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ID 1382 | ROLE OF THE RUMORS DURING THE URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROCESS IN ISTANBUL GECEKONDU SETTLEMENTS

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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is a product of the PhD thesis focusing on the urban transformation process into gecekondu¹ neighbourhoods (the special name for informally, DIY-constructed building groups constructed only in Turkey) in Istanbul and focuses on the rumours flowing mouth to mouth before and after the urban transformation project.

This paper is endorsed on Deleuze and Guattari's arguments about flows, assemblages, and machines. Urban transformation is taken as a machine and the information is the key element of this machine. Rather than the rules, procedures or laws about the urban transformation process, words are moving faster. We always watch on TV or see in the newspapers advertisements about new transformation projects, or professionals' comments about the necessity of the processes. In addition to this, urban transformation in gecekondu does not only happen by the law or by the projects called urban transformation projects. Any kind of luxury residence projects, big shopping malls or big transportation projects can initiate the urban transformation process. This is not an operation that is determined step by step. Communication and negotiation with the inhabitants one by one are very important and at this point, rumours come into the

¹ Gecekondu is an informally constructed house which is built autonomously by the people who uses it. Gecekondu houses come together and make big neighborhoods. For further details: (Karpaz, 1976), (Erman, 1997, 2004), (Ergün, 2008). For a Deleuzian Perspective on informal settlements: (Co Villanueva, 2012)

play. On the gecekondu neighbourhood scale – where the neighbourhood relations are very close - information about the prospective urban transformation projects are influencing the area spreads from mouth to mouth and transforms into rumours. Rumours canalize desire flows making some spaces more attractive, some others less, and affect the daily life of gecekondu inhabitants and their decision process.

In this context, the aim of this paper is to follow the information flows related to urban transformation from the macro scale of Istanbul region to the micro scale of gecekondu neighbourhoods by analysing the news, advertisements, speeches of public authorities and listening to gecekondu inhabitants' stories. Focusing on gecekondu inhabitants, this study demonstrates how information transforms into rumour, the ways it flows through the gecekondu neighbourhood, and finally how people react to these rumours before, during and after urban transformation processes.

The words flow will be followed from macro (Istanbul) to micro (gecekondu) scales and the main aim is to find out how urban transformation works with words. In this paper, first, the theoretical background of the research will be revealed. In the second part, the methodology of the paper will be presented. As a macro scale, discussions about the urban transformation law, the importance of the seismic risk in Istanbul, and the rumours about the demolition threat in gecekondu areas will be introduced. Secondly, focusing on Istanbul -Sarıyer gecekondu neighbourhoods, the two steps of urban transformation will be analysed. The first part will show the rumours flowing into the gecekondu areas before any project is declared. Rumours about the demolishment of the neighbourhood start even before any urban transformation project becomes concrete. The second part will demonstrate what is happening after urban transformation is completed. After the project triggering gecekondu transformation, most inhabitants move to mass housing areas which are assigned for them, and there, they still continue to discuss who paid how much for the new house or who had the most advantageous flat and so on.

