DILEMMA AT RENEWED HOUSING ZONES: BOMONTI SAMPLE

BENGİ YURTSEVER, ÇİĞDEM POLATOĞLU

YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

"People look at the price list to find answers not only to economic problems but also to metaphysical problems like what is valuable, honorable or even real.[1]"

Being an "honorable person" has a certain definition, limit and quantity in a city. That limit cannot be changed or differentiated. However, humans are pressed to fit into this definition; and begin to fulfill what is deemed necessary rather than what they deem necessary. Individuals don't have to make interpretations or to add something from themselves to the process. If they have to be present in city spaces, they do so; if they don't have to, then they don't. Article of Adorno on "The Culture Industry" discusses that individuals are not satisfied with this consumption culture, however they seem as if they are happy just to adapt to others[2]. Being different in life is instilled as such a taboo that, individuals feel uncomfortable when they are so.

According to Lefebvre products that were rare in the past are now abundant, however, abundant things also become rare and lost their meaning; like space, time and desire[3]. All these concepts are not entirely lost, however like Lefebvre stated, they lose their meaning and gain new meanings according to the conditions of the day. According to Loos, this endless speed and movement that comes with modernity have introduced a new style of perception. Today, perception is related with transience[4]. Along with this transience and also with the effect of globalization, the meaning of the "place concept" has changed like the concepts mentioned by Lefebvre. An order that those who can be moved gain value in the fast-paced life rather than those who are attached to a certain place.

Fast-paced lifestyle of today's cities requires people to adapt to both settled and nomadic order, which means that transportation is as important as shelter. Individuals live in same places and become neighbours without getting to know each other due to settling for short terms. However, this lack of communication also brings a reciprocal problem of trust and thus[5], newly built residences are surrounded by walls under intensive security measures. These residences have been built with the projection that each of them will recreate their neighbourhood. At first glance, this might seem that all of these for to solve the problem, however a dual situation emerges in certain transformation areas along with urban, spatial and life problems.

While uncertainty and lack of communication prevails at some points of transformation areas, "innovations" caused by or with a potential to cause a combination of differences prevail at some other points. This duality stems from positive/negative content the duality has. In its essence, each dilemma has a potential to reveal "new" one due to the tension it has. However, to achieve this, the groups who experience duality should be able to question the situation they are faced and to create a collective awareness.

This dilemma forms a limitless wall between urban dwellers and blocks the formation of the collective awareness, which is considered to be necessary for the city to literally be a "city". In conclusion, urban

dwellers either are develop alike personalities or become groups that avoid agreement or sharing, who are constantly in conflict with each other. The gaps in this conflict process involve the concern for constructing new spaces and the groups that make benefit has a say under any circumstances is again profit-makers.

In this respect, the study aims to answer these questions: *Can the transformations performed during "urban transformation" really change the area as projected? Are the projected changes correct, valid and necessary for that environment – settlement- living area?* The study firstly discusses the concepts of "the right to the city" and "profit and urban transformation" and concentrates on Bomonti Area focusing on the questions above.

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY, URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND INCOME

According to Harvey in today's fast-paced era, many ideals are based on individuality and ownership[6]. There are no collective decisions instead; the decisions are taken by one/a few political power and thus many things are made just for individual interests of certain people. "The right to the city" mentioned by Harvey involves a collective structure and in one sense, makes a call for to urban dwellers to wake up. On this waking up process, Harvey talks about a structure in which people can think more integrally, not giving prior importance to their individual interests, comfortably expressing their views and finding parts from themselves in the city and thus a city and life style emerging from that structure.

According to Harvey, the concept of "the right to city" refers a place where an urbanite lives and also means changing and rediscovering for them whatever they want[6]. However, the important thing here is changing of the city by the individual as he/she wishes here expresses and requires a collective approach rather than individuality. According to these, the important point here should be to show a collective movement. New ideas and collective movements resulting from the collectiveness of these differences make a literally city.

