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Influence of Neoliberal Policies on Urban waterfront transformations: socio-spatial outcomes, residents' responses, and urban resilience discourse

The Case of Ataköy,Istanbul

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Abstract

This thesis examines the socio-spatial consequences of neoliberal urban policies and luxury developments by the waterfront in Istanbul's coastal neighbourhood of Ataköy. Focusing on Ataköy's 2-5-6th section neighbourhood and urban developments located at its waterfronts, luxury housing projects, and commercial functions, the research explores how these transformations affect urban resilience, spatial justice, and residents' perceptions of their changing urban environment. Guided by two main research questions, the study adopts a qualitative case study methodology incorporating field observations, interviews with residents, local authorities, and NGOs, as well as the analysis of planning documents and policy texts.

Findings reveal that although Ataköy continues to offer a relatively high quality of life due to its planned layout and green character, residents have expressed growing concerns regarding the privatization of public space, weakening community cohesion, and environmental degradation. According to various actors interviewed at Ataköy, luxury waterfront developments have led to restricted public access to the coast, blocked views, increased microclimatic discomfort, and a growing sense of symbolic alienation among long-term residents. These projects, driven by market logic and centralized urban governance, undermine rather than support Istanbul's broader urban resilience goals.

The research highlights that socio-spatial segregation, loss of urban identity, and top-down decision-making processes exacerbate social inequalities and erode the foundations of inclusive, sustainable urban development. The study concludes with a set of policy recommendations advocating participatory planning, protection of public space, integrated resilience strategies, social inclusion, and decentralization of urban governance.

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Abbreviations

AFAD – Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Interior, Disaster and Emergency Management Authority

ARUP – Arup Group Limited (Multinational design, engineering, and consulting firm)

IBB – Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

IRAP – Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Plan

TAMP – Turkey Disaster Response Plan

TARAP – Türkiye Disaster Risk Reduction Plan

TASIP – Turkey Post-Disaster Recovery Plan

TOKI – Housing Development Administration of Türkiye (*Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı*)

TUIK – Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*)

VEP – Vision Action Plan

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Urban waterfronts have historically served as vital socio-economic and ecological interfaces in global cities. In recent decades, however, the transformation of these spaces has become increasingly shaped by neoliberal urban policies, which prioritize capital accumulation, real estate valorization, and large-scale investment projects worldwide.Üzümcüoğlu and Polay(2022) emphasize that, there are various types of waterfronts, including lakeshores, riverbanks, canals, harbors, and bayfronts. Human settlements have historically clustered around these areas due to their close connection with community life. While in the past waterfronts primarily served purposes of trade and transportation, today the identity of cities is increasingly shaped by environmental, social, and economic dynamics. Consequently, any intervention on waterfronts directly concerns a wide range of stakeholders, such as urban planners and designers, policymakers, and other key decision-makers (Üzümcüoğlu & Polay, 2022).

Beyond their industrial uses, waterfronts now accommodate multiple functions. Their strategic locations make them suitable for transportation, commerce, leisure, and tourism (Üzümcüoğlu & Polay, 2022; Speake & Kennedy, 2019). For this reason, they are often considered favorable sites for new residential complexes, hotels, recreational facilities, sports amenities, and sources of employment. Waterfronts not only act as essential breathing spaces for urban residents, but also provide opportunities for memorials, housing, public recreation, and mixed-use urban development (Üzümcüoğlu & Polay, 2022).The redevelopment of urban waterfronts has therefore emerged as an interdisciplinary topic, attracting growing interest across urban planning, architecture, and geography.

Particularly in post-industrial and post-socialist urban contexts, waterfront redevelopment has been instrumentalized as a tool for global city branding and economic competitiveness (Davidson, 2019). While these interventions often promise urban revitalization, in some cases they simultaneously produce uneven development, social -segregation, and contested public access, especially in rapidly growing metropolises.