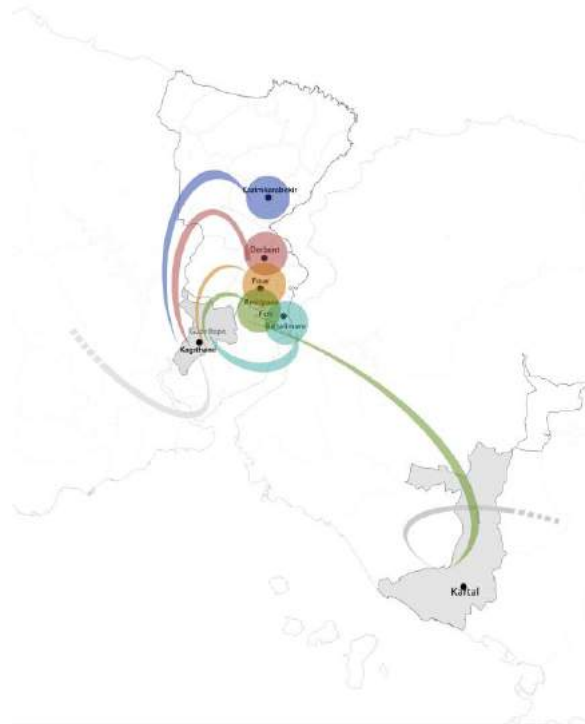
2 THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Urban transformation emerged in the beginning of 2000s not only in scope of “urban transformation projects”, but especially for creating new urban project areas by focusing on gecekondu regions. While there are technical reasons such as seismicity and necessity for transformation, urban transformation has taken place in the form of demolishing especially gecekondu, and building shopping malls, large transportation projects of luxury residency areas, particularly in large metropolitan cities such as Istanbul. The most differentiating aspect of the transformation process experienced in gecekondu neighbourhoods in comparison to other urban transformation projects is that it is usually carried out without planning, over piece by piece projects and based on negotiations. The most emergent issue in this process is the news on the media and rumours flowing across the neighbourhood. It may be stated that various different people, institutions and groups on all scales need to have a say on urban transformation, and there is a bombardment of information regarding urban transformation because of this. The new social organisation proposed by Hardt and Negri (2012) as “the mediatised” may be discussed. This new form is described by Hardt and Negri (2012) as a type of information society, and the information flowing in the media is joined by the people who live in the image world established by this information. They argue that the people of this world has no problem about not being able to say much, but on the contrary, they suffer from the abundance of expression, as well as communication. Hardt and Negri (2012: 22), citing Deleuze, stated that: “the issue is no longer having people express themselves” says Gilles Deleuze, “it is to create small seclusion and calmness intervals at the end of which they may find something to say. Oppressive powers are not preventing people from expressing themselves, on the contrary, they are forcing them to express themselves. Such a privilege to have nothing to say, and the right to say nothing; because, only then there is an opportunity to catch the thing that is rare, the thing that is even rarer, worth saying.” Considering information bombardments and the issue of the mediatised in terms of urban transformation, it is seen that rather than hiding information about a subject, there is the issue of constant circulation of new information, documents and images. Hardt and Negri (2011, p. 111) defend the idea that today’s dominant production system produces “intangible goods” such as ideas, information, ways of communication and relationships. These intangible goods may be significant indicators of urban life. The city becomes the space for all these flows. Similarly, we may argue for urban transformation that it does not only produce buildings, but also new urban lifestyles and forms of information. These new lifestyles whose images are shown in the mass media, actually take an important place for this article and reminds us a quote from Deleuze (2003, p. 30): “A dream is a terrifying desire for power. All of us are more or less victims of other people’s dreams. Even worse, even though the one whose dream you are caught in is the sweetest, most beautiful girl in the

world, she may become a monster – not with her soul, but via her dreams. Keep away from others' dreams, because if you are trapped in the dream of the other, you are fucked.”

In the process of urban transformation, information turns into rumour and can move fast via ambiguity. These micro information flows usually develop with the support of the media or different capital groups, and move through the word of mouth about the initiation of a law or a future foundation of a mega project. These urban transformation rumours whose source is usually unknown may arise from not only the citizens, but also contractors, professionals in the sector, or statements by the public authority. Wright (2008) indicated that it is not important for a rumour to be true or false. In addition to this reference, we may talk about how rumours work. In the process of urban transformation, a rumour about a provisory investment in a neighbourhood may lead inhabitants to sell their houses. At this point, rather than the truth or the lie, it is important that rumours can mobilise people. Secondly, Wright (2008) stated that although rumour is considered “false information” by its nature, it contains true and false information together. In this context, in the urban transformation process, rumours arise related to an investment, or demolition coming to a gecekondu neighbourhood. While these may partly be true, there is no certainty on when they will happen. The function of rumour here is to speed up the process, and allow citizens to develop ideas on a predetermined tendency against potential situations. Additionally, rumour does not proceed as a straight line, but it forms connections, moves like a rootstalk by changing itself during connections.

It may be stated that the fundamental methodology of the study inspired by the approach of Deleuze and Guattari.



