The Mapping of Sensemaking Territories Through Physical and Social Media: A Case of the Historical Bazaar of Kemeraltı, Izmir

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to analyze and make visible the intertwined layers of a palimpsest territory, such as the historical bazaar of Kemeraltı in Izmir, Turkey, through the lens of architecture students concerning their perceptions of producing Instagrammable visual data to influence and attract the prospective visitors and to compensate the lack of interest in the bazaar as mentioned by local institutions. Through this analysis, we also aim to conduct a methodological experiment that recognizes social media as a cognitive tool by combining digital and physical representations. The study encompasses a one-month workshop for students of the visualization in an elective architecture course. The technique of theme-based cognitive mapping both in the space of places and the space of flows in Manuel Castells' sense was utilized to investigate how the students perceive the historical and socio-cultural qualities of the region through different realms. The workshop briefs were accompanied by Instagram hashtag research and the design of visual journals, consisting of the photographs and videos taken by the students to share their influencer/sensemaker routes specific to the selected themes. The students tailored various influencer/sensemaker roles and generated place-based scenarios in combination with the themes. Ultimately, Kemeraltı's multifaceted genius could be reflected on cognitive and sensory grounds through digital and physical cognitive maps, social media journals, and analyses. It was observed that the students could integrate the intersubjective character of the readily presented data on social media into the subjective and authentic character of the data produced mindfully on the site.

Keywords: cognitive mapping, historical places, social media, urban analysis, Kemeraltı

INTRODUCTION

Kemeraltı in Konak district, as the unique historical bazaar of Izmir, refers to a multifaceted system of time- and space-based routes that have been the subject of many academic studies (for some of the recent examples, see Karakaş, 2023; Katmer Koçkar, 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2023; Kurt et al., 2023; Savaşır, 2020). Because Izmir is the third most populated city in Turkey with its cosmopolitan structure and deep historical face spanning five thousand years (since 3000 BC), we can recognize the multi-layered social, cultural, and historical structure. This is especially true of such places which could be connected to our modern day by their conserved architecture and cultural atmosphere, like in Kemeraltı (Kahraman, 2013). The vicinities of the bazaar have a deep-rooted history dating back to the Roman period. However, Kemeraltı gained its modern-time bazaar identity in the 17th century and hosted a total of 230 different business lines and 15.000 trading houses (Ballice & Paykoç, 2014; Savaşır, 2020). Among these, the gastronomic activities (tradesman restaurants) and pedestrian shopping can be observed intensively, as well as the touristic and religious activities connected to the historical qualities of the region which almost create the unique *genius loci* of Kemeraltı (Can, 2007; Kazmaoğlu, 2004; Yentur, 2023).

Thus, as one of the oldest settlements of the city based on commercial and religious functions, it has an organic street texture with mosques, synagogues, passages, and inns as landmarks. Besides, craftsmen's production areas in unique and rare craft branches (Ecemis-Kilic, 2008) such as leatherworking (tannery), weaving and fabric printing (*basmahane*), sewing, and tin smithing accompany the former activities in shaping this genius, though the latter ones gradually decrease in number. While the historical Kemeraltı bazaar moves the user along its spine with its spirit that appeals to all senses and stimulates different layers of memories, it also has a visual architectural flavor that is integrated.

The unique architectural and urban flavor of Kemeraltı, however, suffers from a loss of interest and a lack of preference by young people, as also stated in the comprehensive Izmir-History Project Design Strategy Report prepared by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality in 2015 (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2015; TARKEM staff, 2024). To address this lack of interest and renew the region, the Historical Kemeraltı Construction Investment Trade Incorporated Company (Tarihi Kemeraltı İnşaat Yatırım Ticaret Anonim Şirketi, TARKEM) as a multi-partner structure was established in 2012 to revitalize this historical city center (TARKEM, 2024). To discover the region-specific problems of Kemeraltı, TARKEM staff conduct a Kemeraltı Perception Research survey, which is shared online with all Izmirites in October and November every year. They develop problem- and solution-oriented approaches with the data they collect through consecutive surveys. However, one of the most important results of the survey for this paper has been the emergence of themes such as gastronomy, lost heritage, handicrafts, faith/religion, shopping, textiles, and tourism, which were frequently highlighted by the participants (TARKEM staff, 2024). Along with these themes, TARKEM also organizes video competitions in Kemeraltı—such as the Videothon project (Tarihikemeralti, 2022)—for influencers/sensemakers to attract the attention of young people (TARKEM, 2024).

While existing research on Kemeraltı has explored various aspects of the region's historical and socio-cultural qualities, there has been a lack of integration between these studies and the preferences of young visitors. As the research questions, this paper examines the ways in which young visitors engage with the historical and socio-cultural attributes of Kemeraltı and how they leverage Instagram to create visually compelling content that can influence future visitors. To find answers, the study employs cognitive and sensory mapping techniques to uncover the theme-based spatial preferences of young people within the Kemeraltı bazaar. By analyzing these preferences, we can gain valuable insights into the factors that attract and influence young visitors to this historical site. The four-week workshop also aims to simulate a destination culture marketing strategy by distributing 20 young individuals to the Kemeraltı district to let them find innovative ways to introduce the local context (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Each week's outcomes carry sensory information from young adults' perspectives, such as the smells of the specific streets, sounds

and signs of the squares, sounds of commercial calls, etc.

Following an interview with the TARKEM team, we learned about their ongoing research, the "Kemeraltı Perception Survey," which aims to gather insights into the usage of Kemeraltı district (TARKEM staff, 2024; TARKEM, 2024). TARKEM generously granted us access to the survey results, allowing us to find the identified key themes such as gastronomy, lost heritage, crafts, faith, shopping, textiles, and tourism. Furthermore, in this interview, one of the problem-based highlights was stated as a lack of interest in Kemeraltı from the young generations. It was also promising for our study to learn that TARKEM previously organized the Videothon project, inviting social media influencers, including mostly from younger generations, to create videos about Kemeraltı during a one-day workshop. The resulting videos were shared on TARKEM's Instagram account, further promoting the district's attractions (Tarihikemeralti, 2022).

In the light of this interview, to gain a deeper understanding of young people's perceptions of Kemeraltı, we conducted a comprehensive literature review on the joint scholarship of social media and cognitive studies in urban environments, with a specific focus on Kemeraltı. While existing research has explored various aspects of this historical bazaar, there has been a lack of in-depth analysis on how young people engage with the site and the reasons for their waning interest. Therefore, our study aims to address these gaps by examining how young people perceive Kemeraltı and the types of visual data they produce on social media to influence prospective visitors. The study adopts the hypothesis that architectural and spatial performance is increasingly monitored and adapted across social media platforms, as stated by Alaily-Mattar et al. (2024). Moreover, following the literature review, the concept of *sensemaking*, as articulated by Weick (1995), provided a valuable lens and a base for our study for analyzing the existing context of architectural and urban images and developing potential solutions to increase the visibilities of places.

