

# TRACING THE RURAL IN EXHIBITION SPACES OF İZMİR, TURKEY: TIRE, ÖDEMiŞ AND BERGAMA MUSEUMS

TONGUÇ AKIŞ\*

**Resumo:** Na região de İzmir, com o seu rico hinterland rural e património de produção espaço-cultural, os primeiros povoamentos remontam à época Pré-Histórica. Enquanto palimpsesto de culturas em mudança e plataforma de transformações espaciais ao longo do tempo, İzmir alberga, para além do Museu de Etnografia (1978-1987), no centro da cidade, três museus locais em três distritos administrativos distintos. Estes foram estabelecidos após o impacto do paradigma moderno de construção nacional na Jovem Turquia, que incluem as representações da materialidade rural e vernacular. Estes três museus, Bergama (1963), Odemiş (1987) e Tire (1935-1971), exibem expressões rurais e artefactos de culturas locais, com filtros seletivos. A localização física de cada um dos museus é igualmente única no seu contexto espacial, especialmente as secções etnográficas, apresentando semelhanças e particularidades no que se refere ao enquadramento da vida rural, aos seus artefactos espaciais, formações de linguagem e técnicas de representação: grupos de manequins simulando as pessoas no contexto rural, cenas representativas e maquetes ilustrativas da produção agrícola, interiores de casas vernaculares com decorações características, pistolas únicas, joalharia, tecidos e tapetes dos séculos XIX e XX, em vitrines com quadros e placas informativas. Este artigo irá incidir sobre as representações materiais da cultura rural e vernacular em İzmir, Turquia. Através das modernas salas dos museus, iremos interpretar a produção social destes espaços museológicos e as particularidades do ambiente rural. Partiremos de uma base de investigação académica, particularmente o inventário de povoamentos e casas na região rural de İzmir, realizado entre 2010-2012. O enquadramento teórico para a análise das relações dos museus assenta fundamentalmente na perspetiva espacial dos dois trabalhos de referência de Henri Lefebvre.

**Palavras-chave:** Povoamentos rurais de İzmir; Museus de İzmir; Espaços expositivos; Produção do Espaço.

**Abstract:** In İzmir Region with its rich rural hinterland and heritage of spatio-cultural production, the earliest human settlements date back to prehistoric ages. As palimpsest of altering cultures and platform of spatial transformations in time, İzmir houses three state-based local museums in three different administrative districts, established after the impact of modern nation-building paradigm in Young Turkey including the representations of rural and vernacular materiality, other than the İzmir Ethnography Museum (1978-1987) in the city centre. These three museum locations, of

---

\* İzmir Institute of Technology. tongucakis@iyte.edu.tr.

Bergama (1936), Ödemiş (1987) and Tire (1935-1971), are exhibiting the rural expressions and artefacts of local cultures with selective filters. The physical locations of the museums are also unique in their spatial context. Especially the ethnography section of each museum has similarities and peculiarities in terms of framing rural life and its spatial artefacts and of discourse formations and representation techniques: the rural settings of people with group of manikins, the representational scenes and models from agricultural production, the interiors of vernacular houses with local decorations, special pistols, jewellerys, cloths and carpets from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the glass boxes with information boards and plates.

This descriptive and critical paper will be on those material representations of rural and vernacular culture in İzmir, Turkey. Through the contemporary museum rooms of these different prefectures, I will be reading and contemplating on the social production of these museum spaces and the particularities of rural built environment basing on the academic research, the inventory of the settlements and houses in İzmir Rural, held in 2010-2012. The theoretical frame to consider recent relationships of the museums is resting mostly on the spatial perspective of Henri Lefebvre's two seminal works.

**Keywords:** İzmir Rural Settlements; Museums of İzmir; Exhibition Spaces; Production of Space.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a larger research project of my individual academic interest and curiosity. Although the idea of “representing the rural” derived from individual consideration, it is also part of the theme of “Rural Built Environment” course in our school this year. Besides, the text and argumentations are built up on the two-year comprehensive research held in the villages of İzmir. Henceforth, it is also becoming an academic endeavour for our students to contemplate on rural space among the faculty of architecture in İzmir.

