

Urban transformation through property-led regeneration: A case of building renewals in Istanbul

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Abstract

Urban transformation is a prominent topic within Istanbul's urban planning agenda. Transformation process of the city falls under the scope of academicians and the related authorities; and is a focus of debate from different perspectives in daily life. In this atmosphere, centralised policies promote construction facilities as the leading economic sector, and the legislation sets the legal framework facilitating transformation processes. This transformation in Istanbul occurs in two forms; as area-based regeneration projects and single building renewal processes. Area-based regeneration projects have long been examined due to their widespread effects, however single building renewal also leads to transformation over the long term. The motivation behind this paper is to examine the single building renewal process by means of a case study – Bakirkoy, which is one of the sub-centres of Istanbul. In this context, the paper aims to construct an analytical evaluation of the regeneration process in Bakirkoy and tries to evaluate the process linking it with critiques of property-led regeneration debates worldwide. This paper covers a periodical evaluation of this process by attempting to understand the urban transformation pattern by means of a descriptive spatial analysis, and a discussion of recent policies in Bakirkoy case.

Keywords

Urban transformation, Housing regeneration, Building renewal, Urban planning, Istanbul.



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1. Introduction

Urban transformation in Istanbul, which has significant social, economic, political and ecological dimensions, has recently been a focus of debate within the local urban agenda and a prominent topic in academic studies in Turkey (Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010; Lovering & Turkmen 2011; Dincer, 2011; Balaban, 2012; Angell, 2014). Throughout its recent history, the transformation of Istanbul has taken place within neoliberal policies and has parallel characteristics with other global experiences elsewhere. However lately, the transformation through the urban regeneration process in Istanbul has set a significant example among World cities in terms of the legislative and procedural framework of the urban regeneration implementation.

Urban regeneration is currently a controversial issue in Turkey. Especially after Kocaeli and Duzce earthquakes in 1999, urban planning and renewal agenda in Turkey has been focusing on physical and structural upgrading and consolidation based intervention types more than ever before. Consequently legislative and procedural changes emerged in the national planning system. However, these legal regulations also operate beyond the particular purpose of mitigating the risks from earthquakes, but also are used for redevelopment and regeneration of buildings and areas. In most cases, urban renewal implementations, especially in Istanbul, which are legitimized with the earthquake risk, have been accomplished in order to respond social and economic decay in deprived and deteriorated housing estates, as well (Koramaz, 2018).

Following Van earthquake in 2011, Law on Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk” (no: 6306) was approved in 2012, and it is one of the most peculiar legislative regulations of all. This law establishes a dualistic legal basis that operates both through single building renewal implementations and area-based regeneration projects. However this law is also criticized for using the earthquake risk just for legitimizing the implementations, while the most prominent scope of both of these implementations is mostly structural

upgrading and an increase in the economic values. Most of the problematic regeneration cases in Istanbul so far indicate that both area-based regeneration implementations and building renewals have various triggering factors, mainly in the economic and social dimensions, rather than only the risks associated with earthquakes. Both the urban renewal implementations and area-based regeneration processes have significant effects on the physical environmental quality, social fabric and economic property values of residential areas in which they have been applied. For this reason, analytical considerations before, during and after regeneration processes are necessary. However, as the implementation of single building renewal is subject to rapid changes and uncertainties, and especially influenced by populist political propaganda to be transformed into large-scale programs, a sound basis for analytical considerations that would guide both regeneration practices in Turkey is not usually provided.

The motivation of this paper is to highlight the process of urban transformation of residential areas of Bakirkoy, a sub-central district in Istanbul, by focusing on single building renewal implementations in particular and further trends on area-based regeneration. To this aim, the paper firstly explains the urban renewal agenda of Istanbul in terms of the legislative and procedural framework. The paper also demonstrates an evaluation of the these practices in the case area – the Bakirkoy district, which is one of the oldest housing neighbourhoods in Istanbul to have a formal planning background, thereby making it different from the large number of settlements having a formation of squatter development. As one of the relatively well-organised and advantageous residential areas in terms of public services and infrastructure in Istanbul, Bakirkoy has been going through a spatial transformation process, which has been mainly conducted through single building-renewal implementations, which are in most cases organised by the deal between property owners and contractors. The paper covers a periodical evaluation of the process in the

Bakirkoy case area; first by offering an understanding of the pattern of single building renewal implementations by means of descriptive spatial analysis, followed by a discussion of recent policies regarding urban regeneration in Bakirkoy through participatory observations and the analysis of the discourse.

2. Regeneration agenda of Turkey and Istanbul - legislative and procedural framework and their effects

Neoliberal policies consider urban land as a source of capital through which economic benefit can be maximized and distributed. Within this approach, structural and legal regulations considering urban land are taken as useful tools, as they enable the processes of reshaping the city and redistributing the sources through urban development policies and planning regulations.