Quite a few number of examples of high rise settlements are observed in Istanbul as a result of increasing migration and growing need for shelter. These new residence settlements were first built in a sense of satellite city in outskirts of cities and show a pattern addressing to different income groups. They had the same or differing residence typologies. Later on, especially the upper income group wanted to live in the city and luxury residences began to be constructed. These residences began to be constructed in areas such as old factory lands and shanty towns outside of the city center. In the next parts of the process, the concept of "urban transformation" came to the agenda. The primary aim of urban transformation was to renew shanty areas on the periphery or at the center of the city, which later turned out to have a character of a profit-making transformation. Bomonti Area is one of those areas which is affected by profit-making transformation. High rise buildings have been constructed with a growing pace in the area. The residences, which are completely introverted and designed in the character of a gated community, change the existing settlements morphology and life pattern.

BOMONTI: RELATIONS BETWEEN EXISTING AND NEW HOUSING SETTLEMENTS

Bomonti, selected as study area, is located in European side of Istanbul, in Şişli County. The district had been a region of various factories since the Ottoman Era. Today only a few of those are there. While Bomonti was shaped by a high number of factory buildings, the Kurtuluş district nearby, which

is the first settlement area of Şişli, is more densely occupied by residences. This district has a history of almost 470 years. These factories are very close to housing area and their products are light commercials like fabric, garment, chocolate and beer. The area is especially populated by Greek and Armenian citizens. In recent years the district has been a center of immigration from eastern region of Turkey due to job opportunities in this area and different user groups has settled on its periphery.

Bomonti is considered as a potential development area thanks to its location. Its proximity to important centers of Istanbul, job opportunities in nearby centers, existence of various practical, daily commercial places (spaces such as small shops and groceries still play an important role in daily commerce of this area) add to the attractiveness of the area and day by day the number of its' dwellers both from inside and outside of the city is increasing. High-rise buildings which are constructed to meet this increase began to affect the appearance of the district (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Bomonti Area

There are four main residence patterns in the area, all of which are nested in many locations (Fig. 2):

1- Old, Arc-Deco buildings with 4-5 floors and high ceilings, partially portraying the characteristic of its era and wooden buildings with several floors in-between these buildings. Mostly previous dwellers of the district (Greek and Armenian citizens) or individuals from professional groups such as artists and writers live in these residences.
2- Relatively new buildings constructed in 1970s with 4-5 floors. These residences have an average area of 80 sqm and are 20-40 years old. Exterior facades of these buildings have been renovated in the last 2-3 years and they are renovated in the name of "transformation" although they are not in harmony with their surroundings.
3- Shanty house settlement quite near the residences as a result of increased migration.
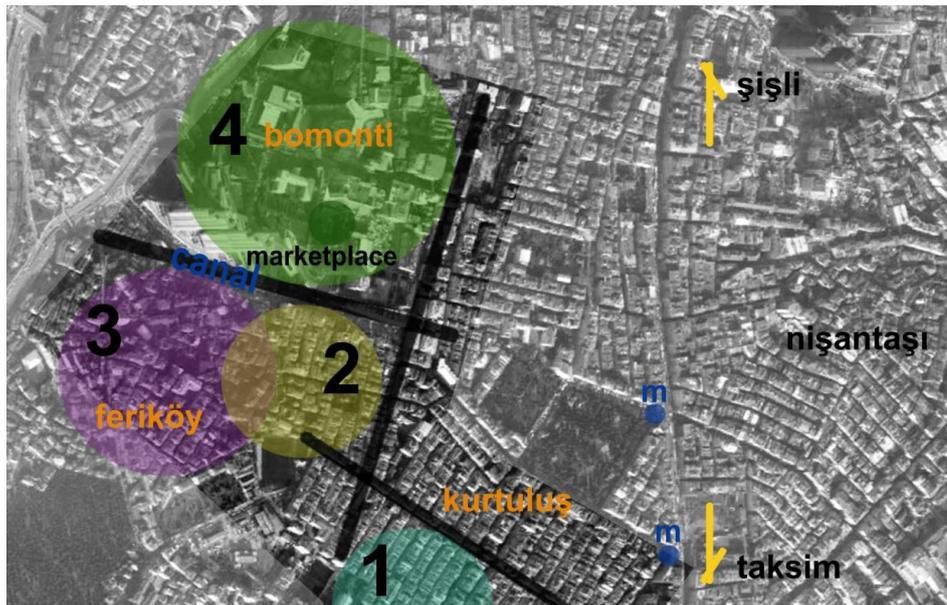4- High-rise blocks that have been constructed in recent years and their new users.