In İzmir Region with its rich rural hinterland and heritage of spatio-cultural production, the earliest human settlements date back to prehistoric ages. As palimpsest of altering cultures and platform of spatial transformations in time, İzmir houses several local museums in three different administrative districts, established after the impact of modern nation-building paradigm in Young Turkey including the representations of rural and vernacular materiality, other than the İzmir Ethnography Museum in the city centre. Three locations with its unique museum buildings of Bergama (1936), Ödemiş (1987) and Tire (1935-1971) are exhibiting the rural expressions and artefacts of local cultures with selective filters. The physical locations of the museums are also unique in their spatial context. Especially the ethnography section of each museum has similarities and peculiarities in terms of framing rural life and its spatial artefacts and of discourse formations and representation techniques: the rural settings of people with group of manikins, the representational scenes and models from agricultural production, the interiors of vernacular houses with local decorations, special pistols, jewellerys, cloths and carpets from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the glass boxes with information boards and plates.

## THE PRODUCTION OF MUSEUMS SPACES

The museums, specially the ethnography museums as the representation of the rural is the focus of this particular paper. The production of these museums in term of their unique space can be understand by the theoretical approach of “the production of space”, introduced by Henri Lefebvre. Although, the production of rural space is examined by Lefebvre seems as the periphery issue or task, his argumentation on the production of space has a comprehensive while understanding the link between rural settlement and the inhabitants. Lefebvre simply claim that «(social) space is a (social) product»<sup>1</sup>. This formulation adds more to the physical evaluation of the space and covers a broader perspective of spatial production and houses the actors and the physicality of the space. Tracing the appropriation and domination in space, he shifts the theoretical route of spatial production and formations.

Tire and Bergama Museums became places of educating the public in 1930s and situated in the rural built environment rather than an urban context with the extensions of both archaeology and ethnography in the new republic. Before going further to the detailed examination of the settlements and their representation in three periphery museums, it is important to define the rural settlements and its link to the urban geography which may be seen as a separated spatial formation than urban itself. It is argued that the urban and rural areas are seemed to be two polar frameworks while considering the built environment in different scales<sup>2</sup>.

In Urban Revolution<sup>3</sup>, Lefebvre estimates the merging of agrarian and industrial properties of space production and underlines the dialectical relationship of these two by framing the novel properties of urban. Introducing a spatial and historical model for transformation of the contemporary built environment, he defines a theoretical path and series of scale starting with the agrarian, reach to the industrial and end up with the urban phenomenon. Besides, he discusses three levels in each such as global, urban and private. First stage is the level of power relations uncovering the political, religious and institutional aspects of the spatial production. Second is the urban level situating between global and private with the physical particularities of built and un-built environments. Third level is the lived-space that decodes the dialectical relationship of the inhabitants and their physical habitat.

In the book *The Production of Space*<sup>4</sup>, he underlines the importance of trialectical and global approach to uncover the spatial relationship between human and rural

---

<sup>1</sup> LEFEVBRE, 1991: 26.

<sup>2</sup> ELDEN, 2002: 209.

<sup>3</sup> LEFEVBRE, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> LEFEVBRE, 1991.

settlements. Considering both the rural and urban built environments, the production of space develops a theoretical framework leaning on the three major moments of space; physical (conceived), mental (perceived), and social (lived)<sup>5</sup>.

The Lefebvrian trilogy in rural lands are translated into another framework developed by Keith Halfacree. Understanding the production of rural space as a whole, but focusing on the following aspects such as *Rural Localities*, *Formal representations of the rural* and *Everyday lives of the rural*, she underlines the comprehensive moments of space to relate human settlements<sup>6</sup>. First covers the spatial practices that include the production and consumption activities in rural settlements, while the second aspect focuses on how the rural environment itself is commoditized by the exchange value. Third inherits the inhabitant's individual and social life inevitably incoherent and fractured as the cognitive interpretation and negotiation increases.

Addition to that, the diversity of the locality is the challenge in reflecting the conceptualisation of historical settlement and inhabitants' role of the place. Margaret C. Rodman in her article "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality" underlines the transactions between locality and the voice of inhabitants while criticising the anthropological studies lacking the voice of the inhabitants<sup>7</sup>. The approach to the settlements by considering the historical and cultural influence of space and geography is underlined and the conditions and relationship of the inhabitants and its spatial background are supported and enhanced theoretically by referring to the varying effects of the platform that the inhabitants dwell on.

## THE MUSEUMS OF İZMİR

İzmir, as the third biggest city of Turkey, has a population of approximately 3 billion located in the shore of Aegean Sea of East Mediterranean. İzmir is one of the oldest cities in Mediterranean Basin with a rich historical background and it is named as *Smyrna* in the past. According to the recent excavations held in Bayraklı Region of İzmir, there are relevant physical clues of prehistoric ages. Chronologically, the traces of Trojans, Aeolians, Lydians, Persians, Romans and Byzantines, Seljuks, the Sons of Aydın Bey during Principalities Period, and Ottomans are seen in this particular city which is situated in the east coast of Asia Minor. Since the foundation of Republic of Turkey (1923), İzmir continues to become a hub for trading and the cultural activities of tourism.

