

FRINGE-BELT ALIENATION AS A TOOL TO DEVELOP CITIES: TURKISH CASE

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ABSTRACT

After its introduction by Louis (1936), the concept of fringe belt was elaborated by Conzen (1960, 1969) through his studies on English towns, and developed by Whitehand (1972, 1974, 1987). Fringe-belt studies began to attract attention in the last two decades. The entire work revealed that once fringe belts are formed, they become subject to modifications, which result in either continuation of fringe-belt uses on site, or their change in other uses, such as residential and commercial. The latter is called fringe-belt alienation.

Turkish cities experienced fringe-belt alienation extensively in the last two decades and became a tool to redevelop urban land through commercial, office and residential developments. Although Istanbul and Ankara, as two largest cities of the country, were at the forefront of such developments, one of the first examples occurred in Mersin, a relatively small but a metropolitan city on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey.

The study investigates redevelopment of the city center of Mersin in relation to transformation of one of the oldest cotton factory into a commercial complex (Mersin Trade Center), including the tallest buildings of the time in the country. The study is conducted through the use of historic maps and photographs, as well as interviews with the morphological agents that took place in the transformation process. It questions the effect of fringe-belt alienation in the urban structure and identity of the city through the change in land-use composition, physical structure and connection of new development to the city.

INTRODUCTION

After its introduction by Louis (1936), the concept of fringe belt was elaborated by MRG Conzen (1960, 1969), and developed by Whitehand (1972, 1974, 1987). In the early years, Louis defined *stadtrandzone* as distinct belts, each of which surrounds the existing built-up area of the city in its outward growth. This physical phenomenon gained historical and geographical character through the studies of MRG Conzen on relatively small-sized British cities. He recognized fringe belts as "a belt-like zone originating from the temporarily stationary or slowly advancing fringe of a town and composed of a characteristic mixture of land use units initially seeking peripheral location" (Conzen, 1969, p.58). The land-use units that are existing in fringe belts are industrial premises, institutional complexes, community services, and open spaces, which seek peripheral locations during the temporarily stationary or slowly advancing fringe of a town. And usually they have larger ownership patterns (Whitehand and Morton, 2004).

MRG Conzen elaborated fringe-belt concept in order to analyze and explain the urban growth of cities. Thus he utilized it as a morphological unit, a character area, produced by the city in its historico-geographical development. He identified inner fringe belt (IFB), middle fringe belt (MFB) and outer fringe belts (OFB) in urban form. IFBs are more recognizable in urban form due to their physical continuity in urban form, while MFB and OFB exist in a more disjointed way.

Following Conzen's initial studies to construct a fringe-belt theory in urban morphology, Whitehand (1967) investigated the fringe-belt concept on its own, without taking the whole urban

development. He extended the inquiry on fringe belts from small-sized medieval towns (as Conzen mostly made) to a large conurbation like Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Barke, 2019). Whitehand's further studies revealed the economical rationale behind development of fringe belts in certain periods during the outward growth of cities: "during a housing boom, existing institutional sites would tend to the bids of house builders, the institutions themselves being displaced to sites farther" (Whitehand, 1972, p. 217).

Fringe-belt studies, developed in almost more than fifty-year period, established by Conzen's and Whitehand's studies, elaborated by the studies of Barke (1976, 1982) and diversified in the last two decades in different cultural contexts, revealed that fringe belts are the constitutive morphological units of urban form. Besides being identified on their own character, fringe belts are also helpful in identification of development periods of cities throughout their historico-geographical development and outward growth.

In the formation phase, the fringe-belt uses are colonized in the peripheral lands of the old city, usually alongside a fixation line in the cities with long histories. As the new residential accretions leapfrog this first fringe belt -IFB- it is enveloped with the development and became recognizable in urban form. Similar processes are also evident in formation of MFB and OFB. Once they are formed, enveloped and consolidated, they stay intact -in continuous or disjointed way- in urban form and later became subject to changes during modification phase. Two types of pressure for change can be identified. The first is associated with the physical changes that results in the continuance of an existing use, and the second is redevelopment of fringe-belt areas that usually results in a land-use change (Whitehand and Morton, 2003). In the former case, the fringe-belt uses tend to remain *in situ* (Conzen, 2009) where the original use survive in its original form (Barke 1982). In a later phase, intensification of land use may appear through development cycles in fringe-belt plots through addition, adaptation and replacement processes (Whitehand, 1994). The latter case is evidenced through fringe-belt alienation, which is defined by Conzen (1969, p.125) as "the absorption of a fringe-belt component by a functionally different, usually residential, integument". Land use change and a complementary intensification may be dependent upon the **shape and size of plots, property ownership pattern, and centrality of location** (Barke, 1976).

