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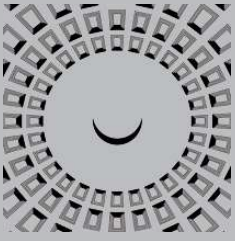
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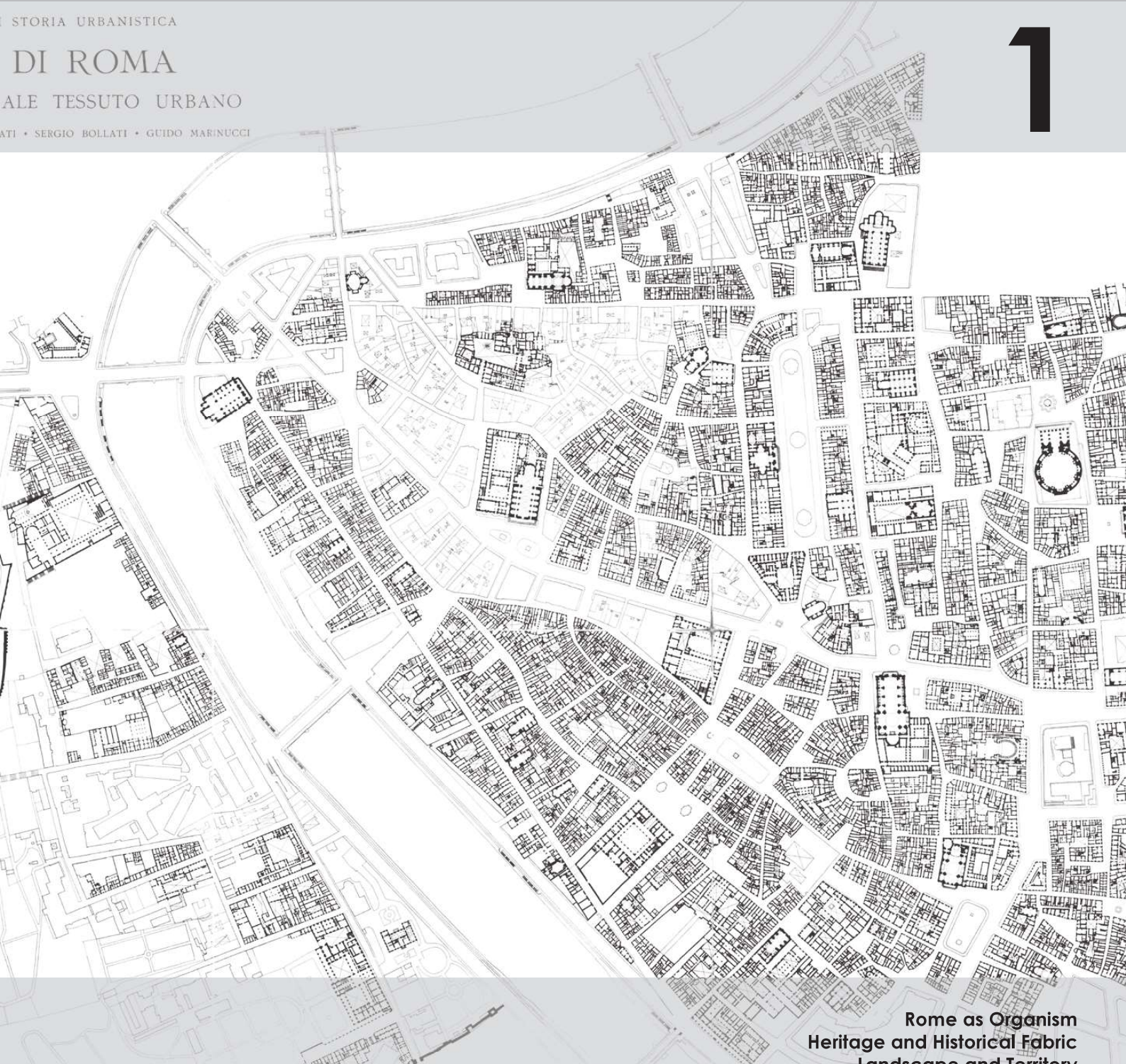
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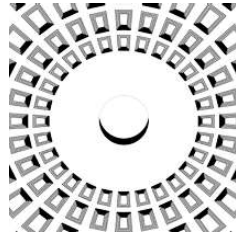
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Rome as Organism
Heritage and Historical Fabric
Landscape and Territory
Sustainable Design and Urban Regeneration