In Turkey, the shift toward market-oriented urban governance became especially pronounced after the 1980s, gaining momentum in the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis (Ekmekci, 2012). In Istanbul—the country's largest and most dynamic city—this transition has been accompanied by an unprecedented wave of real estate investment, state-supported luxury housing initiatives, and the transformation of public coastal lands into privatized enclaves (Serin, 2016). At the heart of this process lies the increasing dominance of branded residential developments and gated communities, which not only reshape the physical landscape but also reconfigure the social fabric

and urban commons (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020). Overlapping with Istanbul's ongoing resilience efforts in order to prepare the city for disasters mainly being earthquakes with the national and local policies for urban transformation of building stock at the city.The paralel development of neoliberal urban governance and disaster resilience policies often raising concerns, since with neoliberal policies mega-projects are designed and implemented in Istanbul's waterfronts. .Meanwhile authors underline the importance of landscape sensitive and disaster resilient planning in the cities and especially waterfronts of the cities (Aycim & Baskaya, 2015).

One of the areas of the city which has undergone a similar waterfront transformation is Bakırköy, a district of Istanbul known for its long coastal line where the case study of this thesis locates,Ataköy.

The neighbourhoods of Ataköy, once known for its middle-class identity, green landscapes, and accessible waterfronts, has undergone dramatic transformation. Branded residential projects such as *SeaPearl Ataköy* and *Yalı Ataköy* now dominate the seafront, replacing open public areas with luxury enclaves and high-rise developments. These changes raise critical questions about urban resilience, socio-spatial justice, and the governance of urban transformation.

This thesis seeks to investigate the socio-spatial impacts of branded coastal housing projects within the context of Istanbul's neoliberal urban transformation. It critically examines how large-scale developments have influenced neighbourhood dynamics in Ataköy, particularly from the perspective of long-term residents. Moreover, the research aims to discover how these transformations intersect with the broader discourse of urban resilience—particularly in relation to disaster preparedness, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion.

1.1 Research scope

This thesis investigates the socio-spatial impacts of neoliberal urban transformation policies on Istanbul's Ataköy coast, with a particular focus on the branded residential projects SeaPearl and Yalı Ataköy, along with other luxury developments along the waterfront. It specifically examines the responses of long-term residents in the Ataköy 2-5-6th parts neighborhood. The study addresses themes such as urban resilience, the transformation of public spaces and waterfronts due to state-led policies, community perceptions, socio-spatial segregation, and gentrification..

Furthermore, the thesis examines how such neoliberal transformations contribute—positively or negatively—to Istanbul's broader earthquake resilience efforts, with an emphasis on the neighbourhood scale and residents' responses. In addition to original interviews and observations, the study also engages with existing literature on the related subjects.Importantly, this research adopts a multiscalar approach: from the national level (Turkey), to the city level (Istanbul), the district level (Bakırköy), the neighborhood level (Ataköy), and finally the micro-scale case study area. It examines how key concepts and phenomena such as neoliberal urbanism, coastal transformation, gated communities, and urban resilience are manifested across these spatial scales. The contribution of a multi-scalar approach lies in its ability to contextualize events across different spatial and temporal levels, enhancing the understanding of both the contextual background and the theoretical framework. This perspective also facilitates the identification of cause-and-effect relationships. The transformation of Ataköy's coastal zone is not an isolated process; rather, it is shaped by global trends, followed by national urban policies, and finally, local governance strategies and upper-scale planning decisions implemented in the Bakırköy district. Accordingly, the literature review supports the case study by providing insights at the global scale, while other local scales—national, regional, and neighbourhood—contribute detailed empirical and contextual data to strengthen the analysis.It should also be emphasized that, in addition to policy documents and the identification of global and national trends, scientific analyses regarding the earthquake and tsunami risks specific to the study area done by the academics mentioned in the thesis —as well as academic literature highlighting sustainability and seismic resilience—have further enriched the research findings. These sources not only complement the responses provided by local residents but also support and validate the overall conclusions in a coherent manner.This thesis specifically centers the lived experiences and perspectives of long-term Ataköy residents, capturing their reflections nearly eight years after the completion of the waterfront transformation. Furthermore, it considers the earlier phases of the process, including moments of public resistance, conflicts, and protest, in order to trace the socio-spatial outcomes and perceived impacts of these large-scale urban interventions.

1.2 Research questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In the case of Ataköy 2-5-6th neighbourhood, how has the neoliberal transformation of the coast affected the neighbourhood's socio-spatial cohesion, how do long-term residents perceive these changes, and what are the consequences?
2. How do these projects influence the effectiveness of Istanbul's earthquake resilience efforts?

1.3 Thesis Structure

The Introduction chapter establishes the foundational concepts pertinent to the thesis and its case study, delineates the specific topics under investigation, formulates the research questions, and succinctly summarizes both the principal findings and the overall scope of the study.