The neoliberal development approach regarding urban issues has always been the main determinant for urban planning policies in Turkey, and it has been closely linked with state-led populist politics and economic restructuring policies. However, and particularly since 2000, neoliberal policies have also become the major determinant for urban development and regeneration policies in Turkey and in Istanbul especially.

Due to the effect of centralized power in Turkey, severe legal and institutional restructuring regulations regarding the urban planning and development issues have been adopted. This has resulted in a radical spatial transformation of urban land in terms of both social and economic factors (Kayasü and Yetişkul, 2014). A major outcome of the institutional restructuring is the centralization of power concerning urban planning and development through the constitution of new institutions under central government bodies and the transference of urban planning and development authorities to these new institutions. Herewith, currently the Ministry of the Environment and the Urbanization and Housing Development Association (TOKİ) have received substantial powers over

regeneration projects.

Particularly in the Istanbul case, the expedited urban development occurs in two major forms; on one hand high scale infrastructure projects with sizable investment costs are carried out on the outskirts of the city; on the other hand, the city centre is undergoing a redevelopment and regeneration process through refunctioning and renewal projects.

The city centre is facing a transformation through urban projects that aim to redevelop the existing land and buildings. These redevelopment projects result in a rise in property and land values, a change in the functional characteristics and user profile in the area, and a radical increase in urbanized land and construction density. From high scale infrastructure projects to building renewals, all of these projects reshape the city while also acting as a tool for redistributing urban resources, property and rent values. The economic outcome of these urban projects is inevitably accompanied with severe negative impacts on the ecological, functional and social dimensions of the urban system (Loving and Turkmen 2011; Kayasü and Yetişkul, 2014; Özkan Eren and Özçevik, 2015). In addition, as the construction sector comes into prominence within this transformation process, development and redevelopment projects at all scales are encouraged as a state policy due to the construction facilities' positive effects on the national economic indicators and unemployment rates (Balaban, 2012).

Moreover, since the approval of the Law on Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk (Law No. 6306) came into force in 2012, there has been a new period for the transformation of the city centre, characterized by the rapid and radical spatial, functional, economic and social transformation of urban areas. The Law departs from the earthquake risk and it aims the renewal of housing stock in danger of an earthquake risk. The Law enables the renewal of existing housing stock, either through single building renewals and area-based regeneration projects.

Within Law no:6306, areas which are subject to earthquake risk due to

building quality and / or the geological characteristics of the location are designated as Risky Areas by the Council of Ministers, upon the request of the Ministry of the Environment and Urbanism and / or the responsible local government. After the assignment of Risky Area status, an area-based regeneration process is implemented. In this process, the central or local government's related bodies are authorized to prepare a regeneration plan in which alternative options considering payment conditions and architectural features are proposed to property owners. However, so far the implementations of these regeneration practices carried out within the Law have mostly showed that the proposed alternatives reflect especially the economic aspect of regeneration in the worldwide literature, rather than establishing a program to secure the property and housing rights of the owners. In other words, this approach inevitably results in uncertainty according to the dynamics of the free market. This approach, in which economic priorities play a major role while social aspects are ignored, area-based renewal and regeneration projects have been criticized for avoiding public participation during project proposals and implementations, for forcing evictions, and for bringing changes in the functional characteristics and social profile of the project sites (Kayasü and Yetişkul, 2014; Özkan Eren and Özçevik, 2015).

Another status defined within Law no: 6306 is the Risky Building status. This refers to buildings designated as being in danger of severe damage or at risk of collapse during an earthquake due to low building construction quality. Risky building status is designated through a technical analysis of the building's construction quality, upon the request of property owners, and the status is then assigned by the local or central governments' related bodies. Risky building status requires the renewal of a building at the property scale and on its own plot. According to the Law, after the designation of a building as risky, it should be demolished within two months, followed by a re-construction period. During the process, property owners choose the contractor and negotiate the architectural plans and

payment conditions. The Law provides tax incentives and rent allowances for the property owners during the demolition and the reconstruction process. For the risky building procedure, the role of the local administration is to direct the housing renewal process, to give construction and utilization permits and to assure legality. At the end of the renewal, building quality is enhanced and correspondingly the property and rent values increase. However, it has been observed that these singular renewals trigger the renewal of other buildings in their vicinity, and inevitably, this produces an effect on the physical character of the residential areas.

Consequently, Law No: 6306 has empowered the central government's authority over the regeneration of the urbanized areas, accelerated the construction activities on different scales, both through area-based regeneration and building renewals. The main criticism of the Law states that it departs from the earthquake risk discourse and operates more in accordance with an ambition for market-oriented real-estate development through regeneration with local and central governments acting as facilitators of the process. Finally, it has been emphasized that so far the Law has been a tool for economic prospects, but has also created new social and economic risks (Kayasü and Yetişkul, 2014; Özkan Eren and Özçevik, 2015). It is obvious that the risks originating from the operation of the Law differ depending on the scale of the regeneration projects and renewals and how they are implemented.

