

# Spontaneity in Everyday Space: Linking Social And Spatial Through an Urban Design Perspective

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The preconceptions of urban planners and designers for a physical environment may fail as everyday users start to employ it. This mismatch is caused by spontaneity that is innate to every person, making them behave and decide according to their natural drives. The postulate is that spontaneity is reflected in urban space, calling for an updated human-oriented urban theory and analysis. With the literature survey, the main aspects of spontaneity in space are set as spatiality, temporality, and agency. This idea is developed through an interpretation of spatial dialectics from an urban design perspective connecting the designed and lived spaces. This theoretical basis is explored with a novel methodological framework entitled as spatial design ethnography realized in a busy central street called Yüksel Street in Ankara-Turkey. Still holding on to its first physical layout in macro scale, the street is being (re)made subtly through the countless micro interventions of its users. To reveal these micro patterns and understand the relation between designed and lived space, the PhD research has been divided into three analytical sections. In this paper, a special emphasis will be given to the first section (spaces for people) that discusses the historical socio-spatial development of the street. This is to reveal the morphological development together with the transformations in the social life; and to create the archive of everyday through analyzing the former plans, urban design schemas, memoirs, old maps, and pictures.

## Research Synopsis

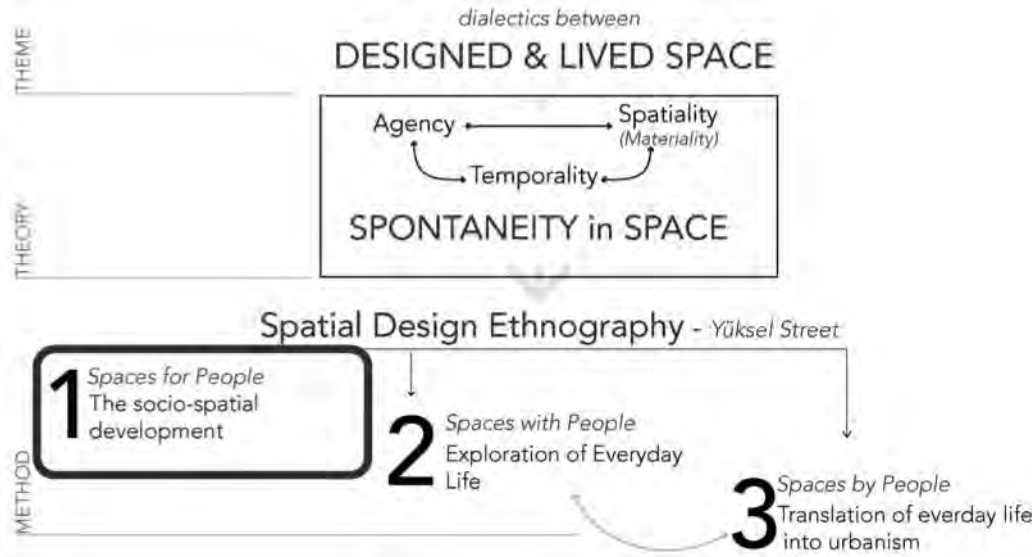
This research focuses on the dialectics between designed and lived space defending that spontaneity is an overlooked yet fundamental human characteristics that is revealed in the formation of physical environment. For this, the main research question is stated as “How can we theorize and analyze the dialectics between designed and lived spaces through situating spontaneity within urbanism?” This is believed to give urban studies a way to address the knowledge gap between the everyday life and spatial design through the interpretation of spontaneity from an urbanism perspective. For the theoretical framework, this interpretation is made after an insightful literature survey encompassing many fields from philosophy to positive sciences to unfold the aspects of spontaneity. The outcome of this is that there are three indivisible aspects of agency, temporality, and spatiality for us to discuss spontaneity in spatial terms. Simply, to understand the post-design process of urban space that makes it a living entity, we need to value the form production by many users through everyday interventions at different time intervals.