The Literature Review chapter critically engages with a broad spectrum of themes central to the research focus—namely, urban transformation and waterfront transformation—within the conceptual boundaries of the study's theoretical framework. In alignment with a systematic approach, the discussion advances from the general to the particular and/or from the macro-scale to the micro-scale, thereby elucidating the interrelationships between relevant concepts. The analysis is enriched by illustrative examples drawn from global scholarship.

The progressive structure of the literature review—from larger-scale contexts to smaller-scale applications—is particularly valuable for revealing the ways in which these concepts influence one another, the outcomes generated by their interplay, and their broader implications for urban space and urban sociology.

The Methodology chapter outlines the analytical methods employed in the study, detailing the characteristics of the interviewees, the coding process, and other relevant particulars, with the aim of ensuring the transparency and comprehensibility of the analysis. In addition, it defines the scope and limitations of the analysis.

One of the key features of this thesis is its multi-scalar structure, in which the topic is examined individually at the national, city, district, and neighbourhood levels, with each scale providing the necessary theoretical and contextual background relevant to that scale. Chapter 4 focuses on the Turkey context, beginning with an overview of the country's urban planning framework, which facilitates the understanding of plan names, processes, and institutional mechanisms referenced in later sections. This chapter also examines Turkey's urban planning and disaster resilience

policies, as earthquake sensitivity plays a central role in shaping urban transformations in Istanbul, making it essential to discuss earthquake resilience at the national scale to highlight its relevance to the thesis. The subsequent subsection addresses neoliberal policies, explaining how they have been shaped and directed in Turkey under the influence of global trends. Subsection 4.4 focuses specifically on tourism as a coastal development strategy, one of the notable impacts of neoliberal policies in Turkey, due to its direct relevance to the case study. The chapter concludes by emphasizing that Istanbul is one of the cities most affected by these policies, thereby transitioning into the Istanbul section.

The Istanbul chapter begins with an overview of the city's historical development and urban growth, followed by an examination of the neoliberal policies and sustainability-oriented trends that have shaped the city since the 1980s. It also addresses the urban transformation for earthquake resilience initiatives that have been ongoing since the early 2000s. This part is crucial for understanding the intersection between Istanbul's long-standing resilience efforts and the influence of neoliberal policies. In addition, it incorporates local government policy documents to discuss the city's natural environment, its needs and challenges, and the trend toward mega projects. Subsections 5.4 and 5.5 focus on key outcomes of Istanbul's urban transformation under neoliberal policies and globalization, including waterfront transformations, mega projects, and concepts such as branded housing and gated communities. As in other sections, the discussion moves from the general to the specific, making use of documents from the relevant administrative authorities at each scale.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the Bakırköy district, beginning with a contextual background of the area and a theoretical framework that together provide an understanding of how the district has been shaped over the years, particularly under the influence of neoliberal policies. The discussion draws on analyses from existing scholarly literature, much of which has focused on the transformation of public and private spaces, as well as the progressive restriction of public access to Bakırköy's waterfronts and long-established public areas through processes of privatization. Most importantly, the chapter highlights the series of mega projects implemented along Bakırköy's waterfront over time, including those situated within the Ataköy coastal zone, which constitutes the case study area of this thesis.

Chapter 7 focuses on *Ataköy*, the case study area of the thesis at the neighborhood scale. It first provides a contextual background, outlining the historical development and demographic profile of the district. This is followed by a discussion of the establishment of Ataköy's neighborhoods and the construction of the housing units of its long-term residents—individuals who are at the core of this thesis's social analysis and whose perspectives were gathered through in-depth interviews.

This historical link is particularly important for understanding the transformation of Ataköy from its origins as a social housing project to its current form as a luxury residential area, a shift driven by neoliberal urban policies.