This method that we may describe as handiwork by joining the material in hand was applied by Deleuze and Guattari by borrowing the term ‘bricolage’ from Levi-Strauss (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012). Considering it in terms of cultural studies, bricolage may be thought of as installation/interpretation of objects, forms, expressions or relationships that are not directly related by recombining them. For the first part of the research, more than 6,000 news pieces in 3 major national papers (Sözcü, Zaman and Milliyet) and TV advertisements about urban transformation were located and analysed. In the second part, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 gecekondu inhabitants from 3 different neighbourhoods in Sariyer (a district experiencing urban transformation), who had moved to mass housing areas. The interviews were made in the mass housing areas located in peripheral areas of Istanbul (Kagithane, Kartal and Guzeltepe). Superimposition of these two scales shows us the circulation of ‘words’ from the citywide narratives to the mouths and actions of inhabitants.

Figure 1. Map of the Sariyer Gecekondu Neighbourhoods Moving to Peripheral Areas

3 FIRST RUMOUR: URBAN TRANSFORMATION LAW

Consecutive laws, executive orders and law changes are starting to be seen in the news, advertisements and all types of media. Thus, it is seen that rather than in-depth research about the law, the information about this is spreading around. Therefore, in the urban transformation process, law suddenly becomes fluid and turns into information, which flows. In 2005, discussions on an urban transformation law started in the public sphere and the Chamber of City Planners launched a press conference regarding “the Draft Law for Urban Transformation.” The statements were in the lines of the idea that the draft law had the potential to create new problems (ŞPO, Mart 2005)(Chamber of City Planners, April 2005). In the statements, the Chamber of City Planners, argued that, although there was the claim that the law was prepared based on scientific data, it was formed in ignorance of science and protection councils. On the other hand, the

chamber of profession stated that old city areas and those that lost their characteristics were devlared “Urban Transformation and Development Areas” in a way that may be a subject of all kinds of speculation later, and this law would create areas of rent. In this process, a perception of suspension of this law was created given the potential that there is an opposition and various opposing scientific ideas. Nevertheless, not so much later, June 2005 faced the initiation of the law for “Protection of Damaged Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets by Restoration and Usage of These by Reanimation.” While the name of the law cannot be related to urban transformation, it is known as the first law of urban transformation that proposes urban transformation in historical neighbourhoods. During these debates, while the changes in the law of TOKI (the Housing Development Administration) were not reflected in mass media in a way that would explain what changed one by one, TOKI’s authority and activities constantly appear in front of us with the term urban transformation. TOKI’s size and many houses built by this institution usually appear on the news.

It is seen that from the start, especially the private sector and the public authority have an important call in terms of urban transformation. However, in the first stage, urban transformation is presented as a process to “get rid of” gecekondus and “illicit” housing, and it is focused rather on very poor neighbourhoods. A news article published in the daily Milliyet in 2007 emphasised this: “Illicit buildings will become “normal” with the law of transformation zones.” Increasingly intensified circulation of discussions on earthquakes in the city is one of the most important factors that allow urban transformation to work fast. Relating urban transformation to this issue of earthquake is a significant pushing power. Another important rumour that emerges in the urban transformation process is the law of “transformation” or “urban transformation” that is expected to “come into power.” It is seen that the law that firstly appeared in the news in 2006 as “the Draft Law for Transformation Zones” has been started to be discussed as the law for converting gecekondu areas into legal status. The news article in Milliyet entitled “Looting Would Become Legitimate”, described the law known as “the Draft Law for Transformation Zones” as a law that provides gecekondu owners with the opportunity of buying a residence with payment term of 20 years.

Before the “Law for Transforming Areas of Disaster Risk” came out in 2012, as opposed to the laws in previous years, there was a positive reaction in the whole society and the newspapers. It is seen that a statement was made about this law in the news by Kadir Topbas during the opening of AKP Bahçesehir Municipality Office. It is an important indicator that a statement was made about urban transformation during the opening of an AKP municipality office, and this statement was made by the Mayor of Istanbul. It is seen that, in this sense, the urban transformation law was meant to stay as an operation of the AKP as an organisation. Again, in the daily Zaman, news pieces were seen regarding families who “were saved from gecekondu life” by moving from gecekondus into mass housing project as a result of urban transformation in the period right before the parliamentary discussion on “the Law of Urban Transformation.”