Within this scope, we designed a one-month course with students of a visualization in architecture course. The students tailored themselves various influencer/*sensemaker* roles—in Weick's sense (1995)—and generated

place-based scenarios in combination with the themes voted for and highlighted by TARKEM staff (2024). Accordingly, the themes of gastronomy, shopping, handicrafts, and tourism were preferred by the students and mapped each week through the techniques of cognitive mapping, sketching, and diagrams in the physical environment. This study was synchronically accompanied by the theme and place-based Instagram hashtag research and the design of visual journals (as the Instagram accounts) consisting of the photographs and videos the students took to share their personal influencer/sensemaker routes specific to the selected theme of the week. Ultimately, Kemeraltı's multifaceted genius could be reflected simultaneously on the cognitive and sensory grounds through maps, sketches, diagrams, social media journals, and analyses. The data collected and produced authentically and intersubjectively by the students with both on-site cognitive mapping and Instagram posts, an integrated and collective cognitive map for the Kemeraltı bazaar could be made regarding the visiting preferences of the young sensemakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Intertwined Relationship Between the Physical City and Its Image on Social Media

The conventional ways of analyzing an urban texture are transformed daily with the accelerating technological advances. In this very transformation, social media plays an essential role in the re-identification of a city (Doyle et al., 1998; Shen & Karimi, 2016). Depending on the developments in digital technologies, the use of location data in social media tools has increased, making possible new identity processes implemented through online documentation of spatial mobility. Individuals have begun to share images of the places they visit, share their locations, create online spatial settings, and establish relationships between these places and their personal identities on social media (Yılmaz & Kocabalkancı, 2021). With all the developments, social media became a part of mainstream media; while transforming society, it

also transformed the space, meaning, and identities of the space. On the other hand, Lindgren (2017) indicates digitization compresses time and space, which makes them less critical because communicating with each other no longer requires a specific time block or a location. Eliminating those time and spatial limits creates new opportunities that allow transformation. However, location plays a crucial role in people's identities as well as people's bonds and perceptions of space; all these aspects play an essential role in the identities of the spaces constructed through a combination of different factors (MacDowall & de Souza, 2018).

Studies on the relationship between social media and urban identification especially examine the ways of investigating and sharing tourism destinations and the roles of social media users and influencers in determining and marketing these touristic perspectives (for example, see Bokunewicz & Shulman, 2017; Palazzo et al., 2021). The characteristics of social media, such as participation and community, significantly impact followers' pull and push factors for visiting tourist destinations. Users often tend to choose destinations endorsed by travel influencers. Instagram is an effective platform for accessing travel information, as travel influencers share experiences through photos and engage with followers' comments. This accessibility makes Instagram a vital source of travel-related information for travelers (Hanifah, 2019).

In other words, social media users and influencers work for sensemaking, attach meaning to places, and sometimes augment reality. Thus, the intersubjectivity provided by social media platforms may also have the power to increase or decrease the misleading effects of the subjective evaluations on a topic (Adams et al., 2023)—say, for example, a travel experience to a historical part of a city—by widely accumulating likes or dislikes as well as the explanatory comments and hashtags about that place (Wang & Alasuutari, 2017). Therefore, social media can be recognized as a *sensemaking* tool, in Weick's (1995) perspective. The perception of a single person is merged with the perceptions of the masses by influencing or being influenced by them, by either fading or integrating, but always by contributing to the general perception of the identity of urban spaces. Therefore, we may also claim that social

media users and influencers are the *sensemakers* in digital media platforms (Stump, 2017). As a result, we oriented the students in our workshop to think in that way, visit the site accordingly, and produce visuals for social media and cognitive maps on-site in the role of sensemakers of the historical Kemeraltı bazaar who can influence and lead future visitors to the region.

Therefore, the historical and natural faces of a city can be reformed by tourists and local sensemakers. Social media influencers may take place on the extremities of visitors' sensemaking and decision-making experiences by augmenting the sensual content to influence and attract their followers (Mueller et al., 2023). They may manipulate the perception of a place by putting theme-based makeup on an image of a location, which may serve as a travel magnet for like-minded individuals. Considering the tourist information on social media platforms, Instagram stands out with its visual-based content with photograph, image, and video posts as well as geotags, hashtags, and comments in verbal regard (Leaver et al., 2020). In Turkey, Instagram was the second most-used platform on social media in 2023, with 48.65 million users (Data Reportal, 2024a). Although the number of users has decreased compared to 2022 (Data Reportal, 2024b), the number of digital inhabitants is sufficient to produce the digital echo of the cities. Thus, even if a user does not reside in the physical city, they can comment on that city on social media and influence the image of the city (Marti et al., 2019; Su et al., 2023).

Studies that recognize the digital echoes of physical cities and try to map the latter through the data from social media are numerous (for example, see Adelfio et al., 2020; Crandall et al., 2009; Palazzo et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of literature connecting the individually produced maps in physical cities to the data on social media. Primarily, cognitive maps may be utilized to help tourists discover important and niche locations in a city through the lenses of the experiencers. In this sense, a city guide, for example, gives places to the theme-based cognitive maps such as a "first impression city," "official city," "emotional city," and "invented city," all of which belong to Beirut (Ernsten, 2014). It opens a discussion that subjectively and authentically produced maps, in this regard, may

provide a more profound and more insightful perspective toward the city compared to the technically produced maps of the local governments. We may also come across this logic on Instagram; some traveling accounts may post city maps prepared considering the users' tendencies in, for example, touristic or gastronomic regards (Figure 1).

Studies focusing on the intersection of urban environments and social media have revealed that "Instagrammable" spaces, such as restaurants with photogenic menus, museums designed for social media moments, and aesthetically pleasing stores, can serve as free advertisements for businesses (Campbell et al., 2022). Similarly, research on tourism and social media has gained significant traction. For instance, studies have explored the development of analytical tools to leverage social media data and spatial morphology to enhance tourism studies and decision-making, considering factors like tourist attractions, facilities, and street networks (Suvannadabha et al., 2022). Additionally, previous research has delved into understanding and re-interpreting cities through the lens of students. One such study focused on Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture*, using a design exercise to engage students in exploring town planning methods (Andri Yatmo & Atmodiwirjo, 2023). While these studies offer valuable insights into social media's influence on urban environments, tourism, and student perspectives on cities, research that combines cognitive and sensory mapping with student involvement in historical city contexts remains relatively limited.

In our context, cognitive maps serve to deepen the connection between architecture students as young individuals and the built environment. These maps are not merely tools for indicating points of interest to visit; instead, they are actively used in workshops to share personal experiences, memories, their research on social media, unexpected interactions, and perhaps even problematic conditions within the city. Therefore, cognitive mapping also serves as a powerful tool for connecting social media research with physical examinations of urban environments, enabling a more holistic understanding of visitor experiences.

