

**TRANSFORMING URBAN LANDSCAPES: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ART IN
KADIKÖY'S OPEN SPACES AND GREEN AREAS**

Scientific paper
submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Public art plays a crucial role in transforming urban landscapes, serving as a catalyst for social cohesion, cultural expression, and urban revitalization. This study explores the significance of public art in Kadıköy, Istanbul, as a case study for understanding its impact on urban spaces. Through a multidisciplinary approach, including literature review, case studies, and impact assessment, key findings emerge regarding the effectiveness of public art in reshaping Kadıköy's open spaces and green areas.

Findings indicate that public art in Kadıköy fosters community engagement, celebrates cultural identity, and enhances the aesthetic appeal of the district. By analyzing notable public art projects, such as murals, sculptures, and installations, the study identifies best practices for promoting public art, including community engagement, diversity, and sustainability. Despite challenges such as gentrification and funding constraints, public art in Kadıköy serves as a powerful tool for urban regeneration and cultural enrichment.

The significance of public art in Kadıköy extends beyond mere decoration; it reflects the district's values, aspirations, and collective memory. Through collaborative efforts between policymakers, urban planners, artists, and residents, Kadıköy has emerged as a vibrant hub of creativity and inclusivity, showcasing the transformative potential of public art in urban development. This study suggests avenues for future research, including longitudinal studies and comparative analyses, to further explore the impact of public art on urban landscapes worldwide.

Keywords:

Urban Art, Public Spaces, Green Areas, Aesthetics, Cultural Engagement, Spatial Recognition, Wayfinding, Landmarks, Community Interaction, City Identity.

INTRODUCTION

Urban spaces are not merely environments of concrete and steel; they are living, breathing ecosystems that shape and are shaped by the individuals who inhabit them. Within this dynamic landscape, public art emerges as a powerful tool for transforming urban environments, enriching cultural experiences, and fostering a sense of community and identity. From towering murals adorning the sides of buildings to whimsical sculptures nestled in parks, public art has the ability to redefine and reimagine the spaces we navigate on a daily basis (Spence, C.2020).

In the vibrant tapestry of urban landscapes, public art serves as more than mere aesthetic embellishment; it functions as a catalyst for social cohesion, cultural expression, and urban transformation. From towering sculptures to vibrant murals adorning city walls, public art has the power to redefine the character of urban spaces, inviting interaction, dialogue, and introspection among residents and visitors alike. In this study, we delve into the significance of public art in shaping urban environments, with a specific focus on its role in transforming the open spaces and green areas of Kadıköy (Cheng Y, et al. 2023).

Public art transcends the confines of traditional galleries and museums, democratizing access to art by embedding it within the fabric of everyday life. It creates points of convergence, encouraging community engagement and fostering a sense of belonging among diverse populations. Through its ability to provoke thought, evoke emotion, and spark conversation, public art enhances the livability of cities, making them more dynamic and culturally enriched environments (Grodach, Carl. 2009).

Nestled on the Asian side of the vibrant metropolis of Istanbul, Kadıköy emerges as a prime exemplar of urban regeneration through public art. Historically, Kadıköy has been a hub of trade, culture, and innovation, but like many urban areas, it has faced challenges such as overcrowding, pollution, and neglect of public spaces. However, in recent years, Kadıköy has undergone a remarkable transformation, leveraging the power of public art to breathe new life into its open spaces and green areas (**Akkuzu, İdil. 2019**).

Through strategic planning and collaboration between local authorities, artists, and community stakeholders, Kadıköy has revitalized its urban landscape, turning neglected corners into vibrant hubs of creativity and community engagement. From the iconic street art of the Moda district to the whimsical sculptures adorning Fenerbahçe Park, public art has become an integral part of Kadıköy's identity, reflecting its rich cultural heritage and progressive spirit (**Vural Arslan, et al. 2011**).

Our study focuses on the pivotal role of public art in the transformation of urban landscapes, with a specific focus on Kadıköy, a vibrant district nestled on the Asian side of Istanbul, Turkey. By delving into the diverse array of public art installations peppered throughout Kadıköy, we can uncover the ways in which art intersects with urban planning, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

Our study seeks to investigate the multifaceted role of public art in reshaping the open spaces and green areas of Kadıköy as a catalyst for urban regeneration. By analyzing the implementation of various artistic interventions and their effects on the community and the environment, we aim to elucidate the significance of public art as a tool for sustainable urban development. Through this exploration, we seek to uncover valuable insights that can inform future urban planning initiatives and contribute to the enrichment of urban landscapes worldwide.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC ART ON COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Public art plays a crucial role in shaping community identity by reflecting and celebrating the cultural, historical, and social narratives of a place. Through murals, sculptures, and installations, public art creates visual markers that resonate with residents and visitors, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in local heritage. Research by Sharon Zukin (1995) emphasizes the role of public art in redefining urban landscapes and reinforcing community identity, particularly in diverse and rapidly changing neighborhoods (**Guinard, et al. 2017**).