Considering the style of providing the news pieces after the approval of the law, the pro-government nature of the newspapers was slightly influential. As opposed to the case in Zaman where the positive aspects of the law were emphasised, on the same day the law came out, the daily Sözcü used the title of “Urban Transformation Law Final” to provide an objective and non-critical language. That the “law was final” ensures the perception that this service has been provided and it is a good service. By the law came into force, we see for a few months that newspapers included very intense amounts of pieces reporting that urban transformation is now started town by town. This issue of initiation was paid a great importance, and the opening speech by the period’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was made during the urban transformation process of the Esenler Airport area by determining a starting date (5 October 2012). Transformation of the law into information, rather than being for information of the public about the laws, is operated with the aim of mobilising the society regarding urban transformation. All these rumours of a law, whether they have a trace of truth or not, create great excitement and make it easier for desires to flow in the direction of urban transformation.

4 EARTHQUAKE RUMOUR

Rumour of earthquakes has a place especially in the initial stages of urban transformation in detailed processing of the imposition in gecekondu neighbourhoods to demolish buildings and transition to mass housings. In this sense, rumour of earthquake creates an axis of ridding people of their place and home. One of the arguments for sustaining an entire urban transformation process is which parts of the city, an

Istanbul earthquake will affect, which may also initiate the formation of urban transformation projects. It was not a coincidence that the years in which the construction sector started to rise correspond to the aftermath of the earthquake in Izmit in 1999. This issue does not stay as a statement that only comes from official offices to the people and only affects poor groups of people, but it has a place in daily life that increasingly moves towards middle-classes. Çiçekoğlu (2015, p. 22), in her book on an analysis of insurrection threshold in movies regarding urban life, described the idea of emphasising the destructive nature of the urban transformation process and usage of earthquake rumours as an excuse for wealthy neighbourhoods by “in the days of ‘construction by destruction’ that surrounded the city again after 40 years, Fenerbahçe is being demolished again using the possibility of an earthquake as an excuse.” This rumour may be traced back to a statement in 2004 in the daily Milliyet by Kadir Topbas, who then had been Mayor of Istanbul for only 5 months, based on rumours where such an earthquake would affect as “I will demolish. Let them call me evil” (Milliyet, 6 September 2004).

With this statement made by Kadir Topbas as soon as he started his job, the post-2004 process based on “urban transformation” in Istanbul started especially in a way to “empty city centres.” However, we see that Kadir Topba still did not use the term “urban transformation” based on this article.

In the early 2000s and in parallel to the timeline of these statements, it is seen that the word flows regarding an earthquake were rather on the level of technical information and they usually involved statements by architects and engineers. Considering the changes in the people and institutions speaking about earthquakes in that time, it is seen that the period of 2000-2006 where academics with technical knowledge were visible was followed by a period of the public authority or people of the law spoke about earthquakes, and were joined later by contractors.

It is seen that the news pieces about buildings in most towns in Istanbul not being resistant enough for earthquakes were more frequent after 2006. It is also seen that the interviews with engineers about fault lines and possibility of an Istanbul earthquake before 2005, left their place for a discussion on “weakness of buildings” led by TOKI and private sector firms. The argument for urban transformation that started over stability and life safety increasingly evolved towards cultural transformation or construction of luxurious buildings. It appears that images used in this article and similar ones usually consist of ruined buildings, cracked walls or aerial views of crammed up city textures, and therefore strengthen the information provided by the news in this context. The news of the instability of buildings in Istanbul and that they carry a risk of collapse in case of an earthquake appeared in certain intervals in newspapers.

Until the Law No. 6306 in 2012¹ came into force, it is seen that the term “disaster” was not used in relation with an earthquake or urban transformation. Additionally, the concept of “risk” we almost did not see at all till 2008 started to emerge in the news after these dates. In the form, it is reflected in the media, it is thought that the responsibility of the public authority is limited to public buildings, and single buildings are considered in the responsibility of the property owner. Again, the same point of view may be seen exactly 5 years later than this news piece in the Law No. 6306, where the responsibility of urban transformation was left to the property owner. Therefore, the process starting with the 2000s and reached 2015 does not work by instant changes through legislation, but is cooked in the media, government statements, developed, added and related, eventually reaching the Law No. 6306.

