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## Legitimization of Urban Regeneration in Squatter Housing Areas through Elements of Poverty and Crime in Turkey

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# LEGITIMIZATION OF URBAN REGENERATION IN SQUATTER HOUSING AREAS THROUGH ELEMENTS OF POVERTY AND CRIME IN TURKEY: ALTINDAĞ ÇİNÇİN AREA AND SİNCAN SARAYCIK NEIGHBOURHOOD

## 1. Introduction

In Turkey, urban regeneration stands out as the primary tool in bringing urban areas into the real estate market through transformation. Sharing the rent gap between the decreasing value of housing situated in squatter housing areas and the increasing value of urban land due to its central location, among the urban actors defines the motivation of regeneration in favor of upper income/status groups. This is first secured and then legitimized by legal legislation within the framework of neoliberal urban policies.

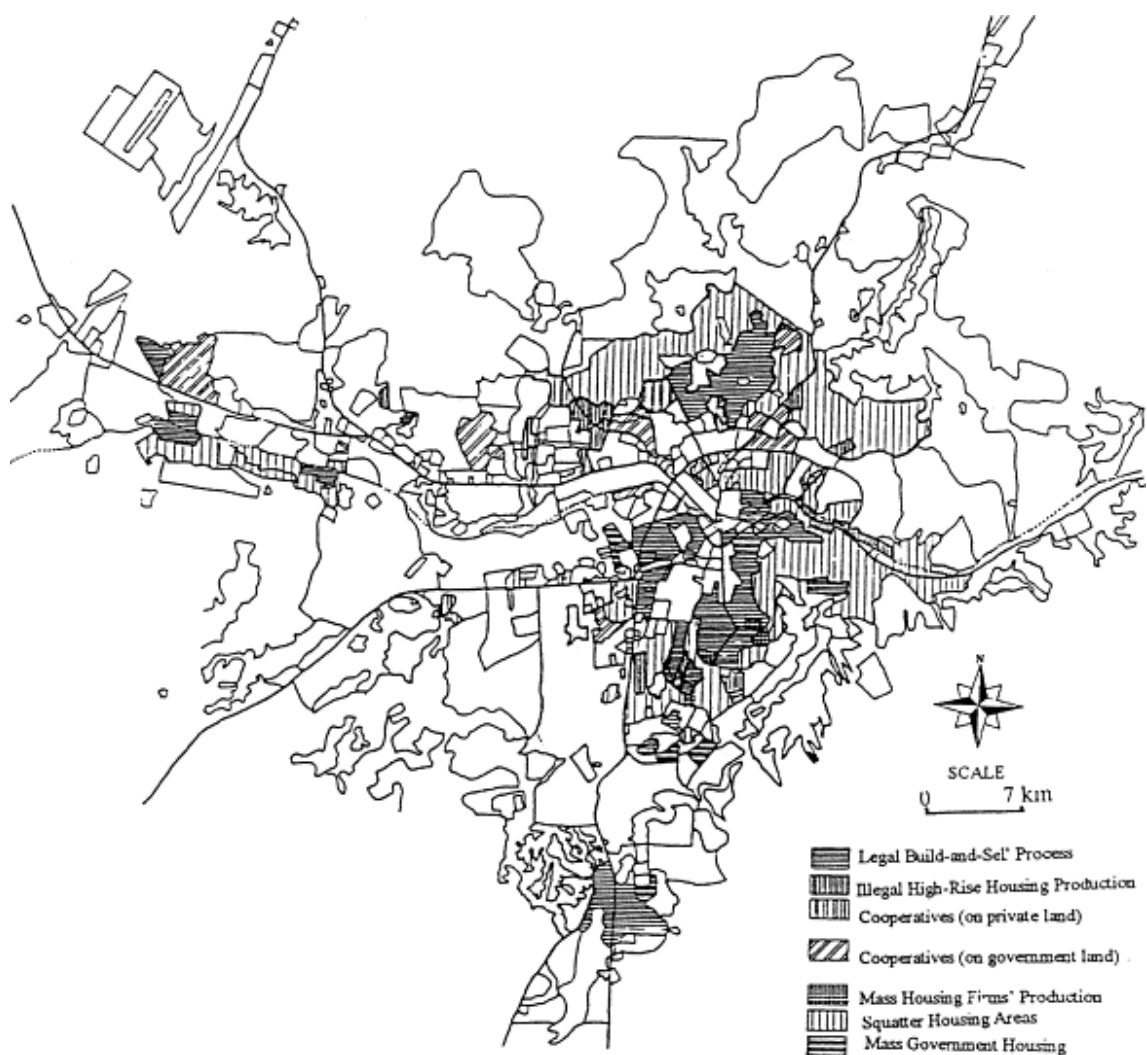
Within this context, the boundaries of legitimization are described through the squatter housing areas where the process of depression is visible, where the social acceptability of the residential population decreases within the societal harmony processes, and where, in fact, that acceptability is deemed harmful to such processes (Güzey, 2012; Türkün 2011; Kurtuluş 2006). Nonetheless, the process of depression built upon social anxiety is made visible in the hands of the institutions related to the urban land - primarily by the Municipalities, TOKİ (Housing Development Administration), and the media (Güzey, 2012; Türkün 2011; Kurtuluş 2006; Karaman, 2012).

