

# Social and Spatial Changes In Urban Historic Neighbourhoods: Case of the Cihangir District-Istanbul

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## Abstract

The term “gentrification” was introduced by sociologist Ruth Glass after her observation of the handover process of old Victorian-style houses in London and has since been discussed at length by scholars, especially regarding its scope and results. The Cihangir district of İstanbul is located in Beyoğlu County, in the west of the city. It had been a settlement for non-Muslim populations throughout the centuries and had experienced social and spatial changes. These started with the departure of those ethnic minorities who were subjected to a population exchange. The process of change in Cihangir continued with the decay of its physical structure and the collapse of its socio-economic conditions. A civil initiative rehabilitation program began after the 1980s, and the neighbourhood became a popular choice for artists, writers and architects. In this context, this study aims to discuss the spatial and social changes experienced by the Cihangir district and to compare these changes with the characteristics of the gentrification process. This study is unique in the sense that the criteria of gentrification are defined and examined within Cihangir district to reveal whether such neighbourhood is exposed to the effects of gentrification or not.

*Keywords: Urban historic neighbourhood; urban conservation; gentrification; Cihangir neighbourhood*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries and cities experienced the results of a wide-spread de-industrialization process that gathered pace after the 1960s. One result of this was the physical and social decline of urban centres. However, many of these centres later underwent a re-appraisal, in terms of their location-desirability, and a process of re-investment began. This re-investment produced a tendency amongst white-collar workers to return to residential areas close to the city centre. During this period, sociologist Ruth Glass [1] introduced the term “gentrification”, which was based on observations she made in London of the handover of old Victorian-style houses that had increased in value following rehabilitation and restoration processes.

While Harvey defines gentrification as a strategy for urban renewal [2], Tekeli considers this term to be a useful tool that can be used to ensure the sustainability of vulnerable areas of the urban fabric [3]. Zukin argues that gentrification began as a movement in the 1960s and that it is controlled by private sector investment in the main parts of the city centre, where more dilapidated housing stock often exists and emphasises that such changes lead to the clustering of new socio-cultural groups [4]. On the other hand, Bailey and Robertson predicate that the gentrification process consists of two main elements: The return of white-collar workers who constitute the professional/managerial class, who are a product of de-industrialization, to the city centre, and the displacement process of poorer households [5].

Although the term “gentrification” is disputed by different scholars who define it according to different perspectives and definitions, the basic approaches regarding the gentrification process are concentrated on Neil Smith’s “Rent Gap Theory” and David Ley’s consumer demand-oriented approach. The Rent Gap Theory asserts that any change taking place in a city centre occurs as a result of negative and irregular capital investment; on the other hand, Ley’s theory emphasises the changing demands of the new middle class, whose choice of living space is concentrated in the city centre [6].

Scholars, therefore, express gentrification as a spontaneous process [1]; a planned movement driven by private sector investments [4]; a situation that is a product of differentiation regarding the demands of white-collar workers returning the city center and thus triggering transformation [5]; a process that occurs when the difference between the potential value and the existing value of a site reaches a maximum (rent gap theory) [7]; an effective strategy for urban renewal and urban conservation [2]; and a useful tool by means to increase the sustainability of conservation areas [3].

## **2. PROCESS OF GENTRIFICATION: COMPONENTS, EFFECTS AND CASES**

According to observations made by Engels, it can be said that similar processes to modern gentrification took place in Britain in the mid-19th century. In America, gentrification began to make its presence felt between 1930 and 1940 [8]; it became more pronounced in the 1960s and expanded to most of the old towns in the 1970s [7]. In the 1990s, gentrification was considered to be a useful tool for local governments, and as a process of financing by public-private partnerships. At this point, a gentrification process that had initially appeared only in main metropolitan cities became a global phenomenon [9].

### **2.1 Supply and Demand Side Explanations to the Gentrification Process**

In the literature, there are two main topics that trigger the gentrification process: supply-side and demand-side explanations. The first is based on Smith’s “Rent Gap” theory and focuses on the conditions of the production phase of sites subjected to gentrification [8]. The second is based on the demand-driven assumptions of Ley and incorporate the process which emerges as a result of the demands of a new socio-economic group, “gentrifier” [10].

Ley’s theory assumes that the initial driving force of gentrification is the requirements of the new social structure which emerged as a consequence of the process of de-industrialization, and the rise of the service sector, which tends to gravitate towards the city centre [10]. However, Smith argues that gentrification is an inevitable result of neoliberal politics and emphasises that the process will continue as long as the rent gap (the difference between the current value and potential value of a site) increases. According to Smith, gentrification occurs when the rent gap reaches a saturation level, and with the contribution of the actors involved in the process [9].

The gentrifiers of Ley’s demand-side theory, are one of the most important components of the gentrification process due to their higher education and occupational status, and according to Zukin [4], they prefer to settle in the city centre for professional reasons.

