

POLITECNICO DI TORINO  
FIRST SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE  
Master of Science in Architecture Construction City  
**Honors theses**

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**Informality in Istanbul and the struggle between local processes and global trends**

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This thesis deals with the topic of informality with special emphasis on the link between urban informality and urban transformations in the past two decades in Istanbul.

This research further argues that, on one hand informal practices highly determine Istanbul's social and spatial forms, on the other those practices are constantly threatened because of recent urban renewal projects.

The purpose is to question a diffused misunderstanding: that in contemporary cities urban informality is a marginal phenomenon. In Istanbul this "marginality" perspective has been ruling the approach to urban transformation since the 90s leading to urban informality erasure.

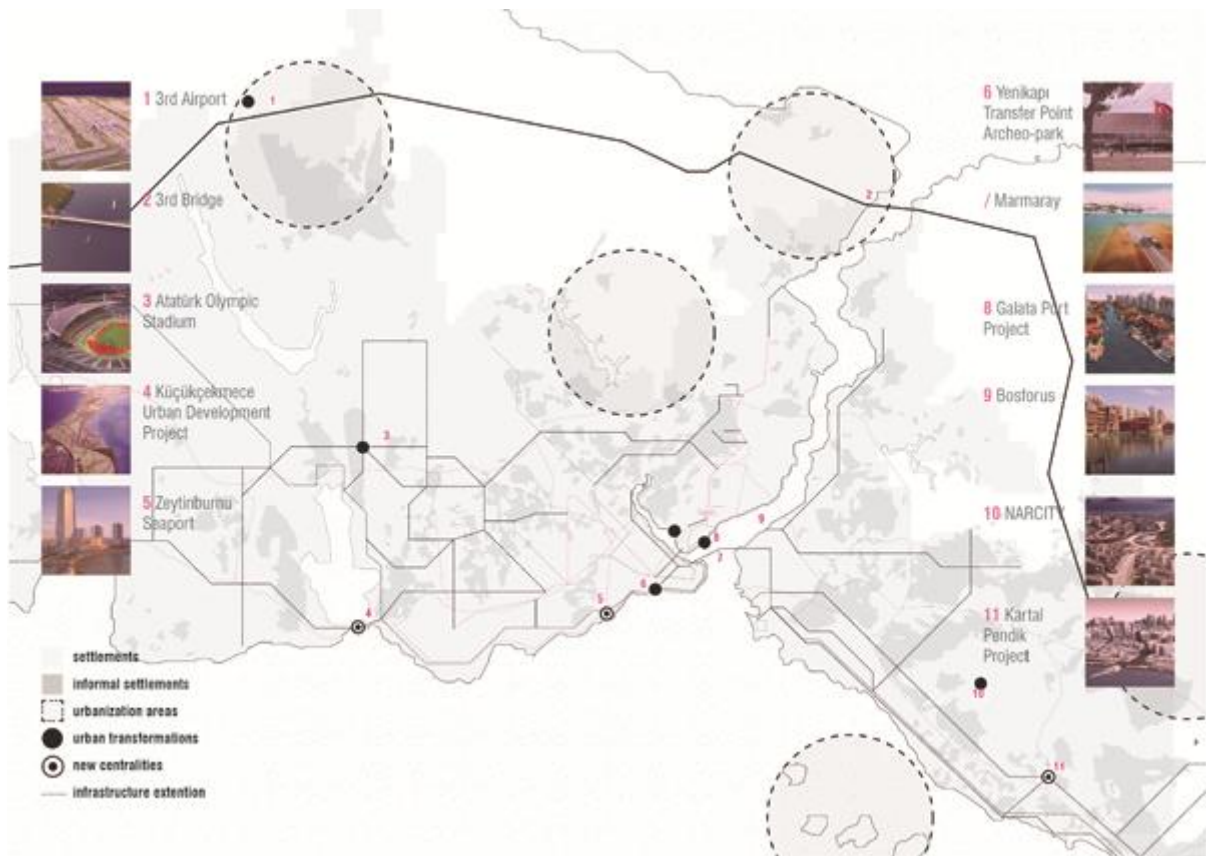
Opposite to this view, my goal is to delineate in the end a low profile urban regeneration strategy, taking into account the spontaneous coexistence and hybridization between formal and informal practices.

Therefore urban informality has been the key to research the theoretical background, to structure the analysis of the urban transformations in *İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi* (Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul) and to inspire the design phase for the area of Boğazkesan Caddesi, in Tophane, Beyoğlu.