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**Rome as Organism
Heritage and Historical Fabric
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Dramatic Changes in Urban Morphology: Urban Regeneration in Istanbul-Gaziosmanpasa

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Keywords: urban regeneration, urban morphology, gated community, Istanbul, Gaziosmanpaşa

Abstract

In Turkey, urban planning is being replaced by piecemeal and property-led urban regeneration projects. Those urban regeneration projects affect cities in Turkey in two fundamental ways. The first impact is on the morphology and the second impact is on the social structure of the city. In this paper, their impact on the morphology of the city is analyzed through a case study of Istanbul's Gaziosmanpasa District. There are squatter houses from 1950s and apartment blocks redeveloped from squatter houses in the urban regeneration area designated by central and local governments. Today, these buildings have become the subject of regeneration. The paper is based on the preliminary findings of a TUBITAK-funded (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) project being developed by the authors. As well as literature review, the research is shaped by face-to-face interviews with related agency representatives, on-site observations, analysis of plans, projects and documents prepared by related agencies and articles in the media on the subject. The main findings of the research established that the existing urban morphology of the area, formed by low-rise, single houses in an organic and unplanned setting, was changing. This existing urban fabric is being replaced by high-rise apartment blocks which can be described as gated communities. As far as Istanbul is concerned, its existing organic, unplanned structure leaves its place to a, mostly grid-shaped, planned structure and thus a spatial structure which takes no notice of local features such as climate, topography and orientation, and its immediate surroundings emerges.

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Introduction

This paper seeks to identify how urban regeneration processes affect the morphology of the city of Istanbul. The analysis is based on the preliminary findings of a research project funded by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey -Pr. no.114K626) being developed by the authors and focused on the regeneration of residential areas. The Gaziosmanpasa District of Istanbul is selected as the case study area.

First, the paper briefly explains Turkish urbanization processes in the second half of the 20th century and its impact on Istanbul's morphology. Then it summarises urban regeneration processes in the past decade and the ways in which they are changing the city's morphology. The change is then illustrated in detail based on the preliminary findings of a field work in Gaziosmanpasa Sarıgöl Urban Regeneration Area. The concluding section outlines a series of recommendations.

Morphological change is easy to observe in the city. It can strengthen city's unique characteristics and ultimately its character, but also can cause destruction in urban context and morphological continuity. These changes can be on individual plots or in building blocks. Change in morphology has significance since it affects the socio-economical and cultural structure of the city. In case of Istanbul, it is destructing the neighbourhoods physically and socially, changing the social structure of the residents in neighbourhood regeneration areas. Change in housing over time creates differences in the spatial order of the housing itself, as well as causing change in the built environment functionally, spatially, visually and morphologically (Ünlü, 2006a). Ünlü (2006b) defines building height, plot size, building density, building order, street network and building block form as morphological elements of the urban built environment.

During urbanization process, housing is affected socially, culturally, economically and spatially and in terms of location, form and area. While residential areas in cities are the dominant development form which make up the largest urban areas, change in housing areas at the scale of either individual plots or larger areas influence the physical change in cities.

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A 'property-led approach' to urban regeneration is currently dominant in Turkish cities. It is operated through a centralised 'top down' process of demolition and re-building of mainly private property. There is an extreme 'centralization' trend in Turkish government processes which are dominated by central government departments and agencies, equipped with almost unlimited powers, working with local authorities, which have a subordinate role. Besides creating excessive profits for landowners and construction companies and causing forced displacement, particularly of poor owners and tenants, this 'top-down' process is changing the urban morphology of cities.

The morphological outcomes of the urban regeneration process in Istanbul can be grouped mainly under three categories. The most visible outcome is the property-led, large scale and mixed use 'prestige projects', implemented without any consideration of the impact on adjacent low income neighbourhoods. These are usually implemented in central areas of the city. Renewal projects in old neighbourhoods of conservation areas are form the second category. These projects damage the traditional urban patterns and usually create gentrification. The last category is the urban regeneration projects in gecekondü or former gecekondü areas. They are mainly residential projects with some amount of social and commercial uses.