This study seeks to analyze and explain how fringe-belt alienation takes place in Turkish cities. Since especially the larger cities have been experiencing rigorous urban growth in the last two centuries, fringe-belt alienation seems to be a way developing new land for residential and commercial complexes. After a brief look at the general tendencies of fringe-belt developments in Turkish cities, the study is focused on the city of Mersin that experienced one of the first influential fringe-belt alienation cases in the country. The role of shape and size of plots, property ownership pattern, and centrality of location are questioned in transformation of an old cotton factory into a commercial complex.

FRINGE-BELT ALIENATION IN TURKISH CITIES

Fringe-belt studies are getting more attention in the last decade in Turkey. After a detailed study on the IFB of Mersin (Ünlü, 2013), several studies (Hazar and Kubat, 2015 and 2016) have been concentrated on Istanbul's fringe belts and on general explanation on fringe-belt developments in Turkish cities (Ünlü 2018; Ünlü and Baş, 2016 and 2019). Recently, Hazar (2020) revealed the transformation process in the military zones in fringe belts of Izmir. One of the latest studies (Kubat, 2019) was particularly had insights into a number of specific cases in Istanbul and it was clear that some of those fringe-belt plots experienced alienation processes.

Fringe-belt alienation in Istanbul began as a part of consciously planned process that aimed at articulation of the city to the neo-liberal world. For that, beginning from 1980s, old factory areas were redeveloped to be office and residential complexes as well as shopping centers in the MFB. This development process had been limited within a particular zone -the ribbon development along Büyükdere Avenue, as a part of CBD extension- until 2000s. This development was triggered by the decisions of central government and local planning authorities (Öktem, 2011).

Nonetheless, fringe-belt alienation spread over other regions of Istanbul, prioritizing transformation of industrial sites into non-fringe-belt uses. Redevelopment of industrial sites were basically realized on privately-owned lands as soon as those zones were considered as unused and deprived areas that ought to be subject to redevelopment schemes.

On the other hand, other fringe-belt plots began to be targets of redevelopment with the 2000s. Transformation of stadiums had a redevelopment cycle. In the first step, the stadiums were considered to have a poor building quality and classified as deprived. In the second step, fringe-belt translation comes into being as older stadium moves to its new location as a new stadium is erected, usually in another (later) fringe belt. In the third step, the large land that became a left-over space after demolition of the older stadium became an attractive place for new redevelopment projects, generally for mixed-use development of residential and commercial purposes. Many Turkish cities experienced this fringe-belt alienation process. One of the oldest stadiums of Istanbul was transformed into a mixed-use development, while the land of older stadium of Kayseri was redeveloped as a shopping centre. Transformation of military zones into residential areas is another example for fringe-belt alienation. This trend reveals itself mostly in Istanbul, as a part of central government planning policies, in order to develop earthquake-resistant settlements. In either cases, the result of the fringe-belt alienation is the increase in building coverage, height and volume within the fringe-belt areas.

It is seen that the planning policies of the central government in Turkey, and partially that of some local authorities, conceives fringe-belt plots as unused and deprived lands that remained intact in the built-up area of the city. And they are taken into consideration as the lands to be redeveloped. This developmental approach was confronted with the protectionist approach of the large public that aimed to use fringe-belt areas for the public interest. The latter one began to be widely adopted, including the central government, of which the planning policies aimed at transformation of older stadium lands into large-scale public parks in the last few years.

ERECTION OF MERSIN TRADE CENTRE

As Istanbul's fringe belts were subject to alienation processes in an earlier period, Mersin was also one of the cities that experienced fringe-belt alienation at the end of 1980s. The study on development of Mersin's inner fringe belt is conducted through the use of historic maps and photographs. Three maps for Mersin, prepared at 1945, 1975 and 2018 are utilized in order to delineate the fringe-belt development, while the aerial photographs and land-use maps are also used in the investigation. It questions the effect of fringe-belt alienation in the urban structure and identity of the city through the change in land-use composition, physical structure and connection of new development to the city. The focus is held upon transformation of the oldest cotton factory into a commercial complex, namely Mersin Trade Centre (MTC).