As a consequence, the gentrification process displays similar dynamics in different urban areas and continues with the participation of common actors. In some cases, the process is actualised by supply-oriented dynamics, and in others, it is directed towards demand-oriented factors, but in all cases, white-collar workers are always the leading actor of gentrification [25].

### **2.2 Effects of Gentrification on the Local Environment**

Since gentrification is mostly discussed with the same negative connotations as “displacement” and “social stratification”, the negative effects remain in the public mind, unlike any positive results.

However, both negative and positive effects are often produced at the end of the gentrification process in the same manner as other processes in which urban space is changed [11].

According to some researchers [12], the positive effects which increase the quality of the urban environment and provide physical development are more important than the negative effects. However, others [13] concentrate on negative results, such as the creation of new housing problems and social conflicts. Atkinson [14] looks at both and asserts that gentrification has both positive and negative effects on the local environment (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Effects of gentrification to the local environment [14]

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
	Displacement is due to rent increase.
	Secondary psychological effects of displacement.
Stability in urban areas which are in physical decline.	Social disagreement and conflicts.
Increase in real estate prices; decrease in the proportion of vacant housing.	Loss of low-cost housing; unsustainable speculative increase in prices; unemployment.
Increase in local income.	Receiving a greater take of local spending.
Increased liveability.	Commercial/industrial displacement.
Reduction of suburbanization.	Pressure for housing demand and displacement to surrounding poor areas.
A mix of different social groups.	Loss of social diversity.
Reduced the crime rate.	Increased crime rate.
Rehabilitation of housing stock whether or not state sponsorship exists.	Occupation of urban areas and population decline.

Thus, on the one hand, there is a new resource for housing supply and an opportunity for the development of the existing housing stock; and on the other, there are other concerns regarding identity, socio-economic status and housing problems. In this regard, the gentrification process, which is not often considered without a degree of bias due to its negative consequences such as displacement and social stratification, is also revealed to have positive influences [25].

### **2.3 Urban Cases and their Gentrification Processes**

Gentrification has become a process that has been experienced by many cities. In North America, which was one of the first regions to be exposed to gentrification, and in Eastern Europe which was faced with the destructive influence of World War II, there are examples of cities which reflect all aspects of gentrification. In this respect, the cases of Vinohrady (Prague), Society Hill (Philadelphia), Prenzlberg (Berlin) and Harlem (Manhattan) have been examined according to their gentrification processes.

In Vinohrady, the revitalization of some parts of the city centre took place as a result of “commercialization” and “gentrification”. However, the development of gentrification was slower than that of commercialization. In terms of financial support, this was provided by both the public and private sectors. Vinohrady also experienced an influx of administrative professionals and an overall reduction of its population. The point that should not be ignored is that the commercialization and gentrification processes, in this case, have helped to produce projects that are compatible with the historical urban environment [15].

At the beginning of the transition process of Society Hill, sites were bought by the public sector to enable the implementation of a renewal plan. Development projects for these sites came under the control of the local authority. The process of Society Hill was different from that of Vinohrady in terms of the diversity of available financing, the larger geographical impact area, and the involvement of the public sector as a provider for expropriation. With the “gentrification” in Society Hill, an almost ruined physical environment was revitalised [8].

**Table 2.** Urban cases and characteristics of their gentrification processes [8], [14], [15], [16]

<b>Case</b>	<b>Existing Housing Stock</b>	<b>Contributing Causes</b>	<b>Involving Actors</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Vinohrady (Prague)</b>	Dilapidated housing stock because of World War II	Rise of low-income groups and working-class, be added to the UNESCO World Heritage List (1993)	Landowners and local government	Settlement of white-collar workers, displacement and reduction of population
<b>Society Hill (Philadelphia)</b>	Dilapidated housing stock because of abandonment by their original owners after the American Civil War	Afro-American community and working-class, Urban Renewal Plan (1950) and other legislative regulations	Local governments and public-private partnerships	Settlement of wealthy whites, displacement and reduction of population
<b>Prenzlberg (Berlin)</b>	Dilapidated housing stock because of the division of Germany	Rise of low-income groups and working-class, be identified as a redevelopment zone	Public and private sector	Settlement of white-collar workers, displacement and reduction of population
<b>Harlem (Manhattan)</b>	Dilapidated housing stock because of economic depression after World War I	Afro-American population and working-class, close location to the city centre and local projects	Public and private sector	Settlement of white-collar workers, displacement and reduction of population

In the case of Prenzlberg, the public sector played a significant role as a provider of incentives and direct or indirect subsidies to site owners and real estate developers. In this case, the first steps for rehabilitation were implemented by the public sector. This shows that sometimes landowners, and sometimes the private or public sector may be implemental for the renewal process. As a consequence, the dilapidated housing stock was rehabilitated and increased in value, the quality of life increased, but there was also displacement and a reduction in the population [14].