Methodology

As mentioned above, the paper is based on the preliminary findings of a TUBITAK-funded (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, Pr.no.114K626) project being developed by the authors. As well as literature review, the research is shaped by face-to-face interviews with related agency representatives, on-site observations, analysis of plans, projects and documents prepared by related agencies and articles in the media on the subject.

Post war urbanization and urban morphology in Turkey-Istanbul

This section explains the elements in the existing morphology and the post war urbanization process which produced it. The need for urban and neighbourhood regeneration stems from the nature of Turkish urbanisation and the consequences of the rapid growth of Istanbul from 1 million people in 1950 to 5 million in 1980 and 14 million in 2014, through mainly illegal development on earthquake vulnerable land.

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 60s and 70s until the early 1980s, the state-led industrialization process in Turkey encouraged massive migration from Anatolia to the big western cities mainly Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. The migrants could not afford legally constructed houses and since there was not a social housing system, the state could not respond to their housing problem by supplying affordable houses. Therefore, they generated their unique solution to the problem: *gecekond* (literally 'built overnight'). *Gecekond*s are squatter houses of very poor quality built by the migrants themselves, on under-used land usually owned by the state. This illegal way of settlement continued in places where resistance was minimum. Thus the subsequent settlement pattern had become one of the least dense and sparse settlement patterns of the World (Keyder, 2000). The state responded to the problem of *gecekond* developments by a series of Amnesty Laws which supported and protected *gecekond* residents who illegally settled on public land in exchange for their votes (Keles, 1997).

Additionally in this era, urban land outside municipal boundaries could be divided by title deeds offices upon applications by land brokers without requiring any subdivision regulation. This enabled a huge number of small plots to be formed and *gecekond* development was encouraged on these newly formed plots (Tekeli, 1994, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*). In 1970s, since urban land in *gecekond* areas were included within municipal boundaries, land brokers could not easily get plots divided or merged through title deed offices. So, they started to sell the agricultural land in the peripheries via shared land deeds.

This type of development also occurred in relatively small plots in the city where there was a modest single-family house and in plots where there were larger Ottoman-era mansions, in the city or in the summer resorts. In the summer resorts, it usually involved the sub-division of a large property into smaller pieces, on each of which an apartment building was built (Enlil, 2011).

Both types of development were made possible via a process called the share of construction (also known as build-sell). In this process, small developers negotiate with the owners of empty lots, single storey *gecekond* dwellings, single-family houses or large Ottoman-era mansions, to redevelop their land for multi-storey apartment blocks. On completion of construction the new dwellings are shared between the owners and the developers. In 1965, the state enacted the Flat Ownership Law which enabled the ownership of a single flat in an apartment block which provided the legal framework for the share of construction system. This system dominated the housing provision in Turkey, in both *gecekond* and planned areas until the end of the 1970s (Tekeli, 1994).

The traditional urban fabric in inner-city neighbourhoods, with many wooden houses and mansions, was mostly replaced with reinforced concrete apartment buildings in much denser neighbourhoods. Development sprawled in peripheral areas at the expense of forests, water basins and farmland.

During the 1980s, four more Amnesty Laws were enacted. These laws ultimately legalized *gecekond* areas by giving them title deeds (or pre-title deeds) through Improvement Plans and opened these areas to development by giving them 4-storey development rights. However, implementation on the ground produced 7-8 storey buildings. In most of the areas, these buildings covered almost all of the plot area, leaving no space between the neighbouring buildings at the back (Tufan, 2014).

The *gecekond* neighbourhoods in the 1990s had a grid network while first generation *gecekond*s had a more spontaneous, organic self-help, low density housing environment in harmony with the landscape, with large front and back gardens, built to the needs of the inhabitants (Pınarcıoğlu ve Işık, 2008, Altınok, 2006).

Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) was established in 1984 with the aim of building

social mass housing and encouraging their construction by giving loans to cooperations. Between 1984 and 1999 over 100,000 units were constructed in Istanbul by TOKI in mass housing areas (Keyder & Oncu, 1993). These were generally high-rise, almost identical apartment blocks on large areas of lands, particularly along the main highways. They were often organized as housing cooperatives (Bilgin, 1998; quoted in Enlil, 2011).

Their overall impact on urban morphology has been dramatic. They also had an impact on the social geography of Istanbul's neighbourhoods. Mass housing projects formed high-rise, high-density suburbs in the periphery and created more socially homogeneous housing areas (Enlil, 2011).