A former study (Ünlü, 2013) revealed that the IFB of Mersin formed and developed in three distinct sections -west, east and south. The disjointed form of the IFB owes its existence to the late

industrialization and also lack of a town wall to act as a fixation line since Mersin had been relatively a young city, founded in the first half of nineteenth century. Mersin's IFB plots are colonized throughout nineteenth century in its formation phase until the mid-twentieth century and faced with modification process since that period. After consolidation in three distinct sections, the number of fringe-belt plots remained so close. 60 plots in 1945 increased to 67 in 1975 and decreased to 63 in 2018. However, the fringe-belt process in these plots brought about the change in the character of IFB due to the changes in land use. The land-use composition in 1945 revealed that Mersin's IFB was dominated by industrial use, covering 53.3% of the total. Gradually it was decreased to 17.91% and 2.71%, in 1975 and in 2018 respectively. On the other hand, the ratio of public institution was increased from 20% in 1945 to 41.79% in 1975 and 52.38% in 2018. This transformation show that the fringe-belt plots experienced a land-use change, but it was not heavily a part of alienation process. Rather, it was a change from one fringe-belt use to another one.

However, the number of fringe-belt plots that experienced alienation raised from 5 to 16, in two periods -from 1945 to 1975, and from 1975 to 2018. In 2018, half of the alienated fringe-belt plots were transformed into commercial purposes while the other half was turned into residential use. Among the entire fringe-belt alienation cases, the most influential one was that of Mersin Trade Centre (MTC), which had been the result of the transformation of the oldest cotton factory into a commercial complex. Proposal for the transformation came into being in 1985 through a plan modification in development plans. A residential development was envisaged in the development plans of the period after the production in the factory was ceased. However, plan modification proposed a mixed-use development, including a shopping centre, offices and a 5-star hotel. The commission report of the council stated that the aim of this transformation is to create a new city centre in the north section of the IFB. Since Mersin was planned to be a centre of international trade, due to its port capacities, through establishment of large-scale free-trade zone, the local authorities aimed at attracting new investments by creating a new city centre.

The dramatic changes in the plot resulted in an increase in the building coverage, from 0.36 to 0.65, and most significantly in erection of the highest building of the period in Turkey. The factory building was replaced by a 4-storey shopping centre, and a 52-storey skyscraper, accommodating office places and a 5-star hotel. The architect of the project highlighted that his purpose was to emphasize the contrast between the horizontal development of buildings in the old city centre and the vertical development in the new city centre. The 176.80 meter-high skyscraper remained as the highest building of the country, even in the region between Frankfurt and Singapore, until 2000, when Isbank Towers were built in Istanbul. And it was the highest building in the cities of Turkey, out of Istanbul until 2014, when Folkart Towers were built in Izmir.

Findings are the key part of your paper. Please be sure to describe your findings and use tables and figure to help you. Tables, charts and figures are limited to five. Please number them, and insert them at the end of the conclusions or within the body of the text. Try to position them so that they do not create a lot of white space in the document. Use the Insert tab at the top of the Word file to insert a picture. Start inserting the picture on a new line. Very important.

CONCLUSIONS

The morphological agents in the redevelopment process of the old cotton factory opted for developmental approach instead of a protectionist one. Since the plot dimensions did not face any changes during the transformation process, the significant changes occurred in the building types, heights and coverage in the plot. As the redevelopment process was focused on the single plot, without getting any attention to the surrounding context, the aim of erection of a landmark building in the city of Mersin was accomplished. However, this approach ignored the historico-geographical development of the city and its morphological continuity and unity. The fringe belt areas was not recognized as morphological units of the urban structure, rather they are conceived as the potential regions, the brownfield areas, to develop mixed-use projects. In the current times, the site is still not being used intensively, and could not attract new users. The commercial premises in the shopping centre is suffering from the lack of customers, while the 5-star hotel is being used under capacity.

Not only the Mersin MTC case but also other similar cases, especially in Istanbul and Izmir, in Turkey, reveals that fringe-belt alienation usually came into being in the privately-owned lands as a tool to redevelop the land. Since the original function became unused by the time, the plot owner aimed to maximize his/her profit through redevelopment projects. However, any redevelopment project that is confined within the boundaries of a single plot would remain as the personal project of morphological agents, especially the architects. Planning attitudes towards the fringe-belt areas should also take into consideration the protectionist view, in which any intervention into the fringe-belt areas should be considered in its historico-geographical development, morphological unity and continuity of the city.

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