

## URBAN TRANSFORMATION in ISTANBUL

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### Introduction

Istanbul is the biggest metropolitan and global city in Turkey. Due to globalization, Istanbul is undergoing rapid urban transformation and development. The 1999 earthquake in Marmara has had an impact on the residential buildings, housing market and all the topics related to the construction sector. In this sense, this earthquake is the turning point in the urban transformation process which plays an important role in order to renovate-regenerate the building stock. Istanbul is the most-affected city by these transformation, especially in housing buildings. The new regulations supported and encouraged this urban transformation process in housing. The new urban transformation has affected different districts in various ways based on district properties, plot properties as well as socio-economical structure of the residents. Therefore distinct practices related to housing can be seen in several districts. In this context, Kadıköy district is a suitable sample area to scrutinize these practices where diversified examples can be found which reflects the aforementioned properties. The aim of this study is to scrutinize the process, actors and practices of urban transformation in housing. The main discussion will be on the potentials and problems of urban transformation, focusing on different practices in Kadıköy.

### Urban Transformation in Istanbul

Urban transformation can be defined as "demolish illegal housing, unpermitted buildings and the buildings that do not comply with the planning regulations of the city and create new urban settlement areas that comply with the planning regulations" [1]. Even though urban transformation varies between nations, the main aim is to create a solution for the urban problems of the transformed area. This solution must have a holistic approach which integrates the cultural, social, economical and environmental aspects to the transformation of physical space [2,3,4].

Urban transformation policies and applications in Turkey and especially in Istanbul; can be discussed in three different period which have distinct features: 1950-1980 period, 1980-2000 period and after 2000 [5]. Between 1950-1980, because of migration from rural to urban areas and rapid population increase; urban transformation focused on regeneration and rehabilitation of squatter areas and urban decay (degradation) areas in central parts of the city. The second period (1980-2000) is the period of rapid socio-spatial transformation due to globalization and neoliberal policies and urban transformation focused on the urban renewal and rehabilitation of the areas with decreased life quality and preservation / gentrification of historical areas. Gentrification of historical housing areas continued and new housing areas are also developed (mostly gated communities). The 1999 earthquake in Marmara is the turning point for urban transformation. After 2000, the focus of urban transformation has shifted to renewal, reconstruction of the housing stock and urban housing

areas based on the new regulations. Moreover, after the 1980's, local municipalities gained power in the planning regulations and process. Also, globalization and privatization gave private sector a bigger role in the construction and urban transformation area. All these developments have accelerated the urban transformation process and changed the main actor from public sector to private.

Urban transformation has been practiced in the planning area since 1980's in Turkey [6]. Urban terminology such as urban transformation, urban renewal, urban regeneration, urban rehabilitation, gentrification etc. became popular in planning in this era. Even though these terminology have different meanings fundamentally, while practicing they point towards the same aim: to rehabilitate a problematic urban area and improve the life quality in that section of the city. The conflict between the meaning of the terminology and practice affect the implementations and process unfavorably. Various regulations and their ambiguity also create problems for the actors to solve during the urban transformation process and practice. The ambiguity of the regulations and the conflicts in the practice may be beneficial for the involved private sector economically.

## **New Regulations and Practices**

There are many laws and regulations effective today in the urban transformation process. The practices may be affected from different factors such as plot properties, local and environmental features of the site, socio-economic status of the residents, and socio-demographic structure etc.. The diversity of urban transformation process and application can be seen in the same area and even possible to be seen in neighboring parcels. The four of the regulations become prominent which dramatically effects the aforementioned conflict and causes the variety in the practices<sup>1</sup>.

The first regulations is the one enacted by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2007, detailing the urban transformation process (dated 23.06.2007). The other ones are dated 01.06.2013, 08.09.2013 and 14.09.2013 (revised version of the regulation dated 08.09.2013) consecutively enacted by Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. The real complication emerged in the execution of the law after 01.06.2013<sup>2</sup>. Projects receiving permits and initiated the procedure:

- 1- before the effective date of the regulations is subject to the new regulations dated 01.06.2013.
- 2- before the effective date of the regulations is subject to the new regulations dated 14.09.2013.
- 3- between 01.06.2013 and 08.09.2013 are subject to choose the favorable articles of the two aforementioned regulations
- 4- between 22.05.2014 and 01.01.2017 are subject to choose between the four aforementioned regulations.
- 5- before 01.06.2013 are subject to choose between the favorable articles of the aforementioned regulations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This study focused on the recent regulations dated 23.06.2007, 01.06.2013, 08.09.2013 and 14.09.2013 and details can be found in the given links: [http://www.ibb.istanbul/tr-TR/kurumsal/Birimler/ImarMd/Documents/imar\\_yonetmelik.pdf](http://www.ibb.istanbul/tr-TR/kurumsal/Birimler/ImarMd/Documents/imar_yonetmelik.pdf) (15.03.2016), <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/06/20130601.pdf> (15.03.2016) and <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/09/20130908.pdf> (15.03.2016), <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/09/20130914.pdf> (15.03.2016)

