One of the world’s mega cities, Istanbul continues to change drastically with its increasing population, skyscrapers as well as mega projects transforming its public spaces and sociocultural fabric in contested ways. These changes require stimulating reflections on the formation of new public spheres. This dissertation approaches this problematic through a focus on the ways in which cultural infrastructures in Beyoğlu - the cultural hub of Istanbul - institute practices that contribute to the emergence of new forms of publicness. These cultural infrastructures can be understood as spaces of openness, embracing the diversity of urban population and enabling practices of common life.

Drawing on an interdisciplinary body of literature, the empirical findings of the dissertation offer evidence of various dimensions of spaces of openness. Cultural infrastructures play a key role in sharing space with a diverse set of urban actors, making visible the invisible stories of urban communities, and acting as an important node in local and translocal networks of engagement. Spaces of openness can thus be understood and conceptualized as characterized by networked, solidary and experimental forms of publicness. At the same time, the dissertation also points to the limits of spaces of openness, shaped as they are by a multiscalar cultural governance context and broader socio-spatial transformations.