

Urban Transformation as a Process for Inner-City Slums in Turkey, The Experience of Gaziantep City, Turkey

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Abstract

This paper explains urban transformation approach as qualified presses in dealing with inner city slum problems and factors that led to emergence urban transformation in Turkey. In addition, it highlights one of the earliest ongoing transformation projects in Gaziantep city adopted by the local municipalities. The study identifying the municipality's motives of choosing this neighborhood beside of analyzing the project and its effect on social and economic aspects. This is more likely to keep up with the efforts of Gaziantep Municipality in developing and transforming slum areas.

Key Words: Gaziantep, urban regeneration, slum.

Introduction

The inner-city slums become a global phenomenon problem. It is widely distributed in separate zones through the urban textures, threatens cities in all aspects. It often has illegal settlements with unsafe and unhealthy. UN-Habitat stated that the number of people living in slum conditions is estimated at 863 million in 2014, in contrast to 760 million in 2000 and 650 million in 1990. Both developed and developing countries started to figure out mechanics to find solutions, which is suitable to solve the inner-city slums problems. In turn, the planning agenda of Turkey has been focused on urban transformation as a solution for inner-city slum problems since the 2000s.

In general, slums appear in the older and central part of the city, usually inhabited by low-income groups (UN-HABITAT, 2008). By the time, slums grew up with growth of its problems. These untreated and uncontrolled city diseases threaten and affect all of city activities absorbing its potentials and disarranged issues. These densely urban with informal settlement and characterized by substandard housing form main dilemmas for governments. As it became a real fact, it got different titles such as barrios in Spain, marginal in France, favelas in Brazil

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and gecekondu in Turkey. It called also shantytowns refer to settlements of plywood, corrugated metal, sheets of plastic and cardboard boxes. These different titles give a clear view of the chronic slum problems in those countries. In common, slums result from inability of cities with its current potentials to obtain the high-speed migration of people to a specific space of land, which increase the demands of housing and general facilities, in addition of increasing in urban population with reduced purchasing capacities. Thus, illegal settlements and uncontrolled land purchase of un-urbanized zones of land take place. Despite the insufficient of necessary life resources, many of these settlements are able to cope with the current situation within the time, and even some of them acquire public services and legal status after decades of foundation (Blanco & Kobayashi, 2009). Urban transformation process is used to be as an economical and physical vitalization of inner city. Recently and after years of this implementation, the social factor become a main part of the urban transformation concept. This concept counted to deal with the cities and metropolitan slum areas which are include unplanned and out of control area of land (Cagla & İnam, 2008). Nowadays, the agenda of most developing countries follow a process for dealing the current and expected urban problems in the future, in order to build a continuous and healthy civilization.

Based on the argument that says, "we shape our buildings thereafter they shape us" it is important to fix our problems in the surrounding environment of our cities and follow the best solutions to make our urban environment meets the needs and demands of the community. In Turkey, the inner city slums became a phenomenon roiling politicians and municipalities because of the harmful influence in the different aspects of life. Therefore, governments started to adopt urban transformation as a process for improving or regaining the city by regenerating the urban structure, which become old, dilapidated, deserted or abandoned in some cases (Cagla & İnam, 2008). Although large scale urban transformation process has been started taking place since 2004 in Turkey, but it is still in the first stages in some parts of country. Gaziantep city though Şahinbey municipality has established several urban transportation projects in the city as substantial procedure to regain the city and solve the increasing problems. In this paper, we will highlight one of earliest urban transformation projects in the city located in the border of Şahinbey Municipality due to planning and urbanization views.

Chronology of Urban Transformation

After the period of Second World War until today, various urban transformation interventions have appeared in order to solve the problems of urban deprivation and decline in both western and Turkish cities. Urban renewal, urban reconstruction, urban development and redevelopment, urban improvement, urban rehabilitation, urban preservation, urban conservation, infill development, urban refurbishment, re-urbanization, urban (re)strengthening and urban relocation are some of these urban transformation interventions emerged within the last two centuries. Among them, especially urban development, urban redevelopment and urban regeneration have become the most common urban transformation interventions over the last three decades (Egercioğlu & Özdemir, 2007). Figure 1 explains the development levels of Urban Transformation due to the years.