<sup>2</sup> On 22th of May, 2014 an temporary article is announced concerning the effectiveness of the abovementioned regulations; <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/05/20140522.pdf> (15.03.2016)

<sup>3</sup> The details and practice differences can be found in the given link <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/Metin.Aspx?MevzuatKod=7.5.4877&MevzuatIliski=0&sourceXmlSearch> (15.03.2016)

Due to the fact that these districts have different characteristics and the abovementioned complications; Kadikoy became an area that should be examined carefully in terms of the current urban transformation projects. Therefore, in this study, the focus will be on the two districts in Kadiköy.

## Kadiköy Case

Two cases are selected in order to discuss characteristics of the districts, features of the plot, the actors and stakeholders of the process, transformation type etc. The districts are selected as Suadiye and Moda which are in the borders of Kadiköy Municipality in the Anatolian side of Istanbul. Both of the districts have middle-high and high income group of habitants. The districts are close to each other, and near to the sea shore while they have different urban fabrics, building coverage ratios and heights.

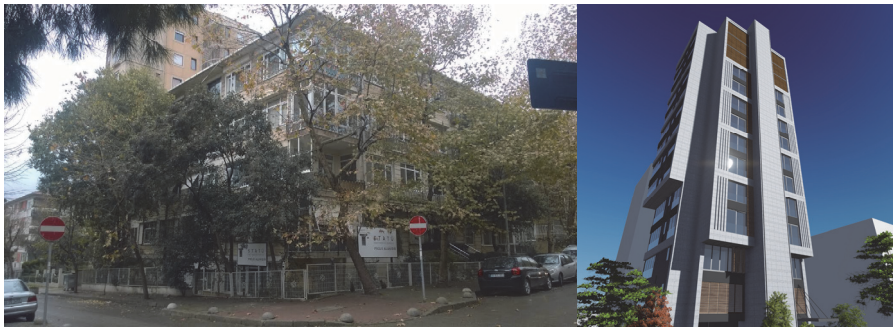


Fig. 1: Suadiye (A) old apartment and (B) the proposal for the same plot (Architect: BTMH, Photographs: Ismail Tandoğan Archive)



Fig. 2: Moda (A) old apartment and (B) the new one for the same plot (Architect: Hasan Alp Demir, Photographs: Serdar İncirlioğlu Archive)

Suadiye Case: In the former fabric, the houses are usually 4-5 stories high and have adequate green areas (Fig 1A). On the other hand, the height of the building have increased dramatically; in the new fabric, the houses are raised to 14-15 stories high (Fig 1B). The houses are detached and have gardens in the previous versions. Even though garden sizes are the same in the newer versions, because of the obligatory car park on the basements and foundations, the quality of green areas decreases. In most of the cases, the size of the

houses decreases, while infrastructure and social facilities remain the same. In other words the life quality decreases while the rent and number of habitants increase. Another important point is that, because of the rent, and height rise, constructors prefer to reconstruct the buildings. The habitants also prefer this renewal even though the house size usually decreases, real estate value increases.

Moda Case: In the former fabric, the houses are usually 4-6 stories high and mostly attached houses (Fig 2A). The height of the buildings have not increased in this district (Fig 2B). Therefore constructors do not find the district profitable which changes the actors of the constructions; habitants need to pay for the reconstruction. In most of the cases, the size of the houses, infrastructure and social facilities remain the same. In other words the life quality and the real estate value increases, but the differences are slight in comparison with Suadiye.

## Concluding Remarks

According to the definition of TDK, current urban transformation practices in Turkey; correspond with the renewal of the housing stock but does not create new urban settlement areas that comply with the planning regulations. Apart from the aforementioned disagreement, the practices usually deal with plot and city block scale instead of urban scale. As seen in the cases, even though the houses are renewed in both of the cases, type of the process, power of the actors and characteristics of the districts change dramatically.

Urban transformation becomes the major practice area for the real estate market while it was an important implementation tool for planning. The ambiguity and contradictory use of the regulations acts for the benefit of rent real estate values. This openness to interpretation must be fixed in order to preserve local values, urban fabric and increase life quality in the transformed area of the city.

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