

## EMERGING AGENCIES WITHIN ARTISTIC METHODS OF CO-CREATION THAT INFORM PLACE NARRATIVES (1099)

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**Abstract.** This paper explores the ways to frame participatory and co-creative methodologies within urban design and planning actions through benefiting from art-based experiments on sensorial understandings of urban environments. It presents the reflections from the workshop series based on idea of creating a dialogue of urban planning, design and architecture disciplines with visual and fine arts disciplines dealing with ceramics and video-making by exploring artistic mediums of narrative and spatial storytelling. Based on reflections and learnings from the workshop, the paper argues on the role of arts and artistic apparatus within urban research and design. The aim is to add on the theoretical and practical discussion on place-making as a category in understanding and expanding participatory and co-creative practices in the disciplines of spatial design and planning.

**Keywords:** art-based methods, walking as urban exploration, place engagement, embodied experience of urban space

### 1. Introduction

Taking place is not a sole human experience. Indeed, it always extends beyond a specific human activity. It includes the ways of participating in an environment and of engaging to other matters. Senses, emotions and intellect play essential role in the reciprocity of this interaction. As is well known, Heidegger's phenomenological and existential accounts of action (2012), in virtue of taking place through senses, emotions and intellect, true agency emerges through networks of relations among entities we encounter in action. Other non-human and human things of environment in turn suggest pathways of formal development of creation. That means, the core features of agency that is obtained in an individual subject are dependent to social relations to others. This mode of action often gives creative access to concepts of sociality and the ways in which everyday life might be utilized as a part of a creative affect. At its core, by participating in place not only individual subject but also other entangled subjects explore new grounds for bodily sensing difference, constituting, negotiating and mobilizing differences as part of social practices

and cultural processes at places of everyday life. Critically, taking place in this context of “act of embodying” can be considered as a situated activity both human and non-human forms of agents are involved.

Viewed from the perspective of nuanced understanding of agency arising with participating in environment through senses, this paper’s focus is emergent agencies with act of walking and explores their reflections on expanding the understandings/readings of urban space by operationalising artistic mediums of deep mapping. The paper further asks for if apprehension of urban space through senses, emotions and intellect can provide a framing for urban design and planning approaches concerned with participatory and co-creative methodologies.

In doing so, this paper evaluates the offerings and learnings from the recently organized and conducted workshop series through which each participant was encouraged to experience the city centre of Kayseri at existentially-sensing level by walking. Then, the workshops has continued to explore the perceptions of urban space through alternate ways of mapping and though experimenting with mediums of arts, including drawings, moving-images and ceramics. These mediums are used both to bring depth to place experience during walking and to express and convey the senses and emotions attached that experience. The result output is a collaboratively created urban narrative as form of map that graphically re-arranged and displayed in the studio space of city museum.

Specifically, this paper asks for the methods of evoking an emergence of agency of single day walking in the city centre and make use of its offerings for critically and creatively re-reading and re-understanding of urban environment. It further asks if urban planning and design practice benefit from art-based methods in which sensorial practice of participating in place can be activated. Tapping into the rich knowledge within the participating in place by the practices of artistic creation, the paper conceptualizes emergent agency of each participant’s existentially grounded experience of walking in the city as a process offering ways of improvising and inventing in everyday life and explores alternate ways of mapping which tend to fall outside the realm of conventional discursive and visual representations of urban space.

## **2. Artfully Participating in Place through Walking**

Practices of art, as a particular form of action, features particular relation with an environment that determines the specific character of art. What differs these practices from any other ordinary action is a way of creatively participating in world materiality. They can operate by means of creative material engagement. The materiality of world matters for artistic creation. This view in principle extends creative agency to all material phenomena and builds a bridge between embodied cognition and material culture. In

this sense, act of creation through practices of art always extends beyond an isolated self-oriented activity. However, it connotes an emergent process of relatedness within a situated production and consummation (Vabalaitė, 2017). It includes ways of participating in an environment and of engaging to other matters. Other non-human and human things of environment in turn suggest pathways of formal development of creation. Heidegger's (2002) approach to art also highlights the relatedness between artistic practice and environment makes works of art to emerge. There is no creator but a true agent determining conditions of the adequate perceptions of artwork. This mode of creation often gives creative access to concepts of sociality and the ways in which everyday life might be utilized as a part of a creative affect. At its core, by act of creation not only individual subject but also other entangled other subjects explore new grounds for bodily sensing difference, constituting, negotiating and mobilizing differences as part of social practices and cultural processes at places of everyday life.