This theoretical basis is explored with a novel methodological framework entitled as *spatial design ethnography* and tested in a busy central street called Yüksel Street in Ankara-Turkey. Still holding on to its first physical layout in macro scale, the street is being (re)made subtly through the countless micro interventions of its users. Spatial design ethnography aims to bring together the agency and materiality while (social and spatial; ethnography and spatial analysis etc.) to understand the ordinary users' impacts on urban space by integrating various modes of data collection and analysis.

The research has been divided into three sections as the empirical study starts in Yüksel Street. The first section (spaces for people) analyzes the former plans, plan reports, memoirs of the inhabitants, old maps, and pictures to reveal the morphological development and to find clues for the archive of everyday. This brings out the second part of the analysis that investigates the instances and rhythms of the everyday life (spaces with people). For this, longitudinal fieldwork encompassing the recording of everyday life, participant observation, photo documentation, behavioural mapping, interviews with users, owners of surrounding buildings has been conducted. The last section (spaces by people) unveils the unique ways of urban space appropriation from a designerly perspective to develop a translation from everyday life and space to urban design operations and principles. This section is closely related to the findings of the second phase of the analysis yet tries to re-evaluate the findings with respect to the initial postulates stated in the theoretical framework.

Within this paper, a special emphasis will be given to the initial analysis section that discusses the historical socio-spatial development of Yüksel Street [fig.1]. This is to understand the planning and design ideology that not only shaped the physical tissue but also altered the social life and, in turn, transformed by it. The space that is produced for people has a background story of the ongoing social, economic, political transformations. Therefore, to have an insight of the everyday life and space of the street, its past will be unfolded. The data has been collected through archival study that has been conducted in two main city archives of Ankara, namely VEKAM (Vehbi Koç University Library) and METU-CRP (Middle East Technical University - City and Regional Planning). The former city plans, old photographs, local newspaper articles are gathered from these archives. Besides this visual collection, the plan reports, books and memoirs constituted the textual information that helps to uncover the dynamics that created the Yüksel Street. The

former and current urban plans were rectified geographically through the map warper software. This analysis will be conducted to track down the basic and most important morphological changes along the street. The main reason to conduct this spatial analysis is to put together the physical imprints of social life and change in everyday life. The aforementioned data does not always cover the street itself, but the surrounding urban area that it is located within.



[fig.1] The flow of the research and the focus of this paper as stated within a green rectangle  
Source: Elaborated by the author

### Yüksel Street: Planning History and Social Life

Yüksel Street is one of the planned streets surrounded by the residential areas in early planning phases of Ankara. That is also clear that the street has faced many alterations not only in its formal plan regulations but also informalities accumulated in time. Today it is still one of the important pedestrian streets in the heart of the city center supported by a diverse set of land uses generating an ever-changing and rich social life. Hence, it is a highly suitable case site to elaborate on the dialectics of designed and lived space, providing not only a rich material in terms of planning history but also a spontaneous way of making of the everyday life and space. In order to grasp the current socio-spatial condition of the street, it is essential to know its past both in terms of spatial and social history.

### On the Eve of Republic (1920s)

To record the everyday life is crucial for a city like Ankara since it does not have the well-known means of what defines an urban land such as the continuum of the interrelation among people through centuries or ages-old urban elements such as squares, rivers, houses or cafés (Miser 2001, p.91). However, the city has many witnesses making it closer to the urban by refreshing the young memory of the city. To narrow down the scale and time period, this study focuses on the beginning of the urbanization period in the city in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century in which Ankara was no more than a deprived settlement as stated below (Atay in Çankaya, 1969, 505; cited in Tanyer 2006):

“The station, then the swamp, then the graveyard, after decrepit Karaoğlan, the site of the fire; and once the end of that is reached village with crooked streets, without pavements or just paved with rough cobblestones. Adobe huts or mud-brick houses”