3. Background of urban characteristics in Bakirkoy

Bakirkoy is one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Istanbul, and it has always been significant within the urban context. As one of the oldest periphery towns of Ottoman Istanbul, it was originally called Makri Koy which means Distant Town in Greek. The railway built in 1871 enhanced the town's spatial and functional connection to central Istanbul and contributed to its growth in terms of population and economic activity (Encyclopaedia of İstanbul, 1993).

A brief consideration of Bakirkoy's development history and the charac-

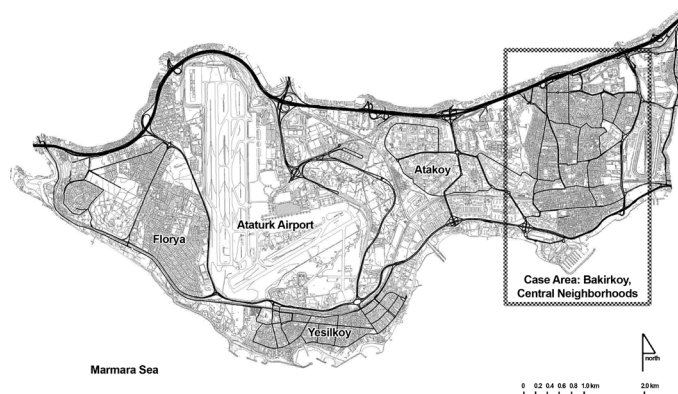


Figure 1. Sub-regions within Bakirkoy district borders.

teristics of its neighbourhoods reveals that within the borders of Bakirkoy, there is more than one unique settlement in terms of housing fabric and development history (Figure 1). Bakirkoy's first urbanization process took place during the 1940s, and was not much different from urbanization of the other old towns in the city. During this period, the single-detached houses and mansions were demolished and 4-5 storey apartments were built instead. This process came about through the entrepreneurship of the property owners and resulted in a significant transformation in terms of the physical urban and social fabric. The other old towns underwent through a similar process at around the same time, and there was an overall transformation of the city. As the population density increased during further development / transformation processes, the functional transformation of the area was highlighted by Istanbul Street, which runs east to west, and Incirli and Istasyon streets, which run north to south, and which are dominated by commerce and services (Encyclopedia of Istanbul, 1993). The historical core of Bakirkoy has mixed-use urban characteristics with formerly developed high density housing settlements and a commercial centre which is a second-degree central area of Istanbul. The case area of this study is the central neighbourhoods of Bakirkoy as these typify the planned settlements in Istanbul's recent history of urbanization and its high potential for physical transformation.

Atakoy mass housing area is one of the oldest housing areas of Bakirkoy. The first stage of the project was completed in 1955 and it is one of the oldest

mass housing projects in Republican Turkey. The later stages of Atakoy were built in the 1990's and the last stage was built after 2005. Yesilkoy, Yesilyurt and Florya are the other housing areas in Bakirkoy, and these are mainly characterized by their peripheral location to the Marmara sea coast and a housing fabric comprised of 4-5 storey detached apartments with their own gardens (Encyclopedia of Istanbul, 1993) (Figure 1).

Quality of urban life studies, which comprise the domains of accessibility, social and cultural infrastructure and housing quality indicate that Bakirkoy has a higher quality of life compared to other districts in Istanbul. With respect to this, the presence of urban green areas in the Atakoy neighbourhoods greatly contribute to the quality of life in these settlements (Kısar Koramaz and Türkoğlu, 2014), while the central neighbourhoods of Bakirkoy stand out due to their socio-cultural infrastructure (Kısar Koramaz and Koramaz, 2017). Generally, the residents of Bakirkoy have middle and upper-middle income and education levels and Central Bakirkoy has mostly middle class residents in terms of education, income and socio-cultural characteristics. In addition, older age groups and retirees are more common in the central neighbourhoods (Kısar Koramaz, 2014).

As we can define sub-regions within the borders of Bakirkoy in terms of their urban development background, residential characteristics and geographical location, the research area in this study is limited to the central neighbourhoods of Bakirkoy (Figure 1). The reasons for focusing on the central neighbourhoods are as follows:

- Integrity in terms of geographical location,
- Similarities in terms of development process, housing fabric and socio-economic / cultural structure of residents,
- A widely accepted and frequently emphasized need for the renewal of buildings; associated with earthquake risk or with the age of buildings,
- Recent observations indicating the rapid regeneration at property level.

The research area is comprised of 7 neighbourhoods and is 323 ha in total. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute 2013 population census it has 111,117 inhabitants, and the gross population density is 344 persons/ha. To the south, one of the important highways of the city and Marmara Sea constitutes the border of the study area, while to the north, it is bordered by the E-5 Highway which is another important transportation line of the city. To the west of the study area is a public hospital and the Atakoy neighbourhood, while to the east there is the Veliefendi Racetrack and the Zeytinburnu district, which is one of the oldest unplanned residential areas of Istanbul.