Figure 2. Map of Bomonti Area

Anthill Residences, which is one of the newly built residences within the scope of urban transformation, can be given as an example. These residences are one of the tallest residence buildings in Istanbul and consist of two towers with a common social center. Three categories of accommodation are offered in this building complex: permanent residence, for rent and for sale. It is striking that the building also addresses to temporary situations. The slogan of the residences was "…much more than a house…" In parallel to this, Anthill Residences claim that they will contribute to the transformation of the surrounding using some jargons such as;

- Located at the heart of Istanbul, Anthill Residence opened the doors of a brand new and authentic world for those who cannot do without the rush of the city.
- … an ideal living center for those who expect much more than just a "house"
- … it promises an elite life style.
- … a life beyond your dreams in which you can color up your social life.
- You no longer need to go far from your house to meet daily needs. It is in boutique marketplace or only a phone call away whenever you wish[7].

Many high-rise buildings in Bomonti area are constructed with these kinds of jargons; it is projected that they will entirely change their surrounding and even the people around them. Regarding these kinds of jargons, whether the surrounding has really transformed or not, is one of the main problems to be discussed during the case study.

CASE STUDY

A factor that strengthens the study in this sense and adds contrast to the problem is that the existing dwellers in Bomonti, changing different cultures, perceptions and forms depending on their accommodation and lives. Thus the question "in this transformation process, what kind of a potential can the dilemma in Bomonti area create?" can allow us to discuss the situation of life in Bomonti.

Field study was designed with two instages; observation and interview. Following the observation, information was collected from different user groups. The scope of interview questions was limited

within the framework of user satisfaction. The questions can be grouped as those for the surrounding, usage areas, and users satisfaction.

It was easier to contact the existing dwellers of the district when compared to new users. A bit of difficulty was occurred in contact and interviewing the dwellers living in high-rise buildings due to intensive security precautions and high walls (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Residence wall (monitored with camera system 7/24)

Observations showed that there is a wall, a boundary between the two close areas based on profit-making concern. Furthermore, social areas that were built for the use of the dwellers in high-rise buildings and to change the surrounding were not intensively used. Although the existing housing area does not have jargons like those of Anthill Residences, it is possible to observe an order based on experience and needs. However, it should be stated that the settlement area which especially has a shanty house character also has problems. There is a pattern in shanty houses consisting of dwellers, who migrated to this area and have no feeling of attachment for this area. In addition, it cannot be stated that the region is safe. For example, although there is only one street in-between, there is a great difference between walking on the pavement of shanty house areas and the pavements of Anthill Residences in terms of the feeling of safety. The canal running along the middle of the street basically divides the area into two. Passage to these different areas is provided by the bridges over the meshed canal. There is a rumor that these areas will be organized as recreational areas within the scope of urban transformation (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Canal

It has been learned from the interviews that; newly built high-rise buildings are generally used on temporary basis. It was found that especially Arabian tourists stay in residences for summer which are lent on daily basis, rather than to be used as a family residence. Similarly, temporary dwellers were observed in winter; presenting no family life and neighbor relationships, where no one knows each other. Newly opening artisan group in the area can mostly provide services to the people between the two different areas. In shanty house area, although some dwellers have their own lands, they do not have title deeds, while some of them have applied for them.

Findings obtained from the observations were supported by the interviews showing that there was no communication between different groups. Everyone lives on their own, without getting in touch with each other. Dwellers of the district who have been living here for a long time, report that the district was better in the past and that they no longer had a gathering/socialization space. Comments from the dwellers of the district despite the emergence of various new spaces for "socialization" (sports center, shopping centers, restaurants etc.) shows that being social is in fact a natural action and the compulsory socialization spaces produced for this purpose are a part of the profit-making system. Results of interviews that are consistent with the results of observations show that the usage frequency of compulsory socialization spaces built in Anthill or other high-rise buildings is limited.