[fig.2] City View in 1922 by Lansere  
Source: Ankara Yazı - 2004



[fig.3]. Ankara 1929  
Source: Atılım University Digital Archive

Before the foundation of the republic and the declaration of Ankara as the capital of Turkey (1923), the city is described as being a village-like-town in the middle of the naked step land. The daily life of people was closely attached to the houses and public spaces in and around the Ankara castle. This tranquil life was enriched with the short-time migrations to the vineyards during summer which was not only a free time but also a working period that the families made living and get ready for the winter (Günes 2013, 15). A Soviet painter Lansere illustrates the life in the city in 1922 [fig.2, fig.3]. He paints the everyday life of this “quiet and poor” city as still living in the middle ages. The spatial traces such as crooked and narrow streets the handicrafts overflowed to these streets from the shops stroke him deeply. Lansere (2004, p.22) states that:

"Despite the rumors about the laziness of the eastern men, the hard working people I see here amaze me... However, although they have never been conquered since the time of Timur, the lack of decorations and embellishments in the houses and furniture is striking. There seems to be nothing attractive...The people go to walking in the evening, they walk to the lakes where there are tables along the water or to the barracks serving tea or coffee near the water streams."

#### The Creation of the Capital (1920s-1950s)

This tranquil and small-scale settlement was about to face an influential transformation in political, intellectual and economic contexts as well as in social life and urbanism. Following the Republican revolution in 1923, Ankara has been selected as the capital despite the lack of means of accommodation, accessibility, and administration. This forgotten step village was transforming into the main city of the new republic, almost symbolizing the passage from an unsettled society to a nation (Bischoff; cited in Azakoglu 2015, 163). This transformation had started with the first urban plan idea initiated by the state. The plan was aware of the greatest changes that the declaration of capital would bring. This would not only be a pressure of transformation of a village into a city but to a center of government of a country (Jausseley 1929, p.11).



[fig.4] First Urban Plan of Ankara by Hermann Jansen (1932) - Yüksel Street and Its Vicinity Highlighted with Red  
Source: METU-CRP Archive

The first urban plan of the city was prepared by Lörcher (1924-1925). The plan supported the development in and around the old city center (Cengizkan 2014). However, the need of housing and administrative buildings overcame the planning scheme, therefore by 1932, Jansen Plan was approved to correspond these changes of the increase both in population and altering needs [fig.4]. This process brought not only the changes in the physical tissue as in the construction of new neighborhoods, city centers, public institutions but also the alterations in the urban activities in cultural, commercial and recreational contexts. The development of the New City (*Yenişehir or Kızılay*) adjacent to the south edge of the old city center was promising a first planned model of urbanization in the country. The construction of residential areas was crucial and urgent to accommodate both the residents of Ankara and new comers. This speed of the implementation process together with the urban plan created absurd sceneries in daily life during the period of construction [fig.5]. When we think of an open steppe land in the south of the old city center and the scattered building constructions with lack accessibility, it is not surprising to read this excerpt from the book *Çankaya* written by Atay (1980, p.371):

"It was a snowy winter night that the rumors said wolfs came down to Yenişehir and bite the bronz sculptures thacitynmanagement broughtht from Europe; the ambassador of England. Mr. Clark wanted to leave from a reception that İsmet Paşa threw. However, his car was stuck in the snow and he decided to walk, yet again it was deserted, empty area covered by snow making the walk to the house that was located only 150 meters away impossible. Instead of getting angry the ambassador laughed; saying that "it is ok if the wolves would kill us...But it will be the first time that a penguin suit and opera hat are left after they have finished with us."



[fig.5] Mimar Kemal School, 1927

Source: Koç University VEKAM Library



[fig.6] Yenişehir is rising 1926-30

Source: Koç University VEKAM Library

The main design idea in Jansen's plan was to implement a garden city concept while creating green continuities, main squares and axial alignments for *Yenişehir*. Yüksel Street is located within this area known commonly as *Kızılay* today. The street and its surroundings were proposed as residential areas by Jansen Plan. Since its location was close to the ministries, the housing units were built for and occupied by state workers (Yavuz 1952). In its form, it was as a branch supporting the main vehicle and pedestrian transportation spine, that is called the Atatürk Boulevard. Its location let a direct connection to the main flow of traffic as well as a close spatial interaction with the government quartier. Detached, two and four floor houses were constructed within the site, making the street pattern was highly permeable yet loose at the same time [fig.6]. This fine-grained street pattern started to transform in the upcoming years. As the development continued, the main boulevards were cut by the inner streets that Akgün (2008) describes as crooked, dusty and never direct due to the "respect" to the ownership patterns during the 1930s and 1940s. Yüksel Street may be one of those streets that the author refers.

