Building Beyoğlu

*Histories of place in a central district in Istanbul*

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**Publication date**
2019

**Document Version**
Other version

**License**
Other

**Citation for published version (APA):**
In between Galatasaray Square and Taksim a building is situated that may well be considered to have one of the most imposing and monumental façades on İstiklal Caddesi. The building historically known as Cercle d’Orient, after the club that occupied one of the floors in the building since its opening in 1882 until at least the late 1970s, was built by one of the most prominent Istanbulite architects of the second half of the nineteenth century, Alexandre Vallaury. The architect made his name in Istanbul designing the Pera Palace Hotel, the Imperial Museum, the Imperial Ottoman Bank buildings, the building of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration and several other prominent monumental buildings in Beyoğlu, the historical peninsula and along the Bosphorus. The main building stands out in the eclectic mosaic that constitutes the architectural landscape of İstiklal Caddesi: the size of the parcel is reflected by the colossal symmetric façade which for a long time stretched beyond any other building along the street. In its most recent incarnation the Cercle d’Orient building has become a shopping mall, cinema centre as well as housing a number of cafés, restaurants and a branch of the Madame Tussaud wax doll museum. The newly constructed annex to the historical building is hardly visible due to the density of buildings in the area. This is where the rear part of the historical Cercle d’Orient parcel was before its demolition, particularly known for housing the iconic Emek Sineması.

Originally the building was constructed for the club, which started as a meeting place for Ottoman and foreign dignitaries, founded by Alfred Sandison, the British Levantine chief dragoman to the Ottoman Empire in 1882. The building was commissioned and owned by an Ottoman Armenian bureaucrat and diplomat Abraham Paşa, one of the wealthiest men in Istanbul at the time. Following his bankruptcy as a
result of unfortunate bourse speculation and gambling the Ottoman Bank seized his properties, including the Cercle d’Orient building. The properties then came into the possession of an Ottoman Armenian stockbroker in 1919, who is mentioned in the archives of the Ottoman Bank as Manuk Manukyan.² The Cercle d’Orient building is listed, as a first grade historical building, initially becoming protected in 1971 in a order by the High Council for Historical Real Estate and Monuments to protect a large number of buildings along the Istiklal Caddesi.³ Its categorization as a first grade historical building does not allow for any changes to be made to both the building’s interior and exterior. The building has been restored with remarkable detail between 2012 and 2016, particularly considering the fact that the surrounding buildings, also listed buildings, have been entirely destroyed. Despite ongoing protests by civil society organizations since the 1990s, the buildings behind the Cercle d’Orient, including the Emek Sineması, were destroyed as part of the parcel’s redevelopment.⁴ The Emek Sineması building on the same parcel as the Cercle d’Orient building, was marked as a second grade historical building, which theoretically should have made it impossible to make any changes to the building’s exterior.⁵ New legislation that was introduced in the early 2000s, however, made it possible to overrule the safeguards of the building’s protected status.⁶

Parallel to the destruction of the Emek Sineması, the main building of the Cercle d’Orient building facing the İstiklal Caddesi was carefully restored. Despite of its restoration, including original interior and exterior details, references to its previous functions or occupants have been erased. To a certain degree the Cercle d’Orient building as it is today has been ‘whitewashed’, in order to re-fashion it as a monumental entrée to a shopping mall complex. The concept of whitewashing is defined by Michael Herzfeld and is marked by process of radical redefinition of a place’s meaning. Such reimaginings of urban landscapes have been the focus of an extensive body of scholarship in history, geography and anthropology, including Herzfeld’s own work that examines the varied processes through which urban boundaries are redefined on both a symbolic and physical level and former residents framed as intruders.⁷ In particular, the obsession with ‘cleanliness’ that Herzfeld notes in the context of Thailand and Greece, is in fact strikingly similar to the Cercle d’Orient case: here, an idealized image crafted by real estate developers
has taken precedence over the messiness and informality of small shops and old cinemas. Although I would not go as far as to compare this to what Herzfeld notes to be a ‘quasi-colonial nervousness about making a good impression on foreigners’, the case of the Cercle d’Orient’s renovation does mark an obsession with idle references to value, quality and reviving the former glory of Beyoğlu. On the website of the shopping complex Grand Pera a return to the alleged glory of the Cercle d’Orient is promised, without further defining what this glory consists of. A similar process is observed by Andreas Huyssen of banners displayed all over Berlin in 1996: ‘BERLIN WIRD, BERLIN BECOMES’, leaving open what Berlin was becoming and ironically (and possibly unwittingly) referring to the building pit that made Berlin in the 1990s.

When I visited the building while it was still under restoration, the supervisor told me that it was unclear what actually would happen to the first and second floors. Since no changes were allowed to be made and – apparently – were made, a lucrative exploitation of the building’s bulk by the concessionaire appears to be complicated. Currently, the Cercle d’Orient building houses a café in a newly constructed annex, the entrée to a Madame Tussaud wax museum, some temporary exhibitions or displays by prominent local and international brands, as well as the entrance to the shopping mall, which will have to account for the majority of the project’s income.

The process of ‘whitewashing’ could be seen as the final step in a longer sequence of growing disconnection between the building and its namesake: the elite club Cercle d’Orient known since 23 April 1944 as the Büyük Kulüp (Grand Club). The Cercle d’Orient club used the first floor of the building for its activities, whereas the ground floor facing İstiklal Caddesi was used by shops and cinemas. The building was formally connected with the elite club Cercle d’Orient club until the early 1980s. The original Cercle d’Orient club held a heterogeneous audience, with businessmen, diplomats, state and military officials from various nationalities and ethnicities until the Second World War. The club is mentioned in numerous British newspapers as the most elite club in Pera. Elsewhere it is described in The Times as ‘the well known diplomatic club’. In recollections from foreign diplomats it was presented as a centerpoint of power. In 1938 Sir George Klerk, a diplomat in Istanbul/Constantinople before the First World War, for instance re-
counts a few memories about the club. He describes it as an elite meeting point for the crème de la crème in Istanbul/Constantinople: ‘You could lunch at the Cercle d’Orient and incidentally eat some of the best food and drink some of the best wine in Europe, and see Talaat [Pasha] embracing the Armenian deputy whom he was to send to his death or watch Enver [Pasha] saluting Nazim Pasha, the Minister of War, whom he shot in the Sublime Porte.’ It would also feature in foreign reporting on Istanbul with regard to more trivial matters: in 1926 The Daily Telegraph Diplomatic reported how the Turkish Liquor Control Board, in control of the liquor monopoly in the newly established republic, confiscated 7000 bottles of French champagne, other wines and 9 300-liter barrels of wine. As Istanbul’s political significance at the national level decreased, following the instation of Ankara as the Turkish capital in 1923, the significance of Beyoğlu and its international clubs would also gradually decline. Orhan Koloğlu claims that the differentiated membership changed significantly, after the Second World War, with a drastic decrease of foreign members. In the 1940s, French was entirely abandoned as an official club language and on 23 April 1944 Büyük Kulüp (Grand Club) would become its official name and thus effectively Turkified.

