Non-erasable human traces against urban transformation

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Abstract:
The notion of urban transformation, which occupies Turkey's agenda, has gained much more momentum because of new urban planning regulations. The regulations aim to make some parts of the city more 'flawless', affecting the physical character and societal norms of the city. The city of Istanbul, which is attempting to create this *flawless* look by clarification of *timeworn* urban parts with the help of urban transformation projects, is evaluated as a revenue generator; giving Istanbul the opportunity to advance its economy to the level of other global brand cities.

Istanbul, a capital city with many different civilizations since the Roman Empire, is such a glowing city in terms of its economical characteristics. The city developed during centuries by many overlapping layers of cultural codes and living spaces belonging to many different cultures. Preserving its history has an important value with this kind of cultural diversity and richness. As it is well known, inaccurate political decisions, intended to gain more votes, caused a significant amount of land to be informally occupied by immigrants who then constructed buildings lacking quality. The 1999 earthquake in the city created a need to rehabilitate these informally built areas and accelerated the movements of urban transformation projects of the *timeworn* and *bedraggled* areas on the uppermost layer of the city. But these efforts turned into a total change of the city instead of preserving the traditions and history of Istanbul.

By the expropriation law in 2006, Romans who were living in Sulukule since the 11th century were forced to abandon their homes. The Roman houses, which could not be improved because of the lack of education and unemployment of the people living in the area, were demolished and no trace was left of its history. The new buildings built in the area in the present time, appeal to a very high income group and the project only focuses to create private spaces for new home owners excluding any kind of urban space for the rest of the public. Although the project is planned with social functions for the Sulukule people, it is clear that those people will not be able to live in the area since the land value has increased ten-fold. Three different cases against the project, causing it to be canceled because no 'public benefit' could be found, have created recognition for the issue.

The kind of urban transformation movement which does not allow cultural values to be transferred to the present time is such an *erasing* activity—scratching out not only the physical realities but also a way of living. The people of Sulukule who were located to the houses built by the government at the outskirts of Istanbul, came back and moved in to the neighborhoods close to their old living areas to pursue their usual daily life activities since there has been no increase in their incomes. They could not adapt to apartment living, reimburse their rents, monthly revenues and transportation expenses.

Consequently, it cannot be told that such an urban transformation implementation has achieved its goal. While *urban deprivation* is the main problematic issue of urban transformations, the implementation, on the other hand, is only *setting back* this deprivation *sweeping* it to the edges.

So, the *erasing* activity of the dozers was not able to neither destroy nor cause social practices to disappear, but only caused them to be *set back* slightly. In the scope of this paper, Sulukule city part, which will be evaluated as a *palimpsest* urban space, is clarified from its *flaws* but many life stories engraved into the history that are assumed to be *erased*, are still leaking into the present time of ours beneath from the parchment paper. That form of *leakage* will be tried to be transferred to the reader by the help of observations and interviews made by the researcher in the area.

In the scope of this article, the issue of social transformation will tried to be argued upon an implemented urban transformation project in such a way that as long as urban transformation policies do not make a contribution to rehabilitate the problems of education, health and unemployment, they will unfortunately continue to be such phenomena increasing the unearned income in the city.

Introduction
According to the report declared by United Nations Department of Population in Economic and Societal Affairs in 2001, while there were 86 cities above one million population in 1950, this number has reached to 400 today and is expected to be at least 550 in 2015. Since 1980s, while urban labor population has been increasing more than twice, the population living in rural areas has reached to its maximum capacity and is thought to be decreasing beginning from 2020. Because most of the population of the world is heaped up in urban areas, plus it is assumed that urban population will make a contribution to the increase, it is expected that the world population will be more than 10 billion in 2050 (Davis, 2010).

According to the data (Url-1) of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the population of Turkey will reach to 100 million in 2050 and will constitute one quarter of the European Union population. On the other hand, according to the results of address-based population registration system of Turkish Statistical Institute in 2007, Turkey is the second largest city in the European Union countries with its 70.5 million populations. Istanbul is pursuing to be the financial capital city of Turkey with its 13 million populations at a 27.4 % increase rate as of 2011 (Url-2).

Istanbul is not only a growing city in terms of population within Europe but also in the world. According to Keyder (2009), Istanbul has always been a global city not only with its surface area but also with its economical power. Being

located on such important trading route, Istanbul had a role of permanent bazaar between Asia and Europe undertaking the engine of economy, during Roman and afterwards Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Istanbul has always been a center where many traditions and cultures have lived together in harmony as a mosaic of languages and religions.