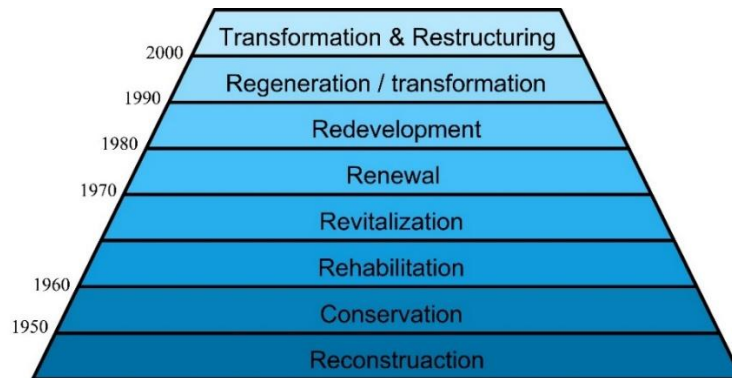


Figure 1 Chronology of Urban Transformation
(Source: Egercioğlu & Özdemir, 2007)

Urban transformation, as an urban policy strategy, serves many major purposes, which are:

- Respond to the continued changing urban needs and demands in time.
- Raise up the urban physical aspects and dismantling social deprivation phenomenon
- Achieve economic success raising quality of life.
- Avoid urban sprawl and invest land by the most appropriate way (Roberts, 2000).

Urbanization and Constructions of Slums in Turkey

Since the 1960s, cities in developing countries like in Turkey have faced an unprecedented rate of urbanization and poverty. Figure 2 explains the increasing of urbanization rate in Turkey due to the fast changes of globalization, industrialization and economic in the world caused unplanned and high urbanization process that led to create cities with un-legalized area. Besides the social transformation following the Second World War has a great effect on the urbanizations. The enormous rate of immigration to the metropolises in a short time period resulted by the industrialization, caused a construction of illegal settlements in all over the world and in Turkey (Erkip, 2000).

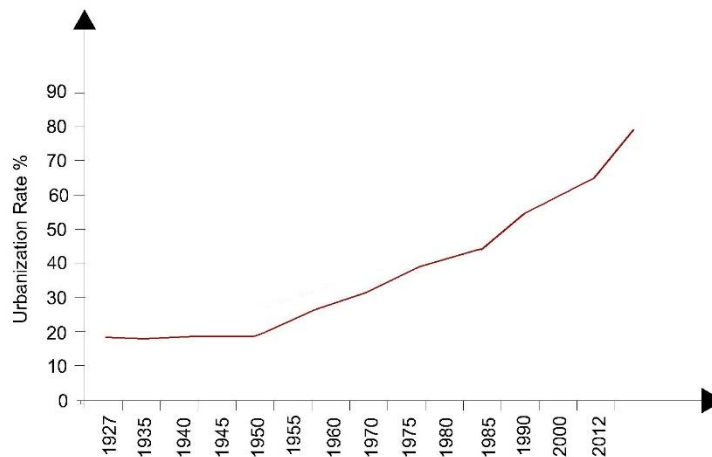


Figure 2 Urbanization rate in Turkey (1927-2012)
(Source: TUIK, 2013)

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According to statistics the average rate of urbanization in Turkey was 17% since the foundation of Turkey Republic in 1923 until the early 1950s, and it increased up 62% in 2000s (Uzun et al.,2010). According to United Nations, urbanization rates in Turkey was ranked third in the world between the years 1980 and 2000. On the other hand, the insufficient abodes during same periods prompted immigrants to make their own solution and create illegal settlements, which is called now *gecekondu* (Erman, 2004).