It started to come out in the newspapers that “Earthquake-Centred Urban Transformation” was initiated in the old gecekonu neighbourhood of Zeytinburnu Sümer. Ali Agaoglu, one of the significant investors in the urban transformation process who has been popular since 2007, confessed in 2009 that the buildings in Bagdat Avenue were constructed using sea sand and scrap metal, and created anxiety in higher-class residents rather than gecekonu citizen. This example clearly demonstrates the process of very technical information such as seismicity or construction quality turning into a rumour. After Agaoglu’s statements, it is seen that initiatives took place regarding the construction activities in Bagdat Avenue and surrounding areas. Again, Agaoglu, stated in 2010 that Istanbul should be demolished not by an earthquake, but by construction firms. It may be argued that these statements in two consecutive years played an important role in carrying the urban transformation process from the particularity of gecekondus into the lives of middle and higher income groups.

¹ The Law For the Risky Areas

The image above used in the news piece regarding Agaoglu's statement is a significant example of the idea of a building and a city in the aftermath of urban transformation. The high-rise building in the form of a skyscraper with a helipad represents the interpretation that urban transformation is not being implemented only for building stronger structures, but it is also used for creation of a new urban lifestyle. After the approval of the "Law for Transformation of Areas Under the Risk of Disaster" on 31 May 2012, more striking news pieces about the risk created by earthquakes started to appear in the media, and newspapers used the argument of urban transformation as the only solution more often. The piece whose image is shared above emphasised especially that urban transformation is not only about refurbishing buildings and the issues of society and environment should be in the process, and showed that there is a move towards more theoretical argumentation than in the previous piece. In the image used in the news article, the human silhouette covered with windows seems to relate the "ideal human" with urban transformation by providing a reference to Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.

Consequently, the argument that urban transformation is a must for preparation for earthquakes started after the 1999 Izmit earthquake became increasingly dominant in the entire media, and the people and institutions expressing this argument changed through time. The process, which usually progressed through scientists and academics in the beginning of the 2000s, started to be spread over the statements of the public authority later. The function of the central government components and the Metropolitan Municipality to distribute information on earthquakes started to be left to private sector components by the early 2000s. The information that progressed through risk, disaster and destruction and evolved towards earthquake-centred urban transformation brings us to the definition of social democracy by Ulus Baker (2010, pp. 343-344): "a regime, and even social-democratic regime individualism, is absorbed in the body of an imaginary 'potestas' that is intended to solve problems in the name of the people who are assumed to be 'innocent' and have the necessity of being 'governed'; government becomes a service". The emphasis is on the desire of the state to pursue the best interests of the public by implementing urban transformation whether the public wants it or not.

The argument of urban transportation that spreads not only in terms of seismicity but also in many fields, or discussions over the common good, also become frequent in the case of gecekondus. The issue of "public interest" that is reached by debates on "occupation" that are carried out considering the property issues in gecekondu areas seems important for reaching consensus in many layers of the society regarding gecekondu demolition.

5 RUMOURS OF DEMOLITION

Gecekondu neighbourhoods have continued their existence by constantly considering the possibility of demolition since their first stages of establishment. In this sense, rumours of demolition are not new for gecekondu neighbourhoods, but it is a mechanism that has been familiar with for more than 50 years. On the one part, it may be argued that these rumours increase the power of solidarity among gecekondu-dwellers in terms of supporting each other and collecting stories in which they stand against demolitions all together (Gizem Aksümer, 2010; Murat Cemal; Yalçınan & Çavuşoğlu, 2008; Yücel & Aksümer, 2011). On the other hand, rumours of demolition entering gecekondu neighbourhoods become a driving force of the urban transformation in the 2000s.

In this context, it may be seen that the reflection of urban transformation debates in the 2000s on gecekondu neighbourhoods did not start with a single urban transformation process, but the process was significantly pushed forward by the re-emerging rumours of demolition that were more intense. Even before the revelation of urban transformation or a project that affects gecekondu neighbourhoods, urban transformation enters the neighbourhoods as a "rumour of demolition." Sometimes, there is no urban transformation project at all, but instead, investments around, transportation projects, and shopping malls lead to a group of gecekondus to be demolished. Important findings include that small-scale projects and plans that only affect gecekondu neighbourhoods do not find a place in the media, and government statements related to these do not appear. Only news pieces about the Derbent neighbourhood took place in the media for a few times as the project was "showcased" abroad. On the other hand, gecekondus usually appear on the news in cases related to resistance against demolition or crimes such as fights. The news pieces that concern the issue of gecekondu the most, those related to mass housing areas, are only carried out over the issues of where these housings are built, whether lotteries are drawn or not, or the number of residences. In the article on how rumour works, Wright (2008) emphasised that rumours