4. From building renewals to area-based regeneration processes in Bakirkoy

In this study, the regeneration process of the case area, which occurred between 2012 and 2015 is examined in terms of building renewals and new housing projects as well as related actors' perceptions of regeneration and their expectations. The process examined in this study starts in 2012, when Law no: 6306 came into force. The systematic analysis of the process is conducted in two stages, each revealing different problems of the process associated with different aspects of regeneration, such as physical – structural characteristics of the single building renewal implementations and attitudes regarding an area-based regeneration for the future.

4.1. Physical – structural characteristics of the building renewal process

This examination of the physical – structural characteristics of the building renewal process in Bakirkoy for the period between 2012 January and 2014 June starts with the implementation of Law no:6306. This period in Bakirkoy is characterized by a rapid regeneration process at the property scale, as singular building renewals and housing constructions through redevelopment projects. In order to evaluate the renewal practices and their effect on regeneration in Bakirkoy, in July, 2014,

Table 1. Study area – central neighbourhoods in Bakirkoy.

Neighbourhoods	Area (ha)	Population (2013)	Gross pop. density (2013)	Population (2015)	Population (2017)
Cevizlik	18.36	5,365	292 p/ha	5,195	5,363
Kartaltepe	116.76	38,683	331 p/ha	38,547	37,778
Osmaniye	61.44	23,615	384 p/ha	24,088	24,126
Sakizagaci	15.68	8,448	539 p/ha	8,276	8,137
Yenimahalle	18.47	7,097	384 p/ha	6,914	6,953
Zeytinlik	20.73	5,576	269 p/ha	5,581	5,376
Zuhuratbaba	71.61	22,333	312 p/ha	21,545	20,966
TOTAL	323.05	111,117 50,29%	344 p/ha	110,146 49,34%	108,699 48,68%
Bakirkoy	2.943	220.974 1,56%	75 p/ha	223.248 1,52%	222.370 1,48%
Istanbul	101.670*	14.160.467	139 p/ha	14.657.434	15.029.231

* Total area for Istanbul is given as settlement area, excluding natural environment.

construction permits recorded since 2012 – after the announcement of law no. 6306 – were obtained from Bakirkoy Municipality. The records were digitized and linked with spatial data. Using this data, building renewals and new construction projects were analysed in terms of their location, number and construction ratios.

The findings indicate that since the announcement of Law no.6306, 98 new construction permits were given, up until 2014 June. These permits were either for constructing on an empty plot, but were mostly for the demolition of an existing building and the construction of a new one. The number of construction permits was 19 for 2012, increasing to 35 in 2013 and reaching 44 in the first half of 2014. These numbers indicate a significant increase in building renewals, especially in the first period of 2014, which largely proves the increasing effect of Law No 6306 on the regeneration of neighbourhoods. The study indicates that building renewals are spatially concentrated within the northern neighbourhoods, where the urban structure is mainly comprised of detached apartments, each situated within their own parcel. (Figure 2).

To allow the consideration of a possible increase in building density, floor area ratios prior to the construction permits have been calculated for each parcel that has a new permit using base maps. Figure 3 clearly indicates the increasing building density resulting from these renewals, which has led to an overall change in the urban fabric. This finding indicates that buildings which did not until that time fulfil the planning regulations in terms of building height and construction measures have

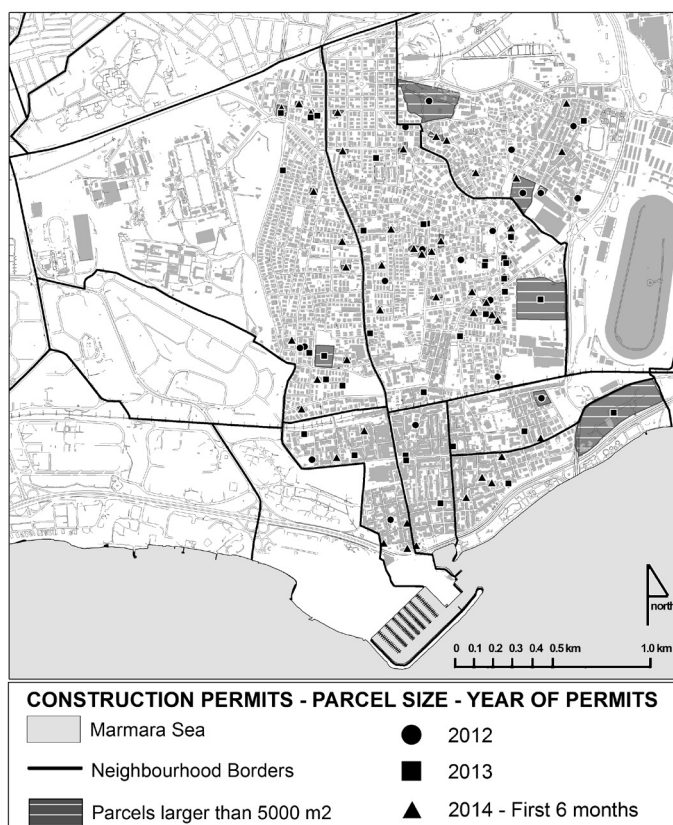


Figure 2. Construction permits – parcel size and year of permit.

