

## **Intersection of Planned and Unplanned Residential Patterns: A Case from Istanbul**

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### **Abstract**

**Nowadays, the luxury residential settlements on the boundaries of the cities are rapidly increasing. These settlements have spread to squatter settlements surrounding the cities, and boundaries of the cities have become areas of collision where the people fleeing the city center are confronted with unplanned settlements. This situation is a sign that the urban environments on the boundaries are surrounded by urbanization. Today, squatter settlements that have undergone urban transformation or are resisting transformation on one hand, and gated communities on the other, continue their existences side by side. In this way, users of different income groups meet and interact in the intersection of different forms of housing productions.**

**The study focuses on the spatial and social interactions in the intersection of squatters and gated communities, and how they came together in the process. The main idea of the study is to find out how different income groups living "looking at each other" in the result of the intersection, how they perceive and interact with the urban environments they live in. As the importance of environment quality is known for the quality of life, the evaluation of the intersections at this point is important, not only to fulfil spatial needs, but also social, psychological and cultural needs and expectations, and to create healthy cities. Within the scope of the research, there is an area study in Istanbul where the social and spatial interaction that have been experienced mutually are discussed through surveys, observations and interviews.**

### **Introduction: Spatial and Social Interaction in the Interface**

In Turkey, having emerged to bring a solution to the sheltering problem of the individuals who migrated from rural areas to towns due to industrialization-oriented rapid urbanization, squatter settlements continue to preserve their existence due to various reasons such as the approach of local governments, deficiencies in urban policies and rapid population growth. On the other hand, luxury housing settlements that have acquired popularity due to the alteration of the meaning of residences after the 1980s and the emergence of security issue became an indicator of status due to their social facility opportunities.<sup>1</sup> During the 2000s, urban areas that expanded towards the outskirts of towns and gated communities were built due to the undesired living conditions in urban centers, and peaceful and secure life demands. In consequence, there emerged a residential pattern consisting of these two different types of housing as gated communities were built near the unplanned settlements. Today, these two types of housing still persist, and the gap between them goes deeper; the resulting bidirectional society separates them from each other although living in the same space due to their lifestyles and consumption habits.<sup>2</sup> Engels explains such spatial distinction in towns with the following words: "Squatter settlements are separated from planned settlements with impermeable/sharp borders. The bourgeoisie, which is the upper class, live in planned settlements next to working class neighborhoods, and they go through the short path in the middle of all the working-class neighborhoods, through the middle of poverty, without seeing them."<sup>3</sup> It is stated that this dispersed/irregular urbanization process has



Figure 1. The change of Maltepe over time. Cebir, 2017.

become the definitive landscape of both wealthy and poor countries of the 21st century.<sup>4</sup>

Since urban life is based on continuous interaction between people-environment and people-people, the communication among these adjacent residential areas is of great significance in terms of the rising urban space and life. Defined as the interface areas where the urban fabrics meet, intersections are also important for evaluating this interaction. The intersection term in the study is defined as the spaces where squatter settlements and gated communities intersect and collide. Stavrides, on the other hand, states the threshold is where two different worlds face each other and the meeting point of contrasts.<sup>5</sup> As a point of both contact and separation, the intersection areas have caused a new spatial landscape and have led to a new social pattern. It can be observed that the life between these two varying patterns does not only consist of pedestrian and car traffic but there are also varying dynamics between the social relations in this space as well as at certain borders. These borders act as spatial elements as they lead to the emergence of defined areas, but they also cause social consequences for they negatively affect the communication environment of residents. In addition, it is thought that the absence of alternative solutions at the design and planning point for these interfaces also causes these areas to function as

“none-places.”<sup>6</sup> In addition, similar intersection examples of planned and unplanned settlements in some developing countries, not only in Turkey can be observed.<sup>7</sup>

Discontinuity between planned and unplanned housing patterns reminds us that we need to rethink the relationship between the city and the human. Today, the perception of heterogeneity in the urban fabric is seen as a hazard and affirmation of homogeneity although the incomplete diversity causes socially different results.<sup>8</sup> Simmel interprets the conflict between different patterns not as a fault, but as one of the dynamics of socialization, and talks about what possibilities these conflicts have produced.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, understanding the situation at the intersection is important in creating ways to provide continuity in urban life, and the study analyses the effects of spatial borders as a result of intersection on the society as a whole.