A migration flow into the city has occurred both by the effect of industrialization movements in Istanbul causing *in-migration* from rural areas in the beginning of 1950s, and by the effect of forced evacuations of towns because of political reasons in the beginning of the 1980s resulting in huge urbanization problems because the city was not ready for such a big demand of housing. Apart from the lack of a planned urbanization policy and supervision, laws of remissions of construction just before elections, not only legitimized informal housing but also promoted these activities. While a new image has been added to the city by the effect of globalization movements accommodating itself to the new consuming activities of people, an independent process of urbanization from master planning had another significant effect on urbanization both in the center and the peripheries of the city.

Also, globalization movements throughout the world in the 90s caused both physical and societal transformations in Istanbul. Together with the investments of international companies, new centers of finance originated and the city had a new silhouette with high rise buildings (Keyder, 2009).

In this context, Keyder (2009) evaluates Istanbul as a 'segregated city' rather than a 'dual city'. While a part of the city adopted to a new social life and new consuming activities, the other part of the city was disjointed. People living in this disjointed region at squatter houses and working in informal sector, prefer to pursue their lives appropriate to their own background and tradition.

This urban condition caused by physical segregation which also brought along social segregation, contributed to the emergence of some new terms such as *urban renewal* and *transformation.* Also, new laws were brought into force such as the first "3030 no. Law for Metropolitan Municipality" in 1984, another "3194 no. Building Law" in 1985, and the third expropriation implementation laws which all caused legalization of those squatter areas bringing an understanding of making the informal owners as landholders rather than a holistic view of rehabilitation of these areas (Ertürk, 2009).

The notion of urban renewal
The notion of urban renewal first began to be argued in Europe especially after the 2nd World War and was brought to the agenda to rehabilitate poor conditioned regions of European cities which initially started and were also widely implemented in England.

Urban renewal, according to Atalık and others, is "*a process providing renewal and change of dated urban fabric to integrate to current social and economical conditions",* and according to Keleş, with a wider definition is, "*to bring cities and the centers of cities or a part of them to a better condition to make them to adapt to current conditions by the enterprise or help of the public with the aim of cleaning the poor neighborhoods, rehabilitating or conserving the buildings, providing better housing conditions, trade and industrial opportunities through local design programs"* (Özden, 2008).

As it can be understood from these definitions, the aim of urban renewal is mainly expressed as integrating ruined areas with current conditions and urban coherence. Not only physical rehabilitation is mentioned but also, and with a greater importance, an evaluation and implementation is emphasized embedded with 'human' phenomenon.

The notion of urban deprivation
One of the reasons for urban renewal in an environment is related to *urban deprivation* in that area. In this context, one of the problematic issues of urban renewal is to provide rehabilitation for the people living in those areas where renewal will be implemented and to bring some solutions to their *urban deprivation*.

According to the research of Stewart accomplished in England, *deprivation* is correlated to aging of physical environments and mentioned as it is wrapped with a typical physical character called 'slum'. The *slums* are such places that because necessary spatial arrangements and repairs cannot be done due to economical inadequacies they are soon converted into areas where health and comfort conditions gradually decrease (Özden, 2008).

According to Özden (2008), urban deprivation, in other words, is an unequal distribution of urban opportunities to low income groups living in unqualified urban lands compared to other urbanites. That unequal situation, while making their lives more difficult, combined with a lack of contribution to education and labor force causes crime rates increase resulting with *social segregation*.

According to Erden (2003), urban renewal is devoted to provide the criteria mentioned below:
  ▪ To develop distress areas with the historical value by renewal projects and to provide urban integrity by the rehabilitation of the urban fabric,
  ▪ To generate economical and social projects focusing on the public inadequacy,
  ▪ Parallel to rehabilitating economical conditions, to generate new spatial components to appropriation of urban integration and liveliness.

Consequently, the main target of urban renewal refers to a common activity of the public and the government together with private administrations and emerges a necessity of a participation model meeting the demand of local residents.

**Urban renewal implementations in Istanbul**
Urban renewal implementations since the 1980s in Turkey, especially in Istanbul, are applied without the participation of the public. Özdemir (2005), in his article about Karanfilköy urban renewal project, which was applied in 1996-1997, evaluates this project with these words; *"every demolition experience is an erasing activity of a trace in societal memory."*

Urban renewal widely remains on the agenda, for Istanbul, especially after the 1999 Marmara Earthquake. Since it is stated by the experts that there is a probable upcoming earthquake which mainly threatens the city of Istanbul, the necessity for urban renewal projects emerged for those unplanned and informally built environments. Therefore, by means of evaluating the city as a

whole, many urban renewal projects have started to be implemented. These projects have been maintained to secure people's lives against a probable earthquake and to integrate these aforesaid environments within the city. One of these renewal projects -Tarlabaşı, Zeytinburnu, Fener-Balat and Kartal each of these having different settlement characteristics- is Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project which is the main theme of this article.

Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project

The project area consisting of two neighborhoods in the Fatih district is located adjacent to the historical city walls of Istanbul, where important highways intersect, and a metro station exists in a 300 meter distance. Surrounded by Vatan Street, Fevzipaşa Street and Beylerbeyi Street, the area is easily reached by D-100 Highway which is known as E-5 (Figure 1).
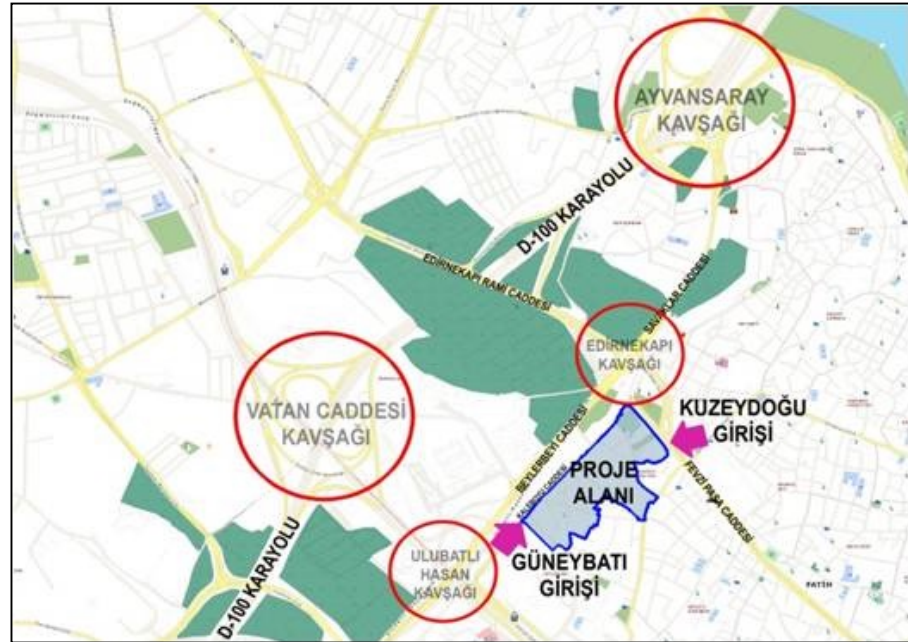
Figure 1. *Urban Renewal Project Area (Ertürk, 2009).*

Historical background and social structure of the area

According to Meriç and others (2006), social researches done upon people living in Sulukule known as a 'gypsy' in Turkey, 'Rom' in the west and as 'Roman's by some of themselves, show that, Romans, because they speak predominantly Hindu, it is propounded that they had come from India (Figure 2).

It is not known for certain when they had come to Istanbul; it is indicated as 11th century in some resources. Romans have been living in districts such as Hacıhüsrev, Yenişehir, Edirnekapı (Neslişah, Haticesultan ve Karagümrük), Mecidiyeköy (Kuştepe, Gültepe), Sarıyer (Çayırbaşı), Fatih (Lonca), Bayrampaşa (Yıldırım mahallesi), Küçükbakkalköy, Üsküdar and Kasımpaşa.

Romans that were left out of the city walls in the Byzantine period accused of activities such as fortune-telling and wizardry, and were invited back in the city to make the city's social life livelier by the Mehmet the 2nd in the Ottoman period. So, some of the Romans established the Lonca Neighborhood in Ayvansaray, and some others were settled in Sulukule. Romans, while contributing into the social life of the city because they are interested in music and dancing, also established janissary band of the Ottomans. Entertainment culture which began with the 'entertainment section' tradition, continued with the 'Entertainment Houses' in the 1950s and it

Figure 2. *A Roman family photograph taken in 1912 (Ertürk, 2009).*

is told that famous singers of that period would come over to these places where there were ladies playing instruments, singing and dancing in spacious, clean rooms (Url-3).

In the 80s, the amount of half legalized 'entertainment houses' considerably increased, while the income of the people living in the area and the population of the region also increased. It was also the time when apartment buildings were built in the area (Figure 3). In the 90s, on the other hand, they were closed down because of raids by the police and because the economy was mainly based on those entertainment houses, people gradually surrendered to poverty and the area also became physically poorer with time (Url-3).
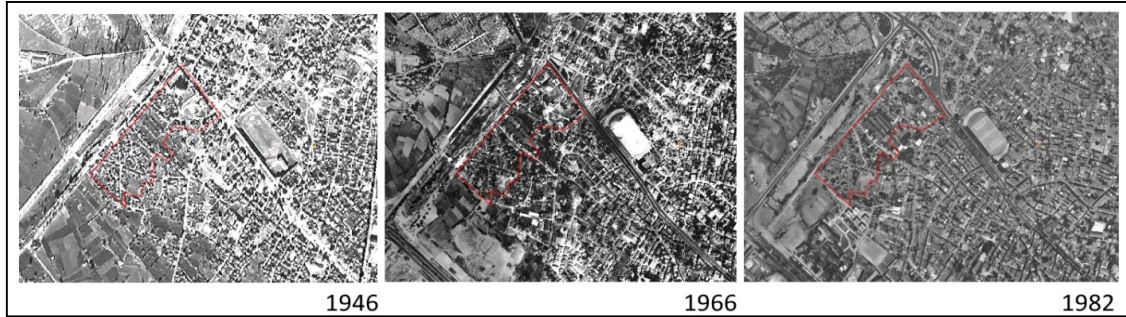
Figure 3. *The development of the region in years (Ertürk, 2009).*

Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project conducted by Fatih Municipality together with Metropolitan Municipality became official by a protocol in 2005. On the official website of Fatih Municipality, it is told that the neighborhoods with neglected buildings needing intervention in the City Wall Conservation Strip were included in the scope of the urban renewal project. It is also stated that with the help of the project, the area would be integrated with the other historical part of the region and would be healthier in terms of environment with its new substructure and buildings appropriate to the heritage of the historical peninsula. The project is composed of 12 city blocks, 10 streets and 3 avenues. There exist 22 registered buildings, while 17 of those are civil architecture instances, the other 5 are monuments (Url-4).

Before the implementation phase, according to a research accomplished by municipality in 2006, some data is obtained concerning the social structure of the people living in the area (Meriç and others, 2006);

- 17% of the people living in the area are Roman.
- 31% of them are not literate, 34% are graduated from elementary school, 5% are graduated from secondary school, and 4% are graduated from high school.
- It is stated that 8% of the families, women do not work, 17% of the families there is no one working and 13% of the families, the children are working.
- Most of the people lack social security. Being 4% with SSK assurance, and 14% with Bağ-Kur assurance shows that people work without any assurance.
- 52% are the owner of the house, s/he lives in, 30% is tenant and 9% is living with close relatives.
- Rental values are considerably low; more than the half of the rentals is lower than 100 TL.
- 41% of the problems in the area are because of violence, 21% is because of poverty and 14% is because of drugs.
- 79% of the people do not want to leave their neighborhoods, 60% of them want their houses to be repaired by the state or want to repair themselves with the support of the state.
- 21% of the people do not want the project to be implemented.

The data above shows how the socioeconomic statuses of Sulukule people have negatively changed over time. It is certain that the physical structure of the area should be evaluated together with the social structure during the process of the renewal project.

Moreover, physical *space production* of Sulukule people who have unique dynamics in terms of social, cultural and economical relations, have shaped in the context of these relations; Sulukule people who have been living in the area, have formed such a spatiality type proper to their *everyday life*. The *production of space* in Sulukule therefore shows a kind of analogy to the notion of *living organism* of Lefebvre since what shapes the physical character of Sulukule is the *social production* itself. In that scope, the notion of the *house* in the neighborhood is established within a special type of ownership; the form of spatiality is based on social and economical solidarity where different families' houses are opened to a common courtyard. This character of space is such a genuine feature of the place which should be transferred to the future (Baş, 2008).

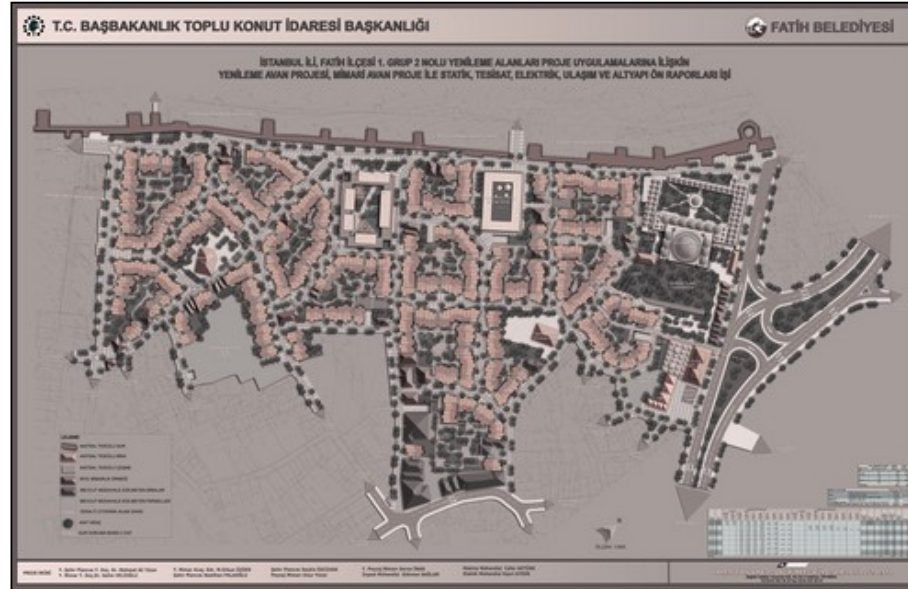***The implementation process of the urban renewal project***
Together with the approval of municipality in 2007, according to the official protocol signed, the process of expropriation and contract with the owners started. It was decided that the holders of a right who proved that they had been living in the area before the 31st of July 2005, would benefit from the social housing blocks in Taşoluk and Kayabaşı built by TOKI (Figure 4) which is 40 km away from the area, by a contract with 180 months credit in such a way that the cost of the wreckage of their homes would be deducted from the cost of their new social houses. It was also decided that the ones who did not want to benefit from the social houses, would leave and endorse their houses to TOKI over the cost determined by the municipality (Ertürk, 2009).

