From the 1990s, the small village of Göktürk was discovered by real estate developers, triggering an unprecedented building boom. Within a few years Göktürk turned from a remote village into a refuge for affluent Istanbulites who wanted to flee the “disorder” of the metropolis. Lured by a desire to discover the beauty and harmony of unspoiled countryside, the “new villagers” entered a life behind the walls of newly erected, gated communities. Göktürk was celebrated as the shining star of Istanbul’s thriving real estate sector, and a showcase of signature architecture. But in the wake of Turkey’s rapprochement to Europe, climate change and the international financial crisis, some doubt has infected the Göktürk dream. Is life in the archipelago of fortified compounds ecologically sustainable and socially just? Once uncontested symbols of social status and cultural progress, gated communities are increasingly associated with decadence and failure. What if an unprecedented process of unification started, walls were demolished, barriers leveled, citizens into sharing infrastructure and assets. Based on the idea of economic efficiency, ecological sustainability and solidarity among neighbours, Göktürk transforms from an archipelago of fortified refuges into an open city for the benefit of all. Of all?


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Istanbul has always been a world city. As the capital of two successive Empires, Byzantine and Ottoman, Istanbul was a glorious imperial city from the fourth century to the early twentieth century. As a locus of cultural diversity, one of the merits of its urban culture was in its imperial way of cultivating modes of co-existence between different worlds. Today, once more, it takes its place in the forefront of the global scene. Yet, as a global city, it has become an arena of excruciating inequalities and intransigent divisions. Now is the time to recover the city’s gift to develop new creative modes of co-existence, but this time in such a way that it can offer to all its inhabitants equitable access to its generous urban resources.

The co-existence of the formal and the informal before the 1980s

The first half of the twentieth century was a difficult period for Istanbul. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and proclamation of the new Republic and transfer of the government to the new capital, Ankara, brought scarcity of the financial, demographic, political, and administrative resources allocated to urbanization. In the early Republican years, Istanbul struggled with shrinkage problems. Starting with the 1950s, it reclaimed its role from Ankara.

The three decades between the 1950s and the 1980s witnessed a significant expansion in industrialization and hence, rapid urbanization. The city regained its primacy on the national scale, but it remained provincial from the global perspective. Istanbul’s population increased from one million to almost five in the meantime. After the devaluation of 1958, the authorities were faced with a tough question: should they allocate their limited resources to finance industrialization or urbanization? They chose to invest in industrialization. Consequently, the unprecedented urbanization could not be accommodated within a planned housing program.

Within this context, the city managed to cope with these transformations only by means of informal mechanisms. The immigrants, who had to fend for themselves, constructed ad hoc solutions for their shelter needs, i.e., gecekondu (literally, ‘built overnight’), occupying mainly the available public lands, empty spaces in the inner city and the peripheries of the industrial areas.

In addition to the construction of informal housing, an informal network of transportation, the dolmuş or minibus, gradually emerged to ease commuting between workplaces and gecekondu. For all their practicality and perseverance, the very awareness of being outsiders made the migrants a docile labor force and those who were better-established took advantage of their insecure existence.
After a period of uncertainties, populist policies became popular. In the West, as a means of granting amenities for buildings and providing municipal services. Hence, there was a reverse urbanization within the informal geographies of shantytowns: first houses, then infrastructures. Thus, the laws of amnesty for buildings, Istanbul’s home-ownership rates increased to one of the highest among the world metropolises and thus lessened the tension between the different classes. After the amnesty, the gecekondu began to be transformed into the ‘multi-story apartment-gecekondu’, without any change within the urban layout or any improvement in physical or social infrastructure. Thus, the glossy picture of the varoş replaced the picturesque and vibrant view of the earlier gecekondu with the over-dense urban fabric with poor construction quality. This transformation also indicates a turning point within which the gecekondu was incorporated into the formal real estate market and thus, commodified.

The gecekondu originally were enclaves of poverty, yet homogeneous social structures that provided solidarity networks. As a simple survival strategy, they consisted of small houses. The lack of amenities and minimum standards of formal social programs, strong social networks lightened the burden of the very resourcelessness of the authorities and functioned as a social safety net to prevent the newcomers from falling into alienation in the coldhearted environment of modernization. The differentiation between the formal and informal geographies amplified segregation based on class differences.

Starting with the 1980s, with the liberalization of the economy, Istanbul began to integrated with global dynamics at an accelerated pace. The flow of transnational investments has brought a drastic transformation in the socio-economic structure of the city: the emergence of new business class (global elites), dynamo sectors, and consumption patterns. Yet, a very limited portion of the population gets a share of this abundance. The uneven distribution alters the climate of the city. Rather than co-existence, the split between the urban poor and the very few nouveau riches and global elites set the urban atmosphere.

The notion of the split aggravates modern man’s obsession to live in a sterile, homogenized, ‘ideal’ environment without any trace of the ‘other’, or as Berman says: to eliminate tragedy from life. This obsession finds its spatial counterpart in the suburban gated communities and urban security-guarded condominiums of the upper middle class.

The very reason people retreat into enclaves is the aspiration not to have contact with people from different socio-economic classes. More than half of the city has been produced by the informal sectors. The inhabitants’ exaggerated aspirations for total control over the environment can be explained by this. In addition, walls, gates, cameras, and security guards are related not only to security, but rather to endorse the exclusivenes as an indication of elitism. In fact, the urban life as a whole, from workplaces to entertainment, is dominated by the same obsession: to be isolated within enclaves in order to avoid any contamination, surprises and differences. This narcissistic imprisonment within one’s own im...
age is the annihilation of the emancipated aspect of the city, impromptu encounters with different people, the chance to enrich oneself with the appropriation of the other worlds.

The obsession which was diagnosed by Baulelaire in the nineteenth century, in his “Eyes of the Poor”, manifests itself in the urban transformation of the twenty-first century Istanbul. Urban transformation becomes the cipher for the ‘project’ to make the urban poor invisible. The following statement by prime-minister Erdoğan about the neighborhoods of urban poor summarizes the essence of the official approach: “cancerous district embedded within the city”. Planning operations in Tarlabas, Fener-Balat, and Süskaleeland 10 are to move the urban poor to the outskirts of the city and to make available their valuable inner city locations for the big construction companies for their fancy projects. 11 These areas are to be incorporated into the real-estate market. The Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) 13 carries over this and similar gigantic construction projects all over Turkey with an unrivalled budget, and builds mass housings on the outskirts of cities. With their depressing environments and tasteless building quality, the high-rise mass housing units are reminiscent of similar areas in the western world that are the subject of rehabilitation projects now or demolished altogether. 13 All these enclaves, voluntary and involuntary, involuntary exclusions—gated communities, condominiums and mass housings—are built with big invest-ments. The era of small contractors is over; since the 1980s within the neo-liberal politics, urban housing production has been carried out by big construction companies. Land development and construction projects are the dynamo sectors of the economy. The motivation behind these ‘projects’ is to make the city a shining spectacle without any trace of contamination, surprise or difference. Architecture has become a trendy profession within this framework. As part of the fashion industry, it has exhausted itself to feed the new consumer society with brand new images and ‘innovations’, rather than as an age-old voca-tion devoted to build artfully a ‘world’ in which to dwell peacefully on earth.

The two bridges and their belt highways set the course of urban growth in the 1990s, or better to say they provoked the existing tendencies. The first bridge and the TEM endorsed the existing growth tendency along the East-West axis, parallel to the Marmara shore; and the high-way still functions as a boundary between the neighborhoods of the upper-middle and lower-middle class. The second bridge and the TEM endorsed the other main tendency of the city: the expansion towards North. TEM set the northern boundaries for the lower-middle class neighbor-hood, but for the areas of its north, it is just like a conveyor of the invasion of the natural reserves of the city by enclaves of the upper-middle class in the forms of university campuses, gated-communities and beach clubs. 14 What is at stake is the entire urban ecological system.

... waiting for Godot...

In the 1980s, the flexibility of the informal mech-anisms got along well with neo-liberal policies and this happy marriage facilitated once more the city’s glorious arrival on the global scene. Yet, it was obviously a risk to go ahead securely. It cracked noisily first in 1999 and then in 2001. The 1999 Marmara Earthquake and the 2001 economic crisis amplified the urgency for a radical change in terms of governance to deal with both urban and economic issues. No one has denied that crises, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technolo-gies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. ... The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is... one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

D. Harvey (2008), “The Right to the City”

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1— see Ali Kural 12 and İhsan Bilgin 13
2— see Interview with Erdoğan Yıldız 17
3— There is no such a spatial differentiation in traditional Ottoman neighborhood; this is an outcome of the modernization and rapid urbanization.
4— see Korhan Kayacınoglu’s analysis on Gül-suyu-Gülenbasi, one of the first shantytowns...
5— see Şehrin Şhöner’s analysis on Ataköy...
6— see Cihan Baysal, “From Ayazma to Bezir-ganbahçe” for an analysis of the aftermath of a relocation project...
7— In the list of 2008, GAWC categorized Istanbul as “alpha & alpha-cities: Very important world cities that link major economic regions and states into the world economy” (http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html).
8— The very displacement in the content of these well-known terms within current debates is worth to study in depth.
9— see Tüzin Baycan Levent, Aliye Ahu Güllüm-ser, “Gated Communities in Istanbul” 11
10— see Cassidy Johnson and Yasar Adanalı, “Forced Evictions in Istanbul” 13
11— see Interview with Yves Cabannes 02
12— see Tuna Kuyucu article, “The Paradigm of Turkey’s New Low-income Housing Policy: The Mass Housing Administration as a Vehicle of State-led Property Transfer” 10
13— see Cihan Baysal, “From Ayazma to Bezir-ganbahçe” for an analysis of the aftermath of a relocation project 08
14— see Elif Şimge Fettahoglu’s analysis...
First, I would like to ask about the OECD Territo-rial Review on Istanbul. What stands out in that report for you? 

Two things once are the poor rural-to-urban migrant workers. I mean people coming from the rest of Anatolia built their own houses. There was relatively little support from the state for those people to transform their own efforts. One of the major actors behind the urban renewal process in Istanbul is TOKİ (the Mass Housing Administration). How do you evaluate TOKİ and the model it follows? 

TOKİ is a very important agency. It was established because of the increase in housing needs, which has produced impressive results. It has easy access to land, and because of this, large capital in the accumulated capital environment. Also, it has high demand for housing in Istanbul, with its 3% population growth. Thus, it has all the means for a successful production model, in terms of producing square meters. It is working well. 