strengthen solidarity and sense of community. We may see this in gecekondu residents supporting each other during demolition stories and keeping watch to prevent demolition teams entering the neighbourhood. On the other hand, stronger solidarity and sense of community brings about faster spread of rumour in the community. Progression of rumour does not happen in a straight line, but takes place in a net-like, rootstalk-like formation, and information is usually spread through multiple different sources with different interpretations rather than a single source. This rootstalk-like operation seems suitable for the gecekondu neighbourhood, where social relationships are also rootstalk-like. Therefore, starting rumours is a factor that speeds up the operation of urban transformation. In this context, in order to see the working mechanism of information flowing from various channels on the adjustment of gecekondus, this section will investigate in detail the rumours of demolition in the Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Baltalimanı and Resitpasa neighbourhoods of the Sariyer district.

Demolition has been a part of daily life for gecekondu residents since 1950s, that is, since they built their gecekondus. Nevertheless, newspaper articles show that the first encounter of Sariyer's gecekondu neighbourhoods with urban transformation after 2005 occurred with the demolition in the Derbent neighbourhood. In the article "Sarıyer'de Yıkım Savaşı" (Demolition War in Sariyer)(Milliyet, 2006) it was reported that actually only one building was demolished in scope of urban transformation, and again in this scope, neighbourhood residents opposed the issue with a violent reaction and established barricades in the neighbourhood due to the rumours that their homes would be demolished¹. In this sense, the emphasis is significant on the report that the demolition team that entered the neighbourhood with the police and anti-riot water cannon vehicles did not intend to demolish the houses in the neighbourhood, and the people were agitated about "false rumours."

In the same article, it was reported that tear gas canisters were fired near the elementary school and the student were taken to the hospital. 2006 was a period where especially the concept of urban transformation became popular by emphasis and worked over gecekondus, while it had the characteristics of attempts of violently implementing projects with gecekondus. Another article about gecekondu transformation was published in September 2013 in Milliyet. The period after 2010 was a period where a discussion as "transformation on site" emerged about urban transformation. In this article, it was stated that it is possible for gecekondu residents to enter urban transformation without payment and stay in their location.

In parallel to this information, one of our interviewees, Ayse stated that there has been rumours about demolition in Baltalimanı for very long, and "the people are fed up with it." Similarly, Mehmet (Ugurmumcu Neighbourhood, 50-55) said he knew about the rumours of demolition in FSM since his young days, and the residents have slackness due to the idea that "they will always say there will be a demolition, but they will never demolish it." Accordingly, such slackness made it easier for 35 buildings to be demolished in FSM.

Gecekondu residents who face a new demolition rumour or possibility every year have lived through long-lasting rumours of "they say demolitions will take place" during the course of the process of urban transformation. The news that demolition will take place in the neighbourhoods of FSM, Baltalimanı, Resitpasa and Pınar where the interviewees who moved to mass housing previously lived, reached them even before the project was known publicly. In addition to shopping malls, mixed-usage residencies, luxury residential complexes in old villages, and mega projects such are large transportation investments in Sariyer, the roads, bridges or green areas that are the extensions of these projects lead to a partial process of destruction and transformation in gecekondu neighbourhoods. It is seen that rumours, speculations and the direction of information flow are highly important in cases where the neighbourhood is not completely a subject of urban transformation, but only some plots are in the demolition zone.

It is seen that demolition rumours in FSM, Baltalimanı, Resitpasa progressed until the construction of the second intercontinental bridge. Halil, an interviewee who moved out of Baltalimanı, stated that the rumours that these neighbourhoods would be demolished, became more prevalent after the construction of the bridge: "The second bridge was opened in Hisarüstü, and it passed between Baltalimanı and Hisarüstü. It may be 1990, I am not sure. There was the rumour for years that Hisarüstü would be removed and

¹ For further details about the opposition of gecekondu neighborhoods to the urban transformation process: AKSÜMER, G. 2010. Luttés Contre La Transformation Urbaine Des Quartiers De Gecekondu D'Istanbul: Etude De Cas Du Quartier Kazimkarabekir. Master Recherche, Galatasaray Üniversitesi.