### Case Study from Istanbul

Although Istanbul is one of the richest and most diverse cities in terms of culture, it is one of the most disintegrated mega cities. It is rapidly spreading towards the city peripheries, which are constantly on the agenda, with the change of unplanned patterns, demolition of historical sites, urban transformation and renewal

projects. The district of Maltepe is also an important region due to the relationship between the new settlements, which are rapidly growing, and the existing tissue that has been developed unplanned. Looking at the urban development process of Maltepe, the settlement took place near the railway line after the zoning plan made in 1945. After the 1960s, the settlement areas shifted to the north and developed on the main transportation axis (E-5). In this context, Emek Street in Maltepe, located at the intersection of Zümrütevler and Güleusu neighborhoods, has features that can be exemplary for planned and unplanned side-by-side situations because it forms the interface of gated communities and squatter settlements.

Gülsuyu and Güleusu neighborhoods in Maltepe developed due to their proximity to industrial zones and the presence of unoccupied public properties. Their population increased dramatically as a result of the migrations from various sections of Turkey.<sup>10</sup> Today, these neighborhoods come to the agenda with urban transformation projects. Furthermore, Maltepe district is indicated among the potentially improvable regions in the Istanbul Master Plan due to its unused land reserve. Therefore, it has become a significant area for upper and middle class housing projects. In consequence of the economic and social changes, Maltepe district is becoming a rapidly developing real estate area. The basic purpose of this study is to discuss spatial contrasts to answer how residents perceive and assess their environment and how they interact with their environment in consequence of the proximity of gated community and squatter settlements which are named as planned and unplanned housings, respectively.

Spatial developments in the area were examined through literature review, archive research, interviews with officials from the local administration and a questionnaire with local people. In order to analyze the spatial interaction of the side-by-side presence of different urban patterns, sections were used at spots of pattern changes on Emek Street to understand boundaries of the urban fabric. User opinion and feedback on spatial interaction at the intersection is comprised of thorough interviews, observations, a questionnaire study conducted in December 2016 with 32 people from planned and 30 from unplanned settlements.<sup>11</sup>

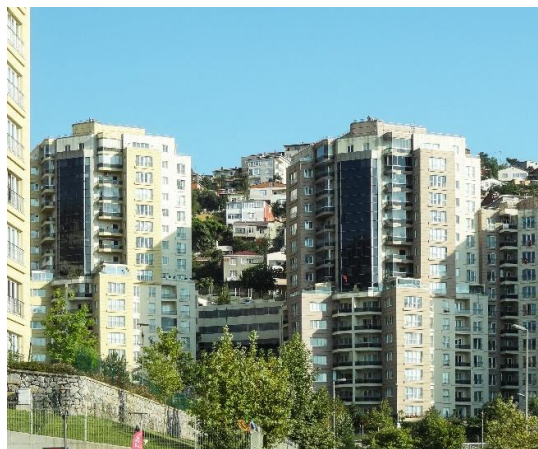


Figure 2. The intertwining of planned and unplanned residential settlements. Cebir, 2018.

The following results were obtained with the field study:

- There are borders in the intersecting interactions of people who benefit from urban space differently and who have varying lifestyles. Border examples encountered at the intersection of planned and unplanned residence patterns are significant in terms of revealing spatial and social interactions. Since it is a fact that a spatial interaction environment is ensured with physical elements, borders direct human acts and interpersonal relations, and several terms arise such as proximity and remoteness. Having arisen so as to define spaces and ensure the communication between human-space and establish order, borders have evolved in time and acquired various meanings.
- As regards to the gated communities in which the upper class lives, the impermeability of the physical borders such as walls, fences, security systems and controlled entries minimize the interaction with unplanned residential areas. Such division in neighbourhoods gives way to a spatial discrimination at the intersection as “insiders” and “outsiders”. These strict borders that cause various behaviour norms such as the acceptance or rejection of certain people to a space, also weaken the interaction with the streets. Besides, these borders also bring about a psychological condition for pedestrians who move near such borders. An inability to enter leads to pressure and inability to see inside creates a sense of curiosity. People are alienated against each other. On the other hand, the borders determining the



unplanned residential areas only define and establish the area; therefore, these residential areas have stronger interaction with the streets. In general, the boundaries of squatter settlements improve socialization and participation in public space. This shows that the borders of unplanned residential areas are more permeable.