How do we understand the model you presented? High concentrations of poor people in high-rise apart-ment blocks, in isolated areas, far from job opportu-nities. As we have seen in the TOKİ compounds in Istanbul, people can’t pay their TOKİ mortgages. There are no social facilities for chil-dren and young people. This is the model that has been used all over in developed countries, in OECD countries. So, yes, I foresee in 20 years or less, these TOKİ buildings will generate serious social problems, and will be knocked down. It’s already happening in many cities today, at a very high social and economic cost. Do you think the urban renewal process in Istanbul, what can also be called the neo-liberal transformation, paves the way to social segregation? The neo-liberal model is the essence of social segregation. This is reflected in the gap between the rich and poor. The segregation has a physical expression in the transformation of the historic parts of the city to host inter-national tourism and the urban elite, who need to consume symbolism. Of course, this process is destructive for those who have been living there for centuries. Nostalgia is a living example of this process. The residents are pushed away, and the profit the developers are making is huge. Another kind of segregation is the pushing of the light industry, what was the soul of the city at one time, away from the center to transform the city into a service city, attractive to international cap-ital. Close to the airports hundreds of industries have been pushed away to allow middle/high-class housing compounds. But as the industries are pushed away, the people are pushed away, too.

Then, you are transferring people in the geccekon- dus, who developed empty land into quite nice neigh-bourhoods, to high-rise TOKİ buildings at the periphery of the city. There is the segregation of functions as well. In the old model, people were able to cultivate their own food and go to their jobs. This sort of multi-functional city integrated at the neighbourhood level was being disaggregated with consuming func-tions in the outer zones, thus fragmenting the city, and transport in between. This is very costly, socially. Look at the transportation here. It’s the result of this kind of functional segregation. This has to be rethought. It is not a sustainable urban solu-tion. So this choice, having clean tourism here, some production services there, and these new TOKİ (Central Business Districts), pushing away the poor, is not a good model in terms of the food self-sufficiency function, the economies of scale. If this model has failed and we know it’s not sustainable, what is sustainable? No, no, the model has not failed. Let’s be clear. It has failed as a model of a right-based city: a city where you have equal ac-cess for all, to education, to all opportunities. If

You’re a clever girl or a boy, access to education is the same for any class. This model does not exist. But it works perfectly well for a certain elite with access to the beauties of this city and its services. So, it works, but only for some. The model fails not under the neo-liberal rules of profit, but as a right-based city, a people-friendly city. To get a more right-based city it is necessary to have cer-tain rights protected and at the same time, the city’s management: the right to housing, the right to access to education. And in terms of shape, the form it could have, the improvement of the exist-ing geccekondu neighbourhoods, which are the soul of the city, is to be strengthened. They have a number of qualities in terms of social cohesion, in terms of solidar-ity, and others, to face crisis. At the same time, there is still land available that could be perfectly transformed for that kind of solidary and functional city.

What we see with the overall crisis is that many people have an instinct to go back to what they know how to do: cultivate and harvest food, and then sell the surplus. This would be quite inter-esting for some places, it could transform a city into a much wealthier city, minimizes need for transport. Many of the geccekondu need improvement. This is for sure: if a school is miss-ing, one should be provided. Services should go to the places. This would generate a more multi-polar city, a more decentralized city, where the soul of the city wouldn’t be the shopping mall, but neighbourhood itself and the people. It would shift from a profit-based city to a more people-based city. That would be my suggestion here. Are there examples of this? Improvements of geccekondu-like neighbourhoods, that trans-formed, that renewed themselves and kept the people where they were. Has this been tried and has it worked? It has been tried many times, and it only costs a small percentage of what the existing solution costs the country. It has sometimes existed with the names Slum Upgrading Programmes in other countries. It’s clear, it has been done on a widescale in Indo-nesia at a certain time, and today in Thailand. It is in the spirit of many programs throughout Europe to strengthen and support the existing neighbourhoods, not to wipe them away or to build new things. Can you name a few places? In developed or developing countries? Developing, in conditions similar to those in Tur-key? You have the Parrenda in Brazil, which is typically adding income-generating activities in the existing neighbourhood. Without the legal-ization of land, you do not invest if you feel that you’re threatened. So, as a matter of fact, you do not have the capital of the people, which is conti-nuously used up in our society. People don’t support it, so that was one case. Basically, the people’s own investment was also the basic infrastructure in Parrenda. A program in Indonesia is a quite good exam-ple of that. You have a couple in South Africa as well. You have an integrated developing project in Mexico. You have the Orangi pilot project, which was massive, in Pakistan. If you look at the example of what is called best practices or good practices, you’ll see that integrated neighbour-hood improvement is quite important. It’s quite important to strengthen communities. It’s not a state-led program like the TOKİs. So it’s shifting not only the approach, but also the role of actors.

It’s much more community-based: starting, con-tinuing and supporting the energy and what has been happening for a long time.

I’ve been living in Brazil for years and what we set up in Parrenda was an integration commission. So it is a multi-actor project, with the munici-pality, the central government, the state govern-ment, the people and the universities. This com-munity has tools to solve 90% of the problems. I don’t see this in Istanbul. In Is-tanbul there’s a strong opposition that divides the state, which provide houses, and the people, who have great difficulties in participating. Can you compare urban social movements in Istanbul to the ones in other places? I think you have quite interesting clusters of initiatives. There are very qualified academics with excellent city plan-ners, architects, lawyers, truly great assets. You have some platforms with social and legal and willpower resisting the demolitions. That’s quite important, because then you can start to negoti-ate with the people who support this model. Then, you have initiatives like the Istanbul Neigh-bourhood Associations Coordination, which is a much wider platform. Because they engage with the policies, they are able to deconstruct a poli-cy, see if a neighbourhood is in danger, and then mobilize and network in a wider base. And then you have people who are in state. You have different factions who don’t work enough together. They don’t have a single-point agenda which should be: let’s respect the right to housing for all and let’s have the improvement of neigh-bourhoods on a common base. I think they are trapped in party politics. Basically, these elements could build a new rela-tion with the government that could move be-yond the delivery of tenement buildings. Instead, you could have an approach that allows for the gradual and systematic improvement of the city, an approach the people are very friendly to. And if you look at international human rights stan-dards, from activists in this country, and help them build a good dialogue with the authorities to de-liver houses and neighbourhoods.

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This is an excerpt from interview conducted by İmre Balanlı for the feature-length documenta-ry film on Istanbul titled ÉCUMENOPOLIS due to be released in November 2009. © 2009 by İmre Balanlı. All rights reserved.
case study A—HALİÇ polarized waterfront

With its advantageous geographical position and inspiring topography, Halıç, a.k.a. the Golden Horn, was the creative nucleus of imperial Istanbul. Its peculiar characteristics also attracted industrial entrepreneurs in the twentieth century. Istanbul’s first industrial area was built on the Halıç waterfront, accommodating the industrial buildings and the hillsides behind, the houses of the workers. With the rapid industrialization of the 1950s and 1960s the area fell into disuse and became the backyard of İstanbul. The city dumped whatever it wanted to conceal there, poverty and industrial pollution. With the decentralization of industry in the mid-1980s, most of the industrial buildings were demolished as a part of then-mayor Dalan’s projects. In this process, the history of the industrialization and modernization of the city was destroyed without any documentation or any urban vision for the re-construction of public space. The brutal “cleansing” left behind a sad waterfront landscape.

Since the 1990s, however, the location and natural beauty of Halıç have been acknowledged once again and the area has become a center of attraction. Parallel to the global trend of the transformation of brown-fields, it hosts a ‘culture zone’ with university campuses (Kadir Has University, İstanbul Bilgi University), museums (Koç Industry Museum, Rezan Has Museum), santralistanbul), a theme park (Miniatürk), culture and convention center (Sütlüce Mezbahası Kongre Merkezi) and the old shipyards, waiting for adaptive re-use. Most of these renovations and re-programming have been produced according to a global blueprint: upper-middle class entertainment enclaves stuffed with the ready-made packages of the leisure industry. With their impenetrable boundaries and security-guarded entrances, and their indifference to the neighborhoods in which they are located, they are exclusive ‘ivory towers’ blocking the waterfront. Consequently, a polarization between the ‘culture zone’ blocking the waterfront and the neighborhoods of urban poor behind has emerged. The overcrowded urban parks on the waterfront are the evidence of the need of the congested working class neighborhoods for public space and programs. Hence, the integration of the whole waterfront and the surrounding neighborhoods should be the first step of the upcoming urban transformation projects. In the transformation process, the priority should be given to the re-construction of the public space, which in turn will be an anchor for further transformations within neighborhoods.
Istanbul: old or new?

One of the major paradoxes of our contemporary Istanbul is the contradiction between the social/cultural burden of its continuous history since its ancient birth and the youth of the building stock it shelters. Yes, Istanbul is two thousand five hundred years old, and never in its long life has it been vacated or marginalized—as were western Roman cities and even Rome itself. Yet the number of buildings more than fifty years old which are now left standing in Istanbul is estimated at five to ten thousand. So, at present, of the nearly two million buildings Istanbul is said to contain, only one in five to ten thousand is over fifty years old! Istanbul keeps its profoundly complex past alive with its legendary topography and seas, the imprints of boulevards and structural alignment left in its ancient districts, its old walls which amusingly, continue to stand, its covered Bazaar and Caravanserai district still teeming with activity, its now barely represented ethnic groups, and of course with myths and memories told and retold. But all of that is covered by the thick layer of heavy, rampant building construction which has been going on for the past fifty years. And it is perhaps the most fragile building stock in Istanbul's history: produced hurriedly, with scarce resources, devoid of the will to disciplined plan and design, it was built knowing from the start it could not endure: these buildings were put up by one by one made with the complicity of almost all the city's new residents, while the knowledge that it would soon be rebuilt anyway was kept hidden in the unconscious.

Istanbul first took up the problem of how this gigantic stock would be rebuilt in the early 2000s. The practice of “urban renewal” has to be one of the most tortuously complicated problems in the history of modern reconstruction. And its weaknesses are not limited to the material fragility of which earthquake risk is a dramatic reminder. It little meets the social and humanitarian needs of the city’s swiftly changing and modernizing new residents either: The roads produced by its physical “patterns” do not have the capacity to bear vehicles ever increasing in number; its houses do not accommodate the changing needs of parents and children; its infrastructure is insufficient; its public spaces and social accoutrements lacking, etc. Under discussion is a gigantic stock produced piece by piece and hanged together in a reflex reaction to a state of emergency, with the initiative and consent of nearly all agents who make use of the city. How should such a stock be renovated? This is the fundamental problem of Istanbul at the beginning of the new century. If the first implementations currently on the agenda are not the rudest expression of the state’s class preferences, they are scarcely more than a display of central and local administrations’ inexperience in constructing this complex equation.

Are Land Parcels an Obstacle?

In the Bilgi University Graduate School of Architecture studio study of the area between the TEM and E5 belt highways and Büyükdere Boulevard, carried out this year under the title “Kağıthane Corridor,” groups led by Can Çinici and Murat Tabanlıoğlu used different parameters in an attempt to frame and resolve the complex algebra of “urban transformation.” The Çinici group began examining how the area might be renovated parcel by parcel by accepting the existing facts of the space, including building blocks (bunblocs), land parcels, streets, property ownership, and even specifications for existing permissions to build. This piece-by-piece renovation strategy is perhaps one of the most radical of approaches to transformation, for it begins by including in its equation every element both academic and professional discourse regard as a source of difficulty.