One of the few local observers who made some remarks on the club and its building is Said Naum Duhani (1892-1970), who writes briefly on the Cercle d’Orient in one of his books. A note on Duhani is required here. Born in a renowned Christian Arab family and part of the Pera community, he was, as Edhem Eldem notes, the first to start a trend of nostalgic reflections on Beyoğlu. Contrary to the many publications of the 1980s and 1990s, which followed the translations of Duhani’s work from French into Turkish, Duhani’s work is different since he wrote his two books about Pera/Beyoğlu at a time when the described communities were still present in the city. In addition, the books were, in French, and thus for ‘internal consumption’ within the Pera community. Eldem is right to note that Duhani’s work is imbued with melancholia and nostalgia, and much of the information in his essayistic writings is hard to check for its ‘historical veracity’. This holds true for many other (later) sources of a similar nature written by authors like Giovanni Scognamillo, Atilla Dorsay, Çelik Gülersoy, but certainly also Koloğlu’s book on the Cercle d’Orient, which is the only publication discussing the history of
the Cercle d’Orient and its building in some detail. I will still include Duhani’s remarks since they were also included in the files on the Emek Cinema and Cercle d’Orient composed by the Chamber of Architects. The inclusion of fragments of the Turkish translation of Duhani’s book gives an impression of how this source is considered by experts of law and architecture in Turkey. Duhani recounts how all the shops in the building of Abraham Pasha (Cercle d’Orient) were very upscale and luxurious, whereas at the time of his writing there were only small shops ‘which could never compete with the esteem of the gentlemen that had left’. To enter the club one would require a password. He cites a chairman of the club who was an ambassador and stated that diplomats or high officials would become members. From among the ‘Turks’ only vezirs could enter the club.

The club itself also occupied a summer residency in Caddebostan, on the Asian side of Istanbul since the early 1950s. When the club’s administrative board decided that the summer residency would be bought in the fall of 1976, the dominance of the summer residency increased and the club became further estranged from the Beyoğlu building. Despite of this, Koloğlu indicates that the 1977 programme of the building in Beyoğlu was still quite rich. That would change when in 1978 the decision was made to only organise activities in the Beyoğlu building. A group within the club wanted to push towards increasing the activities and participation of members at the Beyoğlu building nonetheless. The board in the end decided that the Beyoğlu building was no longer suitable to keep up with the changing desires of the club members. The decisive reason to entirely leave the building, however, seems to have come from external factors. When a fire in the winter of 1983 severely damaged parts of the building and the club refused to pay the rent until the damage was repaired, the owner decided to serve an eviction notice to Büyük Kulüp, definitively severing the ties between club and building.

NIGHTS AT THE MOVIES: THE OTHER CERCLE D’ORIENT PARCEL

Rather than focusing on the Büyük Kulüp itself, this chapter will focus on the lively history of the Cercle d’Orient parcel, which stretches far beyond the club’s history and imaginary. As will be shown in this chapter, the Cercle d’Orient parcel would acquire a prominent position in the cultural and social memory of Istanbul and Turkey, exceeding that of the history of the former gentleman’s club. The building and its surroundings had acquired new meanings, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century. As this corner of the city became both the virtual and actual heart of a local cinema industry, Yeşilçam – named after the street that runs next to the Cercle d’Orient building – the block’s identity would be renegotiated; it became a place in the imagining of a new generation during the 1960s and 1970s. In fact the area around Yeşilçam had been the locus of Turkey’s film industry since the late nineteenth century. That is significant in a Turkish context since cinema would become such a significant commodity from the 1960s onwards, for women living in cities (the most important group of viewers initially) and middle class families, but also subsequently young male working migrants. Dönmez-Colin argues that the case of Yeşilçam cinema is even more important since cinema did not simply functions as a medium in negotiating or contesting various intersectional identities. The process of finding new identities in the complex socio-cultural and political landscape of the young republic was also reflected in cinema itself. Turkish cinema struggled to find an identity of its own, mirroring processes in the country of its origin. One of the more interesting studies on Yeşilçam’s landscape has been executed by Özlem Öz and Kaya Özkaraçalar. They argue that the film industry by the late 1930s had concentrated in Beyoğlu. They add that Istanbul had been the cultural and financial centre of Turkey (and the Ottoman Empire) and present this as the main reason why the concentration of a film industry occurred in the Istanbul. They argue that Pera/Beyoğlu constituted itself as the quintessential centre for movie screening and production, despite of the arrival of cinemas to various parts of the city. Öz and Özkaraçalar explain, that the reason for this was, was that in the early days of film screening in the Ottoman Empire, the industry was mostly import-based. The importers came predominantly from the non-Muslim millets, with some notable exceptions, whose companies were based in the Pera and Galata quarters. They use the example of a Turkish Muslim entrepreneur who started his film venture in Sirkeci, adjacent to Beyoğlu, but on the other side of the Golden Horn and thus in the for-
mer dynastic ‘Muslim’ quarters. He felt it necessary to move his offices to Beyoğlu soon after the establishment of his company, which brings into focus the significance that the area had gained for the film industry by the early 1920s. Kaya Mutlu notes that by that time cinema-going was still limited to the urban elites, limiting its scope. The audience, moreover, would prefer foreign cinema over local productions, as the latter was framed as ‘bad taste’. Cinema consumption was thus largely class-based, as the number of cinemas in smaller cities and towns in Anatolia was limited. During the 1950s, however, the impact of cinema on Turkish society at large and that of Istanbul in particular would change significantly.

Kaya Mutlu’s work also shows that Beyoğlu had been the quintessential centre of cinema production and screening since its onset. She refers to the memoirs of Ekrem Talu, who as a boy witnessed the first public screening of a 30-minute film in a venue called the Sponeck restaurant or pub in Beyoğlu, across Galatasaray, by the local representative of the Pathé Brothers, Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew of Romanian descent. Talu recounts how people were terrified by the footage of a crashing train, while the room was filled with the smell of the petrol used to drive the projector. Further on Kaya Mutlu refers to an advertisement in the cinema journal Sinema ve Tiyatro Heveskârı Mecmuası from 1934 in which Beyoğlu is used as a benchmark of ‘urban quality’. The advertisement claims Beyoğlu is ‘the location of the most distinguished and cultured families of İstanbul’. An implicit link between cinema as an art form befitting to Beyoğlu as a ‘wealthy area’ is thus once again established.

Öz and Özkaracalar note that most of the major film companies, as well as several minor ones, have their origins in the mid-1940s. These companies set up their offices in the Yeşilçam Sokak, its parallel street Sakızagaç Sokak and the street across on the other side of the İstiklal Caddesi, Alyon Sokak. It is unfortunate that Öz and Özkaracalar do not provide precise reference to their sources, though their arguments for the concentration of the companies in this very particular corner of Beyoğlu seems convincing. A number of large cinemas had opened their doors in the vicinity of the Cercle d’Orient parcel since the 1910s. Several older establishments in the parcel’s direct surroundings, such as the horse circus Cirque de Pera, a variety theatre, the Odeon Theatre as well as several large apartment blocks, contributed to the attractiveness of the area for cinema entrepreneurs, the authors argue. This resulted in the situation in which, by the 1940s, six cinemas had flanked the Yeşilçam Sokak, most with capacities of over 1000 seats, making it the de facto centre of Istanbul’s cinema screening. By then two of the cinemas were owned by the İpekçi Brothers, who had their offices in the building of one of the cinema halls. This had a clustering effect on the area, attracting more and more entrepreneurs in the movie industry, that gradually became less import-dependent and more oriented towards domestic film production.