Figure 1

Food and Drink Travel Guide Mappings for the Konak Region Prepared by Two Popular Travel Pages

Note. (left) From *Izmir*, by Filgezi, 2023, Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/CzTHsCLIFqy/?img_index=1). Copyright 2023 by Filgezi. (right) From *Izmir*, by Kisnisvesaire, 2024 , Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/p/C4JCnf5ray4/?hl=en&img_index=1). Copyright 2024 by Kisnisvesaire.

METHODOLOGY

The Design of the Methodology: Connecting the Cognitive Maps to the Data from Social Media

The methodological track of the study was designed within a four-partite approach, including a preliminary phase comprising a literature review on social media studies in socio-urban cognition and the historical Kemeraltı. This was followed by a three-phased data collection and production stage including: (1) theme-based cognitive mapping on site, (2) Instagram hashtag research and their integration to the first phase maps to discover the visiting tendencies of the users about the region, and (3) prepared visual journals consisting of the photographs and videos on Instagram. Cognitive mapping, which involves the mental representation of spatial information, provides insight into individuals' perceptions, spatial relationships, and mental images of a place. Besides, social media research provides real-time data on how people interact through online platforms and perceive the same space. By integrating these approaches, researchers can gain a holistic understanding of how physical spaces are perceived, interpreted, and represented in digital space.

We encouraged students at the beginning of the course and in each session not to worry about the quality of their representation. Instead, we guided them to focus on conveying a specific idea using a limited set of tools. This approach showed a visible improvement in their graphical development and self-esteem in verbally conveying their weekly findings. As a second pedagogical teaching strategy, we utilized the creation of social media accounts as a tool to engage students with the local community and urban fabric. Instead of remaining non-participant observers, students actively engaged with the local community of Kemeraltı to gather information and request specific permissions. This was considered a powerful method to bridge the gap between social and physical realms. At the conclusion of each course session in Kemeraltı, students convened to display and discuss their visual materials, offering diverse perspectives on the urban area they had explored.

Regarding this framework, the first phase was conducted by us as the instructors; however, we also shared the key sources and papers with the students to inform them about the site and the mapping, diagramming, and sketching techniques. The students conducted the rest of the three-step data collection procedure under our supervision through a four-week workshop experiment. For these three phases, we gave the students the themes (gastronomy, lost heritage, handicrafts, faith/religion, shopping, textiles, and tourism) determined by TARKEM through the Kemeraltı Perception Research survey (TARKEM staff, 2024), and they voted for four themes among the seven to research each in the weekly explorations made during the class hours. Therefore, the workshop consisted of a four week data collection and evaluation process: gastronomy, shopping, handicrafts, and tourism. In the design of the methodology, our primary aim was to encourage students to discover places that grab their attention in a specific regard, map them cognitively on-site by supporting these drawings with diagrams and sketches, check those places simultaneously on Instagram through the geotag and hashtags, and in this way, construct a comparatively built sensemaking process leading them to comprehend the *genius loci* in both the space of places and the space of flows in Castells's (2015) sense.

On the other hand, the six aspects of sensemaking by Weick perfectly work with our methodological phases in the experiment. Our experiment was designed to be conducted in a month, including four data collection phases to make the students follow an *ongoing process* of interpreting and making sense of the historical bazaar (Weick, 1995). While mapping Kemeraltı (in the first phase), their previous drawings were also available to use and remember within an understanding of *retrospective construction* to create a coherent narrative (Weick, 1995). We did not expect them to dissociate their experiences. However, the themes changed because their memories and past experiences influenced how they interpreted new information, which was also valuable for us. The integration of the mapping process (in the first phase) and social media research (in the second phase)

proved essential in *engaging* them *actively* in the sensemaking process (Weick, 1995). The Instagram research based on the theme- and place-based hashtags and comments (in the second phase) supported them in seeking further information about the region and testing their interpretations; their actions and interactions with others re-shaped their understanding of the genius of Kemeraltı. Besides, the intersubjectivity provided by the research on social media posts (in the second phase) helped them not to make sense of things in isolation. The social construction in Weick's (1995) sense, provided by the students' newly designed Instagram accounts (in the third phase) gave them an opportunity for further communication and interaction with others to share and refine their interpretations. At the end of this experiment, *plausibility over accuracy* was another critical aspect since they did not aim to find the unchangeable truth about the sense of a place but to create a plausible explanation that allowed them to make further decisions and act throughout their visits in the region (Weick, 1995).

Within this scope, throughout the first three weeks, we prepared the students for the site trips through reading practices, homework, class-work assignments, lectures, and workshops by inviting instructors with expertise in drawing, sketching, urban theory, and analysis. Afterward, we started to work in Kemeraltı bazaar through four weeks and eight assignments. We collected 42 pieces of work mapping the bazaar on site in the second phase, 53 listing, visualizing, and mapping the site with the hashtags on Instagram in the third phase, and again 53 pieces of work sharing the collected visual data on the Instagram accounts designed by the students in the fourth phase (Table 1). Although 20 students were enrolled in the course, not all could participate in the trips: these rates varied, with a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 17 students, as demonstrated in Table 1.

In the following section, we discussed the data collected and produced during the four-week workshop in three phases by comparing and contrasting the outcomes regarding the socio-urban cognition of the students in the Kemeraltı bazaar.

Table 1

The Data Collected and Produced Through the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Phases of the Workshop Experiment and Its Distribution Regarding the Weeks, Themes, Assignments, and Participant Numbers

