Chapter XVI
Spatial Transformations in Istanbul CBD: The Role of ICT?

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ABSTRACT

Now with the intensive use of information and communication technologies, many cities around the world are competing to become a global city. Istanbul is enumerated within the first 50 cities in the globalization process, other than the triad of New York, London, and Tokyo. This chapter explores urban space transformation of Maslak, the contemporary central business district of Istanbul, with respect to information and communication technologies, by using deconcentration and economic restructuring approaches of urban theory. Compared to other global cities, Istanbul has distinctive characteristics, since it has been passing through a unique transformation process. More specifically, its economic, political, and social characteristics distinguish Istanbul from other cities within the same category (Gamma) of world cities. This study has revealed that transformations in Istanbul were not primarily driven by information and communication technologies. In contrast information and communication technology’s role in the transformation of the Istanbul central business district is only a contributing factor.
INTRODUCTION

By the acceleration and intensification of technological innovations, especially in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their use and diffusion in the daily life, appeared a variety of debates within academic circles. ICT is also considered as one of the most influential components of the globalization process as the main driving force for the recent economic, political, and social changes. What is remarkable in these debates is the argument that cities within the globalization process inevitably display spatial transformations in urban space that could not be grasped without considering the impacts of ICT.

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate on the spatial transformation of Maslak, Istanbul as the ICT-intensive CBD formation and its underlying processes driven by the interactions between ICT and globalization. The conceptual tools deconcentration and economic restructuring approaches provide are used to scrutinize these processes. Although cities seem to follow similar trajectories under globalization, each of them undergoes different spatial production due to its political, economic, cultural, and social dynamics. As it is elaborated in the following sections, ICT cannot be interpreted simply as one of the main factors especially in Istanbul. In other words, the findings of the study illustrate that ICT has been a contributing factor in the urban transformation of Istanbul, especially in the Maslak case, rather than being a dominant driving force of the complex process of globalization and relevant spatial changes. There are other factors than ICT, of which the influences on the spatial arrangements have been more visible, such as transportation and accessibility to the CBD, spread of the center functions towards existing sub-centers, zoning policies, land ownership, and land speculations.

The scope of this study is to show the spatial transformation process by using the longitudinal data series of Maslak, which has emerged as the new CBD for ICT-intensive firms (see Figure 1). The key conditions of the transformation processes of Istanbul CBD were examined by using development plans, statistical data, planning policies in specific planning periods, and their respective political and spatial characteristics. However, there had been difficulties in collecting some of the data because of the privatization of Turk Telekom and legal restrictions on detailed land use and land ownership data. Since comprehensive data and information are not publicly accessible, in order to examine the changes in Maslak, we used

Figure 1. The districts surrounding Maslak
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