Kaya Mutlu argues that the material screened by the cinemas in Beyoğlu and elsewhere in Istanbul and Turkey was dominated by imported movies from Europe and the United States until the end of the 1940s. Until the Second World War 43 movies were locally produced, which was probably due to the high profit taxes charged by the state. Until 1938 producers would be charged with 32.5 percent, after which Atatürk reduced the rate to 10 percent. Due to the demanding years of the war period, this steeped to 75 percent at the end of the 1940s, while ticket prices were not increased accordingly. In 1948 taxes for screenings of films that were produced in Turkey were decreased to 25 percent while those for foreign movies were brought back with just 5 percent to 70 percent. This development, which went hand in hand with the liberalization of raw film import, facilitated a favourable climate for Turkish cinema production and screening.

Different socio-economic groups gained access to parts of the building as cinemas and movie production houses started to cater to the working and middle classes, for whom these movies were an attractive and affordable mode of entertainment. Kaya Mutlu explains that from the 1950s onwards the local cinema industry gained traction as it spread to Anatolia and became a more popular medium for entertainment. She notes, however, that film critics still looked down on local productions, distinguishing ‘art’ from ‘entertainment’ and framing the audience of popular Turkish productions as ‘passive’, ‘irresponsible’ or ‘mindless’, essentially imagining a class rift between local low culture and foreign high culture. Whereas Yeşilçam was a popular form of entertainment for women and families at first, producers played into a new market of young men coming to the major cities, particularly Istan-
bul, in search of jobs. This would fit into a category of films that became particularly popular from the 1970s onwards and fitted a wider trend of so-called arabesk culture. Ayşe Öncü describes the term as a derogatory framing of music that is characterized by contestants by it ‘impurity, hybridity and bricolage and designates a special kind of kitsch’. She argues it is a mix of popular Turkish, Western and Egyptian music, disregarding established musical canons and taking hold of large shares of the 1970s cassette market. In broad terms the people enjoying arabesk culture, were framed as the binary opposites of the ‘cosmopolitan’, educated and acculturated Istanbulite. It is interesting that Öncü notes that the perceived danger of arabesk culture was particularly in its hybridity, it did not adhere to existing categories of music or film. Its audience, moreover, lost its rural authenticity and naivety, yet was due to its ignorance also unable to embrace the ‘urbanity of cosmopolitan life’. Moreover, lost its rural authenticity and naivety, yet was due to its ignorance also unable to embrace the ‘urbanity of cosmopolitan life’. Meanwhile, she argues, in the discourse of Turkey’s 1980s (and as we will see later on the 1970s as well) arabesk culture’s hybridity essentialized the ‘purity of Istanbulite’s culture and endanger[ed it]. Coming back to the context of the Cercle d’Orient, Orhan Koloğlu argues that the increase in popularity of the club building’s direct surroundings to a more socio-economically and culturally diverse crowd would around the 1970s in fact much to the dismay of those belonging to the building’s namesake, the Cercle d’Orient and may also in part explain why the elite club left the building for a different one on the Anatolian side. Despite of its separation with the club, the building would be known as the Cercle d’Orient or Serkldoryan, until the building’s recent renovation by Kamer İnşaat.

The purpose of the Cercle d’Orient buildings has been an ongoing discussion since at least the 1950s. In a short news message from 1 December 1951, the Cumhuriyet daily announces that the municipality had decided to sell the building that it had acquired during the ‘war years’ for 1 million liras. In a publication of the municipality titled ‘Güzelleşen İstanbul’ (Beautifying Istanbul), it is stated that all of the Serkldoryan buildings were bought for a total amount of 1,1 million Turkish liras, while the land estate was acquired for an additional 71,500 Turkish liras. The total plot of land that was acquired comprised 410.350 m2, consisting of three adjacent plots, including the Cercle d’Orient building, as well as the Melek (which would later become Emek Cinema), İpek and Sümer cinemas. The Cercle d’Orient building gave access to the club, while the ground floor facing İstiklal Caddesi housed 8 stores and gave access to two of the cinemas. On the side street, Yeşilçam Sokak, there was another shop, a printing house, the five-storied Melek and Sümer apartment blocks as well as two houses. The entresol floor was used as a beer brewery and sewing studio. The club used nine salons and an annex building, while the top floor housed two flats. The total revenue from rental agreements is estimated as close to 100.000 Turkish liras annually. Though I have not been able to find conclusive evidence for this, it seems plausible that the municipality acquired the block from the previous owners, who are in news items indicated as H. Arditi and Saltiel, during the 1942 Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) campaign which particularly targeted the properties of Turkey’s non-Muslim communities.

After these tumultuous years another episode in the building’s history as a contested place begins. It is important to note that the struggle over this particular place from the 1990s onwards, should be considered in the light of contested beginnings as well. The very name of the cinema, Emek Sineması, carries a troubled history that reflects local and national policies geared towards changing the socio-cultural profile of the area, city and nation. After acquiring the block, Cumhuriyet daily announces that the municipality had unsuccessfully tried to evict the tenants from the building. The newspaper on 7 December 1951 reported that the municipal council, moreover, blocked the decision to sell the building. On 6 January 1957, the Milliyet daily reported that the building block was finally sold off to Emek Sandığı (Pension Fund), the only participant in the public bidding, for 16,5 million liras, despite of the municipality’s aim to sell it for at least 25 million liras. In accordance with their newly acquired ownership, the Emek Sandığı decided that the biggest of the cinemas in the block, the Melek Sineması should from then onwards be known as Emek Sineması, setting the scene for an ‘urban legend’. The problematic acquisition of the Cercle d’Orient parcel thus entered a new phase, turning hands from the local government to a national governmental institution. The name change from Melek Sineması to Emek Sineması may also be interpreted as an attempt to turn to another page in its history.

It is unclear whether exploitation until the 1960s was successful, but the fact that a change of hands was discussed at length in nation-
al newspapers in 1968 is significant. On 17 September 1968 the Cumhuriyet reports that the Emek Sineması will be turned into a variety theater by director and scenarist Turgut Demirağ, who according to the newspaper had previously rented the Rüya Sineması, next to the Cercle d’Orient building. The Emek Sineması building was planned to be used for film screenings during day time and operettas, musicals, variety theater and concerts of foreign artists in the evening. Interestingly, the repertoire does not yet appear to cater to an audience of working class men, so strongly associated with the area in the 1970s. An investment of 100,000 Turkish Lira was made by Demirağ to make the necessary changes to the building. Less than two months later, on 4 November 1968, an announcement is made for the opening of the cinema season of the year 1968-1969 in ‘Istanbul’s most luxurious cinema’. The movie ‘Dear Brigitte’ (Tatlı Hayal in Turkish) is announced, featuring Brigitte Bardot and James Stewart will be screened in colour 5 times a day, with the last screening at 21.15 in the evening. According to the advertisement, the operators of the cinema appear to pride themselves in being able to screen movies from MGM, Fox, Paramount, Walt Disney as well as the most popular European films. Apart from notes on the prospective screenings, the advertisement announces that visitors will also be able to watch international revue shows on a new stage of 25 meters. Atilla Dorsay recounts that Yeşilçam Sokak had not witnessed such a crowd in years and tickets had to be booked days or even weeks in advance. For the first time 70 mm and 6-channel audio was used in Turkey.