The subdivision plan that was approved in 1937 by Urban Development Directorate of Ankara Municipality. This created the main morphological traits that lasted till today in terms of block size and street layout. However, as the discussions continue the second world war started, In spite of not taking part, the inhabitants were vastly affected due to the shortage in food, clothing, accommodation and the problems in social life. The people that were ü working in the public sector in genereal such as civil servants in the newly born city were not only struggling with the daily problems but they were living their days to get away from it by going to footbal matches in the weekends, or cinema and theater displayed in the public-houseses as well as walking to the recreation areas surrounding the built-up area such as vineyards or riversides (Güneş 2013).

During these years, the repetitive customs that are mainly religious celebrations such as bayrams and the community celebrations such as weddings helped them pass the heavy burden of the political and economic contexts. Tradition is *gelenek* in Turkish, carrying the root of *gelmek* that means to come. Hence, by celebrating a routine that comes from the past habits, people found strength to build their future.

### Making of the Street's Identity (1950s-1980s)

There, in the middle of Kızılay, near the new building, in front of its shop window that is organized neatly, is a gypsy woman was crouched and begging... This city gone mad, thought Hatice. Not so long ago, it was impossible to see cheap people in the streets of Ankara. There was order before, there was surveillance and presence of authority.'

A literary excerpt (Soysal, 1973, p.46) from the scenery in Kızılay back in the 1970s gives an insight about the changing life and clashing encounters between social groups in the city center. Yüksel Street, as among the actors making this scene acquired many identities as the city grew and socio-political context altered. The inhabitant and user profile was also in a transformation with the rural migration to the city. The socio-economic changes and the shifts in political sphere start to occur and impact the city center started to alter by 1950s. Due to the population increase and demographical change, landuse transformation was inevitable. The new shops were opened along the Atatürk Boulevard, the houses and the furniture of that old and plain city were changed with the new ones (Tanyer, 2006, p.3). Hence the new and old was starting the mold in each other, creating diversity as well as clashes and lack of identity that might be why a famous poet N.F. Kısakürek referred to it as an 'artificial city' (Tanyer, 2006, p.44) or the 'lost city' as Aydın (2012, p.57) claims [fig.7]. There were 'europeanization' visible in clothing, high-culture activities and the architecture while the quiet and poor city prevailed nearby.



[fig.7] From a children book written during the 1950s. The text below the image states that: "The old and the new are all mixed together here."

Source: Koç University VEKAM Library

In the context of everyday life, this period is known as the development of consumerism, western style of life and consumption as well as the diffusion of mass communication (Usal 2014). This was reinforced by plan decisions and by the law proposals for new urban management. Kızılay was announced as a Central Business District in 1952 (Batuman 2006). Following this, a new law for the property ownership was enacted between 1968-1972 following the Yücel-Uybadin Urban Plan (1957) that recommended Kızılay as the Central Business District without a visionary approach that integrates pedestrian and vehicular transportation and landuse needs. When this additional implementation plan declared New City as the 'high-rise region', the crucial changes started to occur in the area. The two and three dimensional composition of the site started to alter drastically. The single blocks with two or four floors within gardens were transformed into high-rise buildings still protecting the same plot size causing densification of the built-up area. The buildings were increased up to 7-8 floors with an adjacent building order without any preconception for the urban infrastructure problems that this would bring (Bilsel 1977).