<sup>5</sup> LEFEVBRE, 2002: 809.

<sup>6</sup> HALFACREE, 2006: 44-45.

<sup>7</sup> RODMAN, 2006: 1005.

The historical houses as a huge building stock that survived in İzmir rapidly lose their original features due to major alterations and interventions that utilize inadequate materials and techniques while their original built topologies are also changed through new development plans. On the contrary, a remarkable portion of rural houses built by local master builders are still intact and reflect the achievement of well-organized guilds of masons, carpenters, ironsmiths, brickmakers, and plasterers who were trained by a mentorship-tradition in centuries<sup>8</sup>. The physicality of spatial productions also turns into the living witnesses of the ethnographic information for the rural environments today.

Additionally, the museum buildings and its historical existence, as a space of representing the rural life and tradition, itself becomes a tools and battlefield for domination and education in time on the urban or rural environment. The administrative and ideological shift can be traced through the museums formation in Turkey. The educational and ideological role attributed by the modernist perspective of state developed through the production of the state based museums. The early republic clarified and crystallised this particular approach by opening various museums in the early years of Republic. Archaeology Museum of Ankara (1921), Antalya (1922), Sivas (1923), Efes (1924), Adana (1924), Edirne (1925), Tokat (1926), Amasya (1926), Konya Mevlana (1927), Ethnography Museums of Ankara (1928), Bursa (1929), Afyon (1933), Bergama (1933), Sinop (1932), Diyarbakır (1934), Tire (1935) and Çanakkale (1936).

This ideological and spatial approach can be traced in the paper of Zeynep Kezer that the first ethnography museum in Ankara. This unique example of museum in Ankara built in the early period of the Republic of Turkey is examined through an ideological discourse analysis. Kezer argues the nation-building approaches of the young republic while arguing the production of this novel understanding of exhibition and spatial organisation (KEZER, 2000: 101). While focusing on the religious and rural artefacts, she uncovers the attributed ideological and educational role of ethnography museums.

## BERGAMA MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

One of the examples of this kind of ethnography museums in Turkey can be seen in Bergama of İzmir. Bergama Museum houses the artefacts from the ancient city Pergamon with its sites like Asklepon and Acropolis having a rich palimpsest

---

<sup>8</sup> TUNÇOKU *et al.*, 2015

of different cultures and historical background. Starting from the establishment of Republic, the chronological development of the museum has started in 1924 till now.

The project of the new museum building was inspired from the missing Zeus Altar. It is designed by two foreign architects referring to the spatial organisation of Altar. If we refer to the museum's information in *Bulletin* again:

*It consists of a square-shaped interior salon and surrounding tiny long corridors, two exhibition halls, and a garden. From the entrance along the corridor on the left, one can see the marble architectural pieces which belong to Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantium Periods (Ion and Corinth column capitals, hill acroteries, embossed designs, table legs, friz blocks, and so on), male and female statues, a model of Zeus Altar, and pictures of the original structure in Berlin Museum, and a model of Demeter Sacred Area. At the end of this corridor on the left is the salon in which archaeological pieces can be seen<sup>9</sup>*



**Fig. 1.** The woman mannequin preparing food for the family.

Source: Author's Own Archive

This museum as the replica of Zeus Altar was not used as an ethnography museum at the beginning. Until 1979, the ethnographic artefacts were exhibited in Public Centre separately. After the construction of the additional building in 1979 to the Replica, the archaeological and ethnological artefacts of Bergama have exhibited under the same roof. The building itself with its additional building loses its Altar like character now but still houses the rural artefacts from the environment in the side hall. Although, the ethnographic pieces in the show cases and show rooms are colourfully exhibited with gestures of mannequins, the informative title of each artefact still misses the location of the artefact. This attitude is quite common in all the museums of İzmir that we had studied. Even the village names or the specific site information are not enough to understand clearly the artefacts topography and geography. These missing information are still ideologically helping to develop a distance between the visitors and the artefacts.

<sup>9</sup> Bergama Museum Bulletin 15, 2006.