The cinema on the same block, Rüya Sineması was also owned by Emekli Sandığı and had for a short period been known as ‘Küçük Emek’, until its name was reversed to Rüya again after 1963. This cinema acquired a particular reputation after it started screening adult movies from the mid-1970s onwards. Dorsay states that most of the material shown in the cinema was local production, shot in the backstreets of Yeşilçam. According to him it would never be the same again from those years onwards, leading it ‘as an unavoidable development’ into becoming a meeting place for gays. It seems thus that by the mid-1970s the area around the Cercle d’Orient had at least in part turned from an elite space for social gatherings and entertainment into a refuge for those who were forced to live their sexual identity, quite literally, in the dark.
Cinema production in Turkey had by then already reached its extraordinary peak, with film production tripling between the early 1960s and the early 1970s to approximately 300 movies a year. By 1962 the number of people working in Yeşilçam — as the industry and thus the street with its direct surroundings — had come to 1185. Yeşilçam appears to have created a transgression between reality and fiction, with the place and the people that acquired a sense of belonging from it, from everyday life into fiction and vice versa. The audiences that the bulk of the cinema production catered to identified with the protagonists in the stories. Another example noted by Kaya Mutlu is that in films and magazines people all over Turkey were able to witness the dynamic life associated with Yeşilçam and thus Beyoğlu, further establishing the ties between the place in the movies and in reality throughout Turkey. Additionally, she argues that the exceptional popularity of Yeşilçam cinema was expressed through the desire of audiences in letters published in cinema journals to have their favourite stars cross from other artistic industries to Yeşilçam. As will be shown further on in this chapter, this was far from uncommon.

The number of movie theaters meanwhile had increased from 170 in 1960 to 281 in 1966, with visitor numbers increasing from 25,161,000 in 1960 to 41,606,506 in 1965 (no data was available for 1966). Since the coup of 1960 and the relatively liberal constitution that was instated consequentially in 1961, the film industry had flourished in what was probably the most liberal political climate ever witnessed until then in the Turkish Republic. Erik-Jan Zürcher indicates that it was mostly liberal in the sense that it gave greater freedom to the political left and right — and Islamism — though that would only occur at a later stage around 1970. Savaş Arslan argues that the Yeşilçam industry moved in consonant with the political developments of the time, even ‘echoing the hegemonic power relations of the state, filmmakers, and its audience’. As indicated in the first part of the dissertation, these years were marked by mass migration to Turkey’s urban centres, particularly Istanbul. Arslan states that this led to cinema going to become one of the most prominent modes of family entertainment. The spatial centerpoint of this these vibrant years in Turkey’s cinema production was the vicinity of Yeşilçam Sokak, bringing a considerable and crucial part of Turkey’s popular cultural production to Beyoğlu. In sync with the socio-political developments of the 1960s, Kaya Mutlu indicates that the 1960s would become the ‘golden age’ of theorizing and thinking on Turkish cinema. Terminology aiming to define or perhaps also claim certain branches of cinema, such as people’s cinema (halk sineması), social realism (toplumsal gerçekçilik), national cinema (ulusal sinema) and revolutionary cinema (devrimci sinema), emanated from this period in which Turkish politics and Turkish civil society was reinventing itself.

The direction of cinema, was also determined to some extent by tough censorship in Turkey. Dönmez-Colin argues that most cinema production during the golden years of Yeşilçam would evade sensitive issues. Since 1939 censorship laws had been in order, executed by a censorship board under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. Dilek Kaya Mutlu and Zeynep Koçer indicate that until 1932 movies were screened to two police officers who would report to city governors. They would subsequently have the authority to censor movies, until film censorship was centralized in 1932. The 1939 Regulations on the Control of Films and Film Screenplays were inspired by Fascist Italy’s Codice di censura according to Gönül Dönmez-Colin, while Mutlu and Koçer remark that it was inspired by the 1934 Police Duty and Authorization Law. This law would be sustained practically unchanged until 1977. Mutlu and Koçer indicate that the Commission’s approval was based on 10 criteria, ironically referred to as Turkey’s ‘Ten Commandments’ of film censorship. They rightly argue that these motivations are not only nationalist (and militaristic), but also vague to such a degree that virtually any movie could be banned based on this. Motivations for banning films or scenes reveal a state in deep conflict, excruciatingly paranoid about anything that might reflect remotely negative on its reputation or incite undesirable criticism. Dönmez-Colin refers to the example of Metin Erksan’s film Aşık Veysel’in Hayatı (1953) about the life of the famous minstrel and poet Veysel. Scenes showing crops in the minstrel’s hometown were banned for showing crops in Anatolia undersized. Considering the harsh repression during Adnan Menderes’ governments and his Democrat Party’ populist efforts to acquire a voter base among the Anatolian rural population such a move does not seem surprising. Another instance that she quotes, is Erksan’s Susuz Yaz (1963), which was awarded with the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. A scene in
which a woman marries the brother of her dead husband was banned since the authorities were worried this would negatively reflect on Turkey’s image abroad.56 Though this is speculative, but with Turkey’s efforts to become further integrated in ‘the West’ – with the 1963 Association Agreement (Ankara Agreement) with the European Economic Community as an obvious benchmark – it once again seems logical that the Turkish state would make efforts to control its desired image to populations abroad, particularly in the context of a high-profile cultural platform.

Mutlu and Koçer show that the reality of the censoring deviated from the commission’s ‘Ten Commandments’, since it was impossible for them to make sure that the copy that would be screened to representatives of the committee was the same as the one that would be screened. They refer to a quote by a representative of the commission in the 1960s, Feriha Sanerk, who features in the 1993 documentary Siyah Perde: Türk Sinemasında Sansürün Tarihi (The Black Curtain: the History of Censorship in Turkish cinema) by Behiç Ak:

‘I knew that my work was in vain. I did my job but it was rather a joke. They [filmmakers] were adding scenes later, so you were unable to control them. They were omitting some scenes before submitting. So you do not see those scenes and you cannot cut something you cannot see … Therefore, in my view, it [censorship] was totally unnecessary.’57

Dönmez-Colin describes the Yeşilçam genre nonetheless as one dominated by Hollywood-like heterosexual relationship narratives, conflict between good and bad and issues of tradition versus modernity.59 She argues that the attitude towards the ‘West’ was ambivalent: an object of desire and corruption at the same time embodied. She goes on to explain that the audience, identified with the melodrama of the movies, in part explaining their popularity and the reason why so many productions revolved around more or less the same narrative of a young (male) protagonist who heads for the city. This inclination towards melodrama coincided or perhaps culminated in the previously discussed arapbek genre. Emanating from the music industry, arapbek in this context propagates a deep nostalgia for the hometown in Anatolia and the impossibility to return. Several successful musicians in the genre, such as Orhan Gencebay and İbrahim Tatlıses, along with many of their less fortunate peers, started to appear on the film screen. Whether or not identification explains the full picture of this booming film industry is questionable, as will be explained further on.