In Harlem, the public sector played a leading role with incentives and implementation projects to accelerate the process. Although the population of Central Harlem was predominantly low-income

Afro-American, the new settlers are ethnically the opposite; most of them come from outside New York City and work in the professional business sector, industry or the Arts. As a result of the gentrification process in Harlem, real estate values increased, and the existing population is faced with displacement. However, gentrification has transformed Harlem into one of Manhattan’s most popular neighbourhoods [16].

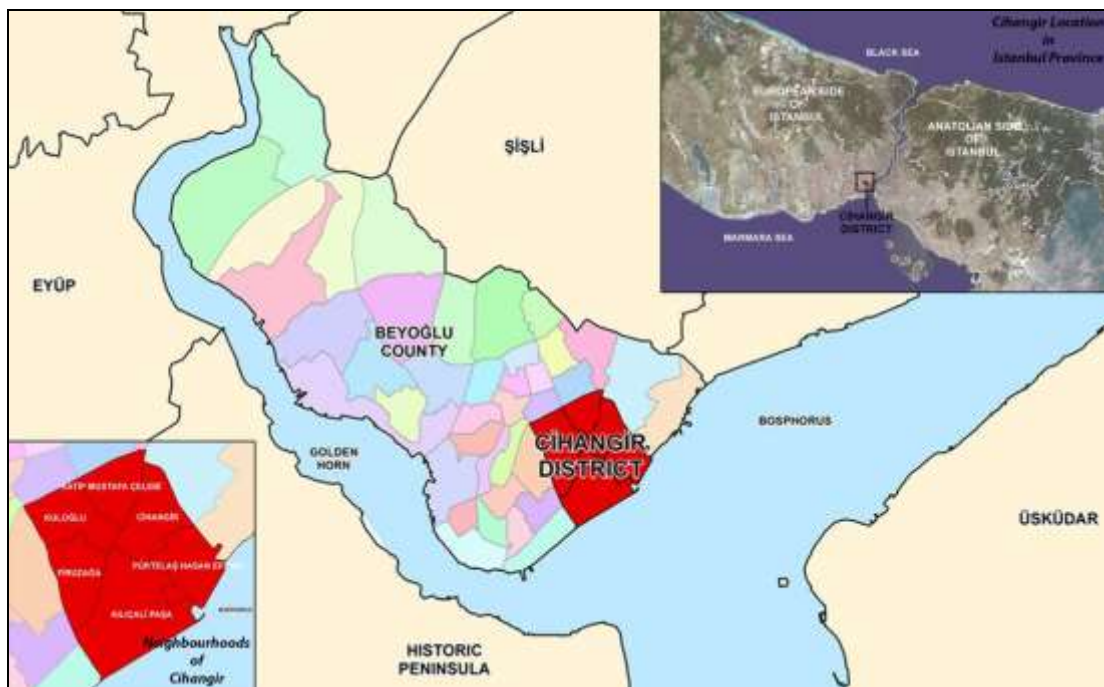
In summary, there are common points in all cases such as the existence of the historic urban fabric, a closer connection to the city centre, population decline and displacement. Furthermore, new settlers in all cases, have an almost identical social structure; they are a young, middle or upper class, white-collar professionals. As a result, when the similar aspects of these urban cases are examined, it is possible to say that gentrification processes follow a path determined by some basic criteria even if their starting points change.

### 3. SOCIAL AND SPATIAL CHANGES AND GENTRIFICATION PROCESS IN THE CİHANGİR DISTRICT

The social and spatial changes in the Cihangir district has been described as “gentrification” by some researchers [17], [18], [19]. The historic housing stock of the Cihangir district was faced with depreciation after its abandonment by its original owners, but Cihangir later came to be preferred by a new socio-economic segment and became an attractor again. Therefore, the process underwent by Cihangir shares similarities with the gentrification process in terms of the alterations it has made to the urban space. The main aim of this paper to reveal similarities between Cihangir’s social and spatial change processes and the gentrification process.

#### 3.1 A Brief History and Location of Cihangir District

The Cihangir district is located in Beyoğlu County, and is composed of six neighbourhoods; Cihangir, Katip Mustafa Çelebi, Kuloğlu, Firuzzağa, Kılıç Ali Paşa and Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi (Figure 1). Today, Cihangir’s boundaries are set by İstiklal Street to the north, the Bosphorus coastline to the south, the Boğazkesen Street and Kılıç Ali Paşa Street to the west and Kazancı Street to the east (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The Location of the Cihangir district and its neighbourhoods.