Moreover, public art serves as a catalyst for social cohesion by providing shared spaces for interaction and dialogue among diverse populations. The presence of art in public spaces encourages spontaneous encounters and facilitates connections between individuals from different backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity and understanding. Studies by Markusen and Gadwa (2010) and Bianchini (1995) underscore the role of public art in promoting social inclusion and bridging social divides within urban communities (**Suwaidi, et al. 2017**).

Public art not only reflects the identity of a community but also shapes it. When individuals interact with public art, they form emotional connections to their surroundings, strengthening their sense of belonging and attachment to their neighborhood. This sense of ownership can lead to increased civic engagement and participation in community activities, further enhancing social cohesion and fostering a collective sense of responsibility for the well-being of the urban environment (**Francis, et al. 2012**).

THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS RELEVANT TO UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC ART AND URBAN SPACES

Several theoretical frameworks help understand the complex relationship between public art and urban spaces. Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of "the production of space" highlights how public art contributes to the social production of urban environments, shaping the lived experiences of individuals within these spaces. Lefebvre argues that public art is not merely decorative but actively participates in the construction of urban meanings and identities (**Taylor, et al. 2007**).

Additionally, Richard Florida's (2002) concept of the "creative class" posits that vibrant artistic and cultural scenes contribute to economic growth and urban revitalization. According to Florida, cities that attract and retain creative individuals through investments in arts and culture experience greater economic prosperity and social vitality. Public art, therefore, becomes instrumental in positioning cities as desirable places to live, work, and invest (**Lawton, et al. 2010**).

Furthermore, David Harvey's (1989) notion of the "right to the city" emphasizes the importance of public participation and democratic decision-making in shaping urban spaces. Public art projects that engage local communities in the planning and implementation process not only reflect the diverse voices and perspectives of residents but also empower them to actively shape the future of their neighborhoods. By democratizing access to

urban resources and cultural opportunities, public art contributes to the realization of more inclusive and equitable cities (**Vergara-Perucich F, et al. 2024**).

Previous studies on public art in urban spaces have yielded valuable insights into its various impacts and outcomes. Research by Ley and Olds (1988) suggests that public art projects can lead to increased property values and economic development, particularly in areas undergoing revitalization (Sharp, Jo, et al. 2005). Similarly, studies by Landry et al. (1996) and De Wit et al. (2015) highlight the positive effects of public art on tourism and place branding, as well as its role in enhancing the overall aesthetic quality of urban environments (**Kasapi, Irisi, et al. 2017**).

Moreover, research by (**Cilliers, Elizelle, et al. 2014**) emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to public art planning and implementation. Engaging local communities in the decision-making process ensures that public art projects resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of residents, fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship over shared urban spaces.

CONTEXTUALIZING KADIKÖY

Kadıköy, situated on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, holds a rich tapestry of history, culture, and diversity. Originally known as Chalcedon, the area dates back to ancient times, tracing its roots to Greek colonization in the 7th century BCE. Over the centuries, Kadıköy has witnessed the rise and fall of empires, serving as a strategic hub for trade and commerce. Today, it stands as a bustling district teeming with life, blending modernity with tradition in its vibrant streets, bustling markets, and picturesque waterfront.

Demographically, Kadıköy is a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities, reflecting Istanbul's cosmopolitan character. With a population of over half a million residents, Kadıköy is home to Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and other ethnic groups, contributing to its rich cultural mosaic. The district's demographic diversity is mirrored in its architectural heritage, with historic buildings coexisting alongside modern developments, creating a unique juxtaposition of old and new.

EXISTING STATE OF PUBLIC ART IN KADIKÖY

Kadıköy boasts a diverse array of public art installations that enrich its urban landscape and reflect its eclectic character. From colorful murals adorning building facades to whimsical sculptures scattered across parks and squares, public art in Kadıköy serves as a vibrant expression of creativity and cultural identity. The Moda and Çarşı neighborhoods, in particular, have emerged as hotspots for street art, attracting both local and international artists to leave their mark on the district's walls.