Figure 4. *The map showing the project area, Taşoluk and Kayabaşı Districts (Ertürk, 2009).*

Project process, intentions, projections

In the scope of the approved urban renewal project, population is projected as 2735 people and every house unit is designed to shelter 3-4 person nuclear families in 75-100 sqm of area. The project which is designed to include 163 number of houses, 6 different types of house are planned each of those having a flat on each floor, two flats on each floor and duplex flats in some of the types (Meriç and others, 2006).

In the scope of the project,
- It is not required to build a health center because there are general hospitals close to the project area.
- It is decided to build an elementary school. The centers of the projected city blocks are left as green areas so that the amount of green space is increased in the area.
- A social and cultural center is designed to provide the public to develop themselves and acquire a profession. Also, a motel is added to the project to create a source of employment (Figure 5).

The design team of the urban renewal project describes the project as *"such a rare, romantic and humane project"* and expresses how and with what kind of intentions they started working on the project with these words
(Url-5):

> *"Together with municipality, TOKI and us, with our professional formations as the urban planners, architects and engineers, we have presented solutions which protect the current social structure which respect to the historical, cultural and geographical values of the region and also the relations of new planning to the current plans. Sulukule project is a social project which highlights the social life composed of modest buildings with low-rise buildings with gardens. The project aims to achieve socio cultural sustainability, spatial sustainability and to solve existing problems rather than displacing people (...) 25-30*

different solutions are produced in the plan. The project is constituted by depending on local habits of the public. The aim is to prevent unjust treatment."

Figure 5. *The site plan of the project area (Url- 5).*

Figure 6. *Elevations of the project (Url-5).*

From the text above, it is understood that the design team delicately intends and considers transforming the area with the public living there and current design principles in the area form the clues of the design ideas. The fact that some social and cultural urban equipment are added to the project as design criteria to facilitate the Sulukule people to acquire professions shows that the project is planned considering the requirements of human being.

Reactions against the urban renewal project
Although Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project is designed to achieve the transfer of an existing culture to the present time and focused to create advantages for the local people, the initial negative reaction resulted because the public heard the project from the media instead of local authorities. Sulukule people who do not want to leave their neighborhoods, feeling 'excluded' from the project process since their demands were not considered, established a civil society organization to announce their voices to the press and media and higher authorities named as *Sulukule Platform*.

Another reason for critics against the project is the fact that in response to the ones having the opportunity to own some other estates by some kind of contracts, no opportunity is presented to the 30% of the residents who are tenants.

As it is presented in the article in a session of UN General Board Human Rights Council in the May 18, 2007, it is stated that opinion of the public is not regarded during the design phase of the project. Although it would be so, the local people do not have enough income to obtain one of the planned flats. The answer from the Turkish Government to this statement was expressed with these words: "*each phase of the project was developed through regular negotiations and counseling meetings with active participation of the public.*" Moreover, *"These houses will be offered to the holders of right firstly. Tenants also hold the rights of procuring new estates since the cost of the estates are low and payment conditions will be appropriate. Cost of the lands enacted will be deducted from the costs of the new estates."* is added.

On the other hand, Sulukule people mention in the press release that it is not possible for them to afford for a new house within the project, the place where they live belongs to them and the area will have a chance to advance only if the urban renewal process is developed together with them with these words below (Url-7):

> "(...) this neighborhood is ours! Most of us have or had land titles left from Ottoman period. In which neighborhood is there such an ownership? These land titles were taken from us forcefully and are still going on to be taken. We did not come here 10 years, 20 years or 30 years ago... We are here for centuries...This neighborhood is our land, our earth, our village... And it should advance and develop together with us. It should live, and get wealth with us. Renewal, transformation... Whatever it is, whatever it is going to be done should be done for the real owners. Not for the shady new owners who had taken our homes from us. This neighborhood should become a livable place for us, Sulukule people. (...)"

In spite of these criticisms, the demolishing process (Figure 7) of many buildings and squatter houses depending on the contracts signed with TOKI and local authority began in August 2008 (Url-6).

Figure 7. Demolishing process in Sulukule (Url-7).

However, because the project area is located in a historical peninsula which is in the list of UNESCO World Heritage, the urban renewal project was closely followed by national and international organizations.

