

“Phantom” of the living units: case of Istanbul

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Giving priority to economical development in planning process ends up with losing ecological and natural values of cities and also exposes social problems related to implementation decisions. Day by day, cities have faced losing green capacity because of defective planning decisions and government policies. Likewise, contemporary urban planning practices focus mainly land cover based socio-economic decision making under the impact of strong settlement competitiveness of global trends ignoring socio-ecological dynamics in this process.

Meanwhile, rapidly growing metropolitan areas of Turkey have dilemmas between sustainable urban growth and urban ecology. Nowadays, Istanbul is experiencing disturbing and devastating urban planning and design practices including the loss of natural green areas. Due to mega projects in Istanbul, *green* areas are under threat of transforming to *gray* areas. At the same time, in urban development process, man-made environments become poor areas which design regardless of age, gender, socio economic level or race. At this point, critical question is that if there is no regulation related to “natural and artificial green planning”, how cities can conduct its sustainability and liveability while maintain its identity and social variety. Undoubtedly, it is essential to response the question of what role the regulation of green or/and open areas play in identifying quality of life in Istanbul as well as what role open spaces play in our social life.

Today’s concern is to lose social identity and urban identity in the lost of public open space. In the change of perception of space, some open spaces become to be

more spotlighted while others become useless, eventually. In the end, losing adherence of space and identity of space reveal importance of social integration and its relations with physical environment. The one of the problem is separation between physical and social space. None of them can be handled individually. This creates social problems and social discriminations in cities as well as Istanbul. Like expiration date these problems cause city's terminations.

In this study, ecological and social problems expose 3 main research questions. (1) Could urban green or open space merely be a physical component or could it be perceived as a social space? (2) Could green or open space be the ultimate factor that creates foundation of social relation in neighbourhood units? (3) How do we manage social obstacles when physical obstacles are destroyed and ecological problems are minimised by planning principles or new design methods, starting with the urban regeneration areas and/or new urban development areas? Could social structure be destroyed together with others?

This paper aims to focus on evaluating green and open areas in two diversified neighbourhoods, which are urban regeneration areas and new developed areas in Istanbul, while questioning which perspectives are underestimated on planning policies and practices, and what social, cultural, psychological factors are affected to neighbourhoods. The assessment will be based on underlining what is under threat in Istanbul as a result of both planning policies and implementation problems in Turkey. In addition to evaluate success and failures of the chosen urban development areas, interviews were made in two different parts includes with academicians and with dwellers individually. The interviews show social consequences as well as spatial consequences.

As a result, Is it possible to change future design of Turkey while maximising justice? What is important for our future? Economical development or human beings?