An opinion taking its place in the urban rhetoric during the 1970s, then becoming prevalent in the 1990s and gaining impetus in the 2000s is that ‘the squatter housing areas are crime oriented; the element of crime can only be cleared away through regeneration’. Based on this opinion, many municipalities point out to the increasing crime ratios as the reason for their regeneration implementations and such reasoning finds acceptance by public opinion. However, there exists no findings that poverty and crime are more common at the areas of squatter housing; instead, researches have revealed and emphasized that crime rates are lower at squatter housing areas, and that the squatters are more enduring against poverty and committing crime, thanks to the texture of solidarity existing within their communities.

## 1. Regeneration of Squatter Housing Areas

The evolution of squatter housing areas in Turkey is explained with rural-urban migration during the 1940s, and by the fact that the state was unable to provide housing for the migrant population (Tekeli 2008; Çakır, 2011; Erman, 2004; Şenyapılı, 2004). By time, the migrants mostly originating from the same parts of the country, in their search for solidarity and support, settled intensively in the same neighbourhood, creating squatter housing areas which then, in time, developed rapidly, expanding over large sections of the urban land. While only 20% of the total population of the county was dwelling in cities in the year 1945, this figure has risen above 80% by the 2000s (Tekeli 2008: 50) (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1 Squatter Housing Areas in Ankara, 1985**



Source: Dündar, Ö., 2001, "Models of urban transformation: Informal housing in Ankara" Cities, 2001, 18 (6): 391-401

Along with a long history of policies put forward in order to find solutions for the problem of squatter housing in Turkey, an important breakingpoint in urban policies towards squatter housing areas is shaped after 1980 by the impact of neoliberalism (Öniş 2004; Lovering and Türkmen 2011; Emimi 2009). In the 1980s, the measures taken to stabilize the economy focused on the liberalization of the market and narrowing the public sector. Planning, on the other hand, has taken on a new role to prepare the ground necessary for market-oriented implementations. As those who are ruling Turkey embrace the market economy model which comes in attachment to the neoliberal world economy, the ethical economy environment of the former era evacuates its place for some other phenomenon (Buğra, 2008: 17). The mechanisms existing in Turkey that are aimed to help keeping poverty under control are beginning to die out (Buğra, 2008: 201).

In the meantime, the squatter housing areas have now started to be impacted by the changes that arise due to the transition to the market economy. As is already observed, the commercialization of squatter housing areas makes it even more difficult for the poor of the city to grab the opportunities to own a residence. At the same time, as the city develops and the new freeways streamline transportation, residences built for the middle class inhabitants start to move out from the center of the city towards its periphery. This totally new settlement style directed the large scale construction entrepreneurs, whose target customers are the

members of the middle class, to compete with the potential social housing construction companies in order to get the ownership of the land situated at the periphery (Buğra, 2008: 202).

Thus at the onset of the 1990s, a new urban coalition is defined. This coalition in itself contains the neoliberal rhetoric shaped by institutional regulations: the motivation to increase urban profits and the support of ownership-based development plans. The authorities and/or the powers of the protagonists of this coalition, namely the construction contractors, land owners, consultants, professionals and the media – all actors of the private sector, are increased and made even more evident by means of legal regulations and the increasing initiatives of state institutions (Türkün, 2011). Within this context, the changing role of planning is defined by a new state tool that expands the area of authorization for the private sector in order to enable the urban actors (Swyngedouw, et al., 2002; Taşan-Kok, 2010; Gunder, 2010). Thus, based on the reasoning concept that considers economic efficacy first, the areas where the planning discipline could intervene were limited only to mega projects to be realized at the locations which would attract the investment capital of the urban elites. Planning could no more interfere in the areas where the public benefit was at its maximum.

Nonetheless, by the 1990s, regeneration have been accepted as a must and is re-structured with the anxieties and considerations of turning squatter housing areas into healthy parts of the city. However the focus of attention is now on the fact of depression and its relation to the increasing poverty and crime rates, thereby to the labeling of squatter housing areas as centers of societal disorder. Now anxieties are closely related to the evolution of the position of the squatter population in the eyes of the society and the economic, societal and political processes on which this evolution is based.