In recent years, Kadıköy Municipality has taken proactive steps to promote and preserve public art in the district. Initiatives such as the Kadıköy Street Art Festival and the Kadıköy Public Art Biennial have provided platforms for artists to showcase their work and engage with the community. Additionally, the municipality has collaborated with local arts organizations and community groups to commission public art projects that reflect Kadıköy's heritage and values.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING PUBLIC ART INTO THE URBAN LANDSCAPE OF KADIKÖY.

Despite the flourishing public art scene in Kadıköy, several challenges persist in integrating art into the urban landscape effectively. One such challenge is the tension between commercialization and artistic integrity, as gentrification and urban development threaten to commodify and homogenize the district's cultural identity. Balancing the need for economic growth with the preservation of artistic authenticity requires careful planning and community engagement to ensure that public art remains accessible and inclusive (Rommetvedt, Hilmar. 2008).

Furthermore, the maintenance and preservation of public art installations pose logistical challenges for local authorities. Ensuring the longevity of outdoor artworks in the face of weathering, vandalism, and neglect requires ongoing investment in conservation efforts and community stewardship. Moreover, navigating bureaucratic processes and securing funding for public art projects can be arduous, particularly for independent artists and grassroots initiatives seeking to contribute to Kadıköy's cultural landscape.

Nevertheless, Kadıköy's vibrant arts community and supportive local government present numerous opportunities for enhancing the integration of public art into the urban fabric. By fostering collaboration between artists, residents, and policymakers, Kadıköy can leverage its cultural capital to create innovative and sustainable solutions for enlivening public spaces and promoting social cohesion. Embracing a holistic approach to urban development that prioritizes creativity, diversity, and community participation will ensure that public

art continues to thrive as an integral part of Kadıköy's identity for generations to come (Dash, Shanta, et al. 2023).

CASE STUDIES OF PUBLIC ART PROJECTS IN KADIKÖY

Kadıköy, with its dynamic cultural scene and vibrant community, is home to several notable public art projects that enrich the district's urban landscape and reflect its eclectic character. In this study, we delve into the details of selected public art installations, analyzing their artistic concepts, mediums used, and their impact on the surrounding environment and community.

1. "THE MURAL OF ATATÜRK"

One of the most iconic public art projects in Kadıköy is the mural of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, located in the bustling Kadife Sokak. This larger-than-life mural pays homage to Atatürk's legacy and enduring influence on Turkish society. Created by local artist İsmail Acar, the mural captures Atatürk's stoic visage in vibrant colors, evoking a sense of reverence and admiration.

The artistic concept behind the mural is to celebrate Atatürk's visionary leadership and his contributions to modernizing Turkey. Acar's use of bold lines and vivid hues creates a striking visual impact, drawing attention to the mural's central figure and inviting contemplation from passersby. By situating the mural in a busy thoroughfare, the artist ensures that Atatürk's presence is felt throughout the community, serving as a reminder of the nation's history and ideals.

The reception of the mural by residents and visitors has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing appreciation for its artistic merit and historical significance. Local authorities have also embraced the mural as a symbol of civic pride, highlighting Kadıköy's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage through public art.

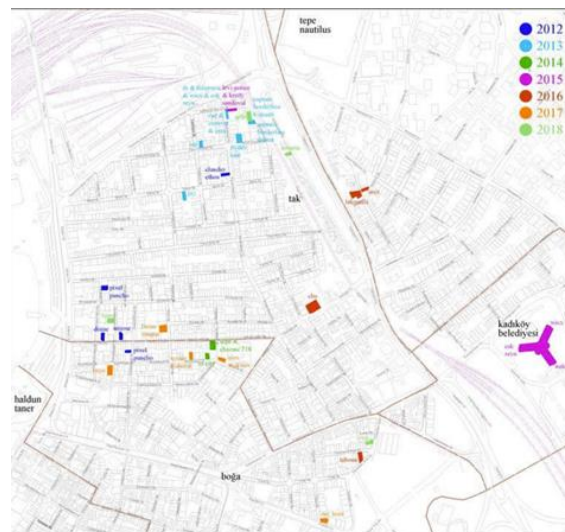


Figure 1 Mural Map of Kadıköy 2012-2018 (Source: Kadıköy Municipality)

2. "Floating Forest" Installation

Another noteworthy public art project in Kadıköy is the "Floating Forest" installation, located in Göztepe Park. Conceived by environmental artist Büşra Tunç, this immersive installation transforms discarded plastic bottles into a mesmerizing canopy of hanging gardens, symbolizing the intersection of nature and urban life. By repurposing waste materials into a sculptural masterpiece, Tunç draws attention to environmental sustainability and the need to protect natural resources.

