

ISTANBUL

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MAPPING ISTANBUL

Pelin Dervis

Mapping Istanbul is a film composed of two fragments including around 70 maps that were prepared for the *Becoming Istanbul* exhibition organized by the Garanti Gallery and the German Museum of Architecture (Deutsches Architekturmuseum/DAM, Frankfurt am Main) in 2008. *Becoming Istanbul* consisted of an interactive database on contemporary Istanbul and a 16-minute complementary film titled *Mapping Istanbul*. Both attempts to look at Istanbul from multiple perspectives and free of all the familiar clichés. In doing this, the database, instead of producing and placing new stereotypes opposite those clichés, forms its own structure by instrumentalizing the clichés themselves. For this purpose, eight dichotomic concepts (old-new, amass-disseminate, fear-relaxation, yearn-forget, movement-

stasis, pure-hybrid, visibility-surveillance, existence-inexistence) were furnished with sub-concepts (decadence, justification etc.). Media accessed via these sub-concepts included works by artists working on Istanbul, architectural projects, photographs, cartoons and essays. Users accessing work produced in the last 10 years had the chance to watch/listen to conditions and actors forming today's Istanbul. *Mapping Istanbul* constituted an important source supporting the understanding of the city and the contemporary view the exhibition presented, at times completely overturning cliché judgments. The maps have been revised for *Europe XXL* and will now be presented in two fragments: *Istanbul in* and *Istanbul is*. *Istanbul in* analyses and positions Istanbul as part of the world, as part of Turkey and within its own dynamics, whereas *Istanbul is* allows us to properly enter the city. The headings include population, purchasing power, income, education, economy, building stock, transport, topography, growth, land use and services. Some maps contain statistical information, whereas others are relational cartographies. Presented in various layers, the information emerges as a unique tool to understand the dynamics of the metropolis. When the information communicated by viewing the building stock of the city in terms of age, number of floors, physical condition and relation with the earthquake belt is combined with housing tenure and when information on housing, hospitals or shopping centres built by TOKİ (the Housing Development Administration) is added to this, it no longer remains only building-related information and takes on a social and economic presence. Issues like the distribution of economic activity within the city and the educational profile can be read in relation to other cities in Turkey. The connectivity of Turkey with other countries is presented both with information on the number of flights and the visa required to enter foreign countries...

Two issues were of vital importance in the formation of *Mapping Istanbul*. The first was ease of perception for all types of viewers in the graphic visuality of the maps. All sections were therefore prepared with meticulous care and went through multiple revisions. The transfer of maps to film was realized with the same care and attention. But the real vital issue was the formation of the maps themselves. It is necessary to point out that none of these maps were produced by modifying available maps featuring information we needed. All the maps, without exception, were constructed from scratch using accumulated data. The maps, the product of comprehensive data and visual research, are meeting the viewer for the first time with these headings.

Europe XXL, takes a section out of today's Europe, and *Mapping Istanbul* will attempt to assume the role of unfolding and positioning this section for Istanbul. Knowing that sections taken via maps from today's Istanbul in today's world will become defunct in, for instance, 10 years, takes the work to a different platform both in terms of the exhibition and the work itself. This platform is related to the value the information these maps carry in forming a contemporary memory. Therefore, the team that prepared the maps and films is now working on transforming these maps into a book that will be published in 2009.

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Istanbul.

Its geographical location, its rampant urban development and its complex socio-political fabric make Istanbul an ideal backdrop for many artists: not only Turkish and Istanbul artists, but also artists from the diaspora or artists from abroad who have come to Istanbul as artists in residence. Through the selected works and the varied backgrounds of the artists, the exhibition attempts to show how city-dwellers face their reality and their history, and how, depending on their cultural, social and political background, they show their resistance to it and participation in it. In recent years, the number of artistic projects has increased, inviting dialogue and historical introspection. These artists accompany the movement of contemporary history. The exhibition will trace these developments.



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