The term of *gecekondu*, which mean by the Turkish language “built overnight”, refers to temporary residences built as a shelter for rural migrants who came from out of the city (Erman, 2004). Slums are not only without a legal status, but also built by a second-hand material with very low standards (Korkmaz, 2013). Because slums build without any coordination with municipalities that caused mostly an environmental degradation, drain of clean water, improper waste disposal, and a damage of existing infrastructure. When we look at the urbanization history in Turkish Republic, we can classify four reasons for urban transformation plans. The illegally constructed settlements, obsolescence in existing building stock, inner-city slums problems, and finally the risk of natural disasters (Mutlu, 2009).

The Evaluation of Urban Transformation Process in Turkey

The unprecedented dimensions of rural-urban migration during the 1940s in Turkey caused appearance of slum housing problem. Migration was started by the transformation of agricultural cultivation technology and stimulate by a rapid industrialization process. Because of the cheap labor that can be provided by migrants they got all facilities from governments and the industrialists. Any way, they could not provide legal housing provision for all of the new incoming people. So squatter housing, a form of make-shift housing, was rapidly built by the incomers and extended with the addition of necessary space in time and developed into extensive neighborhoods constructed on vacant or public land or on farms under absentee ownership surrounding the urban cores (Dündar, 2001). In the beginning, these neighborhoods met by a negative reaction and demolitions. In 1950s, the Turkish central government supported housing construction as a result of welfare state policies for these governments (Korkmaz, 2013). After 1950s, the squatter housing areas became apparent in city pattern. These slums lacked for the public services and were constructed in public land. Therefore, public discussions started to focus on constructing healthy, livable urban areas and adaptation problems of immigrants who are living in squatter housing districts. As an urban renewal strategy, urban redevelopment projects were applied in the squatter areas to improve the living conditions of these areas. At the beginning of the 1960s, some of the squatter housing districts transformed into illegal, and high rise apartment stocks, whereas the vote potential of squatter housing districts have been used by politicians. The promises of politicians put into execution the amnesty laws for squatter districts.

Generally, plans have taken place in squatter housing areas to redevelop contemporary housing areas. The law and regulations have also played an important role at this process. With the law of *gecekondu* numbered 775 in 1966, the squatter areas have gained infrastructure opportunities, such as sewage system and new roads. It is worth mentioning that until 1960s, squatter housing units had been constructed by low-income groups to keep up with their housing needs, but after 1960s, this aim changed. Whenever the economic power of old user of squatter housing unit increased, they constructed another squatter housing and newcomers became their tenants. Therefore, squatter districts became profitable areas. At the beginning of 1970s, the aim of supplying housing needs of residents turned into sustaining profit from these areas by constructing multi story illegal apartments (Özden & Kubat, 2003). The years between 1980-2000, the big cities were affected from liberal policies and globalization.

Suburbanization, new residential developments was seen in the outer parts of the cities. Besides residential areas, the transformation was also seen in industrial and central business districts. In Turkey after 1980s, the new distribution of power between central and local governments made urban land more available for big constructions. In addition, along with various different patterns in the built environment, there have appeared social and economic inequalities among citizens (Erkip, 2000). Within the economic policies of Turkish government, two intervention of the state have caused changes in the structure of Turkish cities:

- Urban transformation with the meaning of improving slum living conditions since 1980s.
- Urban transformation with a comprehensive aspects of improvement in both of public and private partnerships since 1980s (Mutlu, 2009).

Moreover, to legalize the existing building stock and to solve the ownership problems, series of amnesty laws put into force since 1980. In 1984 with the last amnesty act numbered 2981, improvement plans were prepared for squatter districts. In 1986, the squatter amnesty act numbered 3290 enlarged the rights of squatter housing residents. Because the law excuses not only squatter residential buildings, it also excuses the commercial use transformed from residential uses (Özden & Kubat, 2003). With the Law numbered 3414 in 1988, some statements of the law of Gecekondu numbered 775 that restricted and sustained control over squatter houses within the boundaries of municipalities were changed. The law gave authority from governorship and metropolitan municipalities to local municipalities and declared off the rule that restricted the sale or transfer of land or house within 20 years, which were sustained by government. Afterwards, the owners of the squatter housing units started to sale these units and gained economic profit. Especially after 1985, land speculation increased which led to raise land values on unfair grounds. Today squatter housing areas became one of the important places for urban transformation applications.