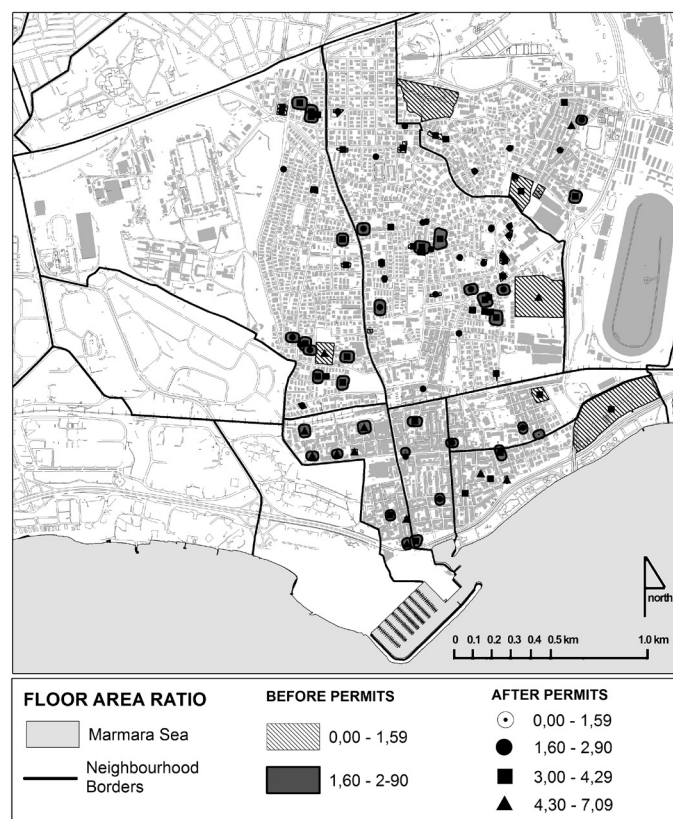


Figure 3. Floor area ratio – before and after permits.

been at the forefront of the building renewal. Even if this increase in building density through renewals takes place

within planning regulations, it inevitably results in structural transformation and a possible increase in population. Nevertheless such an expected population increase has not been observed in the case area that the population sizes in seven neighbourhood units of Bakirkoy decreased to 110,146 in 2015; and 108,699 in 2017 (Table 1).

As the number of housing units and property owners are also low for these renewal projects, easier negotiation and consensus processes among the owners and the contractors are possible. During the renewal of these buildings, new housing units are usually added and these are owned by the construction firms as payment for the construction costs. This renewal process is embraced by the residents as a renewal model because it is advantageous for the residents as they do not pay for the construction. On the other hand, as the new housing units are added in favour of contractor, each former resident's share of the land and property decreases.

In addition to the building renewal on small parcels, it is remarkable that there are also new luxury housing projects on large parcels similar with world-wide cases of property-led regeneration. In world literature property-led regeneration practices are referred to comprise prestigious projects with outstanding architectural and functional features and the economic expectations they create (Loftman and Nevin, 1995). Property-led regeneration transforms urban form with a harsh change on a specific decayed or deteriorated site, sharing the same parcels unit, then criticized for achieving long term planning strategies, while neglecting social and economic sustainability at all (Turok, 1992; Oatley, 1995).

As the evidence of such practices in Bakirkoy, Figure 3 clearly indicates the increase in floor area ratios for luxury housing projects which take place on parcels larger than 5000 m2. These projects are implemented through the functional and physical transformation of existing industrial and/or unoccupied land. When compared to world-wide property-led regeneration cases, both large-scale and small parcel-based renewal cases in Bakirkoy

may reflect the fact that, entire renewal cases put forward the inferences of property-led regeneration practices while attracting developers' interest to transform current urban pattern into new developments.

The research based on construction permits analysis and complemented by systematic observations of the study area reveals that during 2012 – 2014, a significant and rapid regeneration process occurred both in small and large scale properties in the central neighbourhoods of Bakirkoy. These practices at both scales are complementary in the Bakirkoy case in terms of the implementation process and also their effects on the urban system.

The findings indicate that within this rapid transformation process, new challenges emerge in terms of the physical environment, the local ecology, and the economic and social dimensions. Firstly, building renewals seem to have both local and global effects in terms of increasing construction and population density. This increase in density creates new problems related to the insufficiency of the urban infrastructure and services, socio-cultural facilities and traffic accommodation, all of which decrease the quality of the physical environment and urban life. The construction measures allow for underground car parking areas, which cover entire parcels. This widespread implementation seems to create ecological problems in the long term, due to the loss of open areas, loss of soil and local vegetation in apartment gardens, especially those which have been growing for a long time.