Baltalimanı and Armutlu would be expropriated.” Ibrahim, who also moved out of the same neighbourhood provided a parallel argument: “It is not about the rumours, but these (projects) were always ready. I was buying a flat in Hisarüstü. When I went there, the man showed me a map of the location and said the situation is complicated there. It was 1998. Hisarüstü, Baltalimanı, Armutlu... I could not trust these places and but a flat there.” That these rumours may be traced up to the end of 1990s, shows that there was a period of demolition rumours until 2005 for 10-15 years.

Again, Mehmet from FSM, who was affected by the same projects (Ugurmumcu, Male, 40-50) stated that such rumours came into the neighbourhood before they received the official notice of demolition. Such rumours in the form of gossip that may arise in coffee houses and women’s house gatherings are also seen in Baltalimanı and Resitpasa. Halil coming from Baltalimanı even stated that they were informed about the road to be constructed in the neighbourhood with the official notices, but in this process, negotiations were made with many people beforehand. He shared his doubts that preliminary negotiations were made with some residents and those residents were informed beforehand. Tekin said most residents learned about the demolition process from Kadir Topbas speech in the neighbourhood. In this stage, speculations or newspaper articles about the negotiation meetings of construction companies also become the first source of information about the process.

While the interviewees had various complaints about these new mass housing areas and especially women missed their old neighbourhoods, the weariness from the threat of demolition and the unsustainability of the process provides a sense of satisfaction from living in a flat. Housewife Ayse, who moved out of the Baltalimanı neighbourhood (Güzeltepe Konutları, 50-55) stated that she is very sorry to have left the neighbourhood, but added her satisfaction from having a legitimate home here, as “I am thankful that we no longer have this issue of demolition.” Waiting for long times for a demolition is an exhausting process for the residents. These households that are in the middle and lower income group are starting to quit painting their houses or dealing with other issues in the neighbourhood as soon as rumours of demolition start. The previous section emphasised the most important characteristic of gecekondu-type housing as these are not constructed at once and they are turned into liveable, usable, nice houses by modifications through the years. Therefore, sustainability of gecekondus and neighbourhoods consisting of gecekondus depend on constant small repairs and refurbishments. Disruption of the refurbishment process in the household or the neighbourhood leads these places to get unusable over time. Passage of time increases the desires of the residents to leave the neighbourhood.

6 AFTER THE URBAN TRANSFORMATION

The circulation of rumours continues for urban transformation or the gecekondu neighbourhood even after the demolition is carried out. Rumours about who received how much money or who got the better house continue after demolition. This process that works over various assumptions where everyone introduces different information for circulation is a simple product of another ability of rumour, the ability to cause arguments. Wright (2008), emphasised that rumours may have a political role in playing people against each other and presented the roles taken by various media organisations during the massacres of Kosovo and Rwanda as examples. While the outcomes are not this heavy, especially the rumours that are introduced in the beginning stage of demolitions in the urban transformation process, the rumours that the person who gets to demolish first will receive more money or the person who leaves will gain more, lead to divisions among gecekondu residents. Newspaper articles reported that, following demolitions, a solution satisfying all neighbourhood residents was achieved in gecekondu neighbourhoods and various informal neighbourhoods. One of the first examples of these was about the transformation project that was planned for implementation in the Neslisah and Hatice Sultan neighbourhoods, also known as Sulukule. Many media outlets reported about this project that all residents wanted the project to be carried out, and no one could not wait for their new mass housing home.

The rumours arising in the neighbourhoods are generally reduced to 3 main questions in the minds of the residents: how many buildings will be demolished, whose building will be demolished, and who will earn what in this process? In this context, different rumours are often related to issues such as where the demolition take place and how many buildings will be demolished, and different numbers are discussed about everything. With rumours, a process of ridding people of their homes is started, and a sort of slippery slope is formed. No one is completely sure about any number or where the demolition will take

place. Even today, statements by different interviewees about demolition of different numbers of buildings are important indicators of this uncertainty.