The reality of the industry shows that the quality of the product in terms of its cinematography, screenplay and acting was largely subordinate to the potential profit that the movie could make. Arslan explains that many Yeşilçam films were used with handheld cameras, without making use of any of the technological innovations. Innovations that became commonplace, like zoom on cameras, was often used in an amateurish fashion. Actors often did not receive formal education, as the examples previously cited also indicate, and were required to bring props and costumes themselves. Most interesting in terms of the places of Yeşilçam is that there were hardly any studios. Production companies rather rented houses from the upper classes in and around Istanbul or would use actual sites instead.60 The genres of Yeşilçam were highly diverse, from comedy to melodrama, action, ‘spaghetti (or kebab) Westerns’ to horror and pornography. With reference to spaghetti westerns and other ‘genre films’ in Italy, Christopher Wagstaff makes an interesting observation that may in fact be fitting to that of much of the Yeşilçam production and reception as well. These movies specialized in providing so-called ‘quantitative gratifications’, for instance a lot of shoot-outs or splatter. Wagstaff compares it to Coca Cola: it will not nourish you, but you do want to consume more.61 Wagstaff posits
this against the idea that movies should resonate with the ‘needs’ of ‘the people’ for the movies to be profitable, i.e. the audience needs to be able identify ideologically with some of the characters to become popular. He argues that this in fact conflates the concerns and the gratifications of the people: one can enjoy a blockbuster without their private concerns being addressed. Given the steep increase in Yeşilçam production it seems unlikely that addressing private and ideological concerns was a genuine motivation for most producers. This lets us reconsider the argument posed by Dönmez-Colin regarding the cinematic trope of the young male from the countryside who moves to the city. Was it solely the young men’s nostalgia for their hometowns that drove them to the cinemas, or rather a mixture of nostalgia and an urge to be entertained and to be able to forget? Beyoğlu was therefore simultaneously a place for escapism, an imagined place of escapism and a center for Turkey’s national production of escapism.

Though identification with protagonists may have been one reason to explain the success of the film, it would seem that Wagstaff’s more mundane explanation for the success of Italian genre cinema is convincing in the context of Yeşilçam as well. Another indicator of this is that audiences would have an impact on the appearance of particular individuals on the screen. For the artists that had already build a reputation for themselves the film industry may have been a lucrative source of income or of advertisement at least. People like Gencebay and Tatlıses were able to make their fortune in music and, to a lesser extent, film industry, yet many young men and women faced a tougher reality in the Beyoğlu gazinos (nightclubs) and bars. Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins tell the story of Adil Tekirdağ, who used the stage name Adil Tokses during his years as a musician in the Beyoğlu nightlife in the short documentary Improvised City: Adil Kebap Dürüm, which was part of an exhibition during 2012’s Istanbul Design Biennial. Adil, a native of Southeastern Turkey’s city of Urfa, came to Istanbul as a young man around the 1970s to pursue his dream of becoming a professional musician. He settled on the southwestern slope of Beyoğlu, in the old working-class district of Kasımpaşa, where he worked in a restaurant and took singing and saz lessons. He claims to know between 1500 and 2000 songs, calling Beyoğlu his ‘world conservatory’, where he catered to the customers from all corners of Turkey, playing the songs and lo-
cal styles they would request. Sustaining himself and his family later on with music and a small kebab shack, he quite possibly exemplifies the tough life of many young men and women in the Beyoğlu nightlife of the 1970s and 1980s. He explains:

‘Nowadays it is hard to earn bread from music. In early days there was no television, so you have to personally go to see the performer. (...) After that the TV stations were opened and cinemas were closed. The nightclub scene ended. (...) So I have many friends in this business. They all suffered a lot from this business like I did. We were being dragged around between restaurants and nightclubs. Couldn’t play at upscale locations. I was being sent to film sets as a guest artist, but they used me as an extra on sets. I realized I was an extra.’

Having jobs in the nightlife of Beyoğlu was quite common for artists featuring in the Yeşilçam movies. An article from November 1972 in the Milliyet daily discusses how, following the opening of the new nightclub or gazino season, an ever larger amount of names of Yeşilçam stars was featuring in the neonlights. Interestingly, the Milliyet indicates that this is a trend despite of some gazino owners’ claims that there would be no place anymore for movie artists in their gazino. The relationship between Beyoğlu’s nightlife and cinema, significant because they reinforced both its reputation as a centre of escapism and a centre of production of escapism, thus appears to be an inevitable one, though there are some signals of a certain unease with this relationship. In contrast to the apparent reluctance of some gazino owners’ claims that there would be no place anymore for movie artists in their gazino. The relationship between Beyoğlu’s nightlife and cinema, significant because they reinforced both its reputation as a centre of escapism and a centre of production of escapism, thus appears to be an inevitable one, though there are some signals of a certain unease with this relationship. In contrast to the apparent reluctance of some gazino owners’ claims that there would be no place anymore for movie artists in their gazino. The relationship between Beyoğlu’s nightlife and cinema, significant because they reinforced both its reputation as a centre of escapism and a centre of production of escapism, thus appears to be an inevitable one, though there are some signals of a certain unease with this relationship. In contrast to the apparent reluctance of some gazino owners’ claims that there would be no place anymore for movie artists in their gazino.

A discursive dichotomy of moralities determined by spaces – in this case more particular space of occupation – stretches beyond the borders of film making into its narratives. Dönmez-Colin makes an interesting remark with regard to the establishment of place in cinema that makes up the spatial binary of the ‘typical Yeşilçam movie’. In it we find a ‘here’: the poor (but honest) environment of the countryside, the cradle of the protagonist. ‘There’ is Beyoğlu: ‘the cradle of evil, home to the degenerate with slippery values, a trap for innocent country boys (and naive young women without male protection).’ A recurring stereotype about the area as a place of moral deprivation is reproduced in Yeşilçam, somewhat contrasting however with the more ‘positive’ and recurring stereotype of Beyoğlu as the place to be in Istanbul and Turkey.

Despite of the rosiness of many of the productions, driven by commercial rather than artistic motives, Dönmez-Colin’s remark and the fierce censorship it is peculiar to see that a considerable amount of productions focused on the issue of class discrepancies. This leads to a rather different interpretation of the Yeşilçam industry by one of the crucial names in Turkish cinema production, the director Yılmaz Güney (1937-1984). He argued that all of the productions in the Yeşilçam genre are essentially about the struggle of classes. Such an interpretation seems much inspired by Marxist sympathies that were also particularly en vogue among the left-wing of the ideological spectrum in Turkey. Yılmaz Güney himself is considered to be one of the frontmen of Turkish ‘revolutionary cinema’ and had been imprisoned for his work and ideas.

