergy it enables in social and cultural areas and its spatial wealth.

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