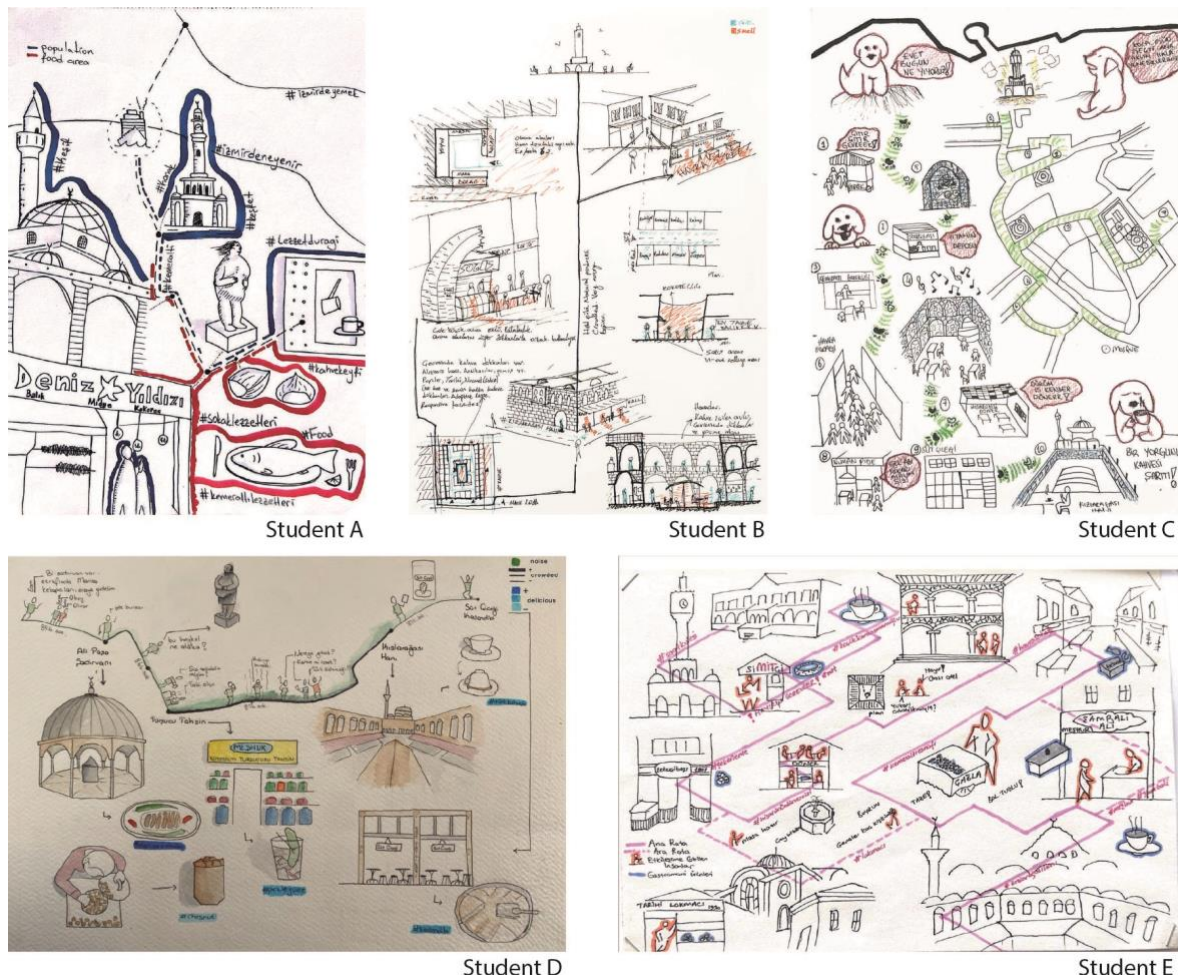| Week / Theme	Assignments given	2nd phase (Mapping on site)	3rd phase (Integration of the Instagram research)	4th phase (Instagram journals)	Participant numbers
1st week / Gastronomy	Classwork (CW04)	10	-	-	13
	Homework (HW04)	-	15	15	15
2nd week / Shopping	Classwork (CW05)	13	-	-	13
	Homework (HW05)	-	16	16	16
3rd week / Handicrafts	Classwork (CW06)	13	-	-	17
	Homework (HW06)	-	10	10	12
4th week / Tourism	Classwork (CW07)	6	-	-	9
	Homework (HW07)	-	12	12	12
Total:		**42**	**53**	**53**	**Max.17 / Min.9**

DISCUSSION

Socio-Urban Discussions of the Outcomes

The first phase: theme-based cognitive mapping on site

After the preliminary phase of the methodological procedures, which comprised the literature review and preparational studies before the site visits, the students started to collect data on-site through cognitive mapping, sketching, and diagramming techniques. Each week, they worked on a single theme and tried to discover the places related to this theme. Therefore, the themes of gastronomy, shopping, handicrafts, and tourism were traced consecutively on the site through the four weeks of the workshop. This phase aimed to make the students comprehend the socio-cultural and historical qualities of the site, sense its genius loci, and transcribe it by reproducing the site's character cognitively through the maps showing their experiences and encounters. Figures 2-5 show some of these transcriptions regarding the themes followed.
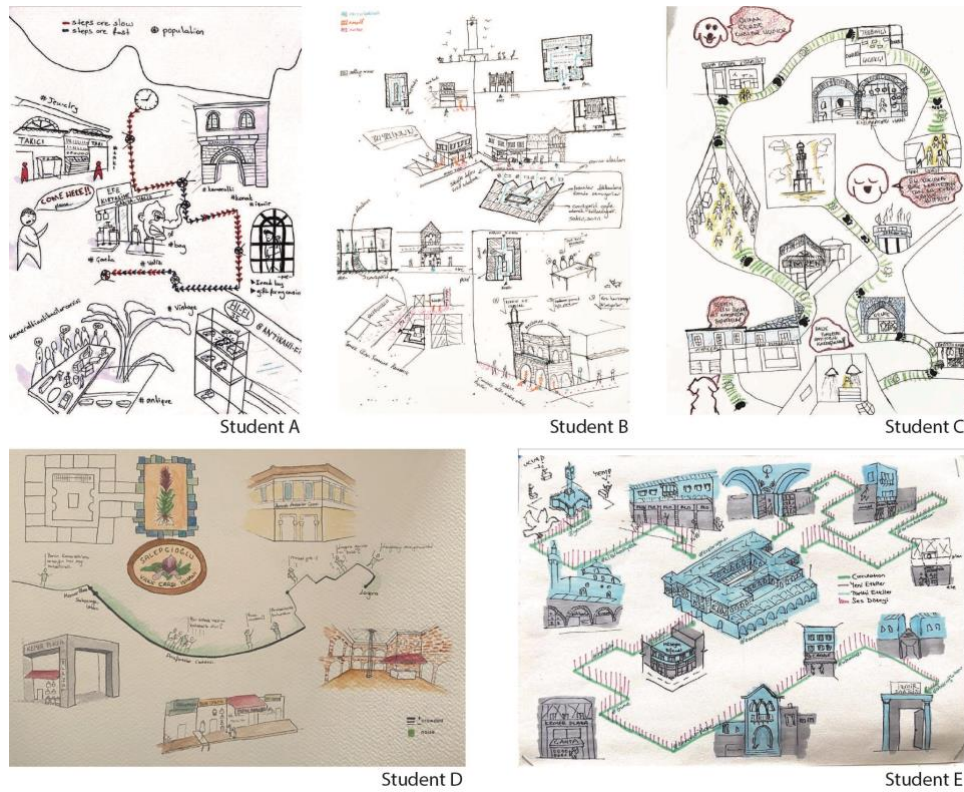
Figure 2

Examples of the First Phase: Cognitive Mapping on Site for the Theme of Gastronomy