Subsequently, Section 7.3 and the following subsections narrow the focus to the 2nd, 5th, and 6th sections of Ataköy, as well as their waterfront areas—these being the specific neighborhoods where interviews were conducted. The analysis examines the spatial changes that have taken place in these areas, with particular attention to the conflicts arising from waterfront development, issues of disaster and earthquake resilience, questions of public access, local protests, and the impacts on the natural environment. The discussion then turns to the current phase of redevelopment, introducing the luxury residential gated communities, hotels, and hospital projects now present in the area.Chapter 8, presents the analysis and findings derived from interviews conducted with residents, shop owners, the neighborhood headman (*muhtar*), and NGO members of Ataköy. Within the scope of the thesis, the focus is on the coastal strip of Ataköy, where two gated luxury residential projects, along with hotel and hospital developments, were completed in 2018. Since these projects are primarily located along the waterfront of the 2nd, 5th, and 6th secchaptertion neighborhoods, interviews with residents from these areas were deemed most relevant. In addition, Ataköy's 1st section neighborhood, which had previously experienced a similar transformation along its coastal strip earlier than the 2nd–5th–6th sections, provided further insights through interviews with its existing NGOs and residents.This chapter organizes and discusses the interviews by categorizing them according to each target group and by identifying key thematic areas that emerged from the analysis.Chapter 9 serves as the concluding discussion, where the findings from the neighborhood case study are summarized and critically examined. This chapter situates the results within the broader body of literature, highlighting their academic contribution and relevance. Furthermore, it provides reflections and practical suggestions for future urban transformations of a similar nature, with an emphasis on lessons learned from the Ataköy case.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

The literature review section investigates the position of the concepts related to the Ataköy case study within the academic literature and provides the reader with a background on the issues and key notions discussed throughout the thesis. This is achieved by situating these concepts within the theoretical frameworks developed by scholars and supporting them with global examples. The structure moves from the general to the specific, and in urban terms, from the large scale to the smaller scale, thereby clarifying the relevant concepts.

It begins by defining urban resilience, explaining its role in this study, and specifying in what sense it is employed. The review then elaborates on how this concept is connected to related notions such as urban form and urban transformation, which are also evident in the case study and often give rise to conflicts. The analysis outlines why such conflicts or alignments may occur and discusses the possible positive and negative outcomes.

Subsequently, the review turns to urban governance, a concept closely tied to the discussion, and addresses neoliberal urban policies as well as the forms of state-led interventions that may result in gentrification. It examines the dynamics between urban transformation and gentrification and explains their possible implications, which can also be observed in the case study.

The discussion then focuses on waterfront and coastal transformation, which is particularly relevant given that the case study area is a coastal neighborhood. The review highlights potential conflicts that may emerge in the transformation of urban waterfronts, supporting these with examples from the literature. The fact that similar conflicts are evident in the case study underscores the significance of this discussion. Moreover, the intersection of waterfront transformations with neoliberal policies is critically assessed.

Finally, the review narrows its scope to a smaller scale by addressing gated communities and luxury housing developments, which often emerge as a result of neoliberal policies or other dynamics. By examining these forms of development, the literature review section is brought to a conclusion.

2.1 Urban resilience and approaches to provide holistic resilience in socio-environmental systems

Resilience has become an increasingly relevant concept, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Glaeser, 2021). Various industries and academic experts have put forth diverse definitions to articulate the idea of resilience. Resilience is a concept studied across multiple sectors such as agriculture, biology, environmental sciences, engineering, business management, and energy. As Vale stated in 2014:

'At a time of enhanced economic insecurity in many parts of the globe, coupled with growing wariness about terrorist threats and growing impacts of climate change, it is hardly surprising that a term like resilience has found multiple resonances (Vale,2014 p. 192).'

The concept outlined here illustrates the importance of resilience in various areas of life and across different sectors. Each profession interprets and defines resilience from a unique perspective, emphasizing the need to acknowledge that resilience can be assessed using various criteria. As resilience can be measured against multiple factors—such as violence, socio-economic issues, management problems, and more—across various sectors, it is essential to consider it not only on an urban scale but also on wider global scales. Büyüközkan et al. (2022) reference the definition provided by ecologist Holling in 1973, which introduced the concept of resilience as an explanation for how ecological systems cope with risks and address the effects of challenges they face. In contrast, Turner et al. define resilience from a perspective that emphasizes the factors that enable a system to adapt to changes and disturbances. This perspective examines whether specific desired outcomes are maintained amid changes and assesses the ability to adapt and deliver these outcomes in the future. In this context, resilience refers to the capacity to tackle both present and future challenges in order to achieve desired results in the short term and long term. While there are various definitions of resilience in the literature made by the diverse scholars interested in different disciplines, as we mentioned some above, this thesis will specifically focus on Urban Resilience (UR). The aim is to enhance understanding of the importance of urban planning policies and urban morphology regarding UR, as well as the significance of ensuring resilience within socio-ecological systems (SES), such as cities, districts, and neighbourhoods.