To restate the issue in other terms, it allows no “external” element into the equation; it defines its problematic as an opportunity to re-test, under these extremely harsh conditions, the capacities of contemporary architecture as a discipline: If the architect were included among agents producing these environments, generated by reflex attempts to find emergency solutions, what would change? The performance of architecture’s intellectual and technical instruments was thus to be measured without aid or support from any other quarter, without expectation of any change in zoning, property ownership, life style, or administrative mentality, in short, risking confrontation with conditions in the most impractical of environments. This statement of the problem postpones the conclusion that architecture can only be practiced when certain conditions obtain, and if it tends to force the profession’s internal discipline to walk the razor’s edge, it also leads to pragmatism. For the environment is already being transformed anyway: the existing stock is being built up, overbuilt and renewed, vertically and horizontally, with floors added to buildings on the parcels and structures added in front, behind and to the side across parcel lines. Would this transformation already in the process of realization be altered significantly by the inclusion of the architect among agents, and architecture among practices? Would the use of architectural instruments open the way for new capacities and values which somehow never emerge? This was the Çinici group’s basic question.

Boundaries first: An expansion of spaces for social services (schools, hospitals, etc.), for example, could not be expected from this scenario, which confines itself to alterations within parcels merely; it could not take advantage of instruments for intervention in problems pertaining to street networks; it could not make fundamental alterations in infrastructure, etc. Rehabilitation carried out according to this scenario could be expected to produce alterations on the following three levels: 1. The interiors of buildings and houses. 2. The interface between buildings. 3. The interface of buildings with the ground they were built upon, and therefore with roads and back gardens to which they are adjacent. Alright then, all told, what would be the effect of an alteration
Can the Building-Block be an Instrument? The Tabanlıoğlu group took the building-block as given in its strategy for transforming the district it chose. That the building-blocks had a certain geometric discipline was taken to indicate that here, as opposed to other Kagithane valley neighborhoods developed through informal mechanisms (such as the site studied by the Çinici group), development had been initiated by a planning will. If architectural instruments were used, what capacities of this morphological discipline, contaminated and rendered illegible by parcel geometry and piecemeal construction processes, might they reveal? Having taken building-blocks and street networks as givens, along with overbuilding, is it possible to come up with alternative spatial constructs which would increase the quality of private and public life? How useful can instruments of urban morphology and building typology, included in the agenda of architectural and planning disciplines since the 1970s, be in transforming an environment propagated by mechanisms particular to Turkish modernization? These were the basic questions directing the study process of the Tabanlıoğlu group. The products which emerged showed once again that above all, the piecemeal structure which makes the district seem like something piled up in a heap could be reproduced by a holistic design practice: the capacity for diversification and differentiation of a practice freed from indexing by parcel rhythms was tested by means of this problematic. Another result was how strikingly the profiles of streets could change while their locations remained the same. Yet another was proof that areas within building-blocks now no more than "leftover space" could acquire character by being transformed into courtyards and become the most attractive areas of the settlement. The articulation of back garden empty spaces transformed into courtyards with the altered profiles of streets, and the resulting morphological construct, became examples of how the district’s public space capacity could be increased by means of architectural instruments. It is already known that freedom from parcel scale affords another possibility having to do with private space, that is, directly with homes. Above all, building-block-scale holistic design made possible new alternatives for vertical and horizontal circulation between homes. Also, with

confined within parcel lines upon the quality of a district? Can one speak of a significant change? Çinici drew the boundaries of his group’s study with these questions. It was thought that the scenario could be realized with the following strategies and techniques: Each project would begin by studying a parcel from a different building-block. After a study, which kept existing specifications for permissions to build in view, of the building project upon that parcel was complete, an adjacent parcel (to the side or to the rear) would be studied, and either a new project would be designed for that second parcel, or the first project would be abandoned and a new project, combining the two parcels, would be designed. The third step would be to evaluate the unification of multi-parcels. In this way ten architects were each to begin with a parcel from ten separate, neighboring building-blocks, and follow a strategy of expansion within the parcel. This process was to be defined as an exercise in the dosage of intervention in existing stock. Thus the existing piecemeal, eclectic structure would be reproduced, the sole difference being inclusion of the instruments of architectural discipline. It should be added that this inclusion was not conceived as a unilateral mechanism; it was also part of the scenario that negotiations between neighbors, and between neighbors and the local administration, would develop along with the agendas architecture introduced. The studies done showed first of all that for housing units on narrow and/or irregular parcels, practicable alternative solutions taking advantage of the twentieth-century topographical and morphological inheritance could be produced. It should be mentioned that the studies did not apply universal housing atlas solutions in a stereotypical manner, and proved that those universal templates could interact with the givens of a district. Of course the fundamental difference lies in the varied solutions offered for road-building back-garden relationships and alternatives for shared spaces of use. Ways of vacating or making the ground floors and first stories of buildings permeable proved how even with interventions on the scale of the parcel alone, urban space can be deepened, stratified, and made “transparent” in the phenomenal sense defined by Colin Rowe. The neighborhood-scale studies carried out by the Çinici and Tabanlıoğlu groups were taken up along with the problematics shaped by the Mehmet Kütükçüoğlu group’s use of ecological data in studying the valley around which these neighborhoods are located, and those of public space, studied by the Nevzat Sayın and Han Hümertekin groups. The studies titled “Kagithane Corridor” are on exhibit at Bilgi University’s Santral Campus and may be viewed through the end of the year...

Translated by Victoria Holbrook

Prof. Dr. İhsan Bilgin—İstanbul Bilgi University, Graduate Program in Architectural Design

Santral Campus and may be viewed through the end of the year...
The first serious planning project for Istanbul took place in 2006 under the Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Centre (IMP), which was established under your leadership. Can you tell us about that process? If you’re a city planner, the planning of Istanbul is the greatest experience you can have. I have felt this every second of my work. I can say that I started my job by presenting a report to the mayor. In light of this report, we decided to establish the IMP. The job ahead demanded a huge staff. As you know, the professional world in Turkey hasn’t improved much yet, so we went to the universities. With the support of universities and the opportunities given by Istanbul’s mayor, our research group and planning project was organized. What subjects shine in this particular process? Planning is a subject that associates the past and the future with how we live. So, the whole thing starts with the truth of life, which is ecology. If life’s continuity is interrupted ecologically, by cities, their formations, transportation systems and manufacturing, planning will be meaningless. So, ecology is the first priority. That’s why the Ecology Department was the first department that we founded. What we are witnessing today is a tag-of-war between the environment and the economy. In other words, the loss of ecology may initially mean a victory for the economy. But in the long term, the economy will suffer.

Secondly, we’ve developed the Regional Planning Department. After that, we developed new departments devoted to the economy, manufacturing and the service industry to increase the quality of life, culture and tourism. The planning of metropolitan Istanbul is never limited to the borders of Istanbul. Today, Istanbul single-handedly shoulders half of Turkey’s economy and exports. When you factor in Gebze, Tekirdağ and İzmit, there’s great industrial density that embraces 30% of the country. Transportation systems are also a part of this. Geographically, metropolitan Istanbul, İzmit, the Marmara Sea and Thrace are a whole. Without recognizing and knowing this synergy, you cannot identify Istanbul and therefore you can’t plan it. Istanbul consumes all of the region’s water. So, it’s impossible to define the metropolis only by its own borders. The same goes for logistics. The Marmara Sea is a water way, but when you look at Istanbul, the city is over-taken by a truck empire. When a ship leaves a port it has to be able to find corresponding ports. Connecting the railways, highways and airways with the ports can never be a local issue. You can’t solve this problem within Istanbul only. In Thrace, there’s a newly growing metropolitan area with 2 million people. I’m talking about Çorlu, Çerkesköy metropolitan region. In the east, İzmit is a metropolitan area of 5 million. Gebze, which shares the Omerli water reservoir with Istanbul, already has been approved as a metropolitan area with 2 million people. And soon it’ll have a labor force of 300,000.

Considering this, the work starts with transportation, ecological sustainability, and decentralization of the labour force. These fields demand not only metropolitan planning, but also metropolitan region planning. In Turkey, there are no institutions to provide coordination in these issues. You mentioned the importance of regional planning. What about the effect of national planning on city planning? Political stability, economic developments, the European Union issue, our relationships with countries like Bulgaria, Greece and Ukraine are all important in the long term. But as IMP, the Municipality of Istanbul can only undertake projects within its borders. We designed 600 km of railway for Istanbul, but the issue that bothers us most is that...
our jurisdiction abruptly ends when we reach the borders. Across the border a whole different authority takes over, and we can’t control or guide them. We have a metropolis growing just across the sea with a population of 5 million, but we can’t properly reach them. I think this dysfunctionality is the biggest problem we have to solve in the near future.

Undoubtedly, there’s this methodology in a planning: local planning decisions are built on top of national decisions. Trade, transportation, social considerations and the labour force influence those decisions. You define the identities of geographical regions and then you merge those with the decisions of your political organization. You achieve the unity and continuity of those strategies.

When we first founded the IMP, we wanted to make sure that we were on firm ground as it is necessary to integrate your master-plan with the national vision. Unfortunately, in our case the ground was shaky. What did you do then? We made an agreement with the Ministry of Environment with the guidance of the Municipality of Istanbul and with the support of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We made a great effort to fill this gap. The Ministry of Environment and the Municipality of Istanbul signed a protocol called the “Adjustment.” It’s basically an integration of the plans that have been developed for the Marmara Region and for Istanbul.

If you don’t emphasize the integration, you just keep running in circles. In 1980, the authorities decide that the geography of Istanbul could only handle 5 million people. So the main city plan of Istanbul was designed for 5 million people. But there are 55 million people in Istanbul now, and we’re projecting that it will reach 25 million in 15 years.

For the metropolitan area, the central governance administrations are important, and we’re aware of that. We emphasized that the issue starts with national planning. But because of the lack of coherence between the ministries, the decisions determined by these institutions are often irrelevant and dysfunctional.

I’m not saying that the Municipality of Istanbul is Istanbul’s absolute ruler, but everyone admits this: the first thing that has to be gained to secure Istanbul’s future is national coordination. When you see the projects produced by the ministries without consulting Istanbul, the results are negative and contradictory. The developments regarding the water basin areas are continuing. For example, how did Sultanbeyli become Sultanbeyli? We’re not only talking about Sultanbeyli. We have to put it this way: what are these settlements developing in these water basin areas? Now, the borders of the metropolitan area are determined by Law No. 3030. Before this law, the borders of Istanbul Municipality ended with Ümraniye and Kartal in the east and Kışıklıçekmece in the west. So that’s really a tight area for Istanbul. The settlements beyond these borders were under the control of the county municipalities. They weren’t controlled by the central authority, and that caused a lack of authority and planning.