Co-president of Helsinki Commission which is an independent government organization in the United States of America, Hastings, speaks out his disturbance of demolitions in his letter written together with the other co-president Cardin and commission representatives Pitts and Butterfield as mentioned like this: *"We feel a great disturbance because of the demolitions in the scope of Istanbul Renewal Project, changing the houses of Sulukule which was the home for Roman community since the year of 1054 with the new villa type houses. Unfortunate result of this renewal project will not only be a demolition of a neighborhood but rather force 3.500 Sulukule residents to move to street and the districts of Taşoluk that is forty km away. It is important for the Turkish government to find a solution to that situation and to provide Roman community opportunity of employment, shelter and education."* (Ertürk, 2009).

Fatih Municipality and TOKI, without regarding any of these criticisms and making no attempt of revisions to provide social participation to the project, continued demolitions and allowed the project to be accomplished. However, as soon as the new buildings were built, unit areas of the buildings have considerably increased.

In one of the websites aimed to publish real estate notices, according to a notice of the new estate built in the area, dated in the 7th of July 2012, a 4+1 flat with 125 sqm of area is put up for sale on 750.000 TL (Url-8). According to another notice (Url-9) on the same web site of a 4+1 flat with 114 sqm of area is put up for sale on 850.000 TL in the 3rd of October 2012. When analyzed in unit area, it is soon understood that unit area cost changes between 6.000 TL and 7.500 TL (3500 $ in average) which appeals to high

income group. When these notices are examined, it is easy to recognize that the unit area price have considerably increased even in three months (Figure 9, 10). So, it is naturally not possible for current homeowners to buy one of these new estates and take bank loans to pay the rest, who sold their estates with the 500 TL (300 $) of unit area price and 50-100 thousand TL in total. Other than that, even though they take the risk, since their monthly income has not changed, it is clear that Sulukule people being pushed out from where they have been living for centuries.

Figure 8. *Sulukule Houses Built in the Scope of the Urban Renewal Project (Url-7).*

Figure 9. *Real Estate notice dated 7th of July 2012 (Url-8).*

As it can be understood from all of these progressions, Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project, turned into a gentrification project increasing the unearned income in the region gradually moving away from the aim of a *"romantic and humane project".*

Figure 10. *Real estate notice dated 3rd of October (Url-9).*

Finally, a case was opened against the project by the Chamber of Architects resulted in cancellation of the project by the 4th Istanbul Administrative Courts with the reason that the project was not for *public benefit* in September 2012. Also, the other two cases opened by the Chamber of City Planners and Sulukule Sustenance Institution resulted in the same decision (Dağlar, 2012).

Present time in Sulukule and remains from erased lives
In the scope of this research, interviews and observations with public and tradesmen were done with the aim to analyze the current condition of the area and acquire findings about the new social life in the area.

Although they seem as if they are appropriate to the rest of the region in terms of scale, the new Sulukule houses are self-enclosed and *withdrawn* from their surroundings of metal construction sheets witnessing the total silence in the area because of their '*peoplelessness'* (Figure 11). Moreover, these houses emphasize their alienation by these sheets tough. While it is necessary to conserve the culture which permeated into the stone and earth of the place, today what is conserved are these new buildings which are uncertain where they have come from.

Although it is saved from demolition because it is a registered building with its civil architecture character recalling the background of the area (Figure 12), it is a fact that building volume cannot replace human voice.

Even though the aura of the social life of the public space has already been trapped into the photographs, when examined closer, it is possible to encounter some traces of people; a child is sitting on the sidewalk in front of the door to a house which is similar to old Sulukule houses while clothes are drying on a piece of rope tightened by the window railings (Figure 13).

People living in a few of the single floored houses left are still pursuing their lives as they are accustomed. No rehabilitation caught one's eye after the accomplishment of the project. Because the aim of the project was 'to clarify'

the area from its *flaws* rather than a social transformation, buildings which are not demolished are still standing with their 'imperfections.'

Figure 11. *New Sulukule Houses conserved by metal construction sheets.*

Figure 12. *One of the registered buildings of the area.*

A mattress left on the sidewalk near to the new Sulukule houses shows the public is fused with the *place* like flesh and bone. It is apparent that maybe that mattress is still the place of a small talk or a twang of a *darbuka* (Figure 14).

Figure 13. *A single floored Sulukule house.*

Figure 14. *A mattress left just beneath the metal sheets, reminding the culture of the place.*

Children, on the other hand, seem to be willing to continue the spatiality on the street. They go on talking inside the entrances of the apartments in Karagümrük Neighborhood (Figure 15). Sulukule Children Art Workshop which was located in Gülsüm's House, who became the symbol of Sulukule Solidarity Platform, was relocated at the entrance floor of an apartment close to the area after the demolition where rhythm, dance, drama and instrument classes are taught in the workshop (Figure 16).