The second important aspect of this transformation can be indicated in economic perspective. In Turkey housing prices increase dramatically, after 2010 (Coskun, et al., 2017), reflecting the period of recent legislative changes in planning system, mentioned in this paper. In addition to this, it is obvious that the luxury housing projects, represented in this paper with property-led regeneration on large size parcels also affect the land and real estate values globally. Among entire provinces, Istanbul is the most appreciated province in Turkey, in terms of construction and housing market, represented

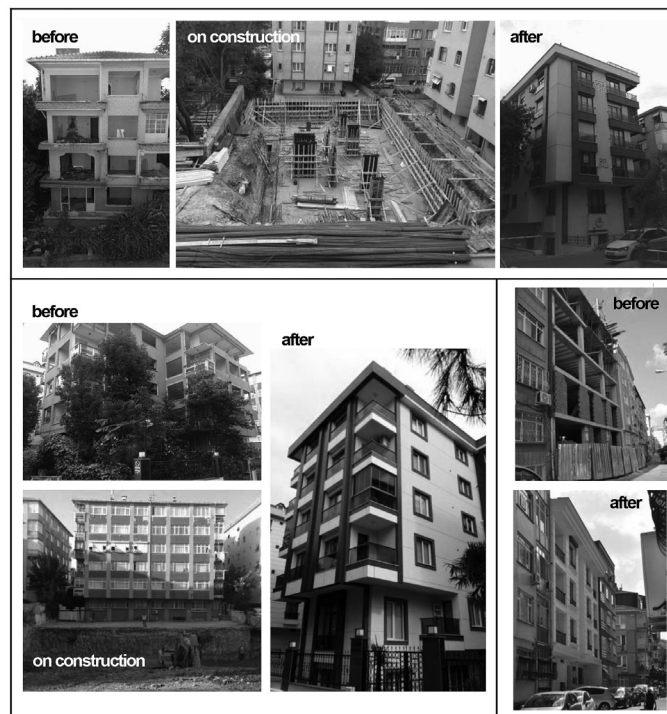


Figure 4. Building renewal cases – before and after.

by highest increase in housing prices and mortgage credit use (Alkay et al., 2018). This rise in economic value is another important consequence, and it should be questioned if these values are speculative in local neighbourhood level, as well.

The last but not the least important dimension of this transformation is the social dimension. During this period, the construction expenses for building renewal are financed by the contractor and new housing units are obtained as the renewal process is completed. Although regeneration process in Bakirkoy for this period did not bring forth gentrification, new housing units with higher sales and rent values would bring a change in the socio-economic and cultural structure of the inhabitants.

4.2. Changing attitudes regarding area-based regeneration and building renewals

By the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015, a new period started in which the attitudes regarding an area-based regeneration became more apparent. During the rapid building renewal process, district municipalities and residents made an attempt to reposition themselves as they framed their expectations, intentions and concerns

about a comprehensive regeneration process. During this period, public meetings and press briefings were the main fields through which the actors expressed themselves, and attitudes towards regeneration may be analysed through these resources.

By 2015, the regeneration agenda of Bakirkoy shifted as Bakirkoy Municipality became involved in a new area based regeneration process, a prospective large-scale comprehensive renewal in municipal and private partnership, covering the central neighbourhoods, which overlaps with the case area of this study to a large extent. In order to manage the regeneration process, the Municipality applied for an official designation of "Regeneration Site" for Bakirkoy and intended to implement an area-based regeneration project for officially so-called "risky area". The Law authorises the district municipality to determine the risky area borders through an analytical survey report. During this forthcoming period, the district municipality suspended construction permits for building renewals, which meant an interruption of the building renewal process, explained in the previous part of this chapter.

One of the main characteristics of this period was the Bakirkoy Municipality's manner. The municipality avoided communicating with the residents or any related NGO's in Bakirkoy, and did not officially inform the residents about the process it had initiated. During this period, the main information resource had been the Mayor's interviews (Url – 1) and other related news in local and national newspapers. The municipality expanded on his claims of single building renewal not being economically sustainable. This was based on the residents' difficulties in affording the increased living expenses, since most of them are medium income groups and retirees as well. The municipality stated that area-based regeneration was the solution to finance regeneration, because this approach would allow extra units within parcels, which have already reached their construction size limits, and would make it possible for the residents to have their units renewed without having to pay for them. The mu-

nicipality also claimed that area-based regeneration would create new open spaces, public squares and pedestrian roads, all of which would contribute to a better standard of living in Bakirkoy.

During this period, the Chamber of Architects first held a press conference and informed the public about the process. The Chamber also explained their rejection of the municipality's attempt at area-based regeneration and criticized the municipality's attitude. They stated that the municipality's area-based project was not realistic, and that it was dishonest and far from principles of urbanism (Url- 2). On the 22nd of March, the Chamber of Architects conducted a panel for the citizens of Bakirkoy with the participation of professionals from urban planning, architecture, law and construction. This panel was important as it was the first time the professionals had been in contact with Bakirkoy residents, and their experiences and knowledge regarding the different aspects of the regeneration practices in Istanbul were shared and discussed (Url- 3).