### **2.1. Depression/Criminal Areas within Urban Space**

The term ‘depressed area’ is used to name and describe the problematic urban areas where “physical wreckage, deformation, houses of low-quality and of bad conditions exist; areas which are over-crowded, where poverty and crime rates are high” (Dönmezer, 1981). In this categorization, the impression these areas create in the minds of the community bears importance.

As for the explanation and review of crime, the approach which focuses not on the act that is described as the crime but on the reaction of the society to this act is evaluated within the context of the theory of labelling. The labelling approach, although is not able to explain the reasons underneath the crime committed, does, however, attract attention to the fact that low-income groups and minorities are more likely to be labelled (Sokullu and Akıncı, 2004). Those living at the “margins of the society”, those who have very little power and resources are the ones who can only show a very little amount of resistance to being labelled and the possibility is high that they will divert themselves to the role of the pervert (Gove, 1975). The importance of this approach from the perspective of the relation between urbanization and crime is that just as certain people, certain urban areas will be exposed to the process of labelling. Wacquant (2006) names this situation as “spatial labelling”.

In Turkey, spatial labelling, especially in the hands of the media, focuses on squatter housing areas. The media adopts a discourse which assumes that the squatters are “not of the humankind”, are “dangerous and shameless”, classifying the squatter housing dwellers as “the others” entitled to all sorts of oppression and atrocity and, thus, in the eyes of the society,

legitimizes the undertakings targeted at removing them from the places where they reside (Geniş, 2006).

The daily newspaper *Yeni Şafak*, in its issue dated December 6, 2004, defines squatter housing areas as potential centers for crime and informs that the research done by the Police Departments of the cities Adana, Ankara, Antalya, İçel, İstanbul and İzmir, covering 16,144 convicts, has discovered that squatter housing areas and the streets where the homeless live are each a potential crime center. Another news item published in *Hürriyet* daily newspaper (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr>), entitled “Çinçin District, known as Crime District” is changing skin” informs that as luxury housing replaces squatter houses as a result of urban regeneration projects initiated in the year 2005, wide avenues replace narrow and closed roads, and underlines that a crime center is saved by means of urban regeneration (Figure 2.2)

**Figure 2.2 Depression at Çinçin**



Source: [www.forumgercek.com](http://www.forumgercek.com)

While at one end the media emphasize the transformation of squatter housing areas into areas of crime, the real estate compounds, on the other end, create a perception about how urban regeneration contributes to the real estate market (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3. Advertisements**



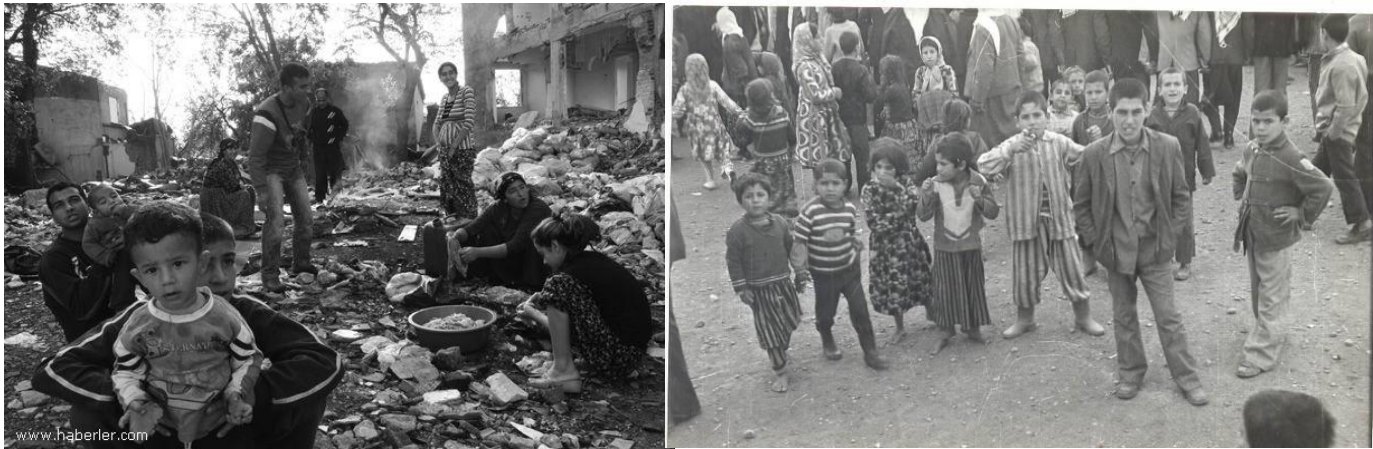
Source: [www.mansetemlak.com](http://www.mansetemlak.com)

## 1.2. “Varoş”

By the mid-1990s, as poverty continues to get a stronger hold of squatter housing areas, the disliked culture of poverty of the squatter houses is formulated in the discourse of the others (Demirtaş and Şen, 2007: 101; Şenyapılı, 2004). Within the context of this process, no feelings of mercy remain for the squatter housing inhabitants; instead, these people are looked upon as those who own unmerited acquisitions. Once the subject matter of the literature of misery, the squatter housing now makes up the backbone of the profit-oriented economy. Unavoidably, the idea that the inhabitants of squatter housing are not the poor has turned out to be the idea that the media enjoyed to elaborate upon (Buğra, 2008: 203; Bozkulak, 2005). It is very often highlighted that the inhabitant of the squatter house is dangerous. The address for all kinds of violence and illegal activities is the squatter housing area (Şenyapılı, 2004). The concept of “varoş” generated in the mid-1990s to express this situation is now a concept used very often (Demirtaş and Şen, 2007).