## **1. Structure**

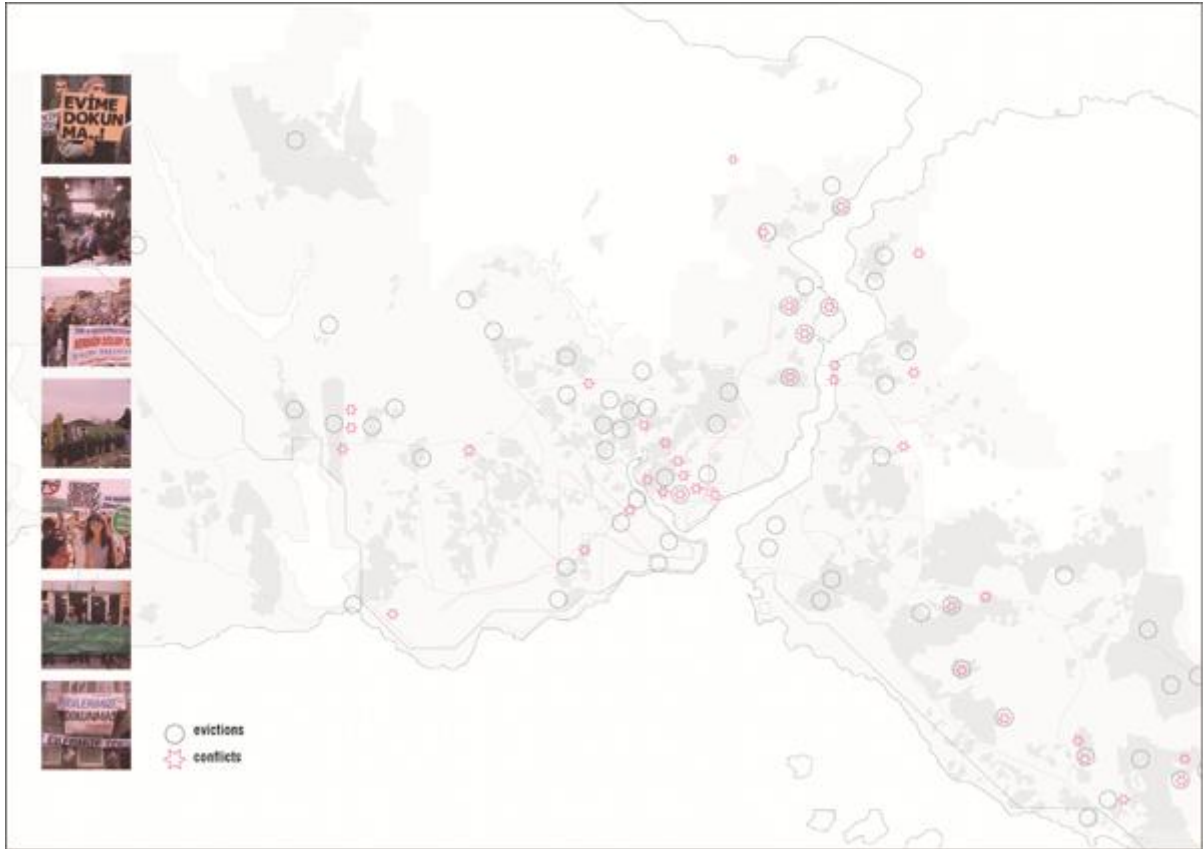
In the first section (Chapter 1) I situated my research in the recent debate on urban informality. Therefore I focused on the component elements of informality in Istanbul (Chapter 2).

The third part (Chapter 3) seeks to delineate the complex Istanbul's urban framework and to analyse the urban transformations taking place. Looking at urban informality it is possible to underline the gap between urban policies based on global trends and the contextual needs of the inhabitants: this gap is undermining strong social balances and provoking alarming social consequences and the consequent uprising of urban movements and activists.



*Main ongoing urban transformations, leading to the urbanization of natural areas*

The next step (Chapter 4) was to look at the impact of urban renewal projects carried in the informal settlements: exclusion, polarization and segregation have been widely criticised by academics and researchers and have found diverse resistances from the bottom up. Thus, in this phase I highlighted the strong connection between the erasure of informality and the spring of new forms of urban conflict in Istanbul.