The panel clearly revealed that most of the residents were not aware of either the legislation or the procedures, especially for area-based regeneration projects, or their rights under the laws associated with regeneration processes. The residents all accepted that their buildings were not safe and stated that renewal was necessary and urgent. On the other hand, they also acknowledged that they could not afford to pay for the construction expenses, but that they could not face losing their houses, which many defined as an inheritance from their family roots. Most of the residents preferred to renew their buildings by themselves, which refers to the demand for a single building renewal procedure. However, in the case of residents in whose buildings extra housing units are not possible due to building density and current plan decisions, their proposed solution was for an increase in building density through a change in planning regulations. They asked for an extra storey that would bring out two new housing units which would be transferred to the contractor as a way to finance the construction expenses. This procedure

for building renewals was offered as a model that would solve the problem of risky building stock. The professionals participating in the panel explained the consequences of an increase in density, but the residents seemed to be ignorant of the economic, social and ecological effects of high building density. They insisted on an increase and legitimized this by comparing the effect of each individual parcel to the negative effects of high density luxury projects in the vicinity. Moreover, as a response to and an interpretation of the rapid singular building renewals, with which they wanted to proceed, the residents all seemed to be happy with the increase in building and rental values. Undoubtedly, the increase in economic values seemed to be another effective motivation for building renewal for the residents (Url-3).

Also, during the panel, and as part of creating an awareness of the implementation process and consequences of area-based regeneration projects, the Bakirkoy residents were informed about other practices, such as ongoing and completed regeneration projects, by the professionals and by the former inhabitants of those neighbourhoods. These participants emphasized the complicated and uncertain procedures which often result in evictions due to financial problems within the new economic land / tax values, the loss of neighbourhood's physical environmental character, the destruction of social and economic networks, and the uncompleted everlasting consensus processes. The participants in these meetings, who shared the similar ideas on the challenges reported in the recent urban planning literature (Sezer, 2017; Ongoren, 2017), were reputed to have a great degree of knowledge, awareness and consciousness of urban renewal processes in the city. It was remarkable that when the Bakirkoy residents were informed about the other area-based regeneration processes and the problems, they strongly reacted against making such a comparison. Their discourse is based on the fact that Bakirkoy neighbourhoods were developed within planning regulations, unlike the other area-based regeneration project cases – most of which had been

developed from informal squatter settlements.

As an overall evaluation of this period, especially with the contribution of the panel, the residents' and the government's understanding of regeneration, and their expectations and demands have been revealed. It is obvious that the residents' main concern regarding regeneration is economic. The residents focus is on solutions that would contribute to financing the construction expenses. On the other hand, this period demonstrates that both the municipality and the residents also expect an increase in economic values in terms of building and land values. Though the residents seem to engage in economic benefits and ignore regeneration process' links to the physical quality and living standards of the neighbourhood as a whole, they also emphasized their emotional attachment to their houses and neighbourhoods. All through these changing demands and preferences of residents authorities can manipulate regeneration process, where uncertainties distracted the local agenda and information retrieval process.

In April 2015, again through newspaper articles it was announced that the Municipality's application for the designation of an official regeneration area and their attempt to implement a regeneration project was rejected by the associated bodies (Url-4). The Ministry of the Environment and Urbanism rejected the application and the official documents Bakirkoy Municipality had prepared, because of insufficient dossier content and analytical evaluation on submission. As previously mentioned, the municipality's attempt at an area-based regeneration process is also not realistic on such a scale, and it can be criticized within the contexts of spatial and social injustice, sustainability in urban form, ecology and urban identity, as well. However, the emphasis has been mainly given to displacement, social exclusion and gentrification issues in literature, possibly after area-based regeneration projects where disadvantaged population had been living in formerly (Elicin, 2014). Such challenges of regeneration both in the World and Turkey, occurred

for middle and upper-middle income neighbourhoods, are lacking in literature and needs an extension of debate within the consideration of this paper. Such an application of an area-based program by a district municipality and its reject from greater municipality puts forward a significant challenge as transference of responsibility, implying that there is a political dimension to the regeneration process. Again in literature, urban regeneration in Turkey, is mostly stressed the political dimension of regeneration in power struggles between vulnerable social groups to be displaced; and state institutions and interest groups, accomplishing the project (Oktem Unsal, 2015). Furthermore, this approach needs an investigation of the transference of power, the expectations and acquisitions related to urbanization processes among different authorities, beyond looking at governing and governed ones.

By April 2015, the Municipality started to allocate new construction permits, and construction began once more, mostly on parcels where the buildings had been demolished before the permits were suspended.