Figure 3

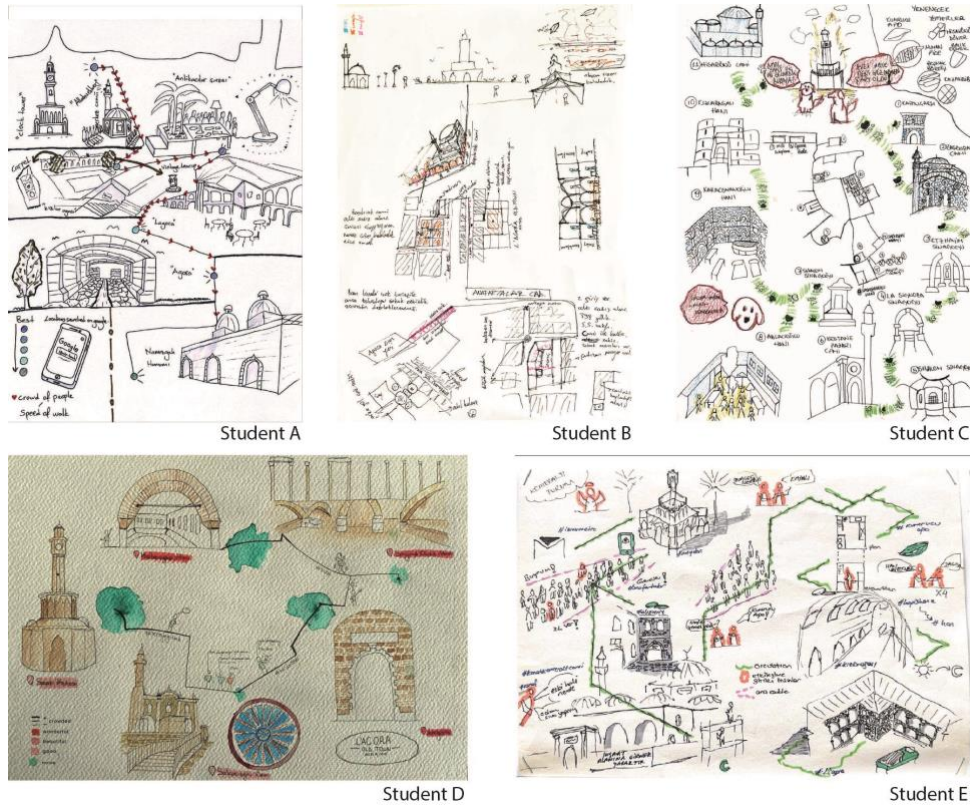*Examples of the First Phase: Cognitive Mapping on Site for the Theme of Shopping*

Student A

Student B

Student C

Student D

Student E

Figure 4

Examples of the First Phase: Cognitive Mapping on Site for the Theme of Handicrafts

Student A

Student B

Student C

Student D

Student E

Figure 5

Examples of the First Phase: Cognitive Mapping on Site for the Theme of Tourism

When we read through the selected examples for the cognitive mapping phase, we may observe that the Clock Tower serves as an entry point to the Kemeraltı region and is not only a symbolic image of the city but also a landmark that aids in orientation (Figure 6a). It has been depicted on multiple maps with nearly identical visual representations. Mostly students draw clock towers as it is, but some students represent the clock tower as the starting point with various symbols. No matter how it is represented, showing the clock tower as the starting point in almost every work highlights its significance in the cognitive mapping of the area. Moreover, Kızlarağası Inn appears on almost every student's cognitive map as a place that includes every theme; it has been shared on all the social media accounts at least once (Figure 6b). Kızlarağası Inn is represented and emphasized in multi-modes of architectural techniques varying from plans to axonometric 3D views, showing
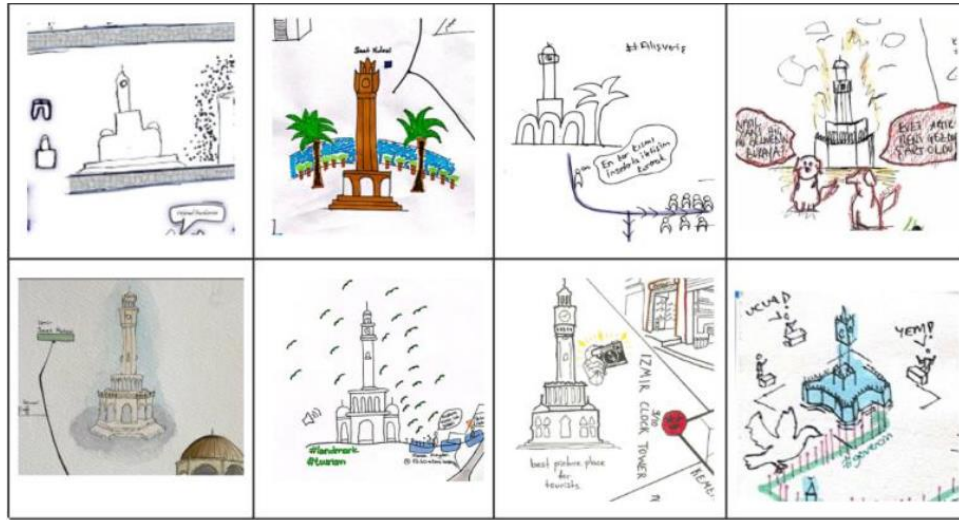
many characteristic aspects of the building. Students could engage and create new meanings in spaces where they could actively participate. The level of architectural representation techniques and graphical detail increases in spaces that students can physically experience rather than just interpreting parallaxes of those spaces. Also, L'agora and Salepçioğlu are among the other prevalent destinations, as reflected in the drawings.

Furthermore, the students have found opportunities to develop empathetic relationships with unexpected subjects, such as the everyday inhabitants of Kemeraltı, shoppers, tourists, artisans, and even stray animals (Sandman, 2021). We hope these experiences will enhance their architectural understanding and practice in the future, as exemplified by Student C's sensemaker persona called Kesifena (see Figures 2-5).
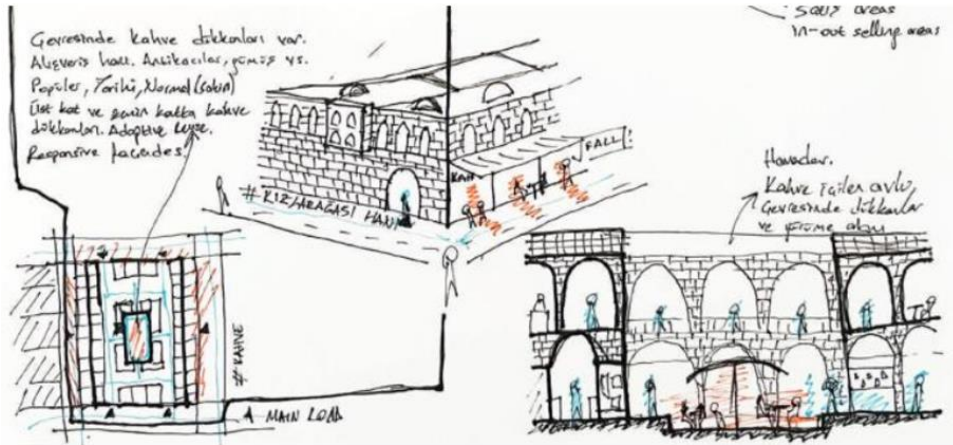
Figure 6