Those local municipalities, which were free from the control of the Istanbul Municipality, applied their own projects on the water basin areas. How big is the upcoming water problem for Istanbul? Water is everything. Today, Istanbul faces a huge water problem. We have the same risk for İzmit and Thrace. Industry also consumes a large amount of water. Today, in Thrace you can no longer extract water from 5–10 meters deep. You have to dig as far as 200 meters. In Thrace, industry will expand 1.5 times in the future, putting even more pressure on water resources. There should be some administrators who are aware of that. This is why we shouldn’t put pressure on the water basin areas.

The registration and protection of these areas and expropriation of these areas is a matter of public consciousness. It’s really important, and it’s closely related to the future of the metropolis. That’s why these regions will be reclaimed by the IMP. The people who have invaded these areas will be evicted, and the areas themselves will be sanitized according to the new transformation law. The rehabilitation of the water basin areas is a huge project for the future. Industry and residences grow together, and they cannot be separated. If you build an industrial zone for 100,000 people, it will bring another 1,000,000 people who will take up residence around this zone. You have to think about industry through its suppliers, the logistics, and the infrastructure. And if you can’t organize it with a proper transportation system, then you’ll suffer just like we are suffering now. Industries are leaving their old locations for the industrial zones built outside the cities. What do you think about this process? Like in every other field, modernization in industry has started. Today, in all of the world’s metropolises, you can see high-tech industry parks. For example, in England there’s no longer a textile industry. In the yards that built the Titanic, Britannic, Olympic boats, there are now flowers and parks. There’s no longer an economy that depends on railways, there’s no automotive industry. It’s all high-tech. Turkey’s medium-sized industry is also changing rapidly, and it’s following this process.

With this transformation, the service industry has replaced the factories. There’s a wildly rapid improvement in the service sector, and there’s no relationship to older industry. Considering this “wild improvement” from an aesthetic point of view, the buildings are built amazingly. From the viewpoint a city planner, this is a disaster. There is nothing but a chaos of high technology and architecture.
Are there new centres that are foreseen in the projects? We consider Istanbul an uncivilized metropolis. Now with the new opportunities, we have a chance to make it multi-centric. We have a chance to balance employment and housing in the city. The Bosphorus Bridge is on the agenda. The second Bosphorus Bridge will be the backbone of the city. It will be a 36 km. The Transportation Master Plan being prepared by the IMM and JICA proposes a rail system from the city to Beşiktaş, which is the old core of the city, lost its CBD (Central Business District) role after the 1980s following the decentralization of both industrial and commercial services. The new settlements were formed on the periphery, expanding the city borders to the west, east and north. The new CBD of the city was shaped along the Büyükçekmece – Levent axis, because of the new transportation facilities provided by the Bosphorus Bridge. The second Bosphorus Bridge opened in 2012. The industrial area was opened in the industrial zone, accelerated the land-use changes. The CBD of Istanbul, originally located in and around Eminönü, has shifted to the Şişli – Zeytinburnu – Maslak axis along the Bosphorus. Some of the important factors are the development of new transportation systems and infrastructure as well as life-enhancing facilities and services. Accessibility also describes the catchment characteristics of a given location. Traditional measures of the effectiveness of the transportation system assess mobility. The challenge of accessibility measures is to characterize, in a meaningful way, the overall system represented by the interaction between land use and transport patterns and transportation facilities. The land use part of the system represents the opportunities for activity participation, while the transportation part of the system represents the ease of participating in activities at specific locations. Accessibility maps prepared for 2023 consider all major rail transit projects with a total length of 165 km. The Transportation Master Plan being prepared by the IMM and JICA proposes a rail transit network with a total length of 527 km in 2023. The Marmaray Project, connecting two sides of the city by the railway tunnel under the Bosphorus Strait, will be the backbone of the future rail network and will become the public transport system. As a result of the integrated public transport system with extensive rail transit network and worsening road congestion, more people will be able to access to work places and schools by car than public transport in the morning peak hour in 2023.
I want to start by diagnosing the transportation problem. When did you come to Istanbul? What did you see when you came here? I came to Istanbul for the first time in 2005. But at that time, I stayed only two weeks. And for this study, we, the JICA study team, came here one year ago. Last year (2007) in June, our study started. We visited many places in Istanbul, and eventually, I thought transportation in this city is not so bad. But I didn’t know how rapid the increase of vehicles had been in the previous 10 years. If there is no improvement, no new policies, the situation will become worse and worse. How did you find Istanbul in terms of public transportation? It’s like an exhibition, a world exposition. Here in Istanbul, there are so many varieties of public transport: metro, tram, cable car, normal bus, articulated bus, double-deckers, dolmus, metrobus and even marine transport. I’ve enjoyed using these services. However, the length of each route is too short—less than 10 km. This forces passengers to change from bus to rail or to another mode very frequently, which does not make for good service. And in the future, when there are longer hauls, longer lines, the fare system will need to change from flat rate to proportional by distance.

One more problem is parking. Istanbul has very old areas, of course, because it is a historic city. Some historic areas have narrow roads without parking facilities, because they were built before the 19th century, of course. City transportation plans have to match the land-use plans. How do those two plans come together, and when they come together do you see multiple centres emerging? I want to explain the relation between the urban plan and the transportation plan. Of course, the transportation plan will be based on the urban plan. But sometimes transportation will affect the urban shape structure essentially. In rural planning and the transportation planning should be developed jointly. In our case, the municipality had developed a land-use plan in which the basic idea is to extend the city east and west. In the north, there are forest areas and water reservoirs that should be conserved. And about the centre, at this moment, there is almost one centre, one core. So it’s essential to build sub-centres. Currently, land-use plans propose to build sub-centres. In the past 10 years, the population has increased by more than 2% per annum. If this trend continues in the coming 15 years, the population will exceed 20 million. At this moment, the population is 12.5 million, and every year the population increases by 200,000. How do we prevent this? How do we mitigate this population pressure? The municipality says we should develop the area outside Istanbul. They have planned for a future population of 16 million. And if this 16 million population is distributed in Istanbul as planned, the Silivri area will have more than 2.5 million people. Today there are only 300,000, 2.5 million is the size of a city like Izmir, Turkey’s third largest city. Another Izmir will be created there in 15 years. If so, we need railway systems, highway systems and road network. But up until now, they haven’t started any construction of that network. How can we expect people to live there? The municipality must have very strong policy measures. Otherwise these networks will not be realized. Since the 1980s in Istanbul there is a trend to relocate industrial areas from inside the city to the outside. What kind of changes in transportation do you have to make to fit that into your model? There was a policy to remove manufacturing outside Istanbul to the suburban area. I think it was a proper policy, and they succeeded. What happened as a result? The transportation demand has increased even more. In the case of secondary industry, meaning manufacturing, the demand is limited to commuting to and from the factories. But in the tertiary sector, in addition to commuting from home to work and back, workers will travel in daytime for business. The rate of business trips is much higher in tertiary sector than in secondary sector. So, these changes in the structure of the city have created more traffic demand. Should there be another bridge crossing? And if yes where should it be? What is your opinion about that? It’s one of the main topics of the master plan study, because it’s a very important matter. At this moment, there are two bridges. About 700,000 people are using these two bridges everyday. And there is also boat transport, which takes about 300,000 people. All together, more than 1 million people are traveling on and crossing the bridges daily. And according to our estimate, the demand will be at least 2.8 million after 15 years. And how will it be possible to fulfill this demand? Within 3 or 4 years you’ll have the Marmaray Pipeline, which will have a capacity of more than 800,000 people per day. It’s very good, but still it’s not enough. So, the central government decided to build a road tunnel, for passenger cars only. The bidding is finished, and now they are negotiating. I hope within 3–4 years it will be realized. But it’s not enough to transport 2.8 million passengers. So, the JICA study team recommends the third bridge. Initially we planned to build a railway bridge, but it was not feasible. So we considered the road highway bridges. The third bridge should be dual purpose: highway and railway. If we build a large, dual mode bridge, some people fear that it will be very ugly and obstructive. The views of the Bosporus are very important. I agree completely that it’s very important. But if we arrange the road and the railway at the same plate, the design is not so ugly. This is the case for the first and second bridges. So, we recommend to build the third bridge in dual mode in the long term future, not in the short term. In the coming 5 years, no, not the 5 years after that either, but another 5 years later. That means around year 2021. In 2023, the third bridge should be in service. For that purpose, maybe after 5 years we should start the work: the survey, the design, the study, and then the design and build. It takes a long time. You don’t think it’s urgently needed? No, no. Urgently, we need Marmaray and the passenger car tunnel. As the new plans, do you have the third bridge? In the master plan, yes. Where is it located? It’s located between ist and 2nd bridge. Like the highway director recommended? Yes. The first time I came here, it was also for the bridge plan. The central government wanted to build the third bridge. They said that building the third bridge north of the second bridge would urbanize the northern part. So I explored the northern part. It’s an angulated, hilly area. It’s not suitable for urbanization. But then, we made a comparative analysis for the location: north of the second bridge versus between the two bridges. From economic point of view, the southern location—between the two bridges—is superior to the northern one from the aspect of demand. But at that time, land acquisition was very difficult. To build there, we would need to remove more than 30 homes, and some are homes to very prestigious people. That’s why we recommended the northern bridge at that time. The Japanese side, the Japanese study, recommended the northern location. But I doubted feasibility and the usefulness of the third bridge located in the northern location. Many people would be forced to detour north just to travel to the other side, and they won’t want to do it. Privately, I had objections to the northern route. And this time, we recommend to build the third bridge in between the two bridges.

Wakui Tetsuo, JICA Study Team Leader, Istanbul Transportation Master Plan

This is an excerpt from interview conducted by İmre Balanlı for the feature-length documentary film on Istanbul titled Excerpicores due to be released in November 2009 © 2009 by İmre Balanlı. All rights reserved.
Gülsu / Gülsuyu are two adjacent gecekondu neighborhoods, situated to the north of the E-5 highway of Istanbul. At the end of the 1950s, the first new arrivals from Anatolia chose the empty hillside because of its proximity to the industrial zone on the Asian side of the city, Maltepe. With a kind of reverse urbanism, the structures in this area were built on state-owned land by migrants from the eastern provinces of the country. Squatting on public lands generated comparatively low density, detached single-storey houses. As the houses were built with ad hoc solutions, these new comers survived in the city with the help of solidarity networks. Later amnesties for the gecekondu neighborhoods paved the way to a new urban process. Apartmentalization first began with the most accessible gecekondus; the less accessible ones were of lower material quality. Located on the periphery of Istanbul, especially after the Kartal Urban Transformation project of the Greater Municipality of Istanbul, the inhabitants of these neighborhoods now find themselves on the ‘most wanted list’ of the real estate market. High accessibility to sub-city centers, inspiring topography, attractive scenery and location in an earthquake safe zone provide Gülsu/Gülsuyu with a strong market pressure. Their resistance is due solely to their still functioning solidarity networks. However, after apartmentalization, the solidarity networks have tended to dissolve. To a certain extent, religion (Alevilik) and political consciousness keep their network alive. What makes the market demands so overwhelming is the absence of any public programs concerning social sustainability. The authorities mostly serve as the moderator of the market and their complex financial models always end up with the displacement of the local inhabitants. In one of the interviews, they expressed their discontent about the urban poor ‘occupying’ such a precious location. With such an immersion in neo-liberal policies, to advocate an alternative social agenda ensuring the ‘right to the City’ for all urban dwellers should get the priority among urban issues.
Erdogan Yildiz, first of all, can you please tell us about the gecekondu (shanty towns) in Istanbul?