The deterioration in the building stock and the encouragements by legal arrangements for transformation of the illegally constructed settlements have increased the importance of urban renewal plans after 1980s. The physical transformation of space has focused on two main issues since 1980. One of them comprises the reconstruction of the ties between the state and the capital with neo-liberal policies and arrangement of ownership property rights in high-income groups' favor. The other factor focuses on the assumption of public space as a commodity (Uzun, 2006). Within the last three decades, rehabilitation of squatter districts with improvement plans could not solve the problems in squatter areas. High-rise and illegally constructed buildings emerged in the scenery of squatter districts.

Urban sprawl occurred with decentralization of residential areas and effects of neo-liberal policies in globalization process have turned government attention into urban renewal projects. Social effects of urban renewal plans started to be discussed. Moreover, to revitalize urban economy urban renewal plans also became a main strategy of the government (Uzun, 2006). Marmara Earthquake in 1999 is also a turning point in urban renewal strategies in Turkey. In order to prepare cities for possible natural hazards, the state has aimed at determining disaster prone areas with high damage risk and at rehabilitating the building stock with substandard conditions. Especially, because of their illegally and substandard structure and strategic locations in cities, squatter housing districts became one of the interest topic of the state, private sector and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) (Özden & Kubat, 2003). Municipalities are obliged to carry out mitigation plans to reduce disaster risks, if ignored; the Ministry could use its prerogatives. They are entitled to determine the location and size of areas for such operations, prepare plans and projects. The municipality or the majority of the property owners in an area could form partnerships for the redevelopment and joint management of the area. Besides physical operations of clearance, development, protection, such projects are envisaged to cover policies of finance, management, ownership and means of socio-economic development.

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The first legislative implementation to solve the illegal and squatter housing areas problems for integration of urban spaces is the forgiveness of construction. This government concession caused to rebuild the illegal and squatter houses from 1-2 stores to four stores apartment blocks. While rebuilding in areas located in inner-city areas, transformation can't be achieved in illegal and squatter areas. This attitude continued until the governments developed new legislation for regulation to of urban transformation in 2004. The special Laws (The Law of 'Greater city Municipalities':5216; 2004, The Law of Municipalities: 5215, section 73, 2004, The Law Concerning the Northern Entry to Ankara: 5104; 2004, the Compulsory Purchase Law: 2942) are legislated to increase of improving the appearances and "life standards" of illegal and squatter housing areas (Ulu, 2007). The next table 1 shows the development of Urban Transformation Act during the years.

Table 1 Concepts and processes related to Urban Transformation in Turkey.
(Source: Egercioğlu & Özdemir, 2007).

Year	Act number/ Year	Plans of act	Authority modifications
1950-1980	327 (1963) 755 (1966)	Central planned development model.	Establishment of state planning Department.
	1164 (1969) 6785 (1972)	Comprehensive planning approaches.	Give more power for Ministry of public work and housing.
1980-2000	3030 (1984) 2985 (1984)	Master plan included Macroform.	Give the authority of planning to local municipality town.
	3194 (1985) 2805 (1983) 2872 (1983) 2873 (1983)	Apply Transformation project in settled location.	Introduction of participation in the scope of local Agenda 21 Program.
After 2000	5216 (2004)	Participative application with initiation of other actors.	Extend of authorities of great municipality.
			Give more participation informing the policy.

The Urban Transformation Experience of Gaziantep

Gaziantep is located in the Southeast Anatolia Region, adjacent to the Mediterranean Region of Turkey. To the west Osmaniye, to the east lies Şanlıurfa, to the northeast Adıyaman, to the northwest Kahramanmaraş, and to the south Kilis, to the southwest Hatay and the border with Syria (Gaziantep Magazine, 2014).



Figure 3 General map of Turkey with town border.