5. Conclusion

The evaluation of the Bakirkoy case reveals the fundamental weaknesses of the regeneration process in Istanbul / Turkey, and highlights the essential challenges in this process. As previously mentioned, the regeneration process in Turkey is held in two main forms; single building renewal and area-based regeneration. In particular, widespread building renewal is carried out in accordance with Law no 6306, under "risky building" status. These processes are also examined through their physical and structural aspects, and the actors' attitudes towards regeneration.

Bakirkoy case indicates the different perspectives of the regeneration debate in Istanbul. For each building renewal that take place in Bakirkoy, has its own individual effect on its own parcel, but their overall effect on the physical structure of the neighbourhoods and the social and economic characteristics as well, are inevitable. It is obvious that the building renewal implementations have become another tool of ur-

ban transformation which in the long run will have an inestimable impact on the city's ecological and physical environmental quality, as well as its social structure and economic future.

Considering the fact that in order to mitigate the risks posed by earthquakes, it is inevitable that the building stock will require renewal, this indicates that building renewals need clear programs that can control the overall effect of the process, guide the residents and strengthen their economic and social, legal capabilities. In addition, ignoring the physical environmental and ecologic aspects, and indeed the overall effect of building renewals, largely ensures that neighbourhoods will face problems over the long term.

In regeneration processes, economic concerns and expectations always dominate the housing and real-estate market. It is remarkable that in regard to the regeneration processes in Turkey, the economic factor becomes the predominant issue for all actors. Quite apart from the contractors, from whom the desire for pecuniary reward is to be expected, the residents and local / central governments also have the expectation of increased building and land values. The residents' main economic concern is covering the construction expenses, but rather more strongly expressed than this concern is the expectation of profit through regeneration. This might best be seen as a reflection of an understanding of "housing" as a means of achieving an economic benefit rather than as a "social right".

Another significant challenge is the lack of communication and lack of confidence between the residents and the local / central government. Instead of conducting participatory practices to discuss and plan any regeneration processes, public bodies often prefer projects in which they can have the power to manage and lead. During these processes, mysterious atmospheres are created through unofficial information and any uncertainties are deemed desirable as they help to manipulate the process. Instead of clear strategies, the actors prefer to use tactics that allow them to manipulate the process to meet their own economic expectations. These symptoms

are deeply connected to actors' giving priority to regeneration as a means to generate economic benefit.

One of the main weaknesses for regeneration at the national level is the legal framework. The legislation related to regeneration on both area and property levels is far from framing the regeneration process according to explicit principles. In fact, the legislation acts as a tool for giving authority to the responsible bodies and strengthening their capabilities. The legal framework only defines the steps for the application, declaration and preparation of the regeneration project, but does not have a clear and holistic vision, principles or priorities for the realization of regeneration. In other words, the legal framework for regeneration paves the way for mistrust among the actors and processes which are widely viewed as manipulative. Most of the time, this leads to antagonism among actors, such as legal institutions, contractors and construction firms and property owners, and this situation usually forces the property owners into a fight to protect their ownership or housing rights. It would be fair to say that given the various dynamics of urban life and the ever-present uncertainties associated with it; this situation causes a state of tension.

Regeneration in Istanbul is legitimized and implemented through the discourse of earthquake risk and safe housing. However, this paper clearly depicts how economic concerns have become the main factor, both in terms of managing renewals and also in gaining economic benefits through regeneration. The building renewals and the attitudes towards regeneration in the case area Bakirkoy, indicate one of the problematic sides of regeneration in Istanbul, which also has similarities especially with the debate on property-led processes world-wide. It is obvious that world-wide property-led regeneration practices differ from the building renewals in Istanbul case, in terms of the scale of projects, their implementation processes and the expectations they create, but still a common ground can be found, especially in terms of their consequences. The criticism for property-led regeneration, which states that

it does not offer any guarantees for long term economic concerns (Oatley, 1995) should be more clearly expressed for Turkish case too. In addition, and as seen in the case area, since the overall effect of single building renewals on the neighbourhood environment is not taken into consideration, it is obvious that the public interest aspect of these implementations is also ignored, which is also a criticism levelled at property-led processes elsewhere (Turok, 1992). Given that the main weakness of property-led processes is the lack of comprehensive plans, programs and complementary strategies to cover different aspects of regeneration, it should also be noted that the critical deficiency of the process in Istanbul is the absence of any realistic attempt to guide the process through a holistic approach and from different perspectives.

For regeneration to be effective, it should be considered as a long term process in which problems are dealt with through the participation of public institutions, the private sector and volunteer organizations (Imrie and Thomas, 1993; Adair et al., 1999). The findings from the Bakirkoy case also indicate that it is critical to manage and monitor the single building renewals in Istanbul through comprehensive plans and programs. Equal importance should be given to economic, social, physical environmental and ecological aspects, and there should be participation from different actors at the local level. Only in this way, the regeneration process in Istanbul may have a chance to tackle urban decline and improve the quality of public life.

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