The artistic concept behind "Floating Forest" is to provoke reflection on humanity's relationship with the environment and the impact of consumerism on ecosystems. Tunç's choice of materials — plastic bottles filled with soil and adorned with greenery — serves as a poignant reminder of the ecological consequences of modern living. The installation's ethereal beauty and thought-provoking message captivate audiences, inspiring them to reconsider their consumption habits and adopt more sustainable practices.

Residents and visitors alike have responded enthusiastically to the "Floating Forest" installation, marveling at its ingenuity and ecological consciousness. Local authorities have lauded Tunç's creative vision, recognizing the installation as a shining example of art's power to raise awareness and inspire positive change in communities.

3. "Unity in Diversity" Sculpture

A striking example of public art promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in Kadıköy is the "Unity in Diversity" sculpture, located in Yoğurtçu Park. Designed by sculptor Mehmet Aksoy, this monumental artwork celebrates the district's cultural diversity and the harmonious coexistence of different ethnic and religious communities.

The sculpture features intertwining figures representing various cultural and ethnic identities, symbolizing the strength and resilience of Kadıköy's multicultural fabric. Aksoy's use of bronze as the medium imparts a sense of permanence and solidity to the artwork, underscoring the enduring values of tolerance and unity.

The "Unity in Diversity" sculpture has garnered widespread acclaim from residents and visitors for its message of inclusivity and respect for diversity. Local authorities have embraced the sculpture as a symbol of Kadıköy's commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all its inhabitants.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The integration of public art into the urban landscape of Kadıköy has yielded significant transformations, enriching the district's cultural fabric, fostering community engagement, and enhancing its aesthetic appeal. In this study, we evaluate the effectiveness of public art in Kadıköy and assess its impact on various aspects of urban life.

EFFECTIVENESS IN TRANSFORMING URBAN SPACES

Public art has played a pivotal role in redefining the character and ambiance of Kadıköy's urban spaces, turning neglected corners into vibrant hubs of creativity and community interaction. Through murals, sculptures, and installations, artists have infused life and vitality into the district's streets, parks, and public squares, creating visually stunning environments that captivate the imagination and inspire dialogue.

Moreover, public art has served as a catalyst for urban regeneration, revitalizing underutilized spaces and attracting visitors from across the city and beyond. By transforming bland walls into colorful canvases and drab plazas into dynamic cultural hubs, public art projects have breathed new life into Kadıköy, contributing to its reputation as a thriving center of artistic innovation and expression (Palermo, Luca, 2014).

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Public art has fostered a sense of community pride and ownership among residents of Kadıköy, strengthening social bonds and promoting civic engagement. Through participatory art projects and community-driven initiatives, residents have had the opportunity to shape their surroundings and contribute to the district's cultural identity. This sense of ownership and belonging has led to increased stewardship of public spaces and a greater sense of responsibility for preserving Kadıköy's artistic heritage for future generations.

Furthermore, public art has served as a vehicle for celebrating Kadıköy's diverse cultural heritage and promoting inclusivity and tolerance. Murals depicting scenes from local folklore, sculptures honoring historical figures, and installations celebrating multiculturalism have reinforced the district's reputation as a melting pot of cultures and ideologies, fostering dialogue and understanding among its diverse inhabitants (Eraydın, Ayda, et al. 2017).

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite its many benefits, the integration of public art into Kadıköy's urban landscape has encountered several challenges and limitations. One such challenge is the risk of gentrification and commercialization, as the popularity of public art projects may attract investment and development that threatens to displace long-standing residents and businesses. Balancing the need for economic growth with the preservation of Kadıköy's cultural authenticity requires careful planning and community engagement to ensure that public art remains accessible and inclusive.

Additionally, the maintenance and preservation of public art installations present logistical challenges for local authorities, particularly in the face of weathering, vandalism, and neglect. Ensuring the longevity of outdoor artworks requires ongoing investment in conservation efforts and community stewardship to protect them from harm and degradation (Irgang, Harriet, et al. 2005).

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the insights gleaned from the case studies and literature review, as well as practical experiences in Kadıköy, several best practices emerge for promoting public art in urban spaces. These practices serve as guiding principles for policymakers, urban planners, and artists interested in leveraging the transformative power of art to enhance the vitality and livability of cities.