The concept of 'resilience' has been explored across various sectors and defined by experts and scholars from different fields. While there are numerous definitions and conceptualizations of resilience, which stem from disciplines such as engineering, ecology, sociology, and development, the core of resilience theory provides valuable insights into complex socio-ecological systems and their sustainable management. This is especially relevant in the context of climate change and urban studies (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016). Resilience serves as a means to characterize

cities' capacity to effectively respond to systemic threats (Vale, 2014) .Here, Vale integrates the term resilience into complex system of the cities while (ARUP, 2014) defines UR as a concept that focuses on cities as systems that can develop capacity against possible future shocks and protect their social structure, economy, technical systems and infrastructures (Büyüközkan, Ilıcak, & Feyzioğlu, 2022). The Rockefeller Foundation (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2020) defines UR as the ability of all systems and society to adapt and grow against disasters in cities (Büyüközkan, Ilıcak, & Feyzioğlu, 2022). We should mention the approaches provided by scholars; Meerow et. al (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016) and Vale (Vale, 2014) , which emphasizes the integration of resilience into the complex social systems of a city, pointing that, it is essential for researchers and experts to tackle the fundamental question of what resilience truly means. Additionally, suggesting that, we must clarify our objectives in developing policies that promote resilience. (Vale, 2014).

The perspective developed by Vale (Vale, 2014), emphasizes the significance of understanding the target of resilience. It suggests that policymakers, urban planners, designers, experts, and researchers should consider key questions before fully defining urban resilience. Specifically, they should ask: Resilience against what or whom? For whom is this resilience intended?

Meanwhile, Brand and Jax (Brand & Jax, 2007), highlight that the concept of resilience acts as a boundary object. This term is flexible and adaptable, allowing it to be interpreted and applied across various disciplines and stakeholder groups. This flexibility enables resilience to be embraced in a wide range of academic, professional, and policy-making contexts, providing a shared yet dynamic framework for addressing complex urban challenges across diverse geographies and for different user groups. This is particularly crucial for work on cities, which function as complex systems and thus demand the collaboration of diverse disciplines and the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016).Implementing urban resilience is inherently a contentious process that involves various stakeholders, whose motivations, power relations, and compromises unfold across different spatial and temporal dimensions. Consequently, it is essential to thoughtfully examine resilience in terms of who it benefits, what it pertains to, when it applies, where it is relevant, and why it matters (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016).

Meerow et. al (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016) consider the 5Ws concerning the definitions of urban resilience found in the literature, as it is often regarded as a desirable state. However, it is important to ask who determines what is considered desirable and for whom. Urban resilience is influenced by who sets the agenda, whose resilience is prioritized, and who benefits or suffers as a result.

Another aspect is that building general adaptive capacity is more important and essential than adapting to specific threats, according to Meerow et al (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016).However, priority areas, sectors, and hazards will be different according to the different properties of each city. Contextual elements also influence the temporal and spatial dimensions in which urban resilience is implemented (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016).

Questions to Consider		
Who?		Who determines what is desirable for an urban system? Whose resilience is prioritized? Who is included (and excluded) from the urban system?
What?	**T** **R** **A**	What perturbations should the urban system be resilient to? What networks and sectors are included in the urban system? Is the focus on generic or specific resilience?
When?	**D** **E** **O**	Is the focus on rapid-onset disturbances or slow-onset changes? Is the focus on short-term resilience or long-term resilience? Is the focus on the resilience of present or future generations?
Where?	**F** **F** **S**	Where are the spatial boundaries of the urban system? Is the resilience of some areas prioritized over others? Does building resilience in some areas affect resilience elsewhere?
Why?	**?**	What is the goal of building urban resilience? What are the underlying motivations for building urban resilience? Is the focus on process or outcome?