In an interview with a tradesman running a market in Karagümrük Neighborhood, it is thought that people think that despite the cancellation

decision of the court, demolitions are going to continue. He tells that everyone who went to Taşoluk came back because they could not live there. He adds that the reason they cannot live there was because they could not afford apartment revenues and transportation fees.

Şükrü Pündük who is the leader of Sulukule Roman Organization and also a musician in the Sulukule Roman Orchestra is one of those who moved to Taşoluk with his family but only stayed for one month. He explains the reason why he turned back to Karagümrük: "They finished the sector of entertainment, I started working in Taksim, and how can I come to Taşoluk at 3 at the night time? Taxi charges 100 TL; I can only earn that amount in a day. Rentals are 300-450 TL but the other fees together with revenues and transportation fees, expenses are 1500 TL monthly. So, everyone turned back." (Url-10).

Figure 15. *Children playing at the entrance of the apartments in Karagümrük Neighborhood.*

Figure 16. *Sulukule Children Art Workshop.*

A real estate consultant in Karagümrük Neighborhood explains another reason why the people who went to Taşoluk as: "*There is no neighborhood relation for the ones who moved there even they cannot want a piece of bread from next-door. Here, neighbor is the helper of the other.*"

The real estate consultant who does not want to do business with the new Sulukule houses, in the contrary has hope about the urban renewal implementations. He mentions that, the demolitions which occurred here will perhaps be a motivating factor for the ones who are resigned to poverty to establish a new and better life. He expresses his feelings as: *"In fact, demolitions are good. Even though no one thinks like that, as a person who grew up here I think in that way. If there were no demolitions, everything would go on the same here. You would not come here, and would not care about what has been going on here."*

Conclusion and discussion
Although Neslişah (Sulukule) and Hatice Sultan Neighborhoods Urban Renewal Project was aimed to provide facilities for the benefit of the public living in the area, it unfortunately could not reach to a better degree compared to other projects having been implemented in İstanbul.

Even though the project was criticized nationally and internationally, no revisions were applied in the process of the project. As a result, the project was completed which in turn increased the unearned income of the region, by all means removing the settlers from their place. It allowed the Roman culture which had been rooted in the area to be destroyed.

But in spite of these implementations, Sulukule people could not live where they had been sent to, and came back to the close neighborhoods like Karagümrük Neighborhood as tenants. The *place* where they belonged, called them back. So, the Sulukule culture which was tried to be removed is still going on to live close to the *place* demolished.

In the scope of this article, Sulukule is represented as an urban culture coalesced with its *place*; demolitions were represented as activities aimed to *erase* that culture from its environment and *clarify* the physical space from its *flaws*; and new Sulukule houses are represented as new cultural codes which are tried to be *written* on the place.

In this context, Sulukule is evaluated as a *palimpsest* urban part; as an analogy of the rubbed out text still showing itself even though a new text is written after erasing the existing text on a piece of parchment, Sulukule culture, is still living on the sidewalk which is the public space of the *place*. Such a destructive intervention applied to physical space was not enough for a culture to be vanished.

A culture coalesced with the stone, earth and water of the urban land is still going on to clutch onto the life with its unique cultural codes.

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Kentsel yenilemeye karşın silinemeyen insan izleri

İstanbul' da özellikle son yıllarda gündemde olan kentsel dönüşüm kavramı, içinde bulunduğumuz yıl kanunlaşan kentsel dönüşüm yasası ile daha da hız kazanarak İstanbul'un farklı bölgelerinde kente daha 'kusursuz' bir görünüm kazandırmak üzere uygulanmakta olan, kentin fiziksel karakteri ile birlikte kentteki yaşamsal pratiğimizi etkileyen en önemli fenomenlerden biri olarak ülke gündemini uzunca bir süredir meşgul etmektedir. *Kusursuz* ve *eskimişlerinden* arındırılmış bir kent görünümü kazandırılmaya çalışılan İstanbul, sözkonusu kentsel dönüşüm faaliyetleri ile dünyanın önde gelen marka kentler arasında yer alması arzu edilen bir ekonomik getiri aracı olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Roma İmparatorluğu'ndan bugüne, farklı medeniyetlerin başkenti olan İstanbul, bugün de Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin iktisadi başkenti olarak parlayan bir kenttir. Yüzyıllardır farklı kültürel kodların ve mekanların üstüste ve içiçe geçerek katmanlaşarak geliştiği İstanbul, dünya sahnesinde aslında bu kültürel çeşitliliği ve zenginliği sebebiyle ayrı bir