## TIRE MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND TIRE CITY MUSEUM

Tire has two different museums in terms of reflecting the everyday practices of rural built environment. Rather than exhibiting local artefacts in Tire, Tire City museum chose to show the particular crafts workshops. After renovating the previous municipality building, that was built by Can Egeli in 1955, Tire City Museum is opened to the public at 15.10.2014. To underline and depict the historical craftsmanship, this museum chose to show the parts of the workshop spaces. Within these workshops, referring to the daily or weekly schedule, the visitors can witness the production of different kind of traditional aspects of historical market by the living professionals. In some showcases and exhibitions room, near the living professional, the dressed-up manikins helps to reflect the built environment of Tire everyday life. The missing craftsmanship of Tire traditions can be recognised by the atmosphere created by the Tire City Museum. The museum promise to show the cultural and traditional heritage of Tire. Entirely donated craftsmanship atelier with the equipment and documents develops the character of the museum and reflects the trade culture of Tire. The sponsors have their impact in this particular exhibition space.



Fig. 2. The woman mannequin preparing food for the family.

Source: Tire City Museum Website

On the other hand, the state-based museum of Tire Ethnography Museum houses numerous number of artefacts from rural area. Including historical coins in glass boxes, the traditional carpets, dressing pieces, weapons can be seen in the showcases. Unlike the so-called “lively” atmosphere of Tire City Museum, the artefacts found their places inside these untouchable showcases.

Both state-based and civil-political actors understood the tourism effect of these museums of Ethnography. The privatization of the ethnography museum is seen in Tire example. The state-based museum becomes secondary because of its location having a far more distance than the city centre. Although the visitors of Tire chose to wander around the streets of Tire Centre, the popularity of Tire City Museum nowadays makes it as the leading museum of Tire. The number of the visitor is much higher than Tire Ethnography Museum if we compare it in the state base reports.

Like Bergama Museum, being an archaeology and ethnography museum, Tire Museum has precious works such as the silver coins produced in Tire Mint during

the period of Ottoman Empire. In particular, engraved coins are highly regarded as precious among the coins from the Ottoman period. The coins produced in Tire have an important place among the prestigious collections of the world. The bordered engraving which is recorded with number 259 in the inventory register of the museum, designed with silver gold thread on black fabric and has the mark of “Es Sultan Orhan İbni Osman” is a remarkable work. Rice grains on which “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim” (Basmala) is written are regarded as the historical and interesting works in Tire Museum.

### ÖDEMiŞ MUSEUM OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

This museum is renovated in 2010 to the national museums of Turkey. It has two different section like Bergama Museum: Archaeology and Ethnography. Differ than Bergama Museum, the sections are not that strictly divided in this particular museum.



**Fig. 3.** The weaving woman mannequin.  
Source: Author's Own Archive

One space character of the museum houses two different academic discipline in single enclosure without separating thick walls.

The ancient ruins of the city Hypaiapa, excavated to the north of Ödemiş District and located at 113 km east of Izmir, reveal that the history of the local settlement dates back to ancient era. The historical connotation of Ödemiş and its environs originates from a nearby prefecture, Birgi, which served as the capital city in the Aydınoğulları Period (Beyliks Era of Anatolia). Birgi now is a member of Historical Environment Association of Turkey. Günlüce settlement, located 6 kilometers to Ödemiş, houses Hypaiapa antique city as the peripheral sites of Ödemiş. The word Hypaia means sharp cliff in Greek. Hypaia is famous for its good-looking ladies and the legend of Arachne, written by Roman writer Ovidius.

Archaeological and ethnographical items of Ödemiş were on display in the museum which was the Ethnography



Museum until 1983. Ceramics, idols, axes, candelabrum, bronze items, glass items, decorative elements, terracotta statuettes, marble statues and statuettes are on display at the archaeology section while various weapons from the Ottoman period, copper and silver items, glass items, handicrafts and clothes are exhibited in the ethnography section.

Ödemiş has a long-live tradition of weaving and fabric production. The Market held in Saturdays can be the showcase of this early trade tradition. Beside its deep culture of weaving, the richness of Ödemiş comes from the agricultural production. The vernacular dwelling in the villages are significant artefacts with its traditional settlements. Reflecting this particular character of rural space, the town of Birgi as an open air museum, demonstrates this rural built environment with its living character. Besides this rural character, the Çakırağa Konağı (House of Çakırağa) promises the traditional house reflecting the 19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling environment.

Belonging to a rich landowner, this particular house itself becomes the artefact for the visitors of Ödemiş. Since this particular house of Ottoman Style renovated as the section of Ethnography Museum, it is the self-standing source of rural built environment for the tourist, too.