1. Community Engagement and Collaboration

One of the most crucial best practices is to prioritize community engagement and collaboration throughout the public art process. By involving residents, stakeholders, and local organizations from the outset, policymakers and planners can ensure that public art projects are rooted in the needs and aspirations of the community. Collaborative decision-making processes foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents, leading to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Geekiyana, et al. 2020).

2. Diversity and Inclusivity

Another best practice is to embrace diversity and inclusivity in public art projects, reflecting the rich tapestry of cultures, histories, and identities present in urban communities. By celebrating cultural diversity and amplifying marginalized voices, artists can create artworks that resonate with a wide range of audiences, fostering empathy, understanding, and social cohesion. Embracing inclusivity also entails providing equitable access to public art and ensuring that artworks reflect the experiences and perspectives of all residents (Hawkes, Jon, 2001).

3. Sustainability and Resilience

Public art projects should prioritize sustainability and resilience, both in terms of artistic materials and environmental impact. Utilizing eco-friendly materials, repurposing existing resources, and incorporating sustainable design principles can minimize the ecological footprint of public art installations and contribute to the overall resilience of urban environments. Additionally, public art can serve as a platform for raising awareness about environmental issues and inspiring collective action towards a more sustainable future (Azhari, Syamim, 2014).

Recommendations:

1. Policy Support: Develop policies and guidelines that support the integration of public art into urban planning and development processes, providing incentives and funding mechanisms to encourage investment in cultural infrastructure and artistic expression.

2. Capacity Building: Invest in capacity building initiatives to empower local artists and community organizations to lead public art projects, providing training, resources, and networking opportunities to enhance their skills and expand their impact.

3. Public-Private Partnerships: Foster partnerships between government agencies, private businesses, and philanthropic organizations to fund and implement public art projects, leveraging resources and expertise from multiple stakeholders to maximize the reach and sustainability of initiatives.

4. Education and Awareness: Promote public awareness and appreciation of public art through educational programs, public events, and digital platforms, engaging residents and visitors in discussions about the value of art in enriching urban environments and fostering social cohesion.

5. Adaptive Reuse: Embrace adaptive reuse strategies to repurpose existing structures and spaces for public art installations, transforming underutilized areas into vibrant cultural destinations that contribute to the revitalization of urban neighborhoods.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers:

1. Community Outreach: Proactively engage with local communities and stakeholders to address concerns, gather input, and build consensus around public art projects, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration from the outset.

2. Flexibility in Design: Design public art projects with flexibility and adaptability in mind, allowing for iterative development and adjustment based on feedback from stakeholders and evolving community needs.

3. Public-Private Collaboration: Foster partnerships between public agencies, private developers, and community organizations to overcome funding constraints and bureaucratic hurdles, pooling resources and expertise to navigate complex regulatory processes and secure support for public art initiatives.

4. Long-Term Planning: Incorporate public art into long-term urban planning strategies and development frameworks, ensuring that it is integrated into the fabric of the city and given due consideration in decision-making processes related to land use, infrastructure, and public space design.

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CONCLUSION

Our study has explored the multifaceted role of public art in transforming urban spaces, with a specific focus on its impact on the district of Kadıköy in Istanbul. Through a comprehensive literature review, case studies of notable public art projects, and an evaluation of their effectiveness, several key findings have emerged.

Public art serves as a powerful catalyst for urban transformation, fostering community engagement, celebrating cultural identity, and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of urban environments. In Kadıköy, public art has revitalized neglected spaces, promoted social cohesion, and celebrated the district's rich cultural heritage, contributing to its reputation as a vibrant hub of creativity and innovation.

The significance of public art in Kadıköy extends beyond mere aesthetic embellishment; it reflects the district's values, aspirations, and collective memory. From iconic murals honoring historical figures to immersive installations promoting environmental sustainability, public art in Kadıköy serves as a visual testament to the community's resilience, creativity, and spirit of inclusivity.

Looking ahead, there are several avenues for future research and exploration in this field. Scholars may delve deeper into the social, economic, and environmental impacts of public art in urban contexts, conducting longitudinal studies to assess its long-term effects on community well-being and urban development. Additionally, comparative studies across different cities and cultures can provide valuable insights into the universal principles and contextual nuances of public art's role in shaping urban landscapes.

Ultimately, the case of Kadıköy demonstrates the transformative potential of public art in reimagining urban spaces as vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich environments. By embracing public art as a cornerstone of urban development, cities can foster creativity, cultivate community pride, and build more resilient and sustainable futures for all their residents.

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