a) The Graphic Pattern of the Konak Clock Tower in the Cognitive Maps; b) Multi-Modal Architectural Explanations of Kızlarağası Inn (Student B)
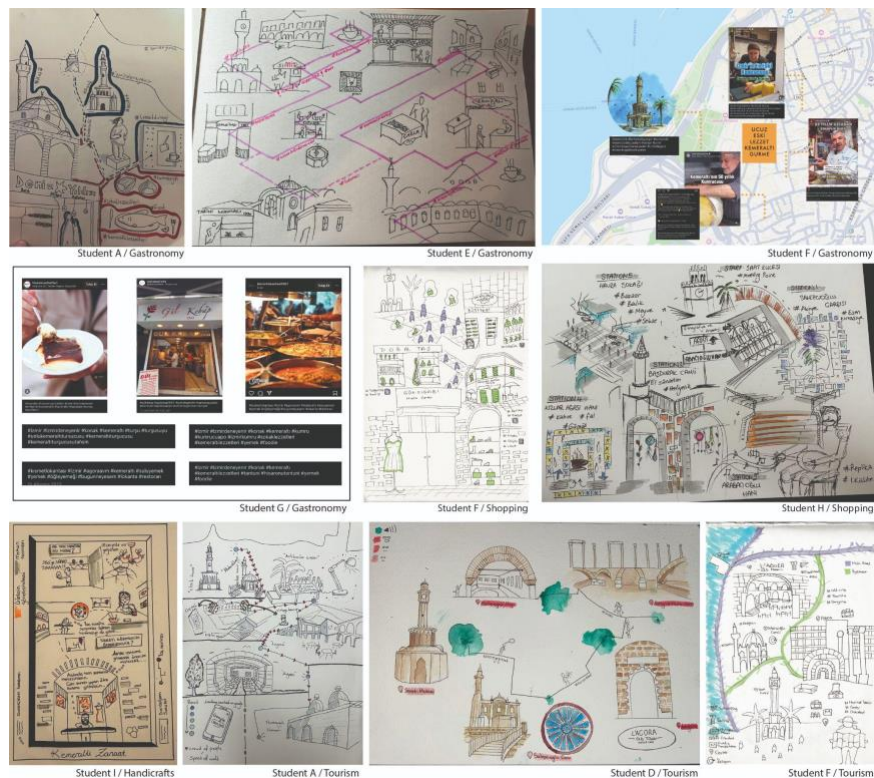

a

b

The second phase: hashtag research and their integration into the first phase maps

The cognitive mapping exercises on site in the first phase of the workshop were accompanied in the second phase by Instagram research through geotags and hashtags, and the students designed social media maps of the digital Kemeraltı to discover the visiting tendencies of the users about the region. While the cognitive maps on site were prepared during class hours within the classwork, the Instagram research and mapping were done as homework to be submitted by the following week. We also required the students to re-visit the physical site during the homework and revise the cognitive map synchronically with the social media research and mapping. Therefore, two sorts of data (physical and digital) could be integrated into each other while acting in this sensemaking process. In Figure 7, some of the Instagram research and mapping is again given regarding the themes followed.

Figure 7

Examples of the Second Phase: Integration of the Cognitive Maps with the Instagram Hashtag Research

Student A / Gastronomy — Student E / Gastronomy — Student F / Gastronomy — Student G / Gastronomy — Student F / Shopping — Student H / Shopping — Student I / Handicrafts — Student A / Tourism — Student D / Tourism — Student F / Tourism

As seen in Figure 7, the students followed different paths to integrate the hashtags on Instagram with the cognitive maps they revised. Some of them did a different mapping to show the user tendencies on social media (Students F and G in gastronomy, as given in Figure 7). Some directly added hashtags on the cognitive maps by pointing out the parallelism between the physical and digital environments (Students A and E in gastronomy, F, and H in shopping, and F in tourism, as shown in Figure 7). The rest of the students preferred to represent the narrations through the symbols of cellular phones (Students I in handicrafts and A in tourism, in Figure 7) and geotags (Student D in tourism, in Figure 7) on social media rather than the hashtags by integrating them into the revised cognitive maps. On the other hand, there are multiple instances where we encounter an additional layer of hashtags on cognitive mappings. These hashtags create an invisible bond between architectural representations and social media accounts simultaneously developed by the students. It is interesting to see how mapped spaces can transform into places characterized by hashtags (Wang & Alasuutari, 2017) based on the suggestions of the students.

The third phase: visual journals on Instagram

Following the previous transitional phase from the cognitive mapping on-site to the mapping via Instagram, the students prepared visual journals consisting of photographs and videos in the third phase. This phase aimed to make the students share what they collected from the site (via pictures and videos) and Instagram (via hashtags and comments). In the first phase, they were informed about the second and third phases; therefore, during the site visits, they could collect data through photographs and videos to be shared on their Instagram accounts designed to create urban narrations to influence the social media users visiting their accounts. While developing the accounts, they were allowed to make specific personas with spatial design tendencies, who would act on the site as if they were an influencer and sensemaker leading the probable visitors in the future. The students especially enjoyed this phase; they could interact

with each other with geotags, hashtags, and comments. Though it would take time to reach a larger audience, many students said they would keep these accounts open and public by turning them into a broader context for traveling. In Figure 8, some of the examples from the posts of these Instagram accounts are presented.

Figure 8

Examples of the Third Phase: Visuals Posted on the Specifically Designed Instagram Accounts of the Students

Student A / Gastronomy   Student A / Handicrafts

Student B / Shopping   Student B / Handicrafts   Student B / Tourism

Student G / Gastronomy   Student G / Handicrafts

We did not orient the students in this phase about the content of the accounts and the style of the influencer/sensemaker personas. They were also free to share their cognitive maps and drawings (like Student A in Figure 8). When we look at the content, we observe that in most of the designed social media accounts, craftsman shops are represented with their facades and artisans. However, other shopping places are mostly depicted with zoom-in shots that exclude the architectural space, encouraging users to focus solely on the products. This spatial exclusion means that local handicraft shops and cultural spaces have a tremendous potential to reflect Kemeraltı's architectural texture and its genuine identity.

On the other hand, inventing architectural storytelling on social media was critical in this phase. Some students found innovative ways to use their social media accounts as storytelling tools, focusing on architectural spaces as the primary attraction material. In several instances, students adopted Instagram's Reel videos to enhance the sense of narration in these spaces. Some students also made their drawings and maps part of their social media accounts (like Student A in Figure 8), which pointed out a method, in the end, that strengthens the relationship between two mediums: cognitive mapping and mapping through social media. Nevertheless, the students could share their experiences in the spaces of places with their followers living in the spaces of flows. By sharing their experiences and insights with their followers through these channels, students strengthen their relationships with their audiences and contribute to a broader discussion about architecture and design in the digital space. It's a method that not only informs, but also encourages and inspires connections between creators and their followers.