Gaziantep became a traditional market center due to the tight connection with Syria and Iraq markets. It is considered also as a transit center in order to reach the Middle East Countries (Yilmaz, 2014) . Now days Gaziantep is the largest city in the Southeastern in terms of population. With its 6845 km² territorial area, the province covers around 1% of the total area of Turkey (TUIK, 2013). Because of all these factors, it became an attractive place for migrants over the last decades. The city created high job opportunities and could accommodate a large number of migrants came from the other around areas until nowadays. Figure 4 can give an idea about the total number of migrants according to State Institute of Statistics (TUIK, 2013).

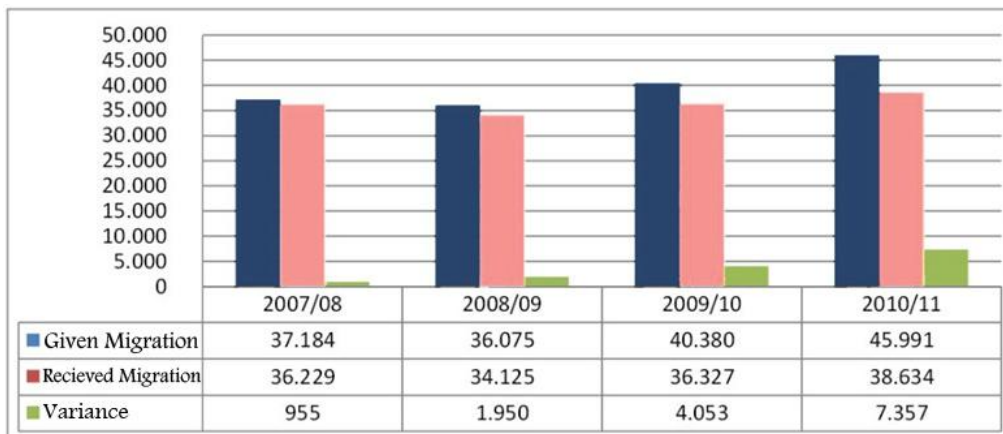


Figure 4 Migration rate, Gaziantep (Source: TUIK, 2012)

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The total number of population of Gaziantep was 1.285.249 in 2000, which make the new settlements form 7% of the total population. A recent Statistics made in year 2013 show that are still waves of migrants come up and down due to local and global different factors. In addition to all of the above, the total number of residents of Gaziantep city reached 1.844.438 in 2013, after it was 328.343 in 1950 as shown in Table 2. Therefore, the census increased to reach 561% within 63 years. Gaziantep is ranked second in Turkey according to population growth rate between 2000 and 2010. According to Turkish Statistical Institute data, by the year 2023, the population of Gaziantep is predicted to be 2.257.278 depending on the previous growth rate (TUIK, 2013).

Table 2 Gaziantep province, Population and Population Density by Year
(Source: TUIK, 2013).

Year	Total	City	Rural	Population density/km ²
1950	328.343	120.015	208.328	48
1955	376.969	153.699	223.270	55
1960	434.579	195.816	238.763	63
1965	511.026	244.215	266.811	75
1970	606.540	330.082	276.458	88
1975	715.939	427.017	288.922	104
1980	808.697	512.745	295.952	118
1985	966.490	642.938	323.552	141
1990	1.140.594	821.127	319.467	166
2000	1.285.249	1.009.126	276.123	188
2006	1.560.023	1.342.518	217.505	228
2013	1.844.438	1,511,159	333.279	274

All of these demographic changes cause a high demand on shelters and dwellings. The city like others in the worldwide were not ready to receive all of these new settlements caused by events that have been mentioned. So people found temporary solution, which become by the years a real matter and chronic problem called slums or "gecekondu" as it is called in the local Turkish language. It is worth mentioning that Gaziantep has nine towns: Şahinbey, Şehitkamil, Oğuzeli central towns and Nizip, İslahiye, Araban, Yavuzeli Nuğrdağı and Karkamış clarified in Figure 5. However, this paper focuses about Şahinbey urban transformation efforts because it includes the most dynamic part of the city.