Critically, participating in a place, seen in this context of "act of embodying", can be considered as a profoundly demanding thing that requires one to be in relation with its environment with forcing all its senses, not only just bringing the sense of vision to the fore but also sound, tactile, smell and etc. Practices of art, in this sense, have potential to create effects on both human and non-human forms of agents that are involved in act of creation actively or passively through building systems of forms allowing them to make sense their environment. Viewed from the perspective of nuanced understanding of participating in place, walking, as Solnit (2006) implies, is one of way to expand our perceptions of place that depends on our experience, the emotions we attach to that experience and the memory it provides us with. As Wylie's (2005) narrative and descriptive writing illustrates, different configurations of self and his surrounding environment, the varied affinities and distanciations of self and landscape, can emerge within the performative milieu of walking. Hence, each walking can be a source of individual narratives of lived experiences, memories and personal identities overlapped. Each narrative of walking can then tell us the story of interaction of subject with its environment and the transformation of this interaction into form of participation and dialogue.

### **3. Narrating Places with Emotions, Senses and Intellect**

As a workshop format, our collaboration from different disciplines with the inclusion of 16 participants has created a dialogue between urban planning and design, architecture with fine and visual arts disciplines, namely ceramics and video-art. This explorational process aids to render some of the disciplinary distinctions less relevant whilst at the

same time raises new questions about the role of arts and artistic apparatus within urban research and design. Fundamentally, the workshop has initiated by a fieldwork that was built on an idea in which walking is conceived as an embodied technique to creatively participate in a place. And it testified the engagement of walking subject with the city centre of Kayseri in Turkey.

The city of Kayseri is a mid-size Anatolian city with rich historical layers juxtaposed. The walking site scrolls for some 5km along Train Station to Bürüngüz Mosque, from there to Meryem Ana Church (see in Figure 1). It runs through several neighbourhoods in transition, commercial bazaar, central public utilities and a city park. The users of route vary, including small businesses, artisans, recreational users; the area is partly residential, mostly immigrants temporary residing urban fabric under urban transformation processes; and the area is walked for different reasons. The vast majority walkers take paths for purpose for instance, shopping, transportation, going to work. Some specific places, like park, squares are used for spending a day in open air. By walking through our own route in the site, the aim is to position ourselves in this specific site in the city and engage walking experience in the continuum of physical and mental, the outer and inner realms in terms of our capacities to reach mental images of site. And, we have experimented with different mediums of art from cartography to video and ceramics for both exploring the ways of creatively participating in and engaging with place along with representing urban space we have walked along by exploring boundaries between cartography and artistic expression.



Figure 1. City centre of Kayseri from Train Station to Bürüngüz Mosque and to Meryem Ana Church

Our states of sensorial being on site as one-day walking on site are provoked by different methods:

#### **4. Walking and drawing**

The group of 16 participants walk their own routes in the city centre. Each participant has sketchbook of their walking experience on site. Drawing as walking allows participants expand their dialogue with the site. When we draw, we are asked to consciously look; and previously inaccessible details of place open themselves to us. As confronting with the innocuous and irrelevant details of places, each participant experiments on making sense of the banal and raw reality of everyday life of site.

Besides that, anonymous encounters along with some confrontations with memories are documented by drawings. Each individual walking brings the attention some inaccessible points to capture while they together reflect the disarray of site.



Figure 2. Examples of participants' drawings

## 5. Walking with moving camera

The walking subject captures photographic and moving-images by camera, acts on and documents the present in motion and embracing their engagement with site with this artistic and technical device. Each participant makes their visual essays about their walking experience. As such, the moving images not only allow us seeing the scenes of one's walking experience, but also feel the rhythm of each walking, observe how each participant are naturally led from one place to another. This profoundly allow to closer look in the ways of one's dwelling in the streets of the city. In this way, we recognize how each participant differently experiences the rhythm of site by walking.