Gecekondu first appeared in Istanbul in the ‘50s and ‘60s when unemployment in rural Anatolia surged due to the mechanization of agriculture. Istanbul was the biggest industrial city in Turkey, gecekondu initially formed there, especially in the Asian part of Istanbul that contained major industrial areas along the E5 highway. The factory workers in these areas built their homes using scrap materials, which are scattered all over Istanbul, the same happened in Kağıthane and Okmeydani. It would be fair to say that the state let them build the shanty towns. There was a kind of unofficial agreement between the squatters and the city. In the ‘70s, squatting reached its highest levels.

Our neighbourhood, Gülsuyu-Gülenbüyük, is one example. The neighbourhood was formed between the ‘50s and the ‘70s, when migration increased dramatically. Affected by the political environment of the ‘70s, our neighbourhood became an important part of leftist movements and declared itself a location for dissenters. Especially during 1978-80, revolutionary committees were very powerful in this area. Do you know this story? These places were Neverland, and we came and turned it into a neighbourhood? Can you tell us about it?

When the neighbours were forming, there were huge infrastructure problems, like the lack of a sewer network, electrical connections, and water supply. We weren’t able to get help from anywhere. In Gülsuyu, the neighbourhood struggled and built all basic infrastructure by their very own efforts. Sometimes, they teamed up with the municipalities to build infrastructure. But, like I said before, these neighbourhods around the E5 Highway weren’t really integrated with the city. So, municipal services had a hard time reaching our area. Until the 1990s and 2000s, infrastructure was still a big problem. And then, Turkey’s political economy began to change. In the ‘80s and especially the ‘90s, neo-liberal policies affected urban policies, and this necessitated urban twists. We faced a lot of pressure to ease these neighbourhods. Can you tell us about that?

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, Istanbul was an industrial city that needed a serious labour force. But in the last two decades, Istanbul has started to evolve into a financial center due to socio-economic transformations. So, the city has traded a production-based economy for a service-based one. So, the city’s need for a labour force has decreased, and all the factories have been decentralized, moving away from the city. The gecekondu neighbourhoods have stayed in the city center. And this new situation puts great pressure on us and our neighborhoods. On the one hand, there were subway systems being built and, on the other hand, the E5 highway was being built. Despite this, we were trying to ease the pressure on our neighbourhoods.

How did your neighbourhood encounter the urban renewal? How does a neighbourhood become aware of an urban renewal project?

In 2004, Gülsuyu experienced a new planning process called the Maltepe Regulatory Command Plan. This was the first plan that we agreed to. There was one month to appeal. When they first informed us, there were only 10 days left. The municipality of Maltepe sent a declaration to our muhtar (village headman) that there were no objections. Your district is within an economic zone. They didn’t arrange any public consultation. The 2005-5000 scaled settlement plan. Deliver us your opinion about it. Our muhtar had never seen anything like this, so he didn’t know what was going on. We sat together with the architects and engineers in our association to try to understand. What we discovered was that they were trying to ease the 7 neighbourhoods located north of the E5 highway with a total population of 70,000-80,000. Furthermore, 60-70% of the population was proposed to be rehoused. We organized rapidly and delivered a petition signed by 5,000 people. We opened 32 court cases against the planning decision and delivered a petition signed by 12,000 people. We organized meetings that involved the architects and engineers in our association to try to understand. What we discovered was that they were trying to ease the 7 neighbourhoods located north of the E5 highway with a population of 70,000-80,000. Furthermore, 60-70% of the population was proposed to be rehoused. We organized rapidly and delivered a petition signed by 5,000 people. We opened 32 court cases against the planning decision and delivered a petition signed by 12,000 people. We organized meetings that involved the architects and engineers in our association to try to understand. What we discovered was that they were trying to ease the 7 neighbourhoods located north of the E5 highway with a population of 70,000-80,000. Furthermore, 60-70% of the population was proposed to be rehoused. We organized rapidly and delivered a petition signed by 5,000 people. 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Following the demolition of the informal settlements of neighbouring Ayazma and Tepeüstü, their inhabitants were relocated to the TOKİ Social Housing Project in Bezirganbahçe. The project is located just next to Yeşilçampkent, a predominantly Kurdish neighbourhood, where historically extremist Turkish nationalists reside. As seen in the image, people from Ayazma (predominantly Turkish) and Tepeüstü (predominantly Turkish) are scattered in the apartment blocks around the project site and cutting area in half. A row of apartment blocks are reserved for families of police officers, creating a space high in potential for ethnic tensions. (Image: Ayfer Bartu Candan & Biray Kolluoğlu) ** for further reading on the subject: Ayfer Bartu Candan & Biray Kolluoğlu (2009) "Emerging spaces of neoliberalism: A gated town and a public housing project in İstanbul" New Perspectives on Turkey, No.39, pp. 5-46

**THE RELOCATION**

Ayazma was a "gecekondu" neighbourhood founded by forced migrants who came to Istanbul and sought asylum there due to security reasons during the 1980s. However, as a result of the construction of important highways and industrial centers nearby and the later construction of the Olympic stadium in 2002, Ayazma land became valuable, and it underwent urban transformation in 2004. Ayazma was demolished in part. Beginning in 2007, those accepted as beneficiaries were relocated to TOKİ Bezirganbahçe Mass Housing Blocks built by TOKİ. Bezirganbahçe consists of 55 blocks, each 11-story high and with 49 apartments.

**THE AFTERMATH**

Exacerbated Poverty

"I couldn't find bread money yesterday, can't even buy bread. For four months we have not been able to pay our installments". Almost two years after the relocation, the dilapidated appearance of the blocks and the bad quality of the construction materials make one wonder what was wrong in Ayazma. The bathrooms all drip to the lower storeys, the walls are cracked, the elevators do not work well, and the kitchen sinks cause trouble. Unfortunately, the Ayazma population do not have the economic means to repair their homes, since almost all are on the brink of poverty because of monthly payments and expenditures.

According to the contracts’ credit schedule, the Ayazma beneficiaries are expected to pay monthly installments of 320–330 TL (350–360 €) for 15 years to eventually own the title deeds of their apartments. The rates may seem fairly logical in the purchase of a house. However, the Ayazma population earns monthly incomes of 600–900 TL (750–1100 €). Furthermore, living in mass housing blocks requires extra expenses such as monthly maintenance fees (15 €), natural gas (40–75 € in winter, 10–20 € in summer) and higher prices for electricity and city water (each 20–30 €). Vital needs like food, health, education, and transportation add to the costs. With this sum of expenses, it is almost impossible for the Ayazma population to survive under these conditions. Aggravating this picture are high unemployment rates; most of the Ayazma population lost their jobs due to the relocation. The Ayazma population used to work at nearby factories in Ayazma, earning low wages with no social security rights. Nevertheless, unemployment was rarely a problem since there was always another factory with-in walking distance to supply jobs. At Bezirganbahçe, which is far from the industrial zone and has very poor mass transportation systems (one has to take three different vehicles), it is too expensive for the population to search for jobs. For those who still have jobs, transportation takes a considerable amount of their budgets. As a consequence, most of the Ayazma population at Bezirganbahçe have mounting debts and are unemployed. Unpaid credits and the threat of foreclosure have led one-third of the population to sell their flats to pay their debts. Many have moved to the periphery of the city, building squatter homes. Poverty in Bezirganbahçe is not alleviated, but exacerbated, and a third forced migration ensues. Another dismal consequence is the high drop-out rate among secondary school students; families have started taking their kids out of school to place them in jobs often in dangerous conditions, such as shoe factories with constant exposure to toxic chemicals and chemicals.

Disintegration of Social Life and Solidarity Bonds

"It's easy to make a new city but hard to relocate persons, you lose the nature, your job, familiar surroundings and neighbours you are used to. In My soul has died here. So has my children\". Ayazma families are typically large with at least five kids, while Bezirganbahçe apartments are small, with 72-square meters each. Because these apartments cannot accommodate families comfortably, some families have resorted to using the kitchen floor as bedrooms at night, and others send older children to relatives. Most feel a sense of imprisonment and confinement: "This place is no better than prison". In contrast to Ayazma, where a step outside welcomes residents with a green, spacious world, living in the blocks aggravates feelings of confinement. For women especially, most of whom do not speak Turkish, leaving the home has become a problem. They are afraid of getting lost among the blocks: "It's been six months since my feet touched soil\". Those courageous enough to go shopping or wandering have faced hostile reactions for speaking Kurdish: "I took Nurus (the child) outside to the playground and had a call from home (from Batman, in the southeast), I started talking Turkish. A 'guilty' lady approached, telling me 'there is no other Istanbul'!". Living in confined spaces with little access to the outside has dissolved neighbourhoodly relations as well. There are no public spaces in the TOKİ Blocks for neighbours to meet each other. In the first days of their arrival, some of the Ayazma population who sat on the lawn outside their blocks were warned by the authorities to be 'civilized'. Economic hardships also made it impossible to invite guests. Because the families are large, having guests is impossible in the crowded apartments without noise and complaints from the other residents. Old friends cannot be met inside or outside. Consequently, vital agents for survival in Ayazma—neighbourly relations and solidarity bonds—are broken due to the relocation.

Discrimination against Cultural Life

"As tradition, custom and culture coming from that part, we did not feel any alienation at Ayazma. As parts of the same culture, we settled next to each other. We left the funeral (their villages in the East) there and came. The Ayazma/Tepeüstü. Urban Transforma- tion Project is singular as the first to relocate an entire population of a neighbourhood to another site. Thus in the Bezirganbahçe blocks, the Ayazma population shares space with populations from Tepeüstü and Zeytinburnu—other transformation sites—and with other low-income families who have bought units in the Bezirganbahçe TOKİ Blocks. The relocation to the same site of populations from completely different cultures, who have had very little contact in the past inevitably creates intergroup problems. In such an environment, even the code of dress- ing may be an excuse for discrimination. The Ayazma population has been confronted with 'modernists' codes that accuse them of being 'uncivilized' because of the way they live, dress, talk and even entertain. While some groups can easily get along with their style of life in the blocks, the Ayazma population has not adapted as easily to the new life, and this can easily be used to stigmatize them as 'barbarians'. Discrimination
is explicitly expressed in the language used by other groups: “People with bestial characteristics whish better leave our venue,” 8, “...they should be warned of their misdeeds and disgust,” 9, “They do not know anything, have broken the stairs, damage the elevators. They must be taught how to behave...” 9.