The credits of more than 100 movies hold Güney’s name, a large portion of which was censored by the authorities. The director-cum-actor, was crowned the çirkin kral (ugly king) by the audiences who struggled, according to Dönmez-Colin, to recognize themselves as working migrants from Anatolia in the characters played by Göksel Arsoy, the handsome blond and blue-eyed actor who was often casted as the archetypical hero or Ayhan İşık. The movies of the short-lived social realist movement in the early 1960s paved the way for Güney’s movies that communicated political messages and put social issues at the forefront, in contrast with the bulk of contemporary commercial Yeşilçam productions. He was imprisoned twice; the first time on charges for assisting
a leftist organization and the second time for killing a prosecutor. He managed to escape from prison and died in exile in Paris. Arslan argues that Güney was exceptional in Yeşilçam since he managed to bind both female and male audiences to his movies. He – as actor, or director and screenwriter (or all at the same time) – struggled against the system in his movies as an anti-hero, with righteous or bad strategies. Arslan concludes that Güney instrumentalized reality and fiction to reflect on the desire of the audience. He quotes a brothel worker stating: ‘His best film is Baba (Father, 1971). In that film, he cleanses (kırklamak) his daughter and saves her from prostitution. We all wait for someone to cleanse us’. To a certain degree this particular representation also shows how different ideologies struggled with the squalor of society, a very significant part of Beyoğlu’s representation.

Through the work of Güney and others before and after him, the block’s fame would spread all over Turkey. Yet reflections on Yeşilçam as an ‘actual place’ on the map of Beyoğlu, beyond its reputation in cinema production are scarce. The actor Ahmet Mekin describes Yeşilçam Sokak, adjacent to the Cercle d’Orient parcel, in a very colourful way, indicating the discursive importance invested into this particular space in Beyoğlu:

‘The people of our street (…) do not live on their own street (…) the mornings are wild on our street. Yelling, shouting, conversations, and excitement…Cars, cameras, projectors stand in front of the offices of producers, and boxes and boxes of raw film are carried about. Stuntmen (…) snack on whatever they can find (…) Directors, reviewing their work plans for the day, determine the cast of players. At such moments there is nothing to say to the anxiety or the annoyance of the producers if one of the main players has not been seen yet (…) this is the cacophony just about every day on our street. No doubt one day, we will have big studios and a housing complex setup for the artists around it. And in this manner OUR STREET will become history. Even if this is a hayal, I like it.’

Mekin’s narration of the street gives an insight in the vibrance of the street and area. It also communicates what this place is, both in fiction
and reality. It is exciting, lively, the place to be for anyone who wants to feature in a Turkish movie or wants to be part of this very particular place in Turkey: Yeşilçam as the cultural signpost for Beyoğlu, with Beyoğlu itself signifying Istanbul's position as the beating heart of Turkey's culture and economy.

A new dynamic in the continuously changing profile of the surrounding area becomes clear in a 1976 article from the movie critic Atila Dorsay in Cumhuriyet. Here, Dorsay complains how Istanbul's cinemas are being transformed into shops and passages. He in fact opens with the sentence that there has been talk for years about closing Emek Sineması and turning it into a passage. He states that the trend in Istanbul is to close art galleries, concert halls, cinemas and theaters, replacing them with shops and passages in order to gain higher rents. In addition he states that books, movies, stage plays, tuluat theatre (improvisational theatre), ideas, thoughts, modernity and patriotism have been forbidden. What is left is only 'the worst of the worst, the most banal of the banal, the most disgusting of the disgusting, promoted under a guise of 'film' or cinema' This remark is interesting as it echoes similar notions of what Beyoğlu should or should not be as a place of social gathering and cultural capital in comparison to those described by Kaya Mutlu in advertisements from the 1930s. The connection he makes between cultural production and notions of modernity and patriotism – highly charged terminology in the context of the tumultuous Turkish 1970s – making an implicit judgement about the 'newcomers', retailers and consumers, of Beyoğlu as well. Dorsay appears to be demarcating in this article the boundaries of what not only cinema, or arts and culture in broad terms, but also Beyoğlu should be defined by.

Arslan notes that during what he defines as the 'late Yeşilçam era', i.e. the late 1970s and early 1980s, cinema started to lose ground to television as more families were able to buy tv sets. Nijat Özön states that while the grand total of ticket sales in 1970 was 250 million, while the sold number of tv sets was 30,000, these numbers contrast sharply with 1984, when the numbers are 56 million and 7 million respectively. In consonant with the comments of Dorsay in the 1980s, Arslan points out that one of the direct effects was that cinemas in the city center (so first and foremost Beyoğlu and its direct surroundings) were closed down or transformed into small shopping malls, meaning the passages that Dorsay talks about disgruntledly. He also argues that the decrease of families going to the movies after 1975 causes a shift of producers towards their new core audience, an urban male one. As a result Dorsay’s 'banal of the banal' – action and sex – became the new mainstay in Yeşilçam’s production pattern. Cinemas saw their visitor rates declining nonetheless, though interestingly the Yeşilçam industry managed to persevere through the introduction of videotapes. One of the most crucial remarks of Arslan is the high regard of Yeşilçam movies and, more importantly, the nostalgia with which it is conceived: it allegedly represents a Turkish cinema industry not affected by the global economy, pure, naïve and innocent. Yet Arslan rightly criticizes this narrative, since these years, particularly the 1970s, were marked by political violence, major socio-economic change and the increasing visibility of urban labour migration on Istanbul's urban landscape.

It is also important to stress once more in this context that, as shown also by Dorsay's article, these are the years in which Beyoğlu's socio-cultural shifts are becoming most sharply noticeable and represented, contrasting the idea of a naïve and innocent Turkey, Istanbul, Beyoğlu, or cinema industry. With the eventual demise of the Yeşilçam industry, cinema production would leave the area for new studios in the newly developing business centres of the cities, though in fact one of the main players in the television production, the state channel TRT, would stay in Beyoğlu and invest in setting up its headquarters in Tepebaşı, only a few blocks away from Mekin and others' vibrant spatial centerpoint for their careers, lives and imagination. Despite of Dorsay’s remarks it appears that Emek Sineması screened a diverse programme and also participated in film festivals, together with institutes such as the new Atatürk Cultural Centre at Taksim Square during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**STRUGGLING FOR THE RIGHT TO INFORMALITY**

The Cercle d’Orient’s main building meanwhile witnessed a different trajectory. A major fire had made parts of the floors used by the club practically unusable and in an article in Cumhuriyet from 13 November 1983 Yalçın Pekşen states that the Cercle d’Orient building had become
The ground floors, however, were still used by shops, entrance to cinemas and the İnci Patisserie. The first floors were in use by the SESAM cinema owner’s association by the 1990s, while the parts damaged by fire (of Büyük Külüp and İpek Sinemasi) were still empty due to fire damage. A first proposal of the Emekli Sandığı states that the building of the comedy theatre on Yeşilçam Sokak had been severely damaged and that a project including a new passage and business centre was suggested which would conserve the façade.