Evaluation of the integrated techniques

The students tailored various influencer/sensemaker roles and generated place-based scenarios in combination with the themes. Considering the guidance provided, students had the opportunity to experience different places through an *influencer gaze* during field analysis (Barauah, 2017). This gaze is akin to Urry's *tourist gaze* (2001), encompassing the motivation not only to discover places but also to represent them in a way that influences a specific community. In our study, it is possible to see how architectural spaces are utilized as an infrastructure for gazing, especially when considered in the context of social media visuals (Sawyer & Lindsay, 2024). In our case, we did not assign a particular target community to influence; instead, students selected spatially defined influencer material each week concerning the weekly themes (gastronomy, shopping, handicrafts, and tourism). In hindsight, it is evident that all four workshop themes culminate under the overarching topic of "touristic image." Ultimately, Kemeraltı's multifaceted genius could be reflected on cognitive and sensory grounds through digitally and physically produced cognitive maps, social media journals, and analyses. We could also observe that the students could integrate the intersubjective character of the readily presented data on social media into the subjective and authentic character of the data produced mindfully on the site.
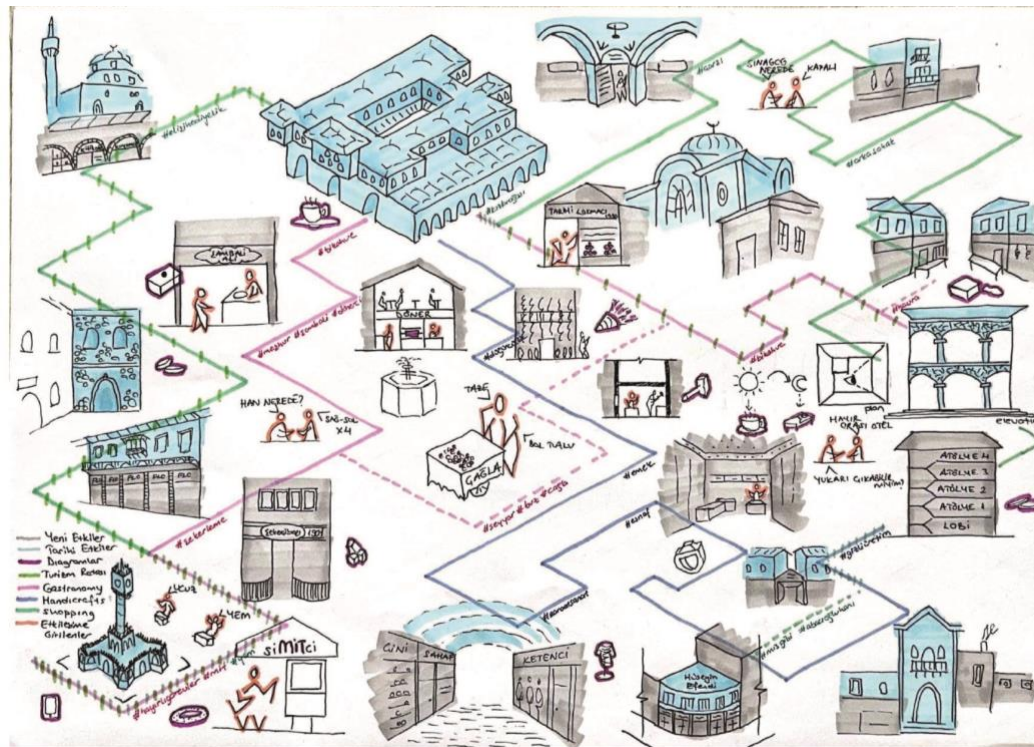
At the end of the workshop experiment, we also required the students to merge all themes and the Instagram research on the same integrated maps by revising and re-drawing the cognitive maps drawn on-site. Regarding this work, we observe that all students could reflect the sense of the space of flows intertwined with the space of places and transcribe Instagram's impression on the maps legibly. Some integrated the hashtags with the places (Figure 9), and some combined the hashtags with the symbolical pictograms representing the functions or socio-culturally important food or objects attached to places (Figure 10). Some preferred to present the effects of social media through emojis representing their feelings in the places (Figure 11), and some utilized the framed flows of Instagram to frame these places (Figure 12).
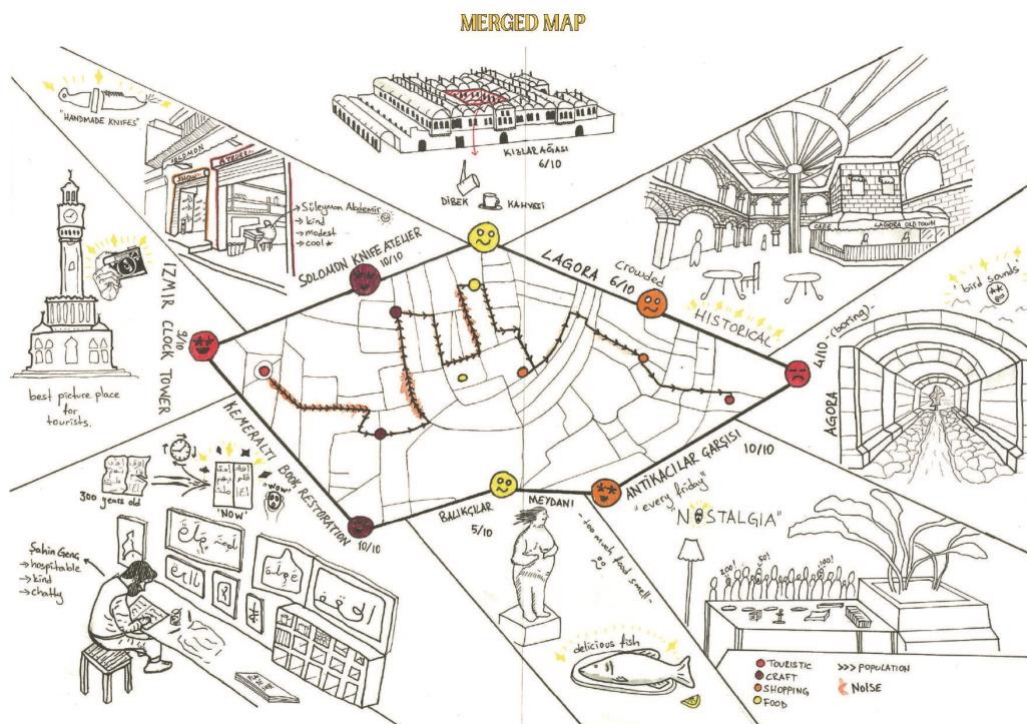
Figure 9

Multi-Layer Mapping of the 4-Week Workshop Showing Multiple Instagrammable Spaces of Kemeraltı by Student B Through the Use of Hashtags