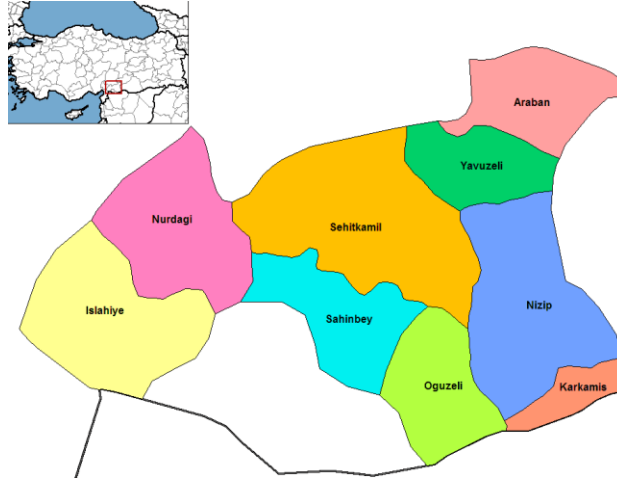


Figure 5 The Map of towns borders of Gaziantep
(Source: YILMAZ, 2014)

As the Mayor of Gaziantep stated, “Still 70% of the city area considers as a slum area” (Haberler News, 2014). According to the plans made by the local municipalities that were guided by the a recent legal actions issued by central government, the municipalities of Gaziantep started to build satellite residential area near city borders, and at the same time rebuilding and transforming the inner city slums. The total number of new residences between 2001 and 2009 reached 53418 apartment built by Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (Satılmış, 2011). These urban development patterns with mass residences reflect the interest of government policy to keep up with the rapid growth of sub-districts and dispersing population from overly crowded city cores to new developed areas with transportation linkages.

In this context, Şahinbey Municipality has been started to apply urban Transformation process as it allocates in vital part of the city and includes historical city center of Gaziantep besides of many commercial centers are located inside its border. Director of Planning Projects in Şahinbey Municipality has mentioned 80% of Şahinbey Town is a slum area. The Municipality determined an action plan for current urban transformation projects, while it determined others as a high-risk zone should take the next steps of urban transformation as shown in Figure 6. These expected areas includes neighborhoods named “Seyrantepe, Umut, Serinevler, Etiler, Türktepe, Özdemir bey”. However, urban transformation has been started in some of these areas and the other still waiting until end of the legal issues relating to the retrieval or purchase of land.

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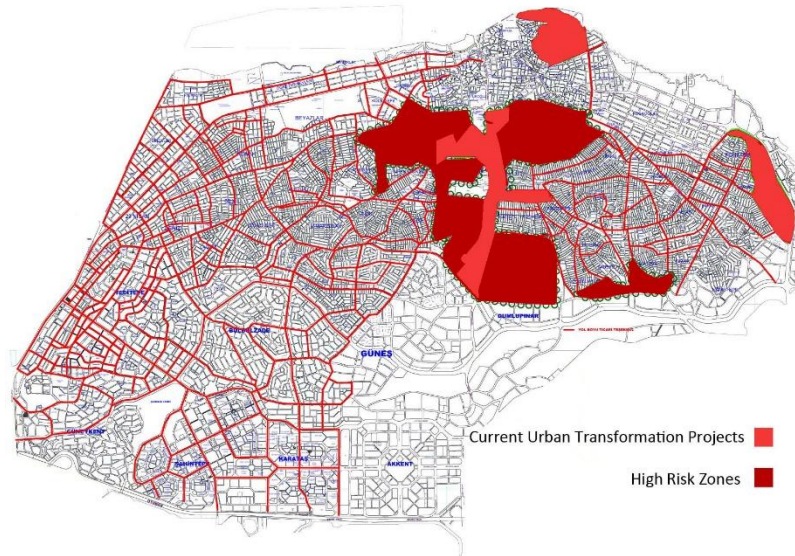