The Cihangir district became a settlement area due to the construction of the Cihangir Mosque. This was dedicated to the son of Suleyman the Magnificent, Cihangir, in the 16th century. During the same period, the embassies of different European countries were established in Beyoğlu, and several ethnic minorities settled there. Muslims started to settle in the area in the 17th century [20]. At the beginning of the 18th century, the influence of the European population remained in Cihangir while the settlement itself extended its limits to those of today’s Taksim. In the 19th century, Beyoğlu reflected the cosmopolitan aspect of İstanbul with banks, apartment buildings, theatres, restaurants, schools and a funicular railway which connected İstiklal Street and the port of Karaköy. The architecture of the area was dominated by new classicalism, baroque and art nouveau styles [21].

Cihangir continued to grow, and in the second half of the 20th century, it became home to both the wealthy, who lived in luxury apartments and Beyoğlu’s low-income entertainment-sector workers [22]. However, this period also saw the main factors that brought about the collapse of Beyoğlu. The ethnic minorities were subjected to a population exchange as a result of the Conscription of Wealth (1940), and there were the events of 6-7 September (1955). Following these, migrants from Anatolia settled in the houses that had to be abandoned by their owners. Thus, the housing stock changed hands, and accordingly, the socio-economic and cultural structure also changed. Cihangir became a settlement for low-income groups, and its decline continued until the 1980s [23].



**Figure 2.** Surrounding streets of Cihangir district.

A new face of Beyoğlu and Cihangir began to emerge in the 1990s. İstiklal Street was closed to traffic and Beyoğlu was transformed into a cultural and commercial centre of the city. This dynamic effect played a significant role in the return of intellectuals and artists to Beyoğlu and Cihangir [24]. Within the scope of these significant developments, the necessary steps for a revitalization process were started in the Cihangir district. Nowadays, Cihangir has a reputation for being an excellent settlement site due to its renovated face and new social structure. In consequence of all this user demand and urban change, a civil organisation, the “Cihangir Beautification Association (CBA)”, was established to undertake kinds of projects and social and cultural activities related to the district. The CBA is also an important means of giving residents the right to speak about projects or ideas that may shape their district’s urban or social spaces [25].

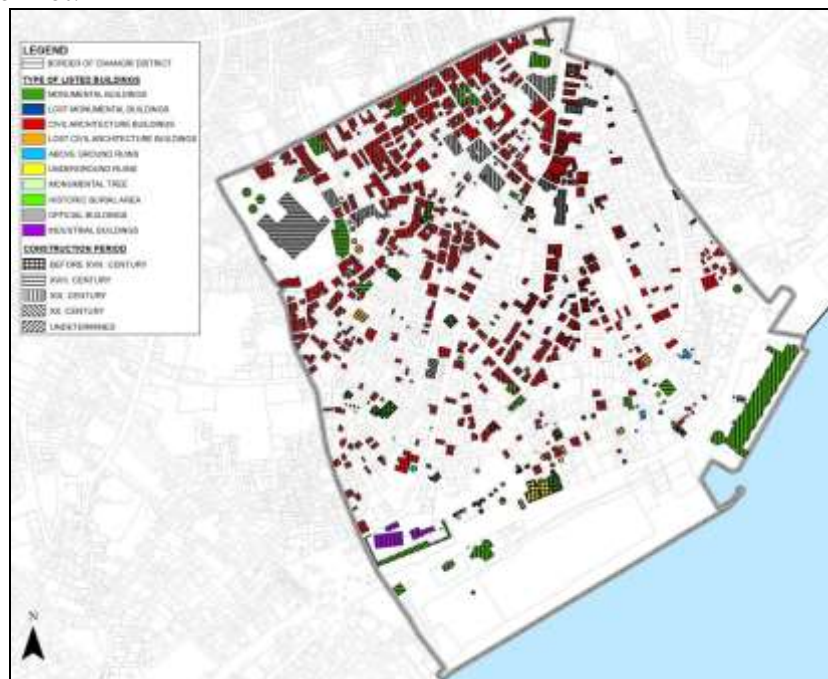


**Figure 3.** The new face of Cihangir after revitalization process [30].

The tools used to accelerate the transformation process in Beyoğlu and Cihangir are the conservation plans prepared by the local government, and the physical and functional interventions undertaken by both public and civil initiatives. The conservation plans define the rules of protection and usage across the whole of Beyoğlu County, which is classified as an urban conservation site. Physical and functional interventions, such as the arrangement of Cihangir Park, carried out with the assistance of the CBA, or the rehabilitation of streets and buildings with the help of the Beyoğlu Municipality Urban Design Department have all driven the transformation process of Cihangir [25].

### 3.2 The Criteria of Gentrification and an Examination of Their Validity for the Cihangir District

According to the literature, and by examining similar cases, it is possible to give three main points that relate to the gentrification process: Population change, changes in the housing market and changes in the socio-economic structure. In addition, the urban cases mentioned previously are all near city centres and have a historic housing stock. This is also true of Cihangir, which is already within an urban conservation area (Figure 4). By using this information, the criteria of gentrification can be determined as consisting of six items (Table 3). In the next step, these criteria are examined through statistical data to discover whether Cihangir is exposed to the effects of gentrification or not.