‘Varoş’ is described as a place where violence is abundant under the domination of illegal activities, and as a place which, instead of supporting integration with the society, produces a protesting stance against it (Etöz, 2000). According to this approach, the inhabitants of ‘varoş’ are a continuous source of danger for the city and the citizens (Erman, 2004). The concept bears in it the reaction of the citizens against the culture which culminated in the cities as a result of migration (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4. Varoş**



Source: www.haberler.com

## 1.3. Legal Regulations

Thus urban regeneration projects have become the basic source of income for almost all municipalities after a long history of upgrading and improvement plans, with the help of legal regulations in search of ways in which applications can be supported and facilitated through government assistance.

The legal regulations issued to govern urban regeneration comprise the Articles numbered 73 within the contexts of “Law on the Rehabilitation and Restoration of Weathered Historical and Cultural Real Estates”, numbered 5366 and that of the “Law on Municipalities” numbered 5393, which stipulate the regeneration of the historical sites or of the places which are exposed to and are vulnerable at the face of, natural disasters or other risks (T.E.A.A

(TMMOB) – Turkish Engineers' and Architects' Association, Chamber of Urban Planners, Board of Directors, 2006). While the Law numbered 5366 does not disclose how and according to which criteria the weathered and off-condition regions of the city shall be determined, the Law on Municipalities, numbered 5393, Article 73, enables the municipalities to regenerate any area at any locality, of any feature and almost of any size (Uzun, 2006).

This law, which enables urban regeneration, is the most forceful legal regulation in effect. The main purpose of Article 73, contained in the Law on Municipalities, numbered 5393, which does not at all refer to any decision protecting the city in its entirety, is to dissociate urban regeneration from all legal ties, such as 3194, 2863, and the like, and, thus, to transform cities into puzzles made up of subdivisional plans.

Furthermore, the subject law transfers all rights of intervention in the urban development to the disposal of Municipalities and TOKİ – Housing Development Administration. Since the year 2005, the scope of authority for TOKİ related to urban development matters has rapidly expanded to include preparation of all kinds of plans without the prerequisite of establishing a registered company and providing all kinds of financial loan opportunities for regeneration projects developed for the squatter housing areas. The Law numbered 5609, put into effect in 2007, declares TOKİ as the only institution authorized for the rehabilitation of squatter housing areas, for the determination of the boundaries of the areas where such buildings are to be demolished or of those where squatter housing formation shall be precluded (Türkün, 2011). As of the year 2003 to date, and within the framework of the state policies on “planned urbanization and housing construction (production)”, TOKİ, in association with different municipalities has prepared urban regeneration projects which incorporated 162.886 dwellings (Kara and Palabıyık, 2009).

Ulusoy (2008) and Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2001) describe this situation as a part of the process supporting market-oriented partnerships created for the regeneration of inner-city areas, or as an extension of a land parcel marketing strategy designed for the new elite. In other words, as the urban areas are rehabilitated, the cities are “cleaned”. This evolution shall increase the acceptability of regeneration from the perspective of the society. The “liveability” criteria for the urban regeneration are emphasized in the web site of TOKİ ([www.toki.gov.tr](http://www.toki.gov.tr)) and it is introduced as the only way for solution and it is accentuated that urban regeneration is now a state policy.

Moreover in 2011, the government restructured the state system with eleven new ministries. This action constitutes an important step in the evolution of an authoritarian state institution. All planning authority of the municipalities was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning, founded in this context, by the “Decree Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning”, dated 17.08.2011 and numbered 648. Article 4 of this Decree Law also transfers the authority to declare urban regeneration areas and the authority to prepare application zoning plans and projects over to the Ministry.

In the field of urban regeneration, the final legal arrangement realized on 16.05.12 is the Law on the Regeneration of Areas under Risk of Disaster. The purpose of this Law is to “determine the course of action and the principles for establishing healthy and secure living environments that conform to the scientific and artistic norms and standards on the terrains which are under risks of disaster and on the other plots of land on which buildings are already situated.” The authority to determine such areas again remains in the hands of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning, TOKİ or the Municipalities.

