Abstract:
This paper explores the question of Roma culture and identity by scrutinizing the practice and politics of space, memory, heritage and identity. It examines the recent destruction of Sulukule, a Turkish Roma neighborhood in the historic area of Istanbul, in terms of the tensions between local and global dynamics in Turkey, and utilizes the case in point to challenge popular assumptions about an all-encompassing Roma identity with nomadism at its core. Since nomads are thought to be placeless and they are supposedly "at home" everywhere, Roma’s attempts to maintain Sulukule as their home have gone unheard by the Turkish government which rapidly evicted 3,500 Roma from their thousand-year-old settlement. The paper concludes that instead of depending on totalizing concepts that essentialize Romani culture and identity, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of rhizome accounts better for the multiple fluidities of Roma culture and identity. Such conceptualization can show the diverse Roma culture and challenge the popular misconceptions about Roma placeless-ness.