Urban regeneration processes in 2000s and their impact on morphology of the city

At the end of the 1990s, much of the gecekondu development was on earthquake vulnerable land. The 17,500 deaths, 50,000 hospitalised citizens, and 300,000 buildings destroyed or seriously damaged in the 1999 Marmara Earthquake tragically demonstrated the need to upgrade the city's urban fabric. Thus a new legal and administrative framework for urban regeneration has been established since 1999. This consists of a series of new laws, together with the administrative restructuring of key public agencies.

The most influential laws included 2005 Municipal Law no. 5393 (Article 73), 2005 Renewal Areas Law no. 5366, and the recent 2012 Urban Regeneration Law no. 6306.

Under Article 73 of Municipal Law no. 5393 municipalities now have powers to designate Urban Regeneration Areas (URAs) of 5-500 hectares in size, implement regeneration projects to redevelop or restore old neighbourhoods, change their function to commercial and industrial purposes, create new residential neighbourhoods and/or minimize earthquake risk. They also have powers to specify densities and building heights in these areas. In urban regeneration areas projects are usually implemented in partnership between TOKI and the municipality, to use the 'demolish/rebuild' method to redevelop the existing housing (Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010).

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Law no. 5366 provides powers for local municipalities to designate Renewal Areas (RA) in designated Conservation Areas, identify urban infrastructure requirements and specify construction standards to meet earthquake safety requirements, prepare a phased programme of projects to be approved by a government appointed Regional Conservation Board and then implemented in the area, establish project organization and management arrangements, and take measures to ensure local residents' participation in this process (Gibson & Goksin, 2009).

In parallel the government passed a series of legal reforms between 2002-2008 which restructured TOKI to become the sole agency for regulating the zoning and sale of all state-owned urban land, except military land. TOKI now has powers to build 'for-profit' housing on state land either by its own subsidiary firms or through public-private partnerships to raise funding for subsidised housing construction in Urban Regeneration Areas. TOKI was also given powers to revise statutory plans and expropriate property in gecekondu areas (Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010).

Moreover, in June 2011, Ministry of Environment and Urbanism (MEU) replaced the Ministry of Redevelopment and Settlement. In a major centralisation process, the new Ministry was given powers which originally rested with local authorities, including making and approving statutory development plans, approving projects, giving building and occupancy permits, and confiscating property (SPO, 2011).

The 2012 Urban Regeneration Law no. 6306, official title 'Law About Transformation of Areas with Disaster Risk', is intended to give priority to improvement, clearance and renewal of disaster (mainly earthquake) vulnerable areas and buildings. MEU now has powers to designate URAs in response to applications by metropolitan or district municipalities and subject to the approval of Council of Ministers. It also has powers to designate areas for replacement housing. After designation, formal development and implementation plans and urban design projects should be prepared. An important element after designation is the community engagement process but this is reduced to developers negotiating with owners. Although all powers for URAs rest with the Ministry, they can

be delegated to metropolitan or district municipalities.

There are mainly two types of urban environments that the implementation of these laws in gecekondu areas produce. The first one is the housing estates built by private contractors after the area is cleared from gecekondu and the gecekondu dwellers are re-located elsewhere. These tend to be prestigious dwellings with high quality services.

The second is the residential areas built by TOKI for the local residents of regeneration areas. They are usually high-rise blocks built on-site or elsewhere in the city. The housing estates in the peripheries are usually built on greenfields, away from the city centre. Replacement housing are also built outside the regeneration area but within district boundaries. Sometimes, the replacement housing on-site includes houses for both local residents and outsiders.

These two type of urban environments are typically a product of a process outside formal planning processes. These regeneration plans and projects do not comply with the formal planning decisions for those areas. They generally increase the plot ratio identified in the formal plans which means more construction area and building density. This also leads to an increase in building heights. The maximum height limits of the plans are either ignored or altered and usually high rise housing blocks are built. The projects usually merge plots and building blocks, sometimes including streets within development. This alters the street network which can reduce the permeability of the environment.