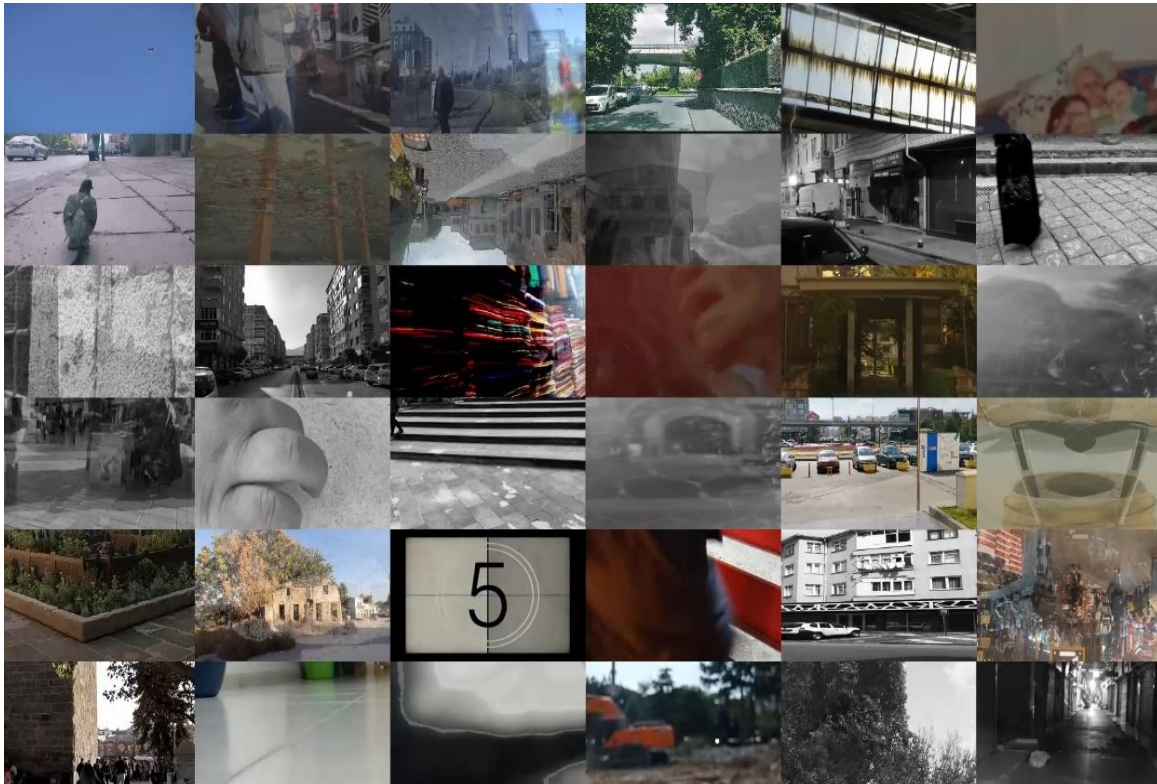


Figure 3. Each participant's visual essay about their walking experience

## 6. Discovering our memories and feeling through ceramics

In the ceramic studio space, each participant has an opportunity to play with mud and fully engage their senses to reflect the tacit dimensions of their walking experience. Following what Polanyi (1966) addresses as saying 'we can know more than we tell', the practice of ceramics gives us opportunity to concentrate our embodied aspects of more in-depth feelings about site. This practice has provided participants a medium to reflect haptic dimensions of their sensual experiences of place and to find new insights about

our interaction with site. A such, this practice takes some light on more effective expressions of senses and feelings through doing. Expressing the feelings that cannot be conveyed by drawings and moving images in the form of ceramic works expand the visual-based representation of place towards multi-sensory understandings.