In the case of FSM, the rumour that 300 buildings would be demolished after the road project started to circulate, the Municipality reduced this number to 260 after various negotiations, and eventually, only 35 buildings were demolished. Since the possibility of the demolition of 300 buildings to the reduction of 35 buildings, about 2-3 years passed, rumours multiplied by variation in this process, and the residents were forced to consider multiple possibilities together in this process. In the case where only 35 buildings were demolished, applications for reconstruction of the buildings in the neighbourhood could not be considered, and 35 households moved to mass housing areas. An administrator in Sarıyer Municipality, Sükrü Muhtar, described the road project to be carried out in Baltalimanı. While describing it, he stated that 60 buildings received notices of demolition in the years 2004-2005, but it was previously estimated that a much higher number of buildings would be demolished. Investigation was made after an expert was appointed in 2005, a “pro-people” report came out, but right after this, about 260 houses were demolished with the presence of 5000 police officers. After a year following the demolition of the buildings, the court cancelled the plan. Therefore, the number of buildings to be demolished was unclear even until the buildings were demolished.

Another group of rumours in the neighbourhoods is who is/will be given how much money or who will be able to receive how many houses where. Ahmet from Baltalimanı (Güzeltepe Konutları, 45-50) stated they learned that early negotiators were given more money, while late ones were given less. Sükrü Muhtar from the Gecekondu Administration at Sarıyer Municipality stated that people whose houses were in danger started negotiations even before the houses were demolished, and it was guessed that some people had already agreed. Thus, who received what or agreed when, always constitute suspicious information.

7 DISCUSSION

This study emphasised that urban transformation does not happen only by laws, projects of capital movements, but is also may be led by affections created in citizen. Word flows are not merely tools to read the situation, but the mechanism of urban transformation works via word flows themselves. In this sense, the word flows in the urban transformation process were traced in different stages from the scale of Istanbul to the scale of gecekondu neighbourhoods. It was found that there are arguments that appeal to emotions such as fear, desire, excitement in the urban transformation process, and the machine is working this way. The process was thought out as a relation of powers as Deleuze meant: “a power relation is a function in the form of “starting, inciting, combining...” In the case of discipline societies, the following holds: dispersing, serialising, combining, normalisation” (Deleuze, 2013a, p. 48). All axes of fear including the laws or the created turbulence and destruction carry the quality of an “initiation function”. New residence typologies we encounter through advertisements, arguments that emphasise how nice urban transformation is, or the context that does not provide gecekondu residents with an option other than mass housing, “incite” the machine and rejoin gecekondu owners in the peripherals of the city.

As the work flows regarding urban transformation get intense, the arguments by chambers of profession and academics converge and more connections may be made, urban transformation starts to be seen as an “unequal tool for sharing rent”, and the side of the government and the public authority resorts to arguments such as that urban transformation is the only way to solve the threat about an earthquake. In this context, it was seen that opinions about an earthquake were presented to the media by scientists, geophysicists and geologists in the early 2000s, but statements of contractors that the earthquake will destroy the entire city took the stage beginning with 2006, and scientists disappeared from the media regarding the issue of urban transformation. Thus, horrifying earthquake scenarios and collapsed building photos, unhealthy and bad representation of gecekondu, and as opposed to these, the new, modern buildings as objects of desire, appeared in the media very frequently. On the other hand, the argument made over the importance of large projects and the unhealthy nature of gecekondu pushed gecekondu away and praised mass housing areas that are being constructed in the peripherals. The two axes related to the flow of words are technical knowledge and legal knowledge that circulate in connection to each other. A third axis is that this knowledge is turned into information, divided into small pieces and converted to rumour. As a result of interpretation of a passed law or transformation about various speculations, rumours of “destruction” come to gecekondu neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, the media and even the public authority manage process due to bombardment of such information. In addition to small scale

pieces of information such as which project will be implemented where or which neighbourhood will be demolished, many words of mouth go into circulation about when the law of urban transformation will come into force, and this issue influences the process greatly. Consequently, we encounter the bombardment-like circulation of word and ambiguity of it by transformation into rumour by crystallisation as an important way of mobilisation that turns the gears of urban transformation, even after the process of moving to new houses.

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