

Messages from Yeldegirmeni

As an Istanbulite who got used to looking at the city from the Anatolian side, I usually find myself lucky since I am pretty away from all the crowds and the noise occupying the old peninsula. I spend my time frequently around the neighborhood that I live in, which is Yeldegirmeni; an old and comparably *rusty* part of the shiny Kadikoy. Despite its fundamental characteristic, as the summertime neighborhood of old Istanbulites in the previous century, Kadikoy became a focal point for the creatives, artists, musicians or the people who enjoy and spend time around the works of those groups during the last decade. However, Yeldegirmeni can be slightly separated from Kadikoy since it is still being depicted as a deprived place, that hosts century old buildings with cracks on their façades, old and whiny neighbors and with insufficient urban infrastructure. On the other hand the neighborhood is always popular, even after the pandemic restrictions, new places are still popping around, like a metaphorical club of gentrification slamming old residents to get out of the neighborhood once they have the chance.

I did not grow up here, yet after the 8 years spent around, I have people on the way to say “Good morning abi” or “Wish you good business brother”, during my commute or while having a small walk for grocery shopping. It always makes one feel homey when that one is able to greet someone while having a regular walk in their neighborhood. I was working as an architect-manager for the local government when I moved in here and what inspired me was the historical fabric in Yeldegirmeni, however I slowly stepped from admiring the physicality to enjoying the people. Even if the neighborhood has been frequently criticized as a ‘hipster magnet’ by many, the mixture of newcomers (which I am also a member of frankly) and the old residents bring something valuable that is not easy to find somewhere else. The shop owners who can resist to the instant changes stand still with their businesses while many others need to leave the neighborhood; this unconscious balance still brings something new on the table, something similar to the feeling of a *failed gentrification*.

I haven’t been working as a practicing architect for a long while yet I have been working on several projects converging with architecture, city and its ecosystem, mostly under the name of our creative collective Urban.koop. Yeldegirmeni is always inspiring on that matter and fruitful to expand my mind; even when I want to refresh my mind to get back to work during these *remote-working times*, a small stroll around the neighborhood would be enough for me to soothe myself. Istanbul is definitely a city that never sleeps and like a patchwork of very different colors brought from distant parts of the world; but Yeldegirmeni could represent a good and zipped version of that urban metaphor.

Since we have lost most of the city to the transformation and never-ending development projects; it is not easy to find tranquility in this city. But it is always a pleasure to see the small glimpses of the Bosphorus while going to have my morning coffee and have another digital meeting in the café at the corner of our apartment.

Onur Atay, september 2021