- In addition to certain elements such as the walls, gates and entrances at the intersection, buildings, streets and avenues can also be indicators of border. Emek Avenue, which is the main axis of the field study, appears as a border to prevent the development of unplanned residential areas. In addition, the disproportionate scale of the housing estates compared to humans and their impermeability towards their environment creates undefined areas and breaks up the region.
- Apart from physical borders, the interaction areas also present economic, sociocultural, ethnic and political boundaries. The borders, due to economic and cultural variations such as demographic qualities, educational level and employment status, result in social exclusion. The increase in the social distance between different classes causes a decrease of using public spaces and means of transportation. The field study revealed that minibus lines that arose after the emergence of squatter settlements due to a lack of bus lines in the area were not preferred by gated community residents. On the other hand, it was also found that squatter residents did not take the bus as a means of daily transportation. This indicates that people are segregated with invisible borders, and that it is reflected in the social life.
- Segregation of people with invisible boundaries results in physical boundaries turning into social boundaries as well as urban tensions. This situation causes the public concept to be questioned again. Particularly considering children, as children with in the gated community grow up in different conditions than the children outside, it becomes easier to state that the meaning of the concept of “public” changes, and disintegration occurs in every phase of life.
- Also it is observed with the field study that social life was limited in urban spaces where the borders that define public and private

spaces are strict and impermeable. When the streets which gain meaning with the buildings around strict border elements, they lose their mobility and turn into areas non-preferable for pedestrians. As a consequence, lesser use of streets leads to decreased inspection, therefore, decreased security. However, streets or avenues with dynamic sidewalks ensure a lively and secure urban life.

Strict borders and their impermeability result in residents from different income groups living without contacting or communicating with each other. Nevertheless, today these polarized people continue to live in the same space as the distance between them persists. In fact, it has been witnessed that people who live in the same neighbourhood are actually strangers inhabiting the same street. These people share the same space by necessity and have quite limited interaction.

## Conclusion

Research and field studies show that social and spatial segregation is experienced in the planned and unplanned housing patterns in towns. It is observed that gated community residents who face squatter settlements only watch the pattern and do not live a common urban life. Similarly, squatters watch the other pattern by looking at planned housings and cannot develop common solutions for urban issues. In general, spaces to meet and socialize with other vanish at such intersections where there is no mutual communication and interaction. While the strict boundaries emerging in the intersection areas reduce urban diversity, permeable and porous borders can provide that intertwining of people who live together with socio-cultural and spatial differences. Besides, it is thought that creation of transition spaces between planned and unplanned residential areas and the establishment of physical and social facilities between them would soften this transition and increase interaction. Also, it is believed that the physical and social borders between these different groups can be minimized by bringing them together in the same place with, for example, workshops to be held with a participatory approach during the planning and design process or when looking for solutions to an environment problem.

It is anticipated that the change and improvement in the conditions of unplanned



Figure 5. Intersection of planned and unplanned housing settlements. Cebir, 2017.

patterns will increase the interaction at the intersection in time. In this respect, the most important factors are thought to be successful urban transformation works and other approaches that attach importance to social and spatial improvement and formation of quality living spaces. In the fall of 2017, the Güleusu neighbourhood where the field study was performed started an urban transformation process that continues to the present day. It is thought that this process will increase the interaction with planned residential areas since the transformation will change the current situation. However, integrative solutions should be adopted, and economic, social and physical dimensions should be taken into consideration when applying urban transformation projects so as to build housing environments that can host various groups. In this sense, the policies suggested and the studies carried out to spatially enhance the squatter settlement conditions and urban public space in Sao Paulo set an important example for Istanbul since the latter has experienced similar processes. These design approach examples<sup>12</sup> that were realized by academia, government and local municipality could ensure various perspectives in terms of planning, designing, participating in the interaction problem in Istanbul, elimination of spatial-social inequalities and emergence of innovative ideas to improve the quality of common life.

In towns, it is seen that the number of gated communities gradually increases and that they are occupied by families with similar economic and social qualities. These ever increasing gated community constructions are compared to rapid squatter settlement constructions in the 1960s in Istanbul. The reproduction of squatter settlements has caused an “irregular” pattern in cities. On the other hand, the expansion of gated communities leads to a “segregated” town. Both situations are problematic. The main goal should be to create spaces with equal approaches where people have a sense of belonging towards their living spaces, are able to use the same space and are not identified as an “insider” or an “outsider”. It should be ensured that people share the same urban space without alienating or seeing each other as strangers or dangerous people. They should interact in this space without being forced to move because differences have always been and will continue to be in our lives, and a homogeneous society cannot be imagined on an urban scale. As a

result, liveable spaces will come out in free societies where there are no strict borders between different groups, and the interaction at intersections will lead to healthy urban living spaces. In today’s world, communication and technology development have gained speed. The phenomena of time and space are intertwined, the concept of limitlessness comes to the fore, the physical and social borders encountered in urban spaces should be removed.

## Endnotes

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