The morphological change is the manifestation of change in the socio-economic structure of the city. Gecekondu regeneration areas have distinct socio-spatial qualities. They usually still have a sense of neighbourhood. The spatial order of these neighbourhoods enable and encourage an environment of communication and sharing. The front areas and the entrance porches of the houses nurture neighbour relations. The lack of spaces such as those in the new projects weakens neighbour relations and social ties on which the communities rely very much on for solidarity. The loss of such possibilities can force families to leave their new accommodation as well as economic circumstances.

Ultimately urban regeneration projects dramatically change the morphology of the urban environment which can subsequently lead to destruction of neighbourhoods in many ways. Considering that 40 urban regeneration areas have already been designated by the MEU based on the 2012 Urban Regeneration Law, the potential morphological outcome of the urban regeneration process will be substantial.

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Case study: Gaziosmanpasa Sarigol-Yenidogan Urban Regeneration Area

The development of Gaziosmanpasa began in 1950s when houses for Balkan refugees from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were built by the Menderes government in the area. As industry began to expand in nearby Eyup and Rami, the industrial workforce, mostly comprising rural migrants, started to illegally settle in Gaziosmanpasa and built their gecekondu on government owned land. By 1962, there were some 18,000 gecekondu houses which accommodated 90,000 people. Gaziosmanpasa was separated from Eyup and became a district in 1963 (<http://www.gaziosmanpasa.bel.tr/>).

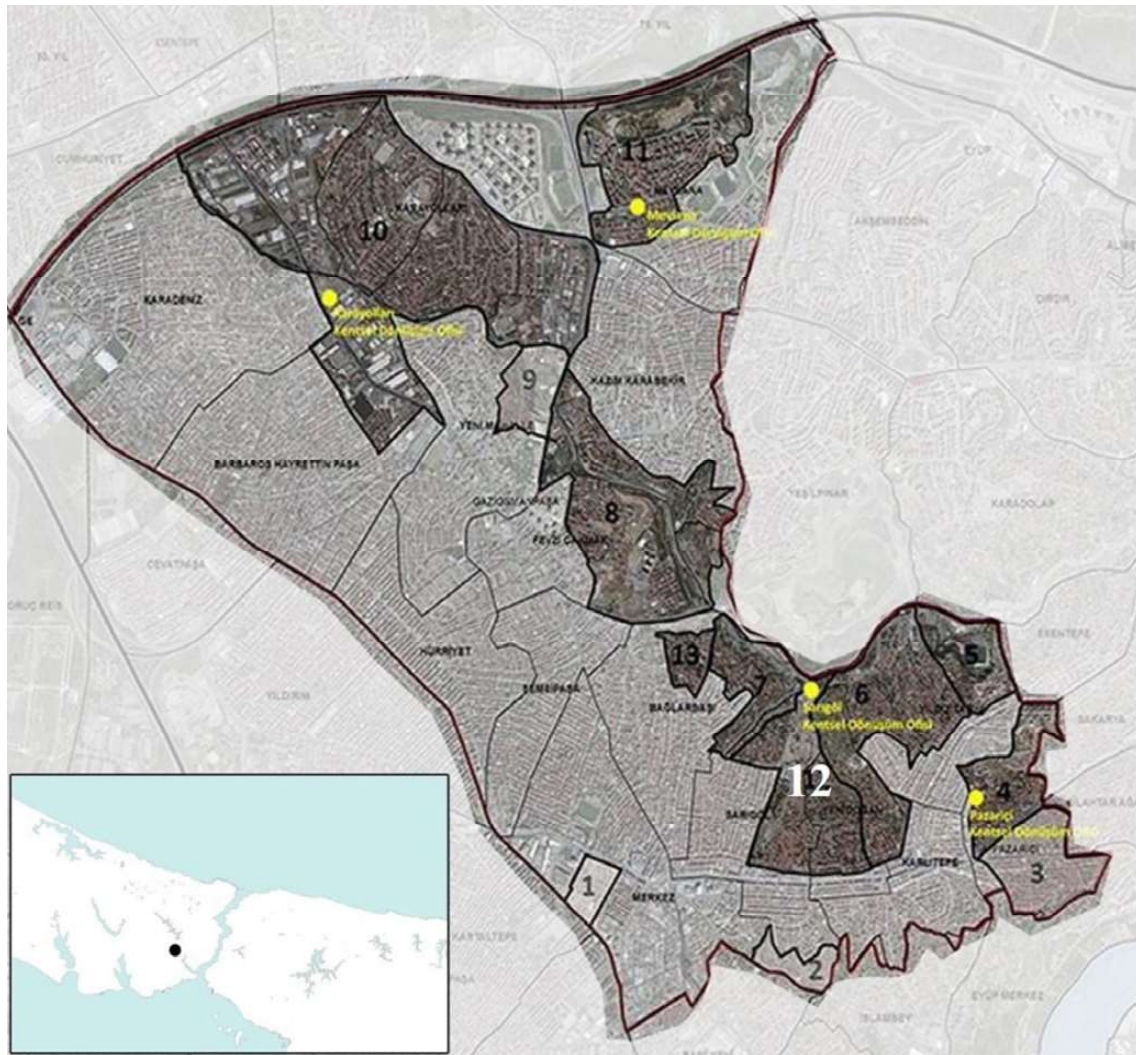
By 2007, Gaziosmanpasa's population was over 1 million and in 2009 it was divided into three districts and its population decreased to 460,000. In 1992, an Improvement Plan was prepared which gave gecekondu buildings title deeds and pre-title deeds. The plan also made improvements in infrastructure including laying power, water and land lines.