Figure 10

Multi-Layer Mapping of the 4-Week Workshop Showing Multiple Instagrammable Spaces of Kemeraltı by Student E Through the Use of Hashtags and Pictograms
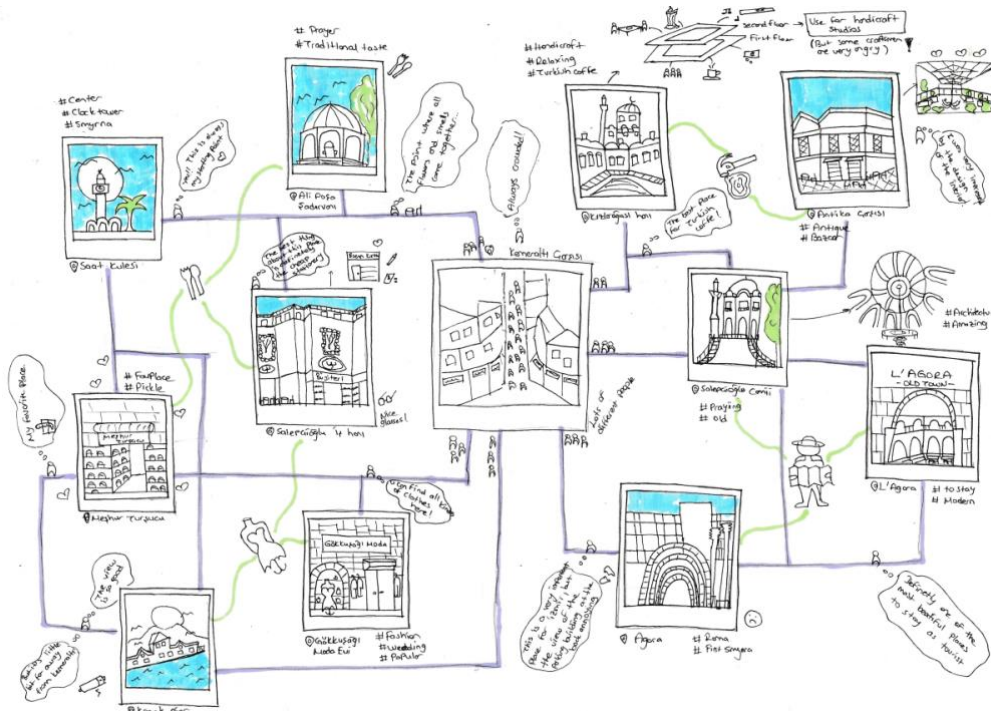

Figure 11

Multi-Layer Mapping of the 4-Week Workshop Showing Multiple Instagrammable Spaces of Kemeraltı by Student A Through the Use of Emojis

Figure 12

Multi-Layer Mapping of the 4-Week Workshop Showing Multiple Instagrammable Spaces of Kemeraltı by Student F Through the Use of Photo Frames

CONCLUSION

This four-phased hybrid study in the historical district of Kemeraltı Bazaar proposes an empirical investigation of architectural spaces' engagement with social media users from a critical urban perspective. It highlights the importance of rethinking urban phenomena by including marginalized voices and encouraging target groups, such as young social media users, to engage with urban spaces actively. The study is limited to a single social media platform (Instagram) for a comparable and easily trackable process. A valuable finding is that, until now, different governing actors and research groups have not explored how Kemeraltı district is perceived and constructed through readings of space on social media. Conducting field research on a single social media platform was deemed sufficient to pioneer this study. However, future studies may illuminate how the city is presented and interpreted within a more extensive social network. In this context, one of the study's essential goals is to involve young user profiles in a content and production hunt within the study area, often noted as starting to distance themselves from this historical part of the city.

An unexpected outcome may be noted as the low level of peer discussion regarding the students' productions. This may result from a lack of interest in the study, or the students may feel insecure discussing each other's findings. There was almost no reaction to each other's work. However, as a positive evaluation, using Instagram as a research tool, students accessed additional layers of information and engaged in a collaborative sensemaking process, interacting with others and developing their interpretations based on shared experiences. The research, conducted through field visits, academic guidance, and digital exploration, has resulted in a wide range of visual and textual work that captures the multifaceted essence of Kemeraltı from multiple perspectives. These findings shed light on the complex interplay between physical space, social interaction, and individual interpretation, highlighting the importance of experiential learning and interdisciplinary collaboration in revealing the rich texture of urban landscapes. As a result, the research not only

contributes to scientific discourses on urban cognition and social media but also enables students to become active participants in the ongoing dialogue regarding the cultural heritage in their environment.

This study emerged from an examination of the research on Kemeraltı in general terms, a literature review based on the cognitive urban analysis and this site, and an interview with a local institution (TARKEM) working on developing the cultural value of the Kemeraltı region. The research revealed that young people do not show interest in experiencing or representing the region. During the pre-class discussion held in the first week of the workshops, it was determined that although the students had been living in Izmir for a long time, they did not have sufficient knowledge about the history of the Kemeraltı region and did not prefer this region for extracurricular/social activities. Therefore, this study aimed to examine how to revitalize the Kemeraltı region on social media to make it a center of attraction for young people through the students' 4-week experiences. At the end of this 4-week study, which was conducted with a group of a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 17 students, it was determined that the participant students could discover many features of Kemeraltı that they had not been aware of (access to all kinds of products, affordable stationery, various food options) and notice the existence of places where they could spend time in their daily lives (for example, L'agora). They also found innovative ways to share their experiences, as discussed in detail in the 4th section above.

Throughout the consecutive assignments of the course, until the end of the term, students continued to produce cognitive maps of various city locations. During this period, we observed that the ones joining the Kemeraltı workshop demonstrated a significantly enhanced ability to produce high-quality representations of the urban environment, combining both physical exploration and digital research on social media. By visiting Kemeraltı, students were able to uncover hidden spatial and cultural nuances, identify personal spaces, and develop innovative ways to share their experiences digitally. They discovered previously unknown aspects of the neighborhood, such as diverse spatial contexts and cultural practices. They also identified potential niche spaces within the urban environment, suggesting increased engagement. Additionally, they found creative ways to learn from others' experiences and to document and share theirs on Instagram through photos and videos. This result underscores the importance of incorporating more workshops and studies into architectural education to foster a deeper understanding of cities through a variety of representational media.

Our experiment yielded three key proposals to follow, in this respect: (1) Incorporating field trips to historically or naturally significant sites enhances student engagement with the city and fosters a deeper understanding of the built environment's positive and negative aspects; (2) Integrating social media data research with physical examinations of the city can encourage young people to visit more frequently and inspire them to address observed problems; and (3) Inviting young people to interact with historical environments through activities like spending time, observing, talking, drawing, and exploring can help local governments identify and address issues such as a loss of interest among younger generations.

Future studies resulting from research conducted in Kemeraltı could explore various ways to deepen our understanding of urban cognition, digital interaction, sensemaking, and placemaking. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of exposure to social media on individuals' perceptions and behaviors in urban areas, such as Kemeraltı. This may include tracking changes in visitor demographics, thematic preferences, and social interaction patterns over time to identify evolving trends and dynamics. Additionally, comparative studies can be conducted to evaluate how similar methodologies applied in different cultural contexts provide different perspectives on urban perception and experience. It is of great importance to search and analyze urban spaces, especially those of historical importance, using digital and analog methods to construct the city image through the perceptions of its inhabitants/visitors. If these studies increase, the cities of places and the cities of flows can be organized and lived in more healthily by establishing a dialogue with their users.

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