However all of these legal arrangements are met with criticism in academic environments. Two significant criticisms note that urban spaces that require regeneration are evaluated in abstraction from their social, cultural and economic roots and urban regeneration is reduced to physical regeneration and in this manner is relinquished to the market operations.

The Domestic Security Testimonial of the Prime Ministry, 2006, foresees the elimination of all residential suburban areas, in line with a particular plan by the related municipalities within the scope of “urban regeneration” and the prevention of the evolution of new suburbs by means of establishing squatter housing prevention areas (Güven, 2008, qtd. in Kılınç and Çelik, 2009).

In order to ensure secure, high-quality and liveable physical spaces, areas under the risk of disaster, areas of physical, social and economic dilapidation, and areas of natural, historical and cultural significance that need to be conserved on the basis of societal society, have to be subjected clearance, renewal and rehabilitation within the scope of regeneration projects (Kılınç and Çelik, 2009: 159-160).

Despite all that is stated here, what is not mentioned is how the local population living in the cities shall be regenerated from the perspective of culture, and also how the issue of the urbanization of city population constituting the human element of the cities constructed under modern standards shall be resolved. Cultural regeneration is not a suitable line of activity for the private sector which is motivated by financial interests. Therefore, it is up to the society and the public institutions to put the human element of the financially regenerated cities through a similar rehabilitation (Kılınç and Çelik, 2009: 160). Under the impact of such developments, the squatter housing areas turn out to be an important tool for the real estate market and are subjected to a fast regeneration. In our day, and in many of our cities, it is no more possible to come across a squatter housing area which still preveserves its original properties and peculiar characteristics (Öncü, 1988, qtd. in Karaman, 2012).

## **2. Field Research**

Çinçin region of the Province of Altındağ in Ankara has been selected as the research area (Figure 3.1). For years, this area was a center of attraction with its ever-increasing poverty and crime rates. The second research area is Sincan Saraycık District. This area has changed its identity in time due to the migrations it received firstly from the South Eastern Anatolian Region and thereafter from Çinçin. This change which gained acceleration as the existing population deserted the area became visible in the social and physical space, and the Mayor of Sincan disclosed his decision to implement urban regeneration at the Saraycık District due to increasing crime rates.

However, following the regeneration, a section of the population with criminal records migrated to other places while a part of them stayed in the same area and continued the records of crime. In order to examine this process, the second research field selected was Saraycık District of Sincan, where squatter housing population of Çinçin migrated to. However, this field research remained limited to in-depth interviews and participant observation due to security problems (Figure 3.2). The population of the Çinçin District, Stage 1 following the regeneration is approximately 2500. A total of 100 surveys were filled out in this area. In addition in-depth interviews were carried out with the Security General Directorate.



**Figure 3.1. Altındağ Çiçin**



Source: Original

**Figure 3.2. Sincan Saraycık**



Source: Original

### **3.1. Altındağ Çiçin District**

In Ankara, during the period between the years 1940-1950, the development of squatter housing areas is observed on three main axes. The first of these axes comprises Altındağ, situated to the north of the city castle, Atıf Bey, Yenidoğan Districts established on and around the hill named Hıdırlık, and the Telsizler region. A total of 460 houses exist in this area and 67% of the total land is occupied by squatter housing. Nearly 40-60.000 people used to live here in 1948. Furthermore, about a population of 5.000 Roman people, assumed to have migrated from Iran after 1920, also settled here. Roman groups arriving from Anatolia as well joined this group (Bektaş, Yücel, 2013).

During the years 1960-1970, the population of Ankara increased 1.6 fold and the population of the Altındağ Province by 2.2 fold. To the north of the Altındağ Region Squatter Housing Area, Siteler Small Scale Industrial Zone was set up and the population of the squatter housing area continued to grow. Between the years 1970-1980, the Province of Altındağ received 34% of the migrant population. In 1981, among all the provinces, Altındağ was the top province which had 67% of its population settled over on unlicensed construction land. By the year 1952, 19 districts were established within the boundaries of the Altındağ Hill

Squatter Housing Area. In 1980, these districts had a total population of 47.858 (Bektaş, Yücel, 2013).

The increasing population along with the process of depression turned the district rapidly into a crime center. The Çiçin area became attractive for many criminals, the unemployed and alcoholics. Therefore, this space emerges as a place that facilitates the reproduction of crime (Erman, 2007). However, at this point Erman (2007) emphasizes that there are also people living in this district who have no connection to crime but are doomed to live there due to their poverty and simply because they have no other choices, and points at the fact that these people are under the threat of spatial labelling.