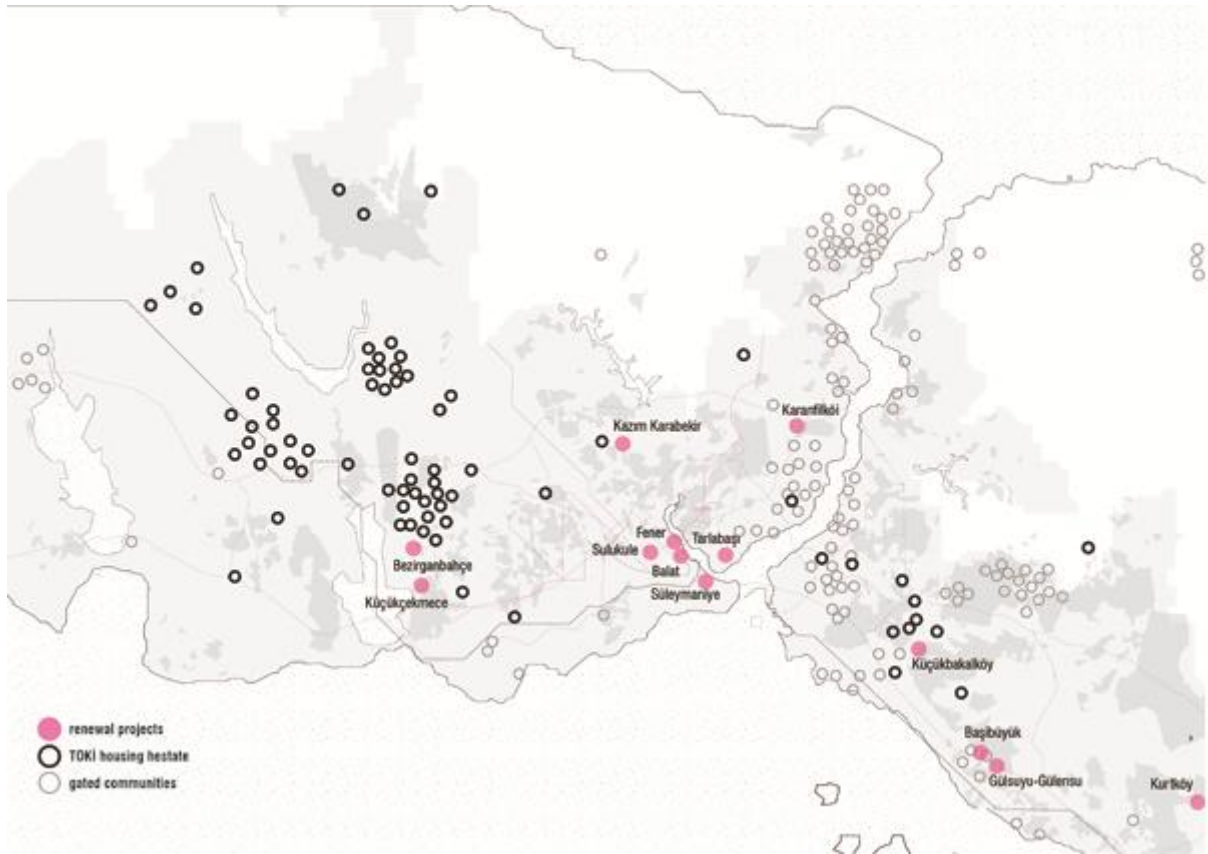


*Renewal projects lead to demolitions and eviction causing the inhabitants' uprising*

Finally the strategy starts from the observation of informal uses of space and mapping of unused buildings and urban voids, and ends with some scenarios for their regeneration. The final goal is to question the way mediation processes between institutions and informal dwellers usually ends: the property right concession.

## 2. Topics

Informal practices bring high spatial and social quality to Istanbul's neighbourhoods . Furthermore they strengthen disadvantaged people's capability and accessibility to goods and facilities. At the same time they are important for the urban life in formal residential neighbourhoods too.



*Real estate, gated communities and renewal projects in the informal settlements*

However urban governance seems to ignore this balance and even to formalize and normalize it on purpose. Thus the real purpose is not to improve urban quality for the inhabitants at the local scale but invest on urban competition at the global one. In the politic propaganda urban informality is described as a threatening element against progress, modernization and Istanbul's global project. While it's actually threatened by global trends implemented in the city in a stereotyped, megalomaniac and decontextualized way.

### **3. Metod and Approach**

Looking at Istanbul's trough informal theories is useful to describe Istanbul's peculiarities; looking at its erasure is useful to question on-going urban transformations.

My intension is to prove that urban informality is full of potentials and that it's possible to support it and protect it from marginalization restoring a natural equilibrium among local processes and global trends.

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