Besides the alteration in the form and the activity pattern within the built environment, the meaning of the street for the city and the people in this time is worth mentioning. Yüksel Street started to employ particular political identity by 1950s by becoming a node for the protests by various political groups (Dinçer 2016). The opening of the Social Club for Political Sciences Graduates (Mülkiyeliler Birliği) in 1964 at the intersection of Yüksel and Konur Street, and the Union of Chamber of Turkish Engineers and Architects at Konur Street contributed a lot to this wave of critical political environment (Dinçer, 2016, p.60) This process is more than a simple site selection, since these institutions are known with their oppositional and mostly leftist views that influenced the immediate public space as Yüksel Street to be a place for the street politics (ibid, 71). The conversion of Yüksel into the place of passive resistance through press releases, protests, hunger strikes point out 'the quiet encroachment of the ordinary' (Bayat 1997). This identity continued to prevail throughout turbulent political events in the country during the 1980s and lasted until today.

### Space of Continuous Flow (1980s-2000s)

The wave of liberalization of economy and the weakening of the social welfare state in Turkey starting with the 1980s affected the urbanization agenda, its spatial reflections and everyday social life in cities. The new role of the state as the facilitator rather than the service provider led privatization of public institutions and services. Being one of them, education had its share from this process. The competition among the high school students to enter the university increased and this caused the private after-school and weekend education centers (*dershane*) to pop up in the city. Thanks to its central location Kızılay, Yüksel Street was in a favorable location for this use of space. Again, the location selection of political unions and chambers in and around this area was planting the seeds of a highly fluid, dynamic and pluralistic urban environment. The outcome was the occupation of the streets by the youth for their gatherings after school, for drinking, chatting and 'killing time'. The book written in 1994 by Doğan tried to understand this group and use in the street within the discussion of the youngsters in Yüksel Street as a sub-culture. They were seen as an alternative youth group that does not follow the mainstream behaviors and preferences of the general young population. They were named as 'Yüksel youth' and attract attention via their choice of clothing, sleeping time, entertainment habits.



[fig.8] Human Rights Sculpture  
Source: Author's Archive, October 2015 & January 2017

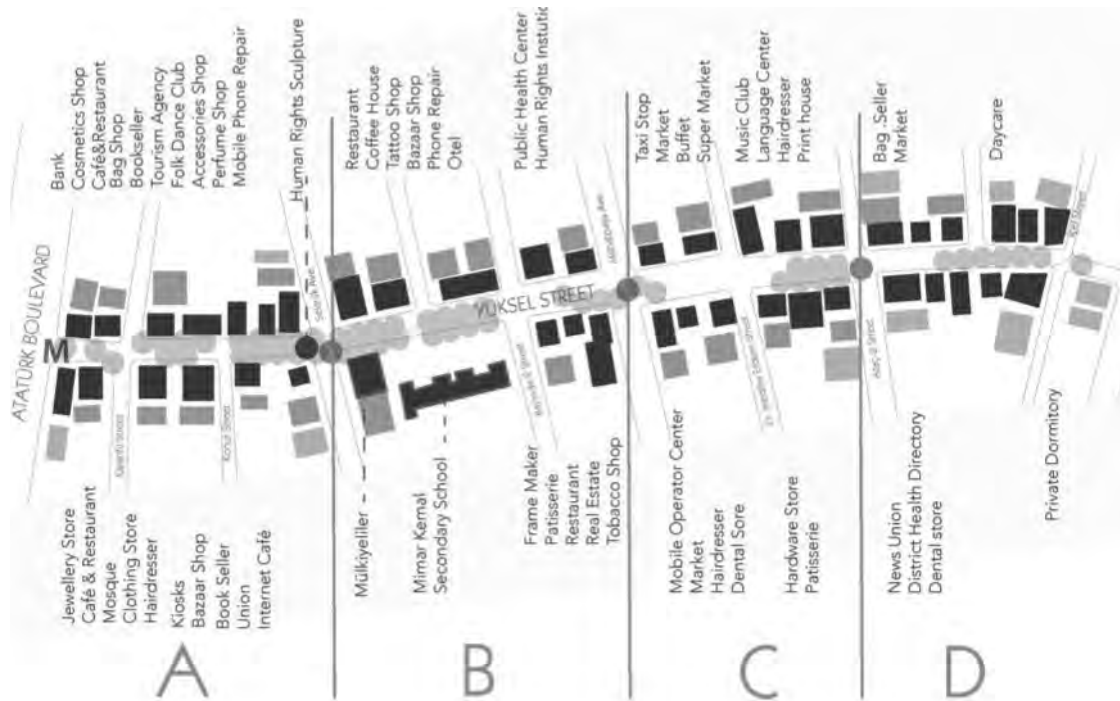
This alternative appropriation of the street was going hand in hand with the political demonstrations and press releases. This period was also associated with petty crimes recorded in and around the street. The local municipality claimed to have responsibility to 'change' this image of the street. Hence the partial pedestrianization of Yüksel, Karanfil, and Konur Streets in Yenışehir was realized in the beginning of 1990s. The city managers wanted to alter the identity from a place for marginal groups to an art and culture site. Alongside with this attitude, the famous bronze sculptures are placed in the street. Being the most known and significant one is 'Human Rights Sculpture' at the intersection of Yüksel and Konur Streets. Designed by Metin Yurdanur in 1990 this art piece has become the landmark and meeting point for various gatherings [fig.8]. This decision fostered an easy and continuous flow of people and provided many opportunities of appropriation in public space both by users and the shop owners.