This attitude can also be perceived in the projects of the municipality, which bear names like “inclusion,” “getting to know the apartment life-style” or “the Apartment Culture Project”. The Ayazma population, on the other hand, have chosen to stick to their cultures while mocking the projects as “Civilization projects they call them. Whose civilization? They’ll better civilize themse- lves”. The most critical issue here is the attitude of the local authority from the governing party, AKP (Justice and Development Party). The ARP has come to the political arena as a party against all of the modernist approaches of the Republic. Ironically, regarding the issue of the Kurdish population, the ARP seems to have turned into a modernizing agent.

Hostilities and Soaring Polarization

All over the world, stigmatization and criminal- ization have been tools adopted by state actors to marginalize perceived outgroups and even commit deeds and violations. The situation is no different in Turkey. The Ayazma population, because of their Kurdish origin, has been labeled a ‘terrorist group’ or ‘group in collaboration with the PKK’ by the central and local authorities to find a legitimate explanation for the urban transformation. The relocation of Ayazma population in 2007 co- incided with the time of the general elections in Turkey. The political atmosphere was one of ac- centuating Turkish nationalism. Because of this terrorist label and their Kurdish backgrounds, other groups in Rezİganimba and in the vicin- ity treated the Ayazma population harshly. Al- though candidates from other political parties were never elected to the Rezİganimba, no candidate from the Kurdish political party could enter the site without violent opposition. Meter-long Turkish flags were hung around the blocks, making the Ayazma population wonder, “Are they trying to symbolize that we are a flag. So, against whom are they hung if not us?” This polarization has affected all age groups, especially the youth and children. Those from Ayazma are called “Children of the Treasury”. Because they had been living on state land in Ayazma, this name insinuated that the Ayazma population had stolen the land from the trea- sury. Against this degrading jargon, the Ayazma population started calling Ayazma a “Treasure”.

“Look, we all are Treasury Children, do you get what it means? It means every single plot in Ayazma is a treasure, the entire place is full of gold. Here, we have come to Hell! You see how unhappy we are here in Hell. We don’t like it here.”

Tensions have started among different groups: “We had our Turkish neighbours at Ayazma as well. We had no such things between us. I am really anxious about the future. Yesterday, my son came home and he was immediately beaten up a boy from Batman (the Southeast re- gion). So to get even, we beat up the Sinop kid.”

This grave development is also been observed by volunteers working with children on social projects: “We made some observations while we had been doing our project here last year. There is a serious Turkish/Kurdish polariza- tion here, and more importantly, the younger chil- dren are aware of this. We saw some traces of reparation here, and the older childrens’ reactions made in Bezirganbahce between Oct. 2008– Feb. 2009. About 100 persons were interviewed. The study was carried out by the author and Tuna Kayrucci from the Sociology Department of Wash- ington University.

It is cited as being one of the biggest olympic stadiums in the world in Stadionland Mundo, pub- lished by Italian Cribraio in 2014.It is also on the 5-star stadiums list of the uefa.

—The Project encompasses two very different communities who have been living next to each other for a long time yet with almost no relations at all: Ayazma population is a Kurdish popula- tion from East and Southeast whereas Tepesu consists of Turkish Alevi Muslims from Tokat and the Black Sea region.

—Resident from Tepesu

—An NGO representative working for the litera- cy of Ayazma women.

—Volunteer from Sabanci University.

—Ayazma Tepesu Kentli Dünyö Projesi


—UN- Cescpr Article 11 and especially Gen- eral Comments 4 and 7.

One winter night, on a hill where the huge re- fuse bins came daily and dumped the city’s waste, eight shelters were set up by lantern- light near the garbage hills. In the morning the first snow of the year fell, and the earliest scavengers saw these eight huts piccled togeth- er from mattresses bought in crate corners, blocks of pitchpaper, wood and -building sites, and breeze- blocks brought from the brickyards by horse and cart. Not even stopping to drop the sacks and baskets from their backs, they all ran to the huts and began a lively exchange with the squatters who were keeping watch. A harsh and power- ful wind kept cutting short their words and at one point almost swept the huts away. The scavengers pointed out that the ramshackle walls and makeshift roofs would never stand up to the wind, so the squatters decided to rope down the roofs and nail supports to the walls.

When the garbage trucks had come and gone, the simit-sellers on the way to the garbage hill that eight huts had been built on the slopes and spread the news through the neigh- bouring warehouses, workshops and coffee- houses. By noon people had begun to descend in the hope building a hut. Men and women, old and young, spread in all directions. Kneeling and rising they measured with feet and outstretched arms. Then with their spades they stretched crooked planks in the earth. By late afternoon their road of blocks and blocks and pitchpaper. That night in snowfall and lantern-light a hundare more huts were erected in the snow.

Next morning, by the garbage heaps—downhill from the factories which manufactured light- bulbs and chemicals, and facing the china facto- ry—a complete neighbourhood was fathered by mud and chemical waste, with roofs of plastic ba- sins, doors from old rugs, oilcloths and window curtains, and blocks of pitchpaper, wood and building sites, and breeze- blocks. Throughout the day bits and pieces arrived to fur- nish the houses, and the remaining women and children, with sacks on their backs and babies in arms, entered their homes. Mattresses were unrolled and kilim-rugs spread on the earthen floors. The damp walls were hung with faded pic- tures and brushes with their blue bead-good-luck charms, cradles were slung from the roofs and chimney pipe was knocked through the sideways of every hut.

The factory workers gathered at the windows to watch, laughing at the belongings arriving in horse-drawn carts and the people chasing up and down. All day long there were whistles, catcalls, songs. In the following a weartiness settled on the huts and the inhabitants dozed off under the wet walls, and the roofs creaked in the wind. By the time the factory nightshift had left, the founders of the community were fast asleep. The factory and the street had been connected to the Wood- and Plastic Neighbourhood. They circled round the huts and mocked the roofs that wished to sprout the wings of a bird:

We're not roofs,
Won't you wing with me?
Drop the babies' cradles
And fly away free.
Fling us out we one, we one.
We, we, we!

For days the birds circled and swooped over the huts, their wheeling and screeching betraying the site. And while they flew and mocked “wee wee, wee”, the demolition men arrived on the hill.

Don’t bunch together, we’ll be hitting bucks and they’ll raçe our homes to the ground.”

The women dropped their babies and picked up hatchets, the men held shovel handles at the ready and took up positions in front of the huts. A lady woman struck the first blow at a wrecker kicking down the wall of one of the huts. He lay bleeding on the ground, then over and over he rolled down and to the stream. The hut people hurled themselves in body at the wreckers, and the fluttering birds flew up to the clouds. The wreckers dropped their pickaxes and fled down to the stream. That night huge trucks arrived and a jeep fol- lowed by five trucks made its way between the huts. Headlamps were switched on, and the hot people were summoned to the headlights at gunpoint.

Don’t bunch together, if you surround us we’re finished!

The fight lasted nearly an hour but the hot people were finally surrounded and trapped in the headlamps. Belongings vanished under the wreckage of their homes and in the early passage of the wind, praying it would carry the doors.

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The Mass Housing Administration (MHA) is a governmental institution that was formed in 1984 to regulate the housing sector, prevent the expansion of unauthorized dwellings (gecekondu) and provide sustainable solutions to the stark housing shortages in Turkish cities. Until 2001, the MHA shaped the housing market by providing state-subsidized credits to housing cooperatives, the number of which drastically increased after the founding of the MHA. The resources to finance these subsidized credits came from the Mass Housing Fund and the state-owned Turkish Real-Estate Bank, both of which were abolished after the 2001 economic crisis, which decimated the Turkish economy. Between 1984 and 2001, the MHA provided cheap credits to around 950,000 housing units throughout Turkey and itself constructed about 45,000 more. The massive amounts of credits allotted to cooperatives and the extensive building activity that this has instigated, however, has failed to provide any long-lasting solutions to the housing problems of the urban poor, mainly because these credits mostly have been used by the middle and upper-middle classes. In other words, through the MHA, the government subsidized middle-class housing rather than supplying affordable housing to the poor. One important consequence of this policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s was the intensification of the ‘gecekondu’ problem. The fact that large amounts of state funds were transferred to the middle classes also had a negative impact on the increasing levels of economic inequality in Turkish society.

By the end of the 1990s, the MHA was already in a deep financial crisis due to the depletion of the state resources that had funded its credit scheme and, equally important, to the massive amounts of corruption that went on in its lending practices. When the most devastating economic crisis in Turkish history erupted in 2001, the MHA lost all of its financial resources and became practically a defunct organization. This, however, radically changed when the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power in 2002. The uncompromising neoliberal economic policies of the JDP had large implications for the construction sector and for real estate markets. As part of its privatization agenda, the JDP sought to privatize valuable state-owned real estate assets, especially in the big cities. Furthermore, to reactivate the economy, it put special emphasis on the regeneration of the construction sector because of its multiple backward and forward linkages to other economic sectors. To efficiently and rapidly accomplish these two tasks, the JDP significantly restructured the MHA and made it into the most powerful institution in the remaking of real-estate markets and the construction sector. As a result of several legal and institutional reforms passed in 2008 the MHA acquired the right to (i) regulate the zoning and sale of almost all state-owned urban land, (ii) form subsidiary construction firms and/or engage in partnerships with existing private firms, (iii) construct ‘for-profit’ housing on state land either through its own subsidiary firms or through public private partnerships in order to raise revenues for public-housing construction, (iv) sell its mortgaged claims to private mortgage-brokerage firms, (v) execute ‘urban renewal’ and ‘gecekondu transformation’ projects, and (vi) revise planning and zoning regulations in ‘transformation’ zones. Perhaps the most controversial and consequential items in this list are the last two. With these new authorities, the MHA can directly intervene in and
were transferred to the MHA with no cost. The agency either sold this land to private developers or used it to construct for-profit housing, subsidized public apartment and various other urban amenities. Throughout Turkey, the MHA, between 2003 and 2009, built 314,513 apartment units, 311 trade centers, 414 schools, 42 hospitals, 268 mosques and numerous other structures. A considerable portion of the apartments are ‘for-profit’ units, sold in the market to wealthy consumers. In Istanbul alone, a total of 71,126 apartment units have been constructed, more than half of which are ‘for-profit’ units. The MHA also undertakes mega-projects that are not related to housing. For example, it has built a 50,000-seat capacity football stadium in Istanbul on public land, and is planning to construct a theme park for the state or for certain private developers (i.e., private interests); 3) The ‘urban transformation projects’ that ‘clear’ densely populated low-income neighborhoods are force-fully displacing the poor from their homes transferring their property to more wealthy groups and they are creating concentrated zones of poverty that are rapidly acquiring ‘ghetto-like’ characteristics.