The daily life during which the possibility that violence and crime may erupt at any moment along with the fame of the district that matches up with crime puts this ordinary district in a very difficult position. As mentioned in another research (Aksungur, 2006), a young person tells about the police treating him as a criminal, just when he finds out where he lives. The policeman asks: “youngsters, where do you live?” When we tell him where, he says “Ok, get in the car”; then we ask “What did we do brother?”...they check the records – oh there I am. I had a street fight some five years ago...immediately they allege: “oh, this one must have committed theft ...” Our appearance is not orderly; “where do you live?” at so and so... He immediately puts a tag that “this one must be a thief.” Another young man, in order to prevent being labelled because of the place he lives at, while chatting over the internet does not tell the correct address where he lives. “When looking for a job or wandering around in the street, even when chatting, when I tell people that I live at Altındağ, everything comes to an end at that moment. We have to lie. We say Bahçelievler (a famous district of the city)... If the person does not know where I live, he/she chats with me for hours, what, when you tell them you are a boy of the squatter housing area - they cut off the chat immediately. I tell you brother; we are excluded just because of the area we live in. “As I look for a job, the man asks where I live, when I answer Altındağ, he immediately cuts you off in his mind...I don’t know what...they look at your appearance and you are offside...”

### **3.1.1. Regeneration of the Squatter House**

At Altındağ, the first implementation aiming at the reclamation of squatter housing areas is rehabilitation plans. However, following the year 1989, such plans remained insufficient at the face of ever-increasing issues. Rehabilitation plans were further revised to include planning work targeting at the construction of four-storey buildings and improvement of the infrastructure areas (Köksal, 2012). These revision plans were also inadequate in resolving the issues. Finally, reclamation work for Altındağ, filled with squatter houses 70% of which are unlicensed, was restarted in the dimension of urban regeneration.

Within this framework, Çiçin region attracts attention. By this project implemented in association with the Municipality of Altındağ, TOKİ concentrates on public order and public security concerns and attempts at changing the outlook of “Çiçin”, the so -alled problematic area comprising Gültepe, Doğantepe and Aktaş Districts. Within the scope of this project, 2608 dwellings in Altındağ, 292 in Doğantepe, 868 dwellings and a mosque in Aktaş, 1448 dwellings, one school and a health center were constructed. Furthermore, one cultural center with a capacity of 1500 persons, Altındağ District Directorate of Security building, and one public park are under construction ([www.toki.gov.tr](http://www.toki.gov.tr)).

As the old buildings located within the district of Çiçin are demolished in line with the project which is communicated to the public under the motto “Regeneration for Healthy Cities, Healthy Future”, apartment building compounds accommodating such facilities as naturalgas central heating and elevators are constructed in their place. At Çiçin, following the demolition activities realized in 2005, the construction activities were started in 2006 to build “Çiçin Stage I Cluster Housing Project;” construction of 14 building blocs situated on four isles indicated in land deeds was completed in 2008. Stage II of the project which started with the demolition of 950 squatter houses was completed in the year 2010. The Municipality of Altındağ, having demolished 985 squatter houses within the scope of Stage III, has initiated the construction of Cluster Housing Project in 2012 ([www.altindag.bel.tr](http://www.altindag.bel.tr)).

### **3.1.2. Çiçin After Regeneration**

The survey results conducted in the area revealed that 66% of the population resided in this district, at the maximum, for five years; 7% for 5 to 10 years and 6% for the last 20 to 25 years. The ratio of the owners of the former squatter houses to the present day population is only 1%. This finding explains that two persons out of every three started to reside in this area pursuant to regeneration. The ratio of tenantry in the area is 36.4% which indicates that a large percentage of the population who became house owners through regeneration have rented their houses and left the area. However, 49% of the persons surveyed answered the question “where did you reside formerly” as “this district”. This, in turn, indicates that the population changed in the same district following regeneration. At this point, as gentrification is questioned, the makeup of the population bears importance.

When the monthly income level of the existing population is reviewed, the general income amount varies from 500 to 5500 TL/month. 29% earns 1000-2000 TL/month; 43% earns 2000-5500 TL/month, and 1% earns 4000-5500 TL/month. Since, in 2014, the minimum wage in Turkey is 846 TL/month, and if we consider the low income level of squatter housing dwellers, we notice that the monthly income of the 20% of the population remains below the minimum wage level. This clearly indicates that the newcomers belong to a higher income group. The low income group, employed in marginal jobs, has a relatively scarce chance of selecting a place to dwell in in this area.

When the question “how often do you have a conversation with your neighbours” was asked, 18% of the respondents stated “not at all”; 12% replied “once a year,” and 9% “once a month”. So, as a result, we can state that 50% of the population has very weak relations with their neighbours. Taking into consideration the habit of the squatter housing dweller, who enjoys sharing life, this outcome points to a different type of population.