Together with the opening of the Metro line along Kızılay in 1997, a Metro exit was started to serve at the entrance of Yüksel Street from Atatürk Boulevard. This supported the connector character of the street in

between the other pedestrianized streets such as Konur and Karanfil. The pictures that show this period does not reflect any less than the current identity of the street. However, besides the lower number of everyday users, the open space in front of the shops that are located in the entrance floors of the buildings attract attention. That is they seem to have a simple taste and less of an appropriation tendency in terms of covers, use of signboards and alike. The people who remember this period, including myself, are mostly claiming that it is not so different than what it is today. However, the pavements, placement of benches, land functions (number and intensity) and many other components seem to alter significantly.

### Continuous Flow, Neglected Identity (2000s - Today)

From 2000 onwards, Yüksel maintained its functional, commercial, political and public characteristics in different scales. It was 2010 when Çankaya Municipality formed a team to make an urban analysis and to propose new arrangements for the pedestrian streets including a section of Yüksel Street. The outcome for the analysis presented a set of problems including pedestrian circulation, pavement, lighting, safety, and expansion of informal developments, social problems and alike with almost no emphasis over the social dimension including users and everyday life. Together with the urban design plan they implemented on the section A and a part of B [fig.9], these issues are tried to be solved through physical rehabilitation and legal measures for the removal of informal counters from the entrances and front yards of some buildings. During one of my visits to the Çankaya municipality, there appeared a chance to make an informal interview with one of the designers of the team. According to her, their purpose was mainly to rehabilitate the other pedestrian streets, namely Konur and Karanfil. However, being in the intersection of these two, Yüksel Street was taken into the agenda and it was observed that the main problems were related with the accessibility of the disabled people and the invasion of public spaces by some shops. Today, the ease of accessibility through ramps or yellow tracking pavements are deprived but still visible. The shop fronts are occupied again blocking the ease of flow yet creating a more vibrant and attractive environment. The kiosks seem to become permanent rather than temporary. They are mainly concentrated around the Metro Exit (in section A); and in the section B. Besides that, the variety in the landuses decrease as we move from the section A to D. The street has a highly mixes-use composition including photographers, unions, many hairdressers and restaurants, dental clinics, small education centers etc.