Another occupant of the building was also faced with Emekli Sandığı’s discontent about its properties’ revenues. Salim Alpaslan for Cumhuriyet daily reported on 29 March 1980 (page 7) that the State Gallery for the Fine Arts, Turkey’s biggest art centre, opened only 5 years before on 1 March 1975, risked closure. The owner, Emekli Sandığı, had filed a lawsuit following an increase in the rent charged to the gallery. In the article it is stated that Emekli Sandığı had set up a company called the Emek Turistik Tesisleri İşletme Ltd. Şr. (Emek Touristic Establishments Operating Company Ltd.) to control the real estate properties of the Emekli Sandığı. The gallery had for a longer time struggled to pay its rent and deal with the rent increase. The chamber of accounts of the Ministry of Culture – the institute controlling the gallery – had argued that the right might rise with 20 percent. On top of that the Emekli Sandığı took the gallery to court demanding the evacuation of the gallery before June. The Ministry of Culture claimed that a favourable solution would be found for the issue. If the decision was taken, however, the author concludes, Istanbul would be without a state gallery for several months as a new location would be prepared. What happened afterwards is unclear. The grand entrée of the Cercle d’Orient building featuring the name of the gallery shows up in a series of undated photos in the collection of the SALT research centre. It is not possible to provide an exact date for the series, though one photo shows the Cercle d’Orient building from the side of Yeşilçam Sokak in which a billboard stating ‘Rambo First Blood 2 Fourth Week’ (İlk Kan 2 4. Hafta) can be seen. As the movie was released in Turkey in 1985 it would be prudent to assume that the pictures were taken in that year. In the Cumhuriyet issue of 17 June 1985, an advertisement for a painting contest for youngsters is announced in the gallery, with the address stated as İstiklal Caddesi 122/A. On 18 February 1990, however, the address is stated as İstiklal Caddesi 209/49, with the remark that the gallery is located above the Atlas cinema. Granted that street numbers on İstiklal Caddesi have changed various times, it seems assumable that the gallery moved from its old premises in the second half of the 1980s to its most recent location above Atlas Pasajı. Until its recent renovation the property reserved by the gallery would be used by SESAM, the cooperative of cinema owners, with the tympanum occupied by the cooperative rather than the gallery’s name. Several governmental websites of local and national authorities, which are apparently out of date, however, show that the building still housed offices of the gallery’s directorate.

As early as the 1970s, files from the TMMOB archives show that the Council for Historical Real Estate and Monuments had in a decision from 13 June 1971 demanded that practically all buildings on both sides of the axis between Tünel and Taksim – being İstiklal Caddesi – would be subject to protection and conversation. A halt was thus made to any prospective changes. This decision was further solidified on 14 July 1978 when the Council decided that the entire area – as well as other historical areas in Istanbul – should be subject to protection and conservation legislation. The ultimate purpose of the council was to pave the way for reinvigorating the Beyoğlu area and turn it into an area for tourism. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism’s Tourism Bank proposed the Beyoğlu-Galata Tourism Development Project. The TMMOB, however, noted in a publication from the late 1980s titled ‘Beyoğlu nasıl kurtulur?’ (how to save Beyoğlu?), that rather than adhering to these plans municipalities decide to start destroying historical properties illegally. It should be noted that the decision by the Council was made around the same time when one of the most intrusive interventions in the İstiklal Caddesi’s urban landscape was made, namely the construction of the Odakule office building. The intervention that would result in public outrage was, however, the destruction of major parts of the Tarlabası neighbourhood in order to construct a motorway in the mid-1980s. Although conservation and protection legislation was applied from a legalistic point of view, it seems that the Council lacked at least the financial and legal means to effectively enforce legislation in a uniform manner. It seems likely that influential stakeholders, such as municipal governments, moreover held a particularly strong sway over the
direction the protection and conservation of the urban landscape would take, even more so after the restructuring of Istanbul’s administrative governance structure in 1984.

This would start to have a notable effect on the Cercle d’Orient parcel when the Emekli Sandığı decided in 1993 to grant a concession for 25 years to a businessman named Kamer Tosun and his construction firm Kamer İnşaat. Plans to turn the group of buildings into a hotel, business, entertainment and art centre had been forwarded for approval already in April 1991 by Süzer Holding who would have been a prospective candidate for a ‘Yap-İşlet-Devret’ (Build, operate, transfer)-construction that was eventually granted to Kamer İnşaat. Soon after the concession was granted to Kamer İnşaat a group which feared closure of the cinema started a petition titled ‘Let Emek Sineması exist’ (Emek Sineması yaşatılsın). The group was fronted by a group of cinema managers, art and the İKSV (İstanbul Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı – Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts). The petition was started on the same date as the 13th International Istanbul Film Festival, organized by İKSV, and managed to collect thousands of signatures during the first days of the campaign. It would be one of the first steps in a long-lasting stalemate between the owner, the prospective developer, local government and civil society organizations.

The documents of the TMMOB show that various actors start to actively claim a position in the process of place-making. In a letter by three architects associated with the TMMOB from 17 January 1995, it is indicated that the buildings’ future should not be only up to Emekli Sandığı to decide on as the Cercle d’Orient buildings are not only in a decent state from the perspective of engineering, but also since these buildings are among the most crucial symbols of 19th century Istanbul. It should be noted that no mention is made of the significance of more recent episodes in the history of the Cercle d’Orient parcel as a place of social and cultural gathering, distinguishing it from other activist representations of the block’s significance, particularly in recent years with initiatives such as Emek Bizim Istanbul Bizim (Emek is Ours, Istanbul is Ours). It moreover displays a quite limited interpretation of what these buildings (should) signify, namely a symbol of late-nineteenth century vernacularized neo-classicism rather than a place with a rich socio-cultural history. In a sense this is also the way the restoration of the Cercle d’Orient’s main building was approached in the 2010s, as a placeless shell that ought to be restored with an obsession for authenticity. Istanbul’s First Council for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Objects decided that a report and layout sheet should be prepared to assess the state of the building. One of Kamer İnşaat’s owners Vey sel Tosun stated among the same time in 1995 that: ‘there are six architects taking measurements in the building. (...) After this, we will apply to the Council for Monuments and bring the project into operation. Everyone is going to thank us when this project is finished. We are changing Beyoğlu’s appearance. Of course we are making profit from this project. No-one can execute a project like this for nothing, but we will definitely not touch the historical construction’. Again, there is no mention whatsoever of the past and present users of the building and the remark simply ignores, wittingly or unwittingly, the position this particular place holds in the social memory of many Istanbulites and Turkey’s citizens. The plans at the time, however, indicate that the plot was supposed to house a three-floored parking space, three theater spaces, 52 meeting rooms, four exhibition halls, 200 stores and offices for a total price of 112 billion Turkish Lira, with a total monthly rent revenue of 330 million Turkish Lira. It therefore seemed inevitable that the construction firm would severely damage the historical properties.