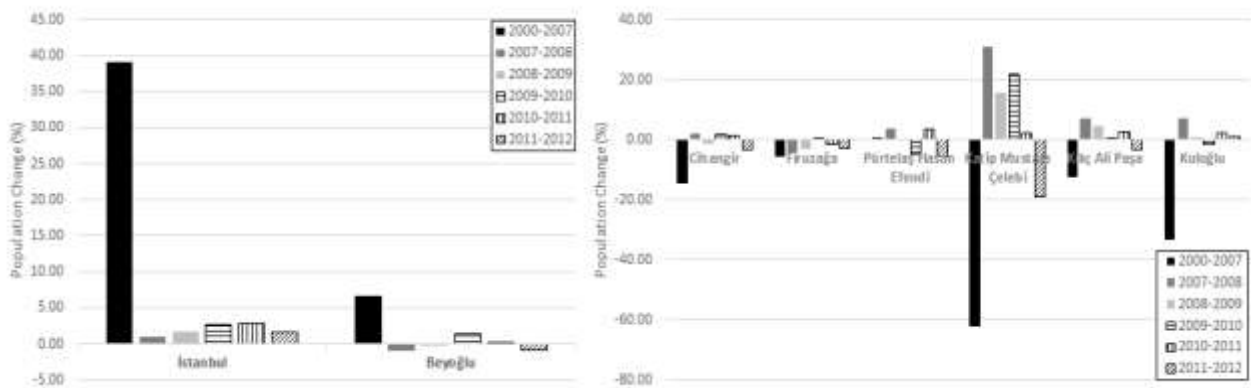
**Figure 4.** Listed buildings and their construction periods in Cihangir district [29].

**Table 3.** Criteria of gentrification and source of statistical data

	Criteria	Sources
<b>Changes in Population</b>	1. Reduction of the population	TSI (Turkish Statistical Institute), 2000-2012
	2. Increase in youth population rate	TSI, 2000-2012
	3. Increase in graduate persons rate	TSI, 2000-2011
<b>Changes in Housing Market</b>	4. Increase in rents	REIDIN, 2007-2014
	5. Increase in real estate prices	REIDIN, 2007-2014
<b>Changes in Economic Situation</b>	6. Increase in the number of commercial units	TSI, 2002; <a href="http://www.beyogluherim.com">http://www.beyogluherim.com</a> .

**Criteria 1. Reduction of the population:**

One of the leading indicators of the gentrification process is a reduction of the population as a result of displacement. In areas where gentrification has taken place, a social transformation has occurred due to the displacement of larger, poorer families and the settlement of smaller, more affluent ones.



**Figure 5.** Population change in İstanbul, Beyoğlu and Cihangir district [26].

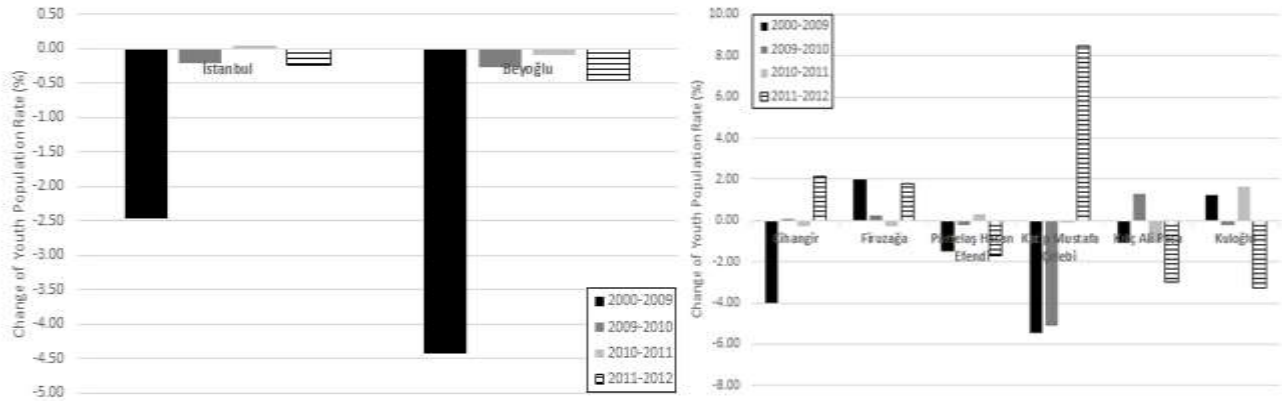
Figure 5 shows the population changes within İstanbul, Beyoğlu County and the Cihangir district. While the population of İstanbul continued to increase between 2000-2012, the total population of Beyoğlu also increased. However, there was a decrease in Beyoğlu’s population between 2007-2009 and 2011-2012. Despite this, the total population of the six neighbourhoods in the Cihangir district decreased between 2000-2012, notwithstanding some isolated periods of increase.

