

# **A thousand Istanbuls**

*A FIG project*

## **Manifesto statement**

Metropolises are small worlds composed of overlapping cities created by the different communities that inhabit them. Expats, internal migrants, transitory citizens, visitors and long-time locals bring with them different ways of using, designing and transforming space, engaging with objects and techniques and moving through the urban fabric. Through an investigative workshop, following the traces of these communities, we will describe the numerous cities that are contained within contemporary Istanbul.

## **Conceptual explanation**

The central intention of the proposal is to explore and represent the multiplicity of cities that are contained within contemporary Istanbul as the consequence of the diversity and simultaneous presence of different communities. The project is in itself a statement about the hybrid and multi-cultural nature of contemporary metropolis and it specifically aims to target the spatial and physical implications of such nature.

Our conviction is that the rich cultural background that immigrants and foreigners bring with them, and more specifically their particular ways of conceiving and using space, produce unplanned and unconstrained alterations and transformations in the existing spatial configurations of the city. The devices and strategies used in their appropriations are at times low cost and simple and yet in other circumstances extremely sophisticated.

Successive waves of immigration have in this manner reconfigured existing spaces and attributed new roles to otherwise neglected spaces. Such is the case of the new collective use of parks in Italian cities for recreation by Peruvian and Ecuadorian immigrants or the unregulated occupation during the weekends of covered lobbies of office skyscrapers for social gathering by Philippine workers in Hong Kong.

New communities have also generated new economic and social networks that cut through the urban matter, joining heterogeneous points and operating on different temporalities as in the case of the Haitian taxi drivers of Montreal or the different Mexican groups in Los Angeles and Chicago, who have reconstituted the social fabric of their specific regions of provenance in their new locations.

Migrant communities have also introduced building and construction techniques, as in the case of the Italians in the USA or the Polish and Eastern Europeans in London; cuisines and produce; technical expertise and/or specific design solutions.

The objective of the present proposal is to reveal the rich landscape of flows of people, objects and knowledge within contemporary Istanbul.

## Format

The project is composed of three phases: a preliminary research phase, a workshop and the edition and display of results.

### 1. Preliminary research

A preparatory phase of preparation – to be realized before the workshop by the *FIG Projects* – will collect background information about Istanbul's migrant communities: internal and foreign immigrants, temporary inhabitants such as visitors and students, business, diplomatic and other professional communities. The phase is oriented to creating a solid base upon which the research realized during the workshop will be founded and will include:

- Understanding what communities have larger representation and/o impact in the social fabric of the city
- Realizing preliminary contacts with local experts that have worked or studied with local communities (artists, sociologists, geographers, community leaders etc.)
- The identification and preliminary contact of members of some migrant communities.
- The location of key sites for each community.
- The creation of a common bibliography of projects and texts relating to projects on mapping, immigration studies and urban transformation to be used as a common library by all participants.

### 2. The workshop

The workshop will be open to local and international students or professionals of different backgrounds and disciplines. Its main aim will be the gathering and edition of material – a visual archive – relating to the different migrant communities present in contemporary Istanbul.

A first half-day will be dedicated to sharing projects and examples regarding thematic mapping. It may include external guests.

Participants will then be divided into groups and assigned (or select) a community to map.

Each group will be asked to choose a specific, but tangible (i.e. physical), entry point to the community they are studying. This could for example be a restaurant or community center from a specific community; a space that functions as a center for gathering of a special group; the presence of an element that points to phenomena or processes triggered by the presence of a certain population.

This entry point will lead to an exercise of mapping of about 4 or 5 days in which each group will follow a trajectory from the initial site through a succession of points. Since we can understand any form of mapping as partial and subjective, the methodologies of representation shall be pertinent to each case and discussed in situ. Special emphasis will however be placed on the heterogeneity of materials of representation: direct testimonies (recorded conversations in sound and/or film), visual records (photography and/or film), textual annotations, sketches or drawings, collections of objects.

### 3. Representing 1000 Istanbul

The common element of each research will be the trajectory of movement through the city associated to each community. The sum of these trajectories will be used as a collective foundation for the display. A single physical element (table, wall, or other to be determined) will display both the totality of trajectories and the rest of heterogeneous materials associated with each of those paths.

A period of approximately 3 days following the research on terrain will be dedicated exclusively to shared phase of editing and preparation of the final display.