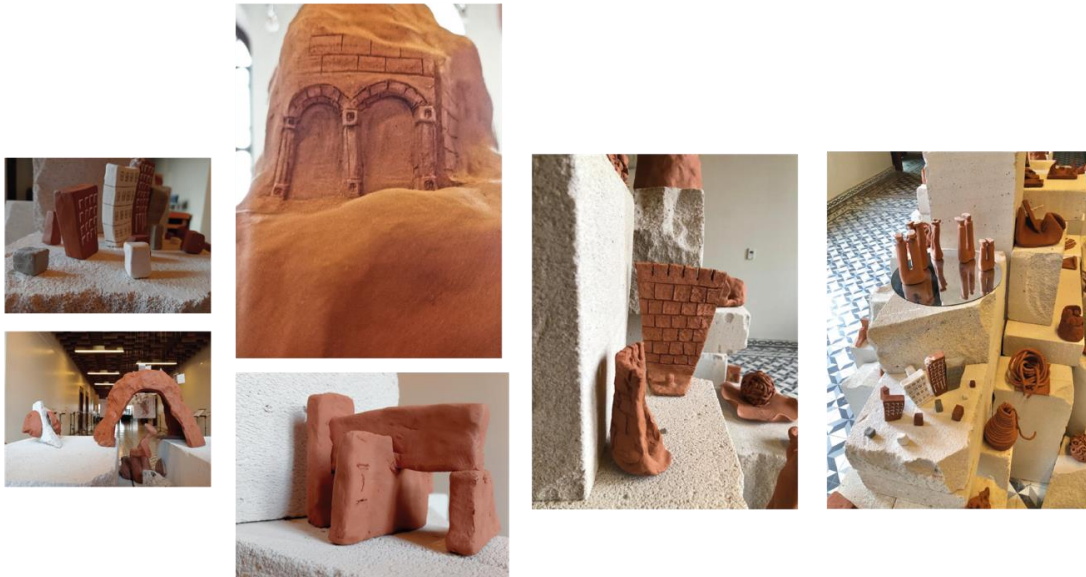


Figure 4. Participants' ceramic works

## 7. Creating dialogue through collective mapping

The performativity of place that accompany each participant's walking experience can be out and flesh in the way the walking participants inhabits and dwells within the space by mapping exercise. Mapping, in this sense, functions as an apparatus of reconstructing individual experiences of walking by giving locational references. However, a fundamental creativity at work during mapping is that it is in some way knowledgeable, polyvocal and passionate engagement with urban space (Biggs, 2010). It opens way to walk through each participant's route and stop by a statute or a tree she highlights on her map. Each individual critical and reflexive gaze over urban space leaves lasting traces on the map, and inevitably effects the other's relationship with place where her experience took place. Hence, the overlapping of these lived experiences of walking, the memories and the personal identities constitute a map of collective narrative. It is through mapping that participants share their walking experience on site with each other. In this respect, the practice of mapping provides collective ways of engagement with site that allows us to think collectively, navigate through shared experiences,

proposing new expectations about site and simultaneously revealing the strategies of its future.

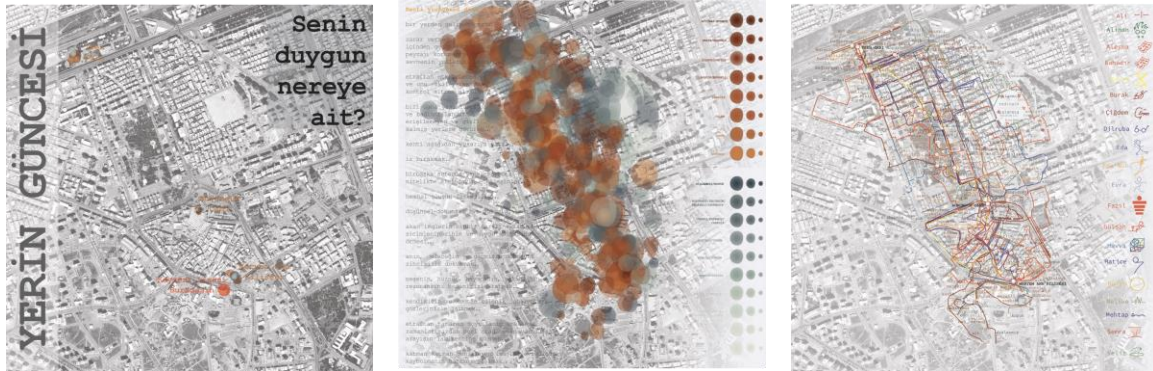


Figure 5. Collective maps of emotions, feelings and memories about place

## 8. Embodied Research Methods in Urban Planning and Design

The importance of built and natural environment on designated our mental, physical, cultural and social evolution has been affirmed jointly by experts from various disciplines (Robinson, 2015). The possibility of embodied research is increasingly prevalent in humanities and social research with wide range of theoretical frameworks from phenomenology to cognitive studies and qualitative research and making reference to artistic research (Spatz, 2017). The workshop that this paper presents is characterized by fading boundaries between self and environment by enabling a dialogue between arts and spatial practices. It is an exercise to think of the place of sensing body \_walking subjects through city centre, paying much attention to their surroundings\_ in urban exploration. Specifically, the aim of all actions that were programmed in the workshop is to layer on self-environment interactions by enriching affective and performative milieu of walking through mediums of arts.

While the vision often came to fore and dominantly affected our spatial experience, it is not only important one to creatively participate in our environment but also directed by smells, sounds and haptic impetus. All mediums of arts examined in the workshops have pointed out the role of different dimensions of sensory capacities of body along with sensory qualities of space so that the practice of walking, as an ordinary everyday activity, is expected to be enhanced by the mediums of arts in order to all other multiplicity of senses need to be interrogated.

First, walking by itself can be a distinctive action of participating in and engaging with environment in the way that art do. We have experienced that when participants consciously make this ordinary task as a multi-sensory task, it principally becomes as

creative engagement method to expand our perceptions of place. This method, walking-as-art has proposed as a radical method of re-conceptualizing the way in which the image in and of public space are produced in the art works, for instance, Dedord's Naked City, Acconci's Following piece, Long's A line made by walking, Abramovic and Ulay's Great Wall Walk, Wodiczko's Alien staff, Muller's Border crossings, Alys's Paradox of Practice, Cardiff's missing voice, Tiravanija's Untitled (Phillips, 2005).