Today, Gaziosmanpasa is an aspiring sub-centre. Throughout the district, increasing private investment in commercial projects is accompanied by public investment in physical and social infrastructure, together with plans and projects for regeneration of gecekondu areas.

In 2005, Gaziosmanpasa Municipality started to designate Urban Regeneration Areas and prepare plans and projects. More recently 13 Urban Regeneration Areas were designated based on 2012 Urban Regeneration Law no. 6306 (Figure 1).

Sarigol-Yenidogan URA is one of the gecekondu areas in the district which covers parts of both Sarigol and Yenidogan Neighbourhoods. The 23 hectare-area is located on the south of the district (Figure 1 – numbered 12) on a sloped land, close to the district

Figure 1. Gaziosmanpasa URAs. Source: adapted from www.keym.com.tr



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centre. There are 1488 buildings and 1996 dwellings within the area. Mostly low-rise gecekondu with gardens and some old multi-storey apartments form the building stock. It has an organic and dense urban pattern (Figure 2). However, there are problems with urban services, community facilities and infrastructure. The area is also associated with illegal activities such as drug dealing. Unemployment is another key problem.

There are three main social groups living in the area, namely immigrants from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, migrants from the Black Sea Region and the Roma community which includes families who came from Sulukule (U. Basin, personal communication). Gathered from interviews with residents, it has been established that there are strong social ties and neighbour relations in the area. Residents come together regularly in home town associations. In the site visits, it has been observed that the residents used the street as a social space, women and children in particular, for various uses such as sitting out, getting together, and playing. In some gardens, they have hen houses and they look after stray animals.

Urban regeneration in Sarıgöl can be analysed in three stages. The first stage began in 2005 when Gaziosmanpasa Municipality designated 5 neighbourhoods including Sarıgöl, based on the Municipality Law no. 5393. The Mayor said that they were not going to force residents to demolish their houses as long as they have title deeds. A few gecekondu houses were demolished. But the designation was cancelled in 2007 (Akkoyunlu, 2013).

Figure 2. Sarigol-Yenidogan URA.



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The second stage began in 2010 when 285 ha. in Sarigol was designated as a Gecekondu Redevelopment Area again by the local municipality, based on Gecekondu Law no. 775. Initially, the Municipality worked in partnership with initially TOKI, and then a private construction company. The Municipality revised the existing district plan, increased the plot ratio and cancelled the height limit. The outcome was a proposal for 725 replacement houses in nine 16 storey-blocks, located around two swimming pools. The Chamber of Urban Planners (SPO) raised their concerns about the lack of provision of transportation infrastructure and community facilities and took the plan revision to court in 2011. The court case is still going on (SPO, 2011).

Most of the residents had only pre-title deeds and thus were not accepted as 'rightful owners'. They were forced to sell their houses to the municipality for very low prices and leave neighbourhood out of fear of expropriation. The tenants were automatically displaced since they had no rights to housing. Some 600 houses have been evacuated and demolished.

In the beginning, it was announced by the Municipality that the replacement housing would be sold to Gaziosmanpasa residents only. But it was announced in November 2013 that sales would be open to the public. Apparently, owners could not afford and/or did not want to buy the replacement housing since it does not suit local residents' ways of living (S. Cati, personal communication).