**Criteria 2. The increase in the youth population rate (20-35 ages):**

One of the common characteristics of the cities that have experienced in the gentrification process is the increase in the youth population rate, which is the essential components of the social structure.

Figure 6 shows changes in the youth population rate of İstanbul, Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district. It can be seen that the youth population rate in İstanbul has decreased over time. The youth population rate in Beyoğlu also decreased from 2000 to 2012. In particular, the youth population rate dropped remarkably between 2000-2009. Beyoğlu shares a similar tendency with the whole of the İstanbul province over the 12 years. The youth population rate of the Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi and Kılıç Ali Paşa neighbourhoods decreased between 2000 and 2012. The Cihangir and Katip, Mustafa Çelebi neighbourhoods, showed a general decline from 2000-2011, and increases between 2011-2012. In contrast, the youth population rate of the Firuzaga neighbourhood increased throughout the same period, and the Kuloğlu neighbourhood had an upward trend from 2000-2011, followed by a sharp drop between 2011-2012.

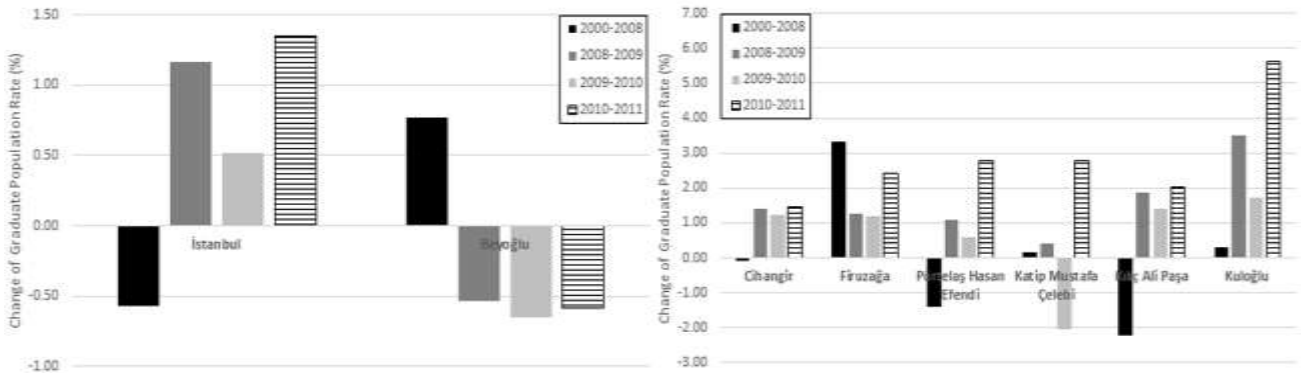




**Figure 6.** Changes in youth population rate of İstanbul, Beyoğlu and Cihangir district [26].

**Criteria 3. The increase in the graduate population rate:**

In cities undergoing the gentrification process, there has been an increase in their graduate population rate. This is one of the most important indicators of change to the social structure and is also one of the core components of gentrification.



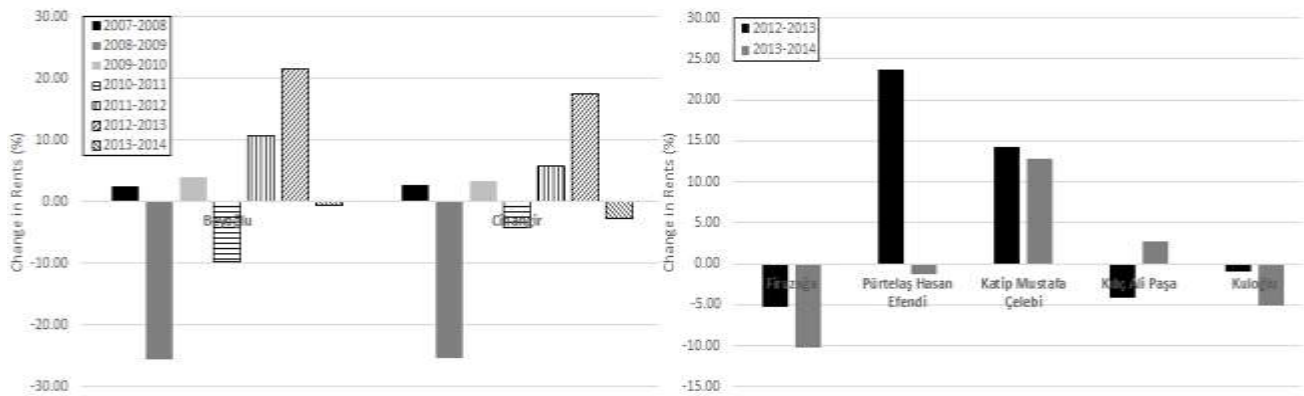
**Figure 7.** Changes in the graduate population rate of İstanbul, Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district [26].