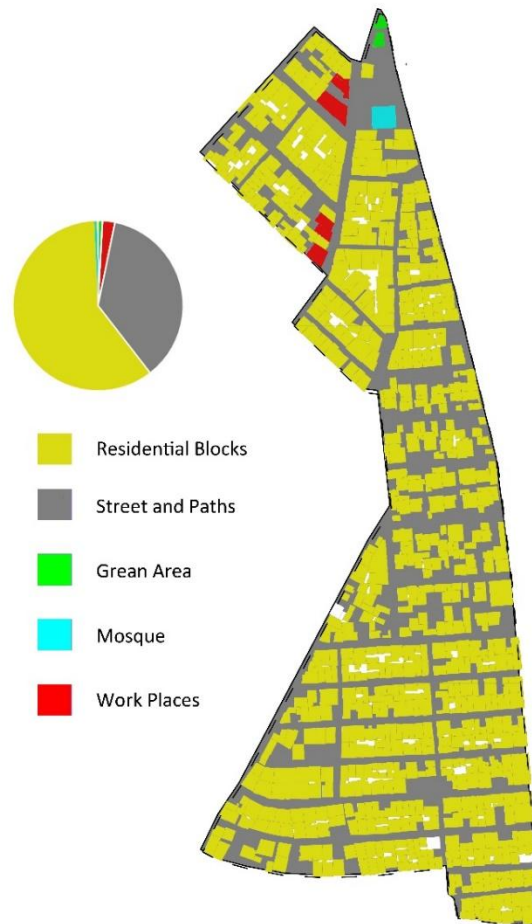
Figure 6 Part of Şahinbey Municipality border map with risk zones
(Source: Şahinbey Municipality, 2014)

Çamlıca , Nuri Pazarbaşı and Sakarya neighborhoods are considered as one of the earliest inner city slums, which went through urban transformation proses with about 10.35 hectare of land. Figure 7 can give an idea about the urban texture of the neighborhoods, which include high-density buildings, variation in heights and unpaved roads. Beside a lot of building raised up with unsafe constructions standard, which make it in danger of earthquake. All of the last factors and other accumulated problems of these neighborhoods make the retrofitting of the authorized stock is legally and socially not viable.



Figure 7 Different views of target neighborhoods and surrounding area before the project

The selected neighborhoods are located near of the city center of Gaziantep and just about 1.5 k.m south of the historical castle. The over crowded and aged houses are clearly defied in these slums. Figur 8 shows functions distribution at nighborhoods before transforming. Most area of land are covered with residential blocks with ratio of 61%, while just 0.3% of land includes green area, 0.9% for work places and 37.8% for streets and pathways. The Residential area included 1554 flats distubuted in 717 house blocks with variable heights. The other factor, which contributed choosing this slum, is the high demand to expand and widen Özdemir Bey Street, as it receives a huge numbers of vehicles according to its location straight forward from the junction of Hürriyet and Atatürk Streets. Özdemir Bey Street also links the nearby working centers to



Figur 8 Plan of project area shows functions distribution before transformation
(Source: Şahinbey Municipality, 2014)

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Figure 9 The connection of Özdemiş Bey Street and near work places
(Source: Şahinbey Municipality, 2014)

The project is named Çamlıca1071 as it replaces the old and insufficient squats in these neighborhoods with 1071 new and modern residences in a healthy and livable conditions. The project as shown in Figure 10 is divided into current project zone and expansion part for next urban renewal project. Total expropriation of illegal residences reached 2111 for both parts, while it is 1554 for the current “Çamlıca1071” project. Çamlıca1071 project includes 5 stages planned to run out by the mid of 2015 year according to statements of officials in Şahinbey Municipality. The new design includes two different types of flats with 112 m² and 135 m² area. All of these new flats will be sold again to the local and new incoming residents..