82, 5% of the residents are pleased with their housing. 17, 5% are displeased due to reasons such as narrow balconies, financial problems encountered in paying the installments for the cost of the house and security. Profound conversation shared displayed that people preferred to buy a house in this area because their chances increased following regeneration; the newly built housing areas are improved, the prices of the houses are relatively cheaper and the area is close to the city center. At this point it has to be emphasized that being pleased with the house itself does not come forward as an important criterion for buying the house. Answering the question “in what type of a house would you like to live,” 15% of the respondents stated “in a house with a garden” and 5% stated “in an apartment with less storeys.”

Furthermore, the weakening neighbourhood bonds increase displeasure. 61% of the

population is displeased with the district. Specifically all of those people who have resided in the area for less than a year complain about security. 88,8% of the people who have lived in the neighbourhood for a period of 1 to 5 years, that is to say those who first moved into the area after regeneration, stated that they are displeased because “they do not feel themselves secure enough in this neighbourhood”. This evaluation indicates that the security issue has reappeared. During the discussions on the subject matter held with the General Directorate of Security, it was emphasized that the security problems recorded an increase but in a different characteristic.

The authorities stated the following: “Especially crimes related to narcotics have again started to increase as of the year 2013 within the housing compounds protected by cameras and security personnel. Criminal organizations that settle in such places began to use the security measures for their own benefits. Especially narcotic crimes got better organized. The cameras placed within the apartment buildings are under their control. They purchase and thus own a couple of flats so it is now easier to hide in between the flats to run away. Prior to this development, theft in front of the doors of the new residents, use of violence, arrogation and harassment incidences were witnessed. For such reasons some people left these secure residential compounds.”

When we analyze the records of the General Directorate of Security for change in the type of crimes committed during the years 2010 to 2013, it is clearly evident that crime rates increased in the area of narcotics. At the Gültepe District where the Çiğir area is located, crimes committed against property holdings increased by 49%, while the crimes against persons decreased by 50%. In 2010, while the number of narcotic police raids was only 6, this figure rose to 16 in the year 2013.

When asked whether “they ever were the victim of a crime”, only 36% of the survey participants answered the question, the remaining percentage did not respond. 36% includes 11% of the population who were victimized by one act of crime. The reason why only such a low percentage of the people answered this question is thought provoking. When asked the question “what type of crime were you faced with” 81.2% stated theft, 9% stated armed assault, and 9.1% stated mutilative assault. The question “have you ever witnessed any crime around the residential area and if you have, what kind of crime was it” was affirmatively answered by 32% of the participants and 62.5% of the witnessed crimes was theft, 28% mutilative assault and 6.5% illegal commercial activities. During the profound conversations it was emphasized that security issues after regeneration have not changed.

At this stage the point of view about urban regeneration was questioned. 55.2% of the respondents have a positive approach. 44.8% of the former residents of the squatter housing area stated that previously they felt excluded from the society but that this feeling has disappeared with the new housing compound. Living in an apartment building is an important indicator of urbanization for the population who used to live in squatter housing areas. Nevertheless, the changing population, increasing crime rates and feelings of displeasure related to the residence reveal that regeneration did not bring along much of the expectations. On the basis of perceptions, regeneration is evaluated as “good”; however, the low level of information about the subject matter restricts awareness about the results of the process to a very limited scope.

The question “Are you informed about the regeneration law” was answered as “No” by the 32% of the survey population. While 7% answered with a “Yes”, 61% did not respond. On

the other hand, only 43% answered the question “Whether the urban regeneration project provided flexibility of back-payment for the low-income level group or not.” Witin this figure, 22% stated that it did not provide flexibility for the low income group.

### **3.2. Sincan Saraycık District**

Saraycık was a rural settlement until the year 2004 when it was united with the Sincan province and attained the status of district. It had a population of 7005 in 2000, it is now estimated to be around 3000 persons. The first breaking point in the population loss started with the arrival of migrants from the South Eastern Anatolian Region and gained velocity after the year 2008 when those people, after the demolishment of their squatter houses located at, selected to settle at the Saraycık District. Profound discussions carried out at this area reveal that, this district, which is gaining fame especially for narcotic crimes committed there, police raids for narcotic crimes have increased. The people of Saraycık, who formerly lived in peace and in good relations with their neighbours, now complain about the sale of narcotics in the streets and the disintegration of good neighbourhood relations, and state that their children are afraid to go out of the house due to lack of security.

“Last year they stabbed our next-door neighbor. He put up wire netting around his house and does not permit his wife and child to go out.”

“Luxury cars swarm to the area during the nights. Drugs are sold all over the place.”

“Formerly the public transportation bus of the Municipality used to pass by here in the mornings and the evenings and it was full all the time. Now you can only see two to three people on the bus. There are no working people left here. Food supply assistance distributed by the Municipality or other institutions affect this as well. People do not want to work, thinking the support will be provided anyway. In fact most of them are selling drugs.”

“We shall also move out of this place. I wait in fear in the evenings until my child arrives home. I talk to anybody.”