Figure 7 shows changes in the graduate population rates of İstanbul, Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district. The rate of the graduate population of İstanbul fell between 2000 and 2008, but there is a rising trend between 2008-2011. However, in Beyoğlu, the graduate population increased between 2000-2008 and decreased between 2008-2011. Moreover, while there are declines at specific times, the rate of university graduates of the six neighbourhoods of the Cihangir district increased between 2000-2012.

**Criteria 4. The increase in rents:**

One of the most important common features of urban examples experiencing gentrification is increased rent values. Gentrification results in an inevitable increase in the cost of real estate because of the value it brings to urban areas. These changes bring about increased rents, which also result in displacement.

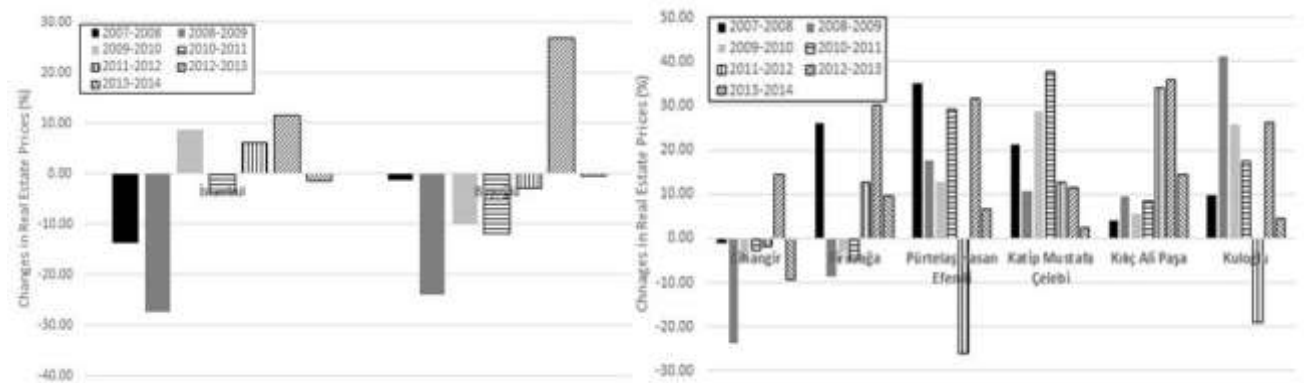
Figure 8 shows changes in the rent values of Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district. The rent values of Beyoğlu County and the Cihangir neighbourhood decreased between 2008-2009, 2010-2011 and 2013-2014. However, data can be obtained for the other five neighbourhoods contains only the period between 2012-2014. According to this, while the rent values of the Firuzağa, Kılıç Ali Paşa and Kuloğlu neighbourhoods decreased, those of the Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi and Katip Mustafa Çelebi neighbourhoods increased.



**Figure 8.** Changes in rents of İstanbul, Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district [27].

**Criteria 5. The increase in real estate prices:**

Gentrification brings about an increase in real estate prices, which are similar to rent increases because of the value it brings to urban areas. This section will examine whether this increase has also occurred in the Cihangir district.



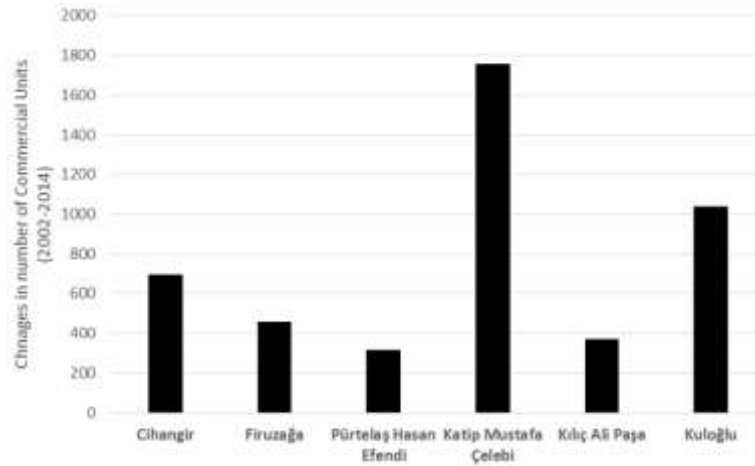
**Figure 9.** Changes in real estate prices of Beyoğlu and the Cihangir district [27].

The cost of real estate in İstanbul and Beyoğlu follow a similar pattern. They increase at specific time intervals and decrease at others, as shown in Figure 9. A significant increase can be seen in the real estate prices in İstanbul and Beyoğlu between 2012-2013. In the Cihangir neighbourhood, a similarly significant increase can be seen for the same period, but this increase did not continue after 2013. Furthermore, in the Firuzağa neighbourhood, prices started to increase from 2011-2012, and this trend continued until 2014. In the Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi and Kuloğlu neighbourhoods, there was a decrease only during 2011-2012, and an increase was observed in the other years within the scope of this study. It has been determined that the Katip Mustafa Çelebi and the Kılıç Ali Paşa neighbourhoods have seen continuous increases between 2007-2014.