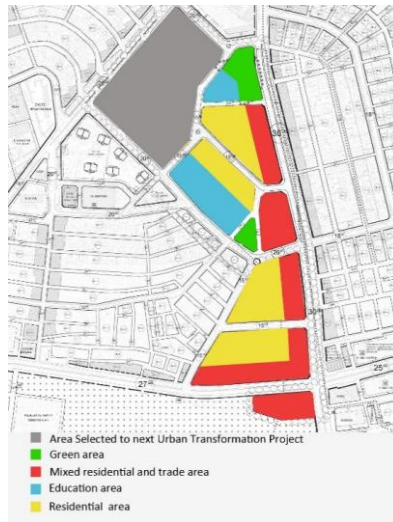


Figure 10 Distribution of functions of Çamlıca1071 Project
(Source: Şahinbey Municipality, 2014)

To ensure the success of the project, the concept address explicitly the need to create job opportunities. In spite of these neighborhoods were used to be a residential area before transforming, the new master plan, designed by the Municipality, uses an integrated design approach due to the fact that people had come to live in these slums for economic and job reasons. It allocates the commercial activities along Özdemir Bey street to make it an artery element of these neighborhoods and surrounding area.

The design also give priority to enlarge streets and walk paths specially the main eastern street, beside of creating a sufficient green area within residence block areas. Although all of these new events and others will help improving life standards, introducing variety in economic sectors and employment, and induce social integration, but this project faces also a replacing of local residents by not giving priorities and facilities for them to reallocate them in these new blocks. On the other hand, the number of new residences are much less than the expropriated ones as clarified in Figure 11. That will lead to transference and accumulate a part of the original social problems of these neighborhoods to other near ones.

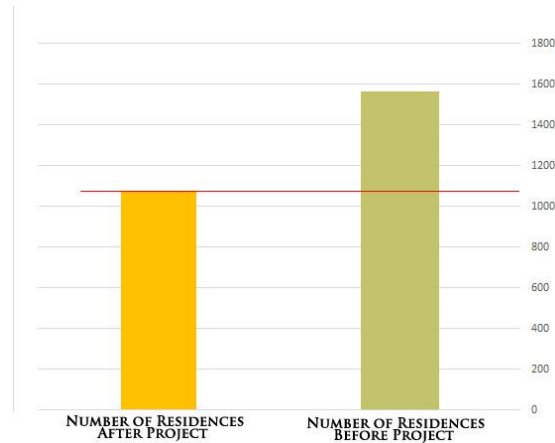


Figure 11 shows the ratio of the residences before and after project.

Finally, the renewal of Özdemir Bey Street is announced to be as a major target in this case of transformation. Beside of solving the transformation problem within the area by including six new car pathways (Figure 12), it also accelerate the enhancement of the street environment within the plan area to encourage established businesses along street.



Figure 12 Özdemir Bey Street before and after Urban Transformation project

Conclusion

Urban Transformation is a multi-faceted and complex process. The success of any transformation project can be majored by the achievements in the physical, social and economic aspects all combined. Every city has its intimate inner pattern like building types, squares the streets, and others. Urban transformation process can give possibilities in order to renewal urban areas and keep up with the local identity without substitute the original population. However, in some cases urban transformation process could not control all of the objectives, so problems related with the economic and social aspect transferring it to other parts of the city. For instance, one of the goals of the municipalities that should be considered is not to dismiss the original populations of the project areas while transforming these areas by supply them with legal and finance facilities.

In Çamlıca project case, although urban transformation project planned to make a quantum leap at the physical and economic levels, it is still suffer from insufficiency in dealing with social problems. The new plans serve great improvements in business and employment sectors by creating and developing new trade areas and moving into a registered economy. Also the new modern blocks are designed to be comfortable place for living compared with the transformed residences, but the number of alternative accommodation are not sufficient for the census of original families. Approximately 30% of families have no place, even if they had the desire and the finance to resettle in their neighborhoods. That aslo creat a housing problem at the city level in the long term which require to add more numbers of homes in the Municipality housing plans to compensate the shortfall resulted by urban transformation projects.

Finally, the most important factor in order to get best results for this kind of urban process is the continues improvements including mechanism, application methods and also the related laws to speed up the transformation process in around the country.

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