Fig. 4. The bride mannequin in House.  
Source: Author's Own Archive

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

These three towns of İzmir have luxurious platform in terms of their rural background. Multi-local places formed the character of each particular town. However, the representation of each rural life in their museum or exhibition spaces are unique and repetitive. The image of woman and man and their role in the everyday life of rural built environment somehow depicted to repeat the traditional character of rural life. The position of woman in the society, the role of man in the everyday



Fig. 5. The eyeglasses of Osman Hamdi Bey.  
Source: Tire City Museum Website

life and the rural spaces produced by them are represented to underline and repeat the older forms of social organisation.

Accepting the argumentation of urban phenomenon of Lefebvre, one can say that the culture of urban and rural has been more emerging than the previous years of Republic. There are more strong connections as he mentioned. The difference between each built environment seems to be disappeared in the exhibition spaces both in terms of exhibiting culture. The traces of the urban society of spectacle dominates also in every centimetre square of periphery museums.

On the other hand, the spatial location of each, like the Zeus Altar model of Bergama Museum, the older Zaviye type of space (an Islamic campus) in the periphery of transforming Tire Ethnography Museum and the representation and restoration of the rich landowner in Ödemiş, Birgi somehow define this reproducing character of museums. These museums as the political tool for the power, both ideological and capital terms, develop those kind of spaces in the skirts of İzmir. The voices of the rural is little heard in these walls of exhibitions.

The attitude of capitalism and state ideology in abstracting the space production is seen clearly in these images of exhibition spaces. The total understanding of space production housing lived, conceived and perceived is utilised in the showcases of the museums. Not only freezing and distancing the everyday life but, these particular representation techniques somehow alienate the visitors and their perception. Conceived spaces of museums put forward its role in reducing the life into an abstract illusion. Real spaces disappear but their remains are there, although there is a rich rural life just a few kilometres from the centres of each town. The museums are also serve for the market economy by the touristic motivations neglecting the existing rural life.

In the information board of the exhibited artefacts little names of rural built environment is depicted and displayed. The missing names of villages or location somehow helps to delete the memorial aspects of rural character and materialisation of museums. This attitude dominated the urban phenomenon and disappearing of rural built environment in people's perception.

To conclude, while looking at the eyeglasses of Osman Hamdi Bey in Tire City Museum, who was the pioneer and the starter museology in Ottoman Empire, one can comment that there is a little change in the perspective of exhibiting artefacts in Anatolian Geography especially on the gaze on woman. If we consider the Early Ottoman Museum in İstanbul having the mannequins of Yeniçeri soldiers and their frozen bodies in Asar-ı Attika, the domination of power seems to be continuing in the periphery towns of İzmir not in the favour of rural life.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bergama Museum Bulletin 15 (2006).
- ELDEN, Stuart (2002) – *Politics, Philosophy, Geography: Henri Lefebvre in Recent Anglo-American Scholarship*. «Antipode», vol. 33: p. 809-825.
- HALFACREE, Keith (2006) – *Rural space: constructing a three-fold architecture*. In CLOKE, Paul; MARSDEN, Terry; MOONEY, Patrick, eds. – *Handbook of Rural Studies*. London: SAGE Pub. Ltd., p. 44-62.
- İzmir Magazine (2013), vol. 20, p. 64-65.
- KEZER, Zeynep (2000) – *Familiar Things in Strange Places: Ankara's Ethnography Museum and the Legacy of Islam in Republican Turkey, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*. UK : Vernacular Architectural Forum, p. 101-116.
- LEFEBVRE, Henri (1991) – *The Production of Space*. New York: Blackwell.
- (2003) *Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Report and statistics of Cultural and Tourism Office of İzmir Province for August 2016*, <http://www.izmirturizm.gov.tr/TR,163695/2016-yili-agustos-ayi-muze-istatistikleri-yayinlandi.html> (accessed in August 2016).
- RODMAN, Margaret C. (2006) – *Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality*. In LOW, Setha M. & LAWRENCE-ZUNIGA, Denise, eds. – *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- SHAW, Wendy M. K. (2004) – *Osmanlı Müzeciliği: Müzeler, Arkeoloji ve Tarihin Görselleştirilmesi (Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualisation in the Late Ottoman Empire)*, translated by Esin Soğancılar, İstanbul: İletişim, p. 56.
- TUNÇOKU, Sarp et. al. (2015) – *Assessment of Construction Techniques and Material Usage in İzmir Rural Houses*. «International Journal of Architectural Heritage», UK: Taylor and Francis, p. 1005-1022.