**Criteria 6. Increase in the number of commercial units**

Another gain of the gentrification process is the increase in commercial units. As a consequence of the social transformation that takes place after the gentrification process, local services have to be diverse and developed due to the expectations of newcomers who have a certain cultural level and income. Therefore, it is to be expected that the number of commercial units in the field will increase.

Figure 10 shows that the number of service-sector commercial units has increased in all neighbourhoods of the Cihangir district. Most of these are located in the Katip Mustafa Çelebi neighbourhood which is adjacent to İstiklal Street and Taksim Square. There are also noticeable increases in the number of commercial units in the Kuloğlu and Cihangir neighbourhoods.



**Figure 10.** Changes in some commercial units of Cihangir district [26], [28].

As a result, if we make a general assessment of the examined criteria:

- "Criteria 1. Reduction of the population" can be observed throughout Cihangir district's neighbourhoods but is not observed in Beyoğlu.
- "Criteria 2. Increase in the youth population rate (20-35 ages)" is not valid for Beyoğlu County. On the other hand, while this criterion which is not valid for Cihangir, Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi, Katip Mustafa Çelebi, Kılıç Ali Paşa and Kuloğlu neighbourhoods, it holds true for the Firuzağa neighbourhood.
- "Criteria 3. Increase in the graduate population rate" holds true for all of the Cihangir district's neighbourhoods, but not for Beyoğlu.
- "Criteria 4. Increase in rents" is not valid for Beyoğlu County and Cihangir Neighbourhood. Increases were observed only in Pürtelaş Hasan Efendi and the Katip Mustafa Çelebi neighbourhoods.
- "Criteria 5. Increase in real estate prices" does not hold true for Beyoğlu County and Cihangir neighbourhood. However, in the other five neighbourhoods of Cihangir district, average property values are rising.
- "Criteria 6. Increase in the number of commercial units" appears to hold true for all neighbourhoods of Cihangir district. This is also a sign of the commercialization process, a side effect of gentrification.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Since the first use of the term “gentrification” by the sociologist Ruth Glass [1], it has been used to define a process which includes the renovation of dilapidated housing stock which is sold or rented to the professional classes after its renewal or renovation. This process results in an increase in real estate values and the replacement of the existing population due to the changing socio-cultural environment. Regarding the gentrification processes so far examined in the Turkish literature, the Cihangir district, the subject of this study, is considered to be an urban area undergoing gentrification by many researchers.

The process taking place in Cihangir is by demand-side approaches in terms of user demand and is also partially by the rent gap theory. While the terms “rehabilitation of housing stock”, “gaining reputation and material value” are valid for the Cihangir district, and reflect the positive effects of gentrification, “displacement”, “loss of social diversity” and “decline of cheap housing” are not widely observed. In the second half of the 20th century, and as a result of the settlement of migrants and marginalised groups into apartments abandoned by ethnic minorities, the physical and social structure of the Cihangir district became frayed. However, the revitalization process which began after

the 1990s became a new turning point in the history of this urban site. The rents and physical quality of the urban area have increased, and the demand for the area has increased as a result of rehabilitation work. It is not accurate to interpret this process as “displacement due to rent/price increase” or “displacement due to the social conflict” because the groups that settled after the removal of the ethnic minorities had no connection to those who had lived in Cihangir for generations and who had played a major role in shaping its socio-spatial structure. It would be more suitable to interpret this change as the return of intellectuals and artists who are already familiar with the long history of the district.

The Cihangir district’s gentrification process is similar to the other cases mentioned previously in terms of “the rehabilitation of the physical structure at the end of the process” and “the return of the professional class to the field”. However, Cihangir differs from the other cases in that the process experienced in Cihangir is not a result of public projects made with the help of public or private sector financing. Despite this difference, some gentrification criteria (increase in real estate prices, increase in the number of commercial units, decrease in population and increase in graduate population) also seem to hold true for the Cihangir district. That being said, it is important to note that Cihangir’s population decline was not the result of displacement, one of the most important effects of gentrification, it occurred due to increased commercialization and the separation of families with many children. In addition, the increase in the rate of university graduates is not a unique phenomenon for the Cihangir district as İstanbul has a tendency to attract graduates, and increased numbers can be observed throughout the city.

Thus, over the past two decades, the Cihangir district has not experienced the usual negative effects attributed to gentrification. However, as an urban conservation area which has a historic housing stock, it has undergone similar conservation, rehabilitation and revitalization processes that have led to an improvement in its environmental and social-life qualities. These changes have come about through a process of integrated conservation similar to those carried out on the spatial and social structure of historic areas all over the world, and this should be regarded as a positive development in the historical progress of the Cihangir district.

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