The rest of the Sarigol-Yenidogan Area was designated as a URA by the MEU in December 2013, using the new powers. This was the beginning of the third and the current stage. After designation, all powers were delegated to the district Municipality. GOPAS, an arm-length company of the Municipality, is running the regeneration process. KEYM, a private company, is commissioned by GOPAS to deal with negotiations as well as the urban planning and design phase (A. Bolukbasi, personal communication). KEYM started work in June, 2012. KEYM employees provide information about the project to the residents in the local municipality office.

Figure 3. Existing and proposed morphology. Source: adapted from www.keym.com.tr



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The project is being developed and will be implemented in 5 phases. The plan and the urban design project for the whole area were prepared by KEYM planners and architects and approved by the Ministry in July 2014. Architectural design is being prepared by private architectural companies behind closed doors and has not been made public yet.

The urban design project for the whole area consists of a combination of high-rise blocks of 6-13 storeys (Figure 3). It has swimming pools and gates with security. Based on the data gathered from official plans and projects and interviews with key actors and residents, it can be stated that the new design will be a particular form of 'gated community'.

Demolitions in Phase 1 and 2 have been completed. Residents with pre-title deeds are offered the half the compensation given to residents with title deeds and tenants are given a one-off rent support of 500TL (H. Kaya, personal communication).

Individual meetings are carried out with owners and there are concerns raised by the residents about the varying contents of individual deals. At the meetings, residents are shown urban design projects only. Only a vague description about the location of the new houses are provided; such as one street up or one street down from where they live. (C. Bozkurt, personal communication). Residents state that they would prefer to live in houses with gardens. They do not want to live in the new high-rise blocks but they also do not want to leave their neighbourhood.

In parallel, residents established a neighbourhood association in February 2014. The Association took the designation to court. The court ruled in their favour and cancelled the designation in December 2014. The next stage is remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Urban regeneration processes in Turkey-Istanbul are dramatically changing the morphology of the city. The morphological outcome of the process is usually high rise blocks in particular type of 'gated communities'. These housing developments often constitute 'modifications' in formal plans i.e. they are superimposed on the formal statutory land use plans. They drastically change the scale of the urban patterns. Organic, low to medium density urban environments are replaced by high density settlements without regarding the topographic circumstances of the sites.

Figure 4. Proposed urban environment. Source: www.keym.com.tr



The morphological change also affect the socio-economical structure of the neighbourhoods. As illustrated in Gaziosmanpasa Sarıgöl-Yenidogan Urban Regeneration Area, the replacement housing is neither affordable nor suitable for mainly low-income residents of the regeneration areas. Even if they are given houses in the new schemes, they have to sell and move to a more suitable environment which is likely to be another low-income neighbourhood in a poor quality urban environment.

At present there two parallel planning processes - the statutory land use plans and the designation of urban regeneration areas. These processes should be integrated as this will a higher degree of morphological continuity and harmony across the metropolitan area.

Although regeneration projects provide earthquake proof housing, they make limited contribution to the quality of life. In some cases, they provide poor living environments in the stereotypical high rise blocks with very limited community facilities. The problems that these blocks built with no respect to geographical and social conditions are going to generate in the future should be considered beforehand.

Taking into account the morphological and social structure of the area, together with interviews with local residents, low-rise social housing would be more suitable in the case study area and in areas with similar characteristics. Good quality low-rise design can deliver high density. Moreover, building heights can be increased at some focal points to create landmarks, balance building density and avoid monotony.

Especially large scale urban regeneration projects should be designed respectful to the topography, climate and aspect of the sites, taking account of the infrastructure, community facilities and relationship with the surrounding areas. They should be accessible by public transport and automobiles as well as on foot. They should have green infrastructures and establish a balance between the built environment and the green areas. They should be in harmony with the surrounding morphology. They should appreciate aesthetic values and variety in design.

Most of all, the design should regard the socio-economic characteristics of the local communities, their needs and their ways of living. This can be achieved via a participatory design process. The needs and wishes of local residents should inform the design. This would involve architects and urban designers to work with the communities in the design process. Participatory methods including neighbourhood profiling, Planning for Real and design charrettes can be used to create morphologically more suitable housing environments for local residents in regeneration areas.

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