The fact that any future changes or projects in or around these buildings were subject to the approval of the Council for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Objects, together with lawsuits opened by the TMMOB hindered further steps by Kamer İnşaat. That changed, however, when in 2005 a notorious new law on urban renewal passed through the Turkish Parliament. This ‘Law on the Protection of Deteriorated Historic and Cultural Heritage through Renewal and Re-use’ is most well-known by its number, 5366. As İcıl Dinçer, Zeynep Enil and Tolga İslam argue the law grants extensive powers to local municipalities. From 2005 onwards local municipalities can declare any given site, regardless of its protection status, as a space for urban renewal. In the case of historical sites this can be done based on the criterium specified in the law as: ‘protection of deteriorated historic and cultural heritage through renewal’. The law thus specifically does not specify
this as renovation, but rather as renewal. For projects to be granted a green light, however, several actors have to grant their accord. It is interesting in that context that the Council for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Objects, is basically sidelined in this process. Moreover, the political climate in Turkey since the early 2000s, dominated by the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP), has effectively annulled the ‘obstacle’ of oppositional forces.

The parcel on which the Cercle d’Orient buildings were situated subsequently were designated as an urban renewal area in 2006. Despite an ongoing lawsuit opened by TMMOB in 2010 which obstructed any kind of work on the buildings on the Cercle d’Orient parcel, public outcry and several attempts to mobilize to protest the destruction of the buildings, Kamer İnşaat started the destruction of Emek Sineması and the surrounding buildings on the parcel in 2013. Contrary to its previous decisions, the Council for the Preservation of Natural and Cultural Objects had agreed with the project proposal already approved by the Council for Renewal. Possibly due to the fact that the destruction of Emek Sineması, more than other buildings on the parcel, had been the subject of public outcry, the Beyoğlu municipality and Kamer İnşaat presented the destruction of the cinema as a renovation. Elements from the old cinema hall were allegedly taken from the old building, restored and placed in an entirely new space in the shopping mall that had been erected on the parcel. The Beyoğlu municipality, fronted by mayor Ahmet Misbah Demircan himself, took great pride in this ‘restored’ facility and the ‘new’ Emek Sineması has since then regularly been used for public events sponsored by the Beyoğlu Municipality as well. The only remaining building on the parcel is the Cercle d’Orient building itself, well-restored, though its function in public space has been effectively marginalized to the role of a – securitized – entrance of a shopping mall.

The recent history of the Cercle d’Orient parcel gives insight into the evolution in time of Istanbul’s debate on public space in a location that features prominently in cultural and social memory through Beyoğlu’s exceptionally rich history in Ottoman and Turkish movie production and screening. More than anything it reveals on a micro level how the city has been re-made by government policies inspired by Turkish nationalism and later by increasing exposure to economic liberalization. Although the starting points may differ, the outcomes are
in fact surprisingly similar as has been demonstrated in this chapter. The successive transfers of ownership in the case of the Cercle d’Orient building show that in all cases little to no attention was attributed to the – judicial and arguably moral – rights and needs of tenants and users of the buildings. From the transfer of a private party to the municipality in 1942, from the municipality to the Emekli Sandığı to the concession granted by Emekli Sandığı to Kamer İnşaat: the first priority of the owners and concessionaries has been maximizing profit. The preservation of the site’s complex historical legacy does not appear to be a concern of the various stakeholders, and if it does then only after consistent public pressure as demonstrated by the ‘restoration’ of Emek Sineması. Though this may come as no surprise to historians and geographers working on Istanbul, it is important to note and stress that the ways in which governmental authorities and companies in many cases deal with their heritage has for decades been driven by this impulse. The rich history of movie production described in this chapter was based here for nearly a century, yet – except for a few small cinemas – virtually nothing is left which can possibly serve as a reminder of this important marker in Turkey’s, Istanbul’s and Beyoğlu’s history. The 5366 legislation has left which can possibly serve as a reminder of this important marker in Turkey’s, Istanbul’s and Beyoğlu’s history. The 5366 legislation has

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15 Koloğlu, Cercle d’Orient’dan Büyük Kulüp’e, 126-127.
18 Koloğlu, Cercle d’Orient’dan Büyük Kulüp’e, 133.
19 Ibidem, 148.
20 Since the club’s current administration has a policy of allowing no-one in their archives it was near to impossible to make any serious contributions to the connection of the club’s history with the Cercle d’Orient building in the twentieth century. I was also not able to find out whether or not materials were lost during one of the fires. The club’s administrator’s words followed an unfortunate and seemingly classic adagium of the club’s history with the Cercle d’Orient building in the twentieth century. I was also not able to find out whether or not materials were lost during one of the fires. The club’s administrator’s words followed an unfortunate and seemingly classic adagium historians face when dealing with institutional archives: ‘a book has already written about us, you can use that’ (although she also noted that the author of the book, Orhan Koloğlu, was not allowed to use the archives as well).
22 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 18.
24 Kaya Mutlu, ‘Yeşilçam in Letters’ (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2002) 98; Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 22.
27 Öz and Özkaraçalar, ‘Path Dependencies’, 161-177.
28 Mutlu, Yeşilçam in Letters, 122.
29 Ibidem, 129.
32 Ibidem, 105.
33 Ibidem.
34 Kaya Mutlu, ‘Yeşilçam in Letters, 122.
35 Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, ‘Serikdoryan binasının satış yarın görüşülecek’, 1 December 1951, 3.
36 İstanbul Belediyesi, Güzeleşen İstanbul (İstanbul: İstanbul Belediye Yayınları, 1943) 55.
37 İstanbul Belediyesi, Güzeleşen İstanbul, 55.
38 Milliyet, ‘Serikdoryan binası dün satılmadı’, 25 December 1956, 5 and ‘Serikdoryan bloku nihayet satılıyor’, 6 January 1957, 1. It should be noted that the value of the Turkish Lira decreased rapidly during the 1950s.
40 Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, Emek Cinema Advertisement, 4 november 1968, 6.
41 Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, Emek Cinema Advertisement, 6.
42 Dorsay, Benim Beyoğlu, 52.
43 Ibidem 65-66.
44 Mutlu, Yeşilçam in Letters, 131.
46 Ibidem, 131.
49 Arslan, Cinema in Turkey, 100.
52 Mutlu, Yeşilçam in Letters, 132-133.
53 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 7-21.
55 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 49.
56 Ibidem.
58 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 38.
60 Arslan, Cinema in Turkey, 15-17.
64 Aksoy, Robins, Çuhacı, Improvised City.
67 Mutlu, Yeşilçam in Letters, 125-126.
69 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 33.
70 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 118; Arslan, Cinema in Turkey, 180.
71 Dönmez-Colin, Turkish Cinema, 119-120.
72 Arslan, Cinema in Turkey, 186.
75 Dorsay, ‘Sinema ve tiyatro salonları’, 6.
76 Ibidem.
77 Arslan, Cinema in Turkey, 101
78 Ibidem, 102.
79 Ibidem.
80 Ibidem.
81 Ibidem, 233.
86 The current number of Mısır Apartmanı is for instance 163, whereas it was 311 in 1983. See: Announcement section, ‘Duyuru’, Cumhuriyet, 12 November 1983, 8.
88 TMMOB, ‘Beyoğlu nasıl kurtulur’.
89 Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği, Beyoğlu nasıl kurtulur? (Istanbul, year unknown).
91 Omacan, Eruzun, Kansu, ‘Rapor: Serkildoryan Tarihi’.
92 The urban activists’ initiative Emek Bizim has been active on social media platforms since 2010, see https://www.facebook.com/emekbizim, last visited 29 January 2019.