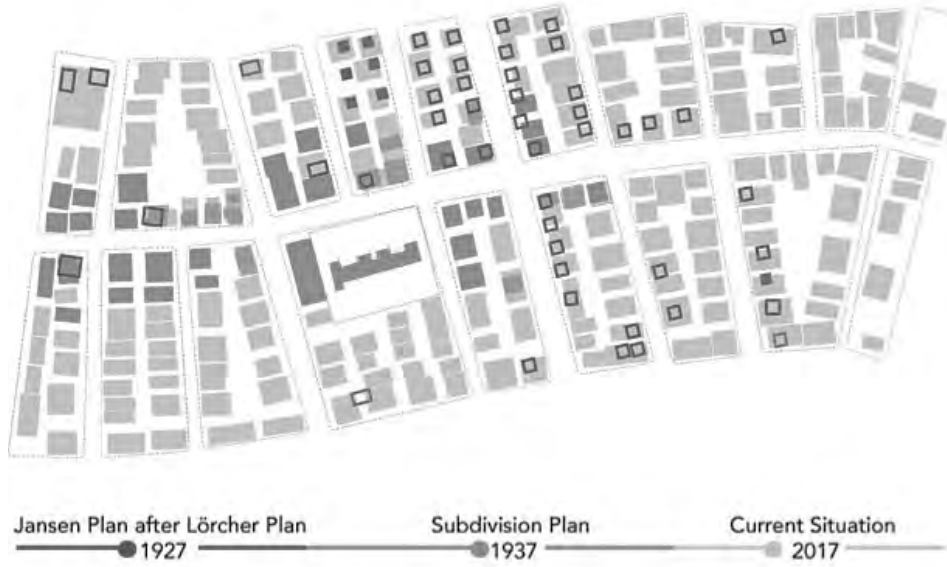


[fig.9] Yüksel Street Landuse Map (2017 July)

Source: Elaborated by the author

The spatial interventions were not so aggressive to change the street. However, the prohibition of kiosks, street vendor and the 'illegal invasion' of the shop fronts aimed to 'clean' the street. The socio-spatial consequences and current conditions of the street will be touched upon in the upcoming section. The significant thing about the materiality of the site is that historical traces seem to be carried through the form of plots till today. This can be seen from the image created by the superimposition of the figure-ground maps

of (i) Jansen Plan, (ii) Subdivision Plan, (iii), up-to-date satellite view [fig.10]. After rectifying these three plans in mapwarper software, it is visible that there is an inevitable densification within the plots created a more legible built environment in and around Yüksel. With the densification of the built-up area and use, the building blocks lost the space in between the buildings was closed by doors or sleazily built shops. Therefore, we need to follow a different approach then a sole material analysis to understand intangible, lived configurations making the street a socio-spatial whole. All in all, this exercise of tracing the morphological alterations does not say much about the current physical condition and the life prevails beyond it.



[fig.10] Superimposition of Figure-Ground Analysis from Three Periods

Source: Elaborated by the author

### Concluding Remarks

This attempt to interpret the socio-spatial evolution of the street is rather controversial. Because stone sustains, construction holds on to time, as well as the political and economic power. This power can control an urban form and cannot go unrecognized in the near future. This creates an illusion in the historical explanation of urban space. Understanding the historicity of urban form development, Yüksel Street is not an exception. City planners as Lörcher, Jansen, Yücel-Uybadin; the municipality and state institutions such as Çankaya and Ankara Municipality, Urban Development Directory come to the fore when talking about the physical formation and continuum of the street layout. The inclusion of the memoirs and literature helped us to picture the everyday user of the *Yenişehir* in its near past. However, the part of the research that aims to have unstructured conversations with the witnesses will close this gap. From this point onwards the spaces with people will be unfolded in Yüksel street. For this, the 'informal' uses such as appropriation of street setbacks, the distributionns of kiosks and the appearance of street vendors will be documented together with the people's spatial choices for waiting, meeting or resting. This will form the minor map of the street besides the master planning studies [fig.11, fig.12] .



[fig.11] Kiosks at the heart of the street

Source: Personal Archive, 2017



[fig.12] Yüksel Street at Night- Covered by pop-up street vendors

Source: <http://www.halksahnesi.org>



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