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case study G—ATAKÖY
from fence to defense
Ataköy is an exceptional neighborhood in Istanbul. Built in six phases as a public housing project from the end of the 1950s to the early 2000s, it is a paradigmatic case for the transformation of the notion of ‘ideal’ housing in modern Turkey. Today, on a total area of 4,000,000 m², Ataköy houses 12,000 housing units, 7 elementary schools, 1 kindergarten, 1 conservatory, 4 weekly market places, 75 small shops and 1 large shopping mall.

Though planned as a public housing scheme, the inhabitants are upper-middle class. In the years where the anonymous fabric of the city was produced incrementally, it was designed to be a ‘project’ of an ideal environment: a sterile and homogeneous dreamscape for ‘ideal’ inhabitants. These ‘projects’ of the exclusive environment are always unreceptive to any ‘contamination’, surprise and the ‘other’. The obsession to total control devised to soothe modern anxiety explains the paradox of the modernist housing projects: the tension between the emancipation and confinement.

In Ataköy, the chronological sequence of the phases of the settlement reveals the gradual amplification of the boundaries: from fence to defense. Where there is almost no need for physical barrier, the sterility itself functions as the most impenetrable barrier. Rather than self-defense or defining one’s own space, it is the xenophobia and narcissism of the bourgeoisie that has built the boundaries. The progression of surveillance and safety is obviously parallel to global trends, but without any doubt, the informal growth of the city has provoked the obsession of total control.

Starting from the beginning, the abolition of the planned railway station was a sign of the Ataköy residents’ insistence on inaccessibility. But while this exclusivity of the neighborhood was declared from the beginning, the district has been aggravated by the global trends and the growth of informal geographies.
Gated communities in Istanbul

Gated communities are a new trend of urbanization. They are defined as physical private areas with restricted rules and prohibited access, where outsiders and insiders exist. They have increasingly become a new development trend in the housing market by global socio-economic changes and marketing strategies of developers in all around the world. Due to their increasing diversity and multiplicity, they have grown fast and have radically transformed the urban environment. Gated communities have first appeared by the security reasons in the US and in South Africa. But nowadays, security concerns are not very distinctive aspects since all gated communities have walls or booms with a secured and prohibited entrance while such communities differentiate from each other by the services and concepts provided inside.

Gated communities in Istanbul have developed as a result of the appearance of a new social class by the economic and political changes in 1980s. They have become a marketing angle and another way to target specific submarkets for developers. In contrast to their global counterparts, gated communities in Istanbul have spread out as a fashion with prestige concerns. In other words, the introduction of gated communities into the Turkish housing market was based on the creation of the lost social values and the sense of community while giving the opportunity to live with celebrities. The main reason behind this is the pioneering projects that used the slogan of ‘a new life style’ as the marketing strategy. Today, they are the driving forces of the housing sector and the refuge offered by the developers has become the basic and indispensable product in the market.

According to the research conducted by Baycan-Levent and Gülümser in 2005, the common characteristics of these communities are arisen walls, restricted gates, 24 hours security and social facilities with an attractive landscape. In the same research, researchers identified four types of gated developments in Istanbul, viz. ‘gated towers’, ‘gated villa towns’, ‘gated apartment blocks’, and ‘gated towns’. Depending on the size of the development, gated communities in Istanbul have emerged in both inner and outer city of both the European and Asian sides that is encouraged mainly through the north periphery where quantity and quality of natural elements are high. However their choice of location not only has detrimental effects on the natural environment but also on the social environment. Particularly, the communities located in the outskirts of the city create a chaos and a class division between rural and upper class families. Therefore, they threaten both natural and social sustainability, while legally building developments through the loops in the regulations. Actually, gated communities shape the urban sprawl by creating new residential zones of the city which are planned and independent from the rest of the city.

Gated communities do not only threaten, but also contribute to the city. According to the developers, these contributions are the creation of new job opportunities, secured areas, better infrastructure and utilising inactive lands. The creation of new job opportunities and better infrastructure can be counted as contributions to the whole city at least for near vicinity, while the secured areas is an advantage only for the inhabitants of gated communities. Another contribution of gated communities is the utilisation of inactivate land in a legal way. However, the large demand for these settlements has led the size of available lands for agriculture and natural resources to decrease. Therefore, this current trend in the housing sector shows that Istanbul has no plans/strategies to control this development. In contrast, gated communities control the development and the sprawl of the city of Istanbul by affecting both the lives of the people who live in them and in the whole city. In addition, it is still unknown for whom and from what/who gated communities take refuge.

This article is edited from the MSc thesis “Gated Communities in Istanbul: A New Trend in Urbanization” of Aliye Ahu Gülümser conducted under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tüzin Baycan Levent in 2005.
case study I—RUMELİ FENERİ AND ITS ENVIRONS

refuge as involvement in and as resistance to global trends

The preservation of the northern forests is the essential issue of Istanbul in terms of ecological sustainability. The second bridge and its belt highway, the TEM/E-6, provoke urbanization towards the northern part of the city. Despite all preventative legislations, the new global trend, gated communities, seems to be the utmost threat at this point. Today, the upper-middle class takes advantage of the tendency of the city to activate informal mechanisms to bypass legal issues and occupies the city’s priceless natural reserves in the forms of gated communities, university campuses and private beach clubs. Their occupation presents the unfortunate attitude of seeing nature as a “standing reserve”, in which the northern forests, the fishermen’s village, Rumelifeneri, and the Black Sea shores are represented simply as an idyllic panorama, a pastoral background at their disposal, rather than as a living habitat. This panorama acts as a refuge from all kinds of ‘pollution’ from the metropolis. Nevertheless, they bring the very ‘pollution’ with them and in turn, destroy their refuge by colonizing it with their own solutions. What is at stake is not only the close vicinity, but the whole ecological system of the city. That is why the villagers of Rumelifeneri see these global consumerist patterns as a threat to their habitat and close themselves off to strangers and take refuge in their serene world. The analysis discloses two contradictory current forms of refuge side by side: refuge as involvement in and as resistance to global trends.
As the projection indicates, the dynamics of urbanization will produce functional, environmental and social problems in the designated region in a period of eight to ten years. In this time, the area will be transformed from predominantly rural in character to relentlessly urban.

**Functional Problems:** New business districts will consolidate and advance without sufficient services and infrastructure. Two large housing estates will demand services for which they are not prepared. Informal housing will permeate the area even further at a density that is very complicated and expensive to provide services for later.

**Environmental Problems:** Development will encroach upon the reservoir lakes and overrun the feeding streams, threatening their viability.

**Social Problems:** The interior development of exclusively low-density settlement will coagulate a large number of settlements, eradicating the game of uses. Sites subsequent to the business district formation, low-density settlement and informal development will remain in desuetude.

**Proposed Solutions:**

- **A Green and Adapting Urbanism**
  - The premise that urbanization in the area will continue under the current conditions and that it will diminish the reserve of green is the starting point from which the strategy is developed: the protection and improvement of green at the same pace as that of urbanization. Conditions for development will be redefined with two complementary operations. First, the implementation of fast and coherent development plans will redirect development away from the reservoir. Given a proper configuration of access, it would be possible to determine the patterns of development, use and densities that the area will attract. Second is the development of "green." Pioneering reforestation will create a new edge between the development and the reservoirs. Recouping stream corridors, flood plains, drainage areas and forests will successfully protect the sensitive areas against development. In addition to ecological protection, forestation also will be part of the urban requirements—thereby creating a network of green spaces with an amenable culture and character. The green spaces now expanded by forestation will constitute a second layer of conditions for development, use and densities that the area will attract. The green and adapting urbanism will be in a perpetual state of evolution. It will not be fixed, but open. It contains the possibility and the need for its transformation and adaptation. It will be defined by its capacity to change. The green and adapting urbanism will redefine the relationships between the existing elements and the patterns of development. It will generate the potentials and conditions to respond. The green and adapting urbanism will be the form of organization in the area.

**Conclusion**

Currently in the northeast of the Anatolian side of Istanbul development occurs through formal and informal means: new developments with luxury villas, detached houses of modest means, and neighborhoods affordable to a population with irregular incomes. Development proceeds without the required planning permissions, and in spite of regulations regarding the use of land. This urbanism successfully evades even an attempt to stop or even to control its development. Outside of Istanbul's development zones with regulations enforced severely, the area is acquiring urban substance solely on the conditions that make for agricultural facilities suitable for development—organizing land uses, densities of occupation and intensities of growth based on the market forces. The inquiry arrives at an intriguing position in the light of these conditions: the Beykoz-Ümraniye area is developing with considerable speed, but also becomes in itself a tool to transform the permanence of built form. It is not dissatisfactory with and does not interfere in how people build.

This alternative proposal for urbanization has further implications. The intensity of development that exhibits itself at the moment in the Beykoz-Ümraniye area around the Elmas Reservoir Lake has its own rules. If the rate at which the fringes of Istanbul urbanize continues at this speed, this proposal could become an important tool in protecting the natural resources, guiding development and giving structure to it. It could become the strategy for growth in the Istanbul region in the near future.

The alternative growth strategy proposed here offers an understanding in which the environment that we call the "city" does not have its form in what is built, but in the changes it will undergo in time. Its form is not static, but dynamic and in constant transformation. Thus, this new and alternative approach to a "Green and Adapting Urbanism" also calls for a "Formless City."
What is driving the evictions in Istanbul? In recent years many Istanbul neighbourhoods have been going through dramatic transformations, which have led to the demolition of houses and the eviction of their residents. In some cases, residents are being relocated to the outskirts of the city, while others are being left to the streets. While the actual number of evictions to date in Istanbul has been quite small, the scale of potential evictions is high if the urban renewal plans are carried out as foreseen. Different factors are driving these evictions, from property speculation in the regeneration of urban areas to mega-projects, such as the airport, Formula 1 racing and the 2010 Capital of Culture. In response to reports by local organisations that further evictions are expected to take place, the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE) to the Executive Director of ÜN-HABITAT was invited by civil society groups to undertake a mission to Istanbul. The mission, which took place from June 8 to 12, 2009, was tasked with documenting and future possible evictions, assessing the exiting legal framework, and hearing the viewpoints of those responsible for and those affected by evictions. The findings and recommendations of the report would be communicated to the Executive Director of ÜN-HABITAT.

The mission visited several neighbourhoods, some of which had already been demolished and some which had been designated for urban renewal. Several land speculations, associations, residents, municipality officials and a representative of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKI).

The various stages of the eviction and demolition processes

The neighbourhoods visited during the mission were chosen because they exemplified the different stages of urban renewal, which can be identified as:

Stage 1: Designated as a renewal or project area — the area had been designated by the municipality or greater municipality as a renewal area or an area for special projects or mega-projects. Planning was not taking place and evictions had not happened. If the area did undergo renewal or the project did go forward then evictions might have taken place.