Drawing as walking, in this sense, is one maker of art that evokes manner of knowing space intimately through vision. Undoubtedly, the drawings of participants are main evidences showing that built environment in all of the walking experiences integrates sociocultural experiences with architectural experiences. The architectural space stands as interaction platform in the meaning of experiences. Other artistic mediums, such as moving images and ceramics, are used to add on this engagement by reaching out the emotions that we attach this experience and the memories it provides us with. As expanding our sensual engagement in different levels aid to think on other senses. Experimenting with varied mediums of art can turn bodies as participants and insiders of urban environment that we wish to explore. Variety of perceptions can easily reveal memory and imagination directly through different mediums of arts to constitute our participation and engagement with meaning and temporal duration.

Even though spatial interventions in architecture and planning differ from any other arts in terms of being more direct and extensive in re-shaping of subsequent experience (Dewey, 1934, p.13), similar to art, architectural practices as a form of action distinguishes others forms of action as it requires to adopt creatively participating in and engaging with place. This holistic understanding of architectural practice points out the extension of any spatial intervention reaching beyond itself. Accordingly, participatory and collaborative methodologies in architectural, design and planning practices are used as creative and critical means of operating this conceptualization of co-creative framework with spatial planning and design disciplines in general. And the possibility of embodied research methodologies is increasingly prevalent in urban research.

In particular the theoretical and practical discussion on place-making as a category in understanding and expanding participatory and co-creative practices direct the attention and thinking towards the idea that the disciplines of spatial design and planning is reliant on subjective knowledge and ultimately unconscious relations to that knowledge. Hence any spatial intervention at any scale should be collaborative and process-based and co-creative in essence. Parallel to Cousins's (2004) description of architecture as weak discipline, the concern of that weakness positively challenges the position of creative subject in close relationship with other subjects. Urban design and planning, in this sense, cannot be seen a discipline that experience object of study outside and that is authorized by formal knowledge. Particularly, the fieldworks as a part of design and

planning practice that are concerned with crossing divide between geographical research and artistic creation suggests alternative ways of knowing that can agent ordinary everyday action into vehicles of knowing and apprehending urban space.

With this regard, exploring alternate ways of mapping layered by art-based methods could offer whether a sharply-observed or experimentally immersive descriptions of a given socio-cultural urban landscape. Urban design and planning practice have long utilized mapping to effectively and efficiently communicate spatial information. Not just simply present information, the role of map is to construct meaningful order. However, the concept of deep mapping falls into interdisciplinary field of spatial humanities domain offering rich pickings of qualitative and humanistic forays into the representation of place and the map finally presented is multifaceted, open-ended and irreducible to formal and programmatic design (Roberts, 2016). In similar terms to those endeavours of deeply configured spatial knowledge, linking cartographic specifications and artistic imagination extends into spatial knowledge into a form of narrative with voluminous, polyvocal and open-ended insights about place experience. In this respect, mediums of art can add on mapping as a medium of discursive construction of place to be rendered critically and playfully. Whether these be photographic or moving images, drawings or texts, the combability of different medias and artworks lead to create seamless and fluid interplay between meanings and to overcome representational constraints attached to conventional maps.

## **9. Conclusion**

The intentions that lie behind this workshop have forced to think us on embodied methodologies as a part of urban space research and artistic expression – how to cross divide between research and artistic creation. It is essential to see the emergent agencies with walking as practices of participating in surrounding environment and to testify how to frame these layers of walking experiences as a map in order to narrate the sensible dimension of this environment in the forms of texts, drawings photographic or moving images and ceramic works. The output of process shows that artful initiatives of participating in place can allow collaboratively written new urban narratives to emerge and let to argue on if these narrative-writing process function as creation of multiplicity of forms that are succeed to affect our perception about urban space.

This explorative workshop and exhibition process, on the other side, allow to operationalise the arts-based research methods for exploring urban space's poetic, sensual and post-humanistic dimensions, and to testify the potentiality of different mediums of arts to open varied ways of multi-sensual modes of engagement with the urban space. This exploration has allowed to appear an experimental arena for artistic practices of fieldwork in which sensorial engagement and relatedness to place

generated through mediums of art refer to new urban narratives that aid to grasp richness of urban perspectives. Likewise, when experimental arenas are provided for our spatial practices operating as practices of art that have capacity to reframe our perceptions in alternative ways, not only we discover new ways of participating in and engaging the complexity of urban environment, but also there appears new potentialities for knowing and re-reading of urban space we live.

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