The "marketplace" in the area seems to be a common meeting point for dwellers. The market offers different products like food, organic food, antiques etc. and on some days provides services not only to the people from the area but also to the people from a larger environment. It undertakes a much more active task when compared to many other socialization spaces. Spaces like the "marketplace" are primary spaces for the users and serve as a mediating space that allows bringing different groups together. In this respect, the fact that the area is located among historical factory buildings, it has a heterotophic character with its old-new pattern (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Marketplace at Bomonti

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

According to data obtained from observations and interviews, there is no doubt that a transformation takes place in the area. However, this change cannot occur in the scale that was projected within the framework of urban transformation. Despite the fact that the area has certain points that should be reconsidered, proposed projects are not perceived to be quite appropriate for the users in the area. Gated communities surrounded by high walls cause an increase in non-communicating individual users. This individualism prevents the formation of collective awareness that makes a "city".

The concept of "place"'s change can be seem also on housing usage, which was stated at the beginning of the study. Especially, new residances are used for temporary purpose, and it emphasizes this situation.

In addition to these, there is another point that should be taken into account. The new buildings claim that they will bring a different life to that area. However, the users for whom they bring that different life deserves to be discussed. It causes the formation of a hybrid structure by moving a completely different user group to the area instead of bringing a new design for its own surrounding[8]. In this respect, it has got a positive potential. But this potential cannot be found an environment for manifest itself. Even area has a change for its own, the communication between users are going down in time. So at first it is required some suggestions to gain collective consciousness to urbanites and to corroborate the communication between them.

It was observed that the new spaces added for socialization in the area also failed to meet the need. However, "marketplace" is not included in these areas. The marketplace changes the atmosphere of the area as an urban space where different user groups can interact. Dwellers of the area need these kinds of spaces where they can participate without feeling compelled to do so. On the other hand, "compulsory socialization spaces" serve as a profit-making factor and make people individualistic. In fact, people need sharing and interaction more and more in today's fast paced living conditions. This sharing should be performed in the natural development process of the city rather than through artificial or compulsory planning. Otherwise, the sharing also becomes artificial. The ability of

individuals to question, to think critically, collectively develop an idea and forming a collective structure towards the problems have a potential to affect the life and as a result the city and thus the life. The kind of projects that should be developed to achieve this should be discussed, the projects should be considered in terms of being "human centered".

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ENDNOTES

[1] . Marshall Berman, *Katı Olan Her Şey Buharlaşıyor*, translated by Ümit Altuğ, Bülent Peker (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları. 2013).

[2] . Theodor Adorno, *Kültür Endüstrisini Yeniden Düşünürken*, *Cogito.* 36. translated by Bülent Doğan. (2003) p. 76-83.

[3] . Henri Lefebvre, *Kentsel Devrim*, translated by Selim Sezer (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2013).

[4] . Beatriz Colomina, *Mahremiyet ve Kamusallık: Kitle İletişim Aracı Olarak Modern Mimari*, translated by Aziz Ufuk Kılıç (İstanbul: MetisYayınları, 2011).

[5] . Siegfried Kracauer, *The Hotel Lobby. Re-thinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory.* edited by Neal Leach. (London: Routledge. 1997) p. 51-64.

[6] . David Harvey, *Asi Şehirler*, translated by Ayşe Deniz Temiz (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2013).

[7] . Anthill, 'Anthill Residence' <http://www.anthillresidence.com/tr/index.html> (accessed 19 March 2015).

[8] . Maureen Heyns, *Reclaiming the Hybrid City: Regeneration Projects for London's Eastern City Fringe*. *EAAE Conference on the Rise of Heterotopia: Public Space and the Architecture of the Everyday in a Post-Civil Society.* edited by Hilde Heynen, B. De Maulder (Leuven: EAAE, 2005), p. 161-175.

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