öneme sahiptir. Bilindiği üzere, yakın geçmişte siyasi yönetimlerin oy çoğunluğu sağlamaya yönelik uyguladığı politik kararlar, İstanbul'un pek çok arazisinin kırsal kesimden göçenler tarafından enformel yoldan edinilmesi sonucunda kalitesiz bir biçimde yapılaşmasına neden olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, 1999 Marmara depreminde İstanbul'da çok sayıda binanın yıkılması, birçok insanın hayatını kaybetmesi ve bu depremin ardından önümüzdeki yıllarda beklenen olası bir Marmara depreminin özellikle İstanbul'u tehdit ediyor olması, sözkonusu enformel yapılaşma biçiminin ivedilikle rehabilite edilmesi gerekliliğini ortaya koymuş, bu sebepten kentin en üst katmanının eskimiş, köhnemiş ve planlamaya uygun inşa edilmemiş alanlarının kentsel dönüşüm hareketleri ile iyileştirilmesi gerekliliği ortaya çıkmıştır. Fakat bu dönüşüm hareketleri ne yazık ki mekanla birlikte sosyal dönüşümü hedeflemekten ve varolan kültürü bugüne aktarmaya çalışmaktan öte, topyekün bir fiziksel mekanı değiştirme biçimi olarak fiiliyata dönüşmektedir.

2006 yılında çıkarılan kamulaştırma yasası ile Sulukule'de başlatılan bu türden bir kentsel dönüşüm uygulaması örneği, 11. yüzyıldan itibaren bölgede yaşayan Romanların zorla evlerini terk etmek zorunda kalmalarına neden olmuştur. Eğitimsizlik ve işsizlikten ötürü yaşam alanlarının niteliğini olumlu yönde geliştiremeyen Romanların evleri, kamulaştırma vb anlaşmalar yoluyla TOKİ'ye devredilerek yıkılmış, eski yaşama dair hiçbir iz bırakılmamış, yerine, üst gelir grubuna hitap eden evler yapılarak, bölgenin rantı önemli ölçüde arttırılmıştır. Ortaya çıkan proje, kentsel planlama ve mimari projeyi üstlenen grup tarafından bölge halkının faydalanabileceği sosyal donatı alanlarına yer vermiş olsa da, yapımı tamamlanan evlerin, arazi değerini yaklaşık on kat arttırması nedeniyle, halkın bölgede yaşamaya devam edemeyeceğini göstermektedir. Zira, proje aleyhine açılan üç davanın da 'kamu yararı'nı gözetmediği gerekçesiyle projenin iptal edilmesi, bu gerçeğin geç de olsa, resmiyet kazanmasını sağlamıştır.

Kültürel değerlerinin bugüne aktarılmasına katkı sağlamayan bu tür bir kentsel yenileme hareketi, balyozla, tarihe ait fiziksel gerçeklerin yanı sıra bir yaşam biçiminin *kazınarak silinmesine* uğraşılan bir tutumdur. Evlerini terk etmek zorunda bırakılan Sulukuleliler, İstanbul'un dış çeperlerinde devlet eliyle yapılan konutlara yerleştirilmiş, fakat gelirlerinde herhangi bir artış olmayan halk, apartman yaşamına uyum sağlayamamanın yanı sıra, birçoğu kira, aidat, kent merkezine ulaşım vb. masraflarını karşılayamadığından hayatları boyunca sürdürdükleri yaşam tarzını sürdürebilmek için yıkılan evlerinin yakınlarında bulunan mahallelere tekrar taşınmışlardır. Dolayısıyla bölge halkını yerinden etmeye yönelik bu kentsel dönüşüm uygulamasının aslında pek de amacına ulaştığı söylenemez. Kentsel dönüşümün ana sorunsalını oluşturan *kentsel yoksunluk* kavramı aynen devam etmekte, uygulamalar ise, kentteki bu yoksunluğu ancak kenarlara süpürerek *ötelemektedir.*

Mekanların dozelerle silinmesi, o mekanlara ait yaşamsal pratiklerin yok olmasına neden olamamış, sadece bir nebze *ötelenmesine* sebep olmuştur. Yıkılarak üzerine yeni hayatların yazılmaya çalışıldığı ve bu nedenle yazıda *palimpsest* bir mekan olarak değerlendirilecek Sulukule bölgesi, *kusurlarından* arındırılmış fakat tarihe kazınan hayat hikayeleri, silindiği sanılan parşömen kağıdının altından hala bugüne sızmayı başarmaktadır. Bu sızma şekli, araştırmacı tarafından Sulukule'de yapılan gözlem ve görüşmelerden elde edilen bilgilere dayanılarak aktarılmaya çalışılmaktadır.

Bu makale kapsamında, kentsel yenilemenin, asıl hedefi dahilindeki sosyal dönüşümü gerçekleştirmediği sürece, yalnızca kentteki rantları arttıran bir olgu olmaya devam edeceği, enformel alanlarda yaşayan insanların sosyal hayatlarının başlıca sorunları olan eğitim, iş ve sağlık problemlerinde herhangi bir iyileşmeye katkı sağlayamayacağı uygulanmış bir olgu üzerinden tartışılmaya çalışılmaktadır.