Stage 2: Planning process underway—a plan for renewal of the nercburbation project or was in the process of being approved. Negotiations with owners and purchasing of properties was taking place. Evictions may not have started but likely would begin soon.

Stage 3: Demolition ongoing—some residents had been evicted and some houses had been destroyed; the process was happening then.

Stage 4: Demolition completed—the residents had been evicted and the houses had been destroyed.

Stage 5: 2nd wave of evictions—people relocated from renewal areas to social housing in TOKI tenements who had forced to leave the tenements because they would afford to pay the monthly instalments, the building fees, or other costs.

Brief presentation of the neighbourhoods visited during the mission

Sulukule is a residential neighbourhood situated in the historic peninsula, within the boundaries of the Theodosian Wall built in 417. Although home to many different groups of people, the area is characterized by a Roma population who have lived in the vicinity for many generations, and who rely strongly on social networks for their survival. In 2006, an urban transformation project was announced under Law No. 5666, the Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalizing Deteriorated Immovable Histori- cal and Cultural Properties, which called for the transformation of the area, including the demolition of the existing houses and replacement with modern villas. The renter would be displaced from the area and relocated to new housing development in Taşoluk, 33 km away. Owners would have the chance to stay in Sulukule if they could afford to pay the difference between the current property valuation and the price of the new houses; however most could not afford to pay, and sold to third parties.

Demolition had been ongoing for two years and had recently been completed. TOKI was considering a re-evaluation of the urban renewal process for Sulukule, following the widespread and intense pressure from national and international urban social networks and international organisations. A new workshop (Sulukule Atölye) was initiated by concerned citizens and experts to prepare an alternative plan, which aims to regain the housing rights of Sulukule residents and minimize the damage that had been caused so far. Süleymaniye is another neighbourhood in the historic peninsula, close to the famous Süleymaniye Mosque. It contains many houses of architectural significance. The area designated for renewal is comprised of 1700 houses and demolitions are ongoing. Most of residents are renters and the owners are generally absentee. Kiptaş (the public development company undertaking renewal projects and acting in the Istanbul Metropolitan Region) has been buying houses in the area and has been evicting the tenants. There have been several fires recently that have destroyed many houses and left families homeless and there are also many small businesses in the area which are affected.

Tarlabaşı neighbourhood is also in an historic district and part of Beyoğlu municipality. It is directly adjacent to the centre of the city, Taksim square, and contains historic domestic architecture and other valuable architecture. In total there are 3000 people to be affected by the project in 275 plots, the project has been approved but no demolitions have taken place yet.

Başbeyliktu in Maltepe Municipality is a gecekondu area on the Asian side of Istanbul which was first built in the late 1960s. The neighbourhood is well built with permanent two, three and four storey buildings, paved roads, water and sewerage system, and electricity. The planning process for an urban renewal project began in 2006 and it was designated as a renewal area in 2009. There are 6000 houses and 35,000 residents. Nine houses have already been destroyed to make way for TOKI tenements and the rest of the neighbourhood is under threat of demolitions.

Küçükbaşakköy is a small Roma community of 256 houses which was demolished in June 2006, with no prior notice given to the residents. Some of the residents are still camped in backyard tents on the site, as they have no where to go. Living conditions are very unhealthy.

Kurtköy neighbourhood located close to the Sabiha Gökçen airport and the Formula 1 race track. The settlement originally had 1200 houses and 6000 residents. Houses were of one and two storeys located on government-owned land. Out of these, 950 houses were demolished in 2005 and residents were relocated to blocks some distance away, although most cannot afford to stay there. New housing blocks have been built on the site, but are still unoccupied. The remaining 350 houses have been designated as a renewal site.

Beşiktaş is a site of TOKI tenement blocks which were 7800 residents of Ayazma (a nearby former gecekondu) have been relocated to after their old neighbourhood was destroyed in 2007 for a renewal project. When the mission visited Beşiktaş there was no demolitions and the police were keeping the area and has been evicting the tenants. The government has given the residents the housing rights of Sulukule residents and minimize the damage that had been caused so far. Süleymaniy is another neighbourhood in the historic peninsula, close to the famous Süleymaniye Mosque.

Summary and key findings from field visits

In summary, approximately 80,000 people were directly affected by the urban renewal projects in the area visited by the mission. In total, 12,710 people had already had their homes destroyed (in Ayazma / Tepesustu, Küçükbaşakköy and Sulukule). Some of these situations could not be termed ‘forced evictions’ since some people were willing to sell their property to the government. However, from what the AGFE mission gathered, those people who were willing participants in the urban renewal projects were a small minority and the majority of people were forced to participate in the projects through the signing of a contract agreement with the public authorities.

In addition to the neighbourhoods visited by the mission, there are many other neighbourhoods throughout the city which are currently under the threat of evictions. The map below, prepared by architecture and urban planning graduate students from Istanbul and Zurich during and immediately after the mission depicts the neighbourhoods which are marked for urban renewal or other transformation projects. Each one of them corresponds to the five stages described above.

Given the available information, it is not possible to accurately define the total number of people who will be directly affected. However, in 2007, Istanbul Municipality’s Deputy Secretary General İlhan Urun said, “preparations for urban transformation projects are continuing at full speed. One million of the 1.5 million buildings need to be replaced by new ones”. Commenting on the similar figures declared by the president of TOKI, Urun stated that, “however, this is not something can be done in a day. This will be done stage by stage. We should build housing that meets the demand of an ever-increasing population.”

Thus both local and central authorities project that over 60% of the housing units in Metropolitan Istanbul will undergo demolitions for urban renewal. This gives an idea of the scale of the dramatic problem that the poor and middle class residents of Istanbul are facing and will be facing in the near future, if nothing is done to reverse the current trend and the current practices.

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1—(Ayşel Alp, Okhan Şentürk, 13.11.2007, Turkish Daily News).
In Istanbul, a very aggressive urban regeneration process began with a new law (5366) passed in July 2005. Under this law, municipalities and TOKİ (The Mass Housing Administration of Turkey) are authorized to carry out urban renewal projects in historic areas. Sulukule, a neighbourhood inhabited by the Romani people for centuries, was chosen as the first renewal site in Istanbul. The project is being implemented under the protocol of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the District (Fatih) Municipality and TOKİ. Step by step, the Romani people living there have been forcefully evicted or manipulated out of their livelihoods, and their departure is followed by ruthless demolitions throughout the area.

Today out of 5000 residents, only 5 remain in the neighbourhood. Initially around 300 families were removed, and we were wondering who they were when they were removed. Why? Is that a new right of the state? Who are the people who left, who are displaced. First, we should keep in mind when assessing the participatory approach this movement has been striving to adopt in its efforts to create the alternative plan. The process after TOKİ's contact can be separated into three sub-periods. The first phase covers TOKİ's initial contact with the movement until the beginning of the regrouping. The second phase is the period when a core group of volunteers and activists had to make quick decisions and immediately start working on a draft plan due to time constraints. When the production of the concept plan reached a level of maturity, it was time to share and discuss this with the wider public. This was when the third phase started.

First Phase: First Contact

For the question of participation to enter into the picture, there needs to be a process of decision making. The first contact by TOKİ suddenly necessitated decisions on very important matters. Considering the constraints imposed by TOKİ, scarring the participatory decision making for the sake of being operative was an option, but that wasn't the path chosen by the bearers of the movement.

At this stage, fundamental points of decision were:
- What is the motivation behind TOKİ's contact with the movement? How should TOKİ's call be evaluated given its wider operations, its values and approach?
- How should the pros and cons of working with TOKİ be considered? Positive being tangible betterments for the lives of people that make room for an introduction of a human-centered approach to the state-run urban projects; negatives being the risk to be co-opted by the system and becoming a tool in TOKİ's washing intentions.
- What are the benefits of such an endeavor for the people of Sulukule? Is it possible to bring back the people who were displaced in the first place?
- If the outcome of which quantifiable indicators of betterment for the people of Sulukule should constitute the red line of the movement in negotiating with TOKİ?
- In relation with the above, how do we deal with the ambiguity of creating space in the number of limited former residents, new contractors retain their contracts?
- What should be the strategy of 'going public' about the developments with TOKİ?
with representatives from public and civil society organizations. The public communication group prepared the lists for invitation with suggestions from everyone in the movement.

The discussions emerging from these meetings illustrate very well the general, participatory dynamic of the whole process. That’s why the last section of this paper will be allocated to select excerpts from those meetings, each touching upon diverse and crucial debates.


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ON THE ARCHITECTURAL ASPECT

Renowned Architect: I think that in this project, the architectural aspect is missing. If there is an ongoing work on this issue, I suggest that it is done by an experienced team.

We have to convince TOKİ that this isn’t a job done in a hurry. This shouldn’t be done by simply putting a number of floors over a concept plan. If you can convince TOKİ to accept this concept, you can then proceed to the architectural phase.

Architect: The architect shouldn’t be doing it all. It should go beyond that. Maybe we’ll need to do it by spending time in the field.

Artist Planner: Wouldn’t it be nice if you architecture students joined to work with our friends who are working in architecture?

Renowned Architect: I cannot do that since the semester hasn’t started yet.

Lawyer: If TOKİ doesn’t have good intentions, it wouldn’t proceed any way. We, on principle, shouldn’t go to them with an architectural project or you don’t. We said what we produce could only be on the level of the concept plan. Our power wouldn’t hold out for the second phase. Is it possible that three universities wanted to do the project within their circulating capital, but we don’t want to be in a position of negotiator. To put it nicely, would it be better if we ask the project to be open to tender or contest after the concept plan process?

Renowned Architect: I don’t understand the difference between this idea and what I said. Are we doing a project or not? You either do a project or you don’t. What is called architecture is composed of the program and the ideology itself. Architecture is completely within the process.

Urban Planner: In a contest, the architectural proposals compete. What we want, on the other hand, is a project suitable for the people living there. What you are telling is maybe right from the architectural perspective, but when I look at it from the perspective of people living there, a completely different process visualizes in my mind.

We first try to define a concept plan. After defining the ownership status, we can have quickly advance with a process of participatory design. If we even let the people choose the material for construction, people would appropriate the space they live even more.

Renowned Architect: I don’t take this as a response to you, but when we went to speak with TOKİ, we clearly said that we are group of volunteers and we wouldn’t do anything for a price. We said what we produce could only be on the level of the concept plan. Our power wouldn’t hold out for the second phase. Three universities also wanted to do the project within their circulating capital, but we don’t want to be in a position of negotiator. To put it nicely, would it be better if we ask the project to be open to tender or contest after the concept plan process?

Renowned Architect: We have a stand against it. For a creative work, tender would not do. A contest would be much better. Then, not only universities, but other parts could be involved. But that would extend the process.