Observations in the area confirm the above statements. During the day, the streets are empty; a couple of people you may see on the streets gaze at each other in anxiety. The quality of life is very low; the houses and the streets are neglected and uncared for. In the open area, you can find no traces of the collective life-style of a squatter housing area.

Thus, the change which gained impetus with the departure of the existing population from the area and which became visible in the social and physical space, prepares the basis for the legitimization of urban regeneration. This statement is expressed in the following way on the internet website of the Municipality:

“The fact that citizens whose squatter houses were demolished settled in Sincan’s Saraycık district as of 2008 and that the police raids in this area, especially for narcotics, reached a peak for the whole of Ankara set the Municipality of Saraycık in motion. Hoping to eliminate a case of ‘Second Çiçin,’ the Municipality of Sincan has declared the area a place for ‘urban regeneration,’ and initiated its implementations” ([www.sincan.bel.tr](http://www.sincan.bel.tr))

“Within the framework of the protocol signed between TOKİ and the Municipality of Sincan, an urban regeneration project comprising 11.000 residences and all necessary social

installations is prepared for the Districts of Saraycık and Ulubatlı Hasan. This project came to life after the demolition of the squatter houses located at the Çiçin Bağları District, which, security wise, is one of the most problematic areas of the Capital city and upon the settlement of the owners of the demolished squatter houses in Saraycık and Ulubatlı Hasan Districts. 4.800 residences will be constructed in the Saraycık District, and 6.200 residences and 160 workplaces in the Ulubatlı Hasan District” ([www.sincan.bel.tr](http://www.sincan.bel.tr)) (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3 Saraycık Urban Regeneration Project**



Source: [www.sincan.bel.tr](http://www.sincan.bel.tr)

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Research verifies that space is an agent, producing crime; however research also emphasizes that interrelating spaces to crime creates a perception in the eyes of the society which labels residents collectively. Therefore, those people who wish to remain out of the scope of this situation flee outside the area; the citizens remaining are labelled along with the district, lose their chances of finding a job and friends, and as an end-result they are pulled into crime committing behavior (Erman, 2007). This vicious circle constitutes the legitimacy basis for urban regeneration implementations.

However, it should not be overlooked that this situation is configured on the basis of increasing acceptability only in the eyes of the society. Yet, fundamentally, urban regeneration seeks not to find solutions for the issues of unhealthy formations of the urban areas and their populations but aims at bestowing such areas onto the urban land market by means of transformation.

Perception of the squatter housing areas and their populations as a problem is not a new phenomenon. Beginning in the past and continuing until our day, and caused by changing factors, the squatter house and its resident have been perceived as a problem and governments have based their policies on the solution of this problem. Forms of intervention are associated with the level of public perception and this association defines the boundaries of the interventions. However, what differs in our day in urban regeneration implementations is the fact that the public viewpoint is moulded in the hands of institutions and the media. Furthermore, the necessity for intervention is legitimized by the social point of view which is formulated on the basis of public anxieties.

While this evolution related with the new area, the subject matter of the rhetoric, i.e. “varoş”, increases the acceptability of the regeneration by the society, the exclusion of the population of the squatter housing areas and the gentrification of the area are essential. Gentrification is the unpronounced yet expected end result at the areas with high profits which are subjected to regenerations. The squatter housing population departs this area and mainly moves out to other areas, primarily to other squatter housing areas of the city, and thus increases the population density there. In this manner, these areas now turn into new areas to be regenerated. In regenerated but lower profit potential areas, the existing population remains in the area or leaves the area by way of selling or renting their houses due to reasons such as incompatibility or inability to meet the expenses. In this case, despite the expectations, the new inhabitants are not the intermediary or high level income group people, but are, again, the members of the low-income group. This vicious circle, along with the extinction of the solidarity patterns and the ongoing poverty, converts the squatter housing area problem into a problem of depression.

Unfortunately, research targeted at questioning this phenomenon that bases the argument on the bilateral relations/ impacts/interactions of these factors remains limited. Research probes into studying the correlations between migration and the squatter house, migration and urbanization, crime and the squatter housing dweller, crime and the urban security, and the like, without referring to or mentioning the corresponding involvement of all such processes. Particularly, existing research does not, at all, mention the impacts of the types of intervention implementations enacted on the squatter housing areas – the areas which are considered an issue, a problem that has to be solved. This deficiency contributes only to the fortification of this phenomenon as a false statement in the hands of the media and through some other tools. By means of this rhetoric, the emergent approaches that deem urban regeneration to be the only method and the spatial differences cause harm to and damage the re-production of economic and social spaces.

Consequently, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach for the city within the framework of a plan which incorporates economic and social phenomenon. It is a necessity to inquire into ways of ensuring social participation/integration along with spatial rehabilitation and, therefore, it is also necessary to create the social environment which will lead to the objective of social coalescence and trigger the use of social networks for this purpose.

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