Table 1. Fundamental questions related to Urban Resilience *(source: Meerow, Newell, & Stults, Defining Urban resilinece, A review ,2016, page 46.)*

Search for 'resilience' is alerting against a variety of challenges;security threats,economic problems, and also environmental issues and natural disasters. It has been seen that 'different threads suggest different responses to the design and habitation of public space'(Vale,2014, p. 199). When resilience is considered in socio-environmental systems like cities, it naturally intersects with the fields of planning and urbanism in two distinct ways, according to Vale (Vale, 2014). First, resilience is seen as a proactive approach. Urban planners and designers ask questions like: What actions can we take now to enable faster recovery in case of sudden disruptions? Or, in terms of cities and their neighbourhoods: What designs and policies can we establish today to make communities more energy-efficient, environmentally aware, accessible, well-managed, appealing both physically and socially, and better prepared to face climate change,

security risks, and other potential crises? This perspective views resilience as a form of resistance—a strategic effort to fortify a city, anticipating future challenges and implementing proactive solutions that improve the quality of life in both public and private spaces (Vale, 2014).

Vale adds that pursuing a type of anticipatory resilience is always complex and challenging. As anticipatory governance holds great importance in order to provide preparedness to the cities, according to a study by Boyd et al. (Boyd, Nykvist, Borgstörm, & Stacewicz, 2015),anticipatory resilience approaches emphasize the importance of proactive planning and long-term strategies in the face of uncertain future risks. Within this framework, anticipatory governance enables institutions and decision-makers to incorporate foresight into policy and urban planning, allowing them to act before crises occur. A key characteristic of this governance model is its support for participatory mechanisms, such as the 'citizens as sensors' model, which actively involves communities in monitoring, data collection, and early warning processes. This inclusive approach fosters greater responsiveness and local relevance in resilience planning. Furthermore, anticipatory governance promotes adaptive and multi-level coordination among various stakeholders, ranging from government bodies to civil society and private actors. It is typically supported by future-oriented tools—including scenario planning, risk analysis, and early warning systems—that help cities navigate uncertainty, especially being useful for unpredictable events and natural disasters, , and enhance their social-ecological resilience (Boyd, Nykvist, Borgstörm, & Stacewicz, 2015).

A more comprehensive approach to anticipatory resilience, therefore, should consider and address the needs of all affected parties (Vale, 2014). Often, however, planning and design function in a reactive mode, with planners and designers called in only after a disaster or other disruptive event has already happened. Such disasters often involve sudden crises, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, or floods, which can be worsened by poorly constructed or neglected levees and canals that were initially considered resilient measures. Meanwhile, proactive or preventive resilience requires an initial investment and tough decisions regarding which components of the built environment deserve funding, and consequently, which individuals should benefit from it. Furthermore, rapid urban development and redevelopment, viewed from the standpoint of those at the most significant risk of displacement, can also be regarded as another type of danger (Vale, 2014). The danger is not only physical displacement but also loss of their spatial centrality and valued social networks, as well as the sense of belonging for the low-income residents and businesses who are told that displacement is for their good, meaning that the displaced residents are usually promised to be moved to some place 'higher and better' in the city, but usually displacement do not benefit them (Vale, 2014). On the other hand, scholars such as

DeVerteuil et al. (2021) add that low-income residents usually benefit from ‘cast-off resilience’ and usually being neglected.

DeVerteuil et al. (DeVerteuil, Golubchikov, & Sheridan, 2021) discuss ‘cast-off resilience’ as a consequence of neoliberal policies within socio-economic systems. They argue that this form of resilience intersects with place-based needs through a hegemonic, top-down approach. It often manifests as the removal of choice, neglect of vulnerable communities, a reduction in state intervention in areas that are most in need, and a reframing of political struggle as mere survival.

DeVerteuil et al. (2021) reject the ‘all-or-nothing’ perspective, which views resilience solely as an ideological construct of historically specific neoliberalism. Instead, they propose a more critical and inclusive perspective—one that allows for a heterogeneous and transhistorical understanding of resilience. This approach acknowledges that resilience is not inherently neoliberal but is context-dependent, shaped by who employs it, how it is applied, and for what political purposes (DeVerteuil, Golubchikov, & Sheridan, 2021).

In the reactive sense, resilience in urban design and planning focuses on retrofitting and managing recovery efforts (Vale, 2014) often neglecting the anticipatory and holistic resilience of the urban area. The concept to achieve ‘resilient city’ or UR holistically, often idealized as the goal of ‘recovery’ by governments or professionals, is not bringing equitable results to socio -economic system (Vale, 2014). In this context, DeVerteuil et al. (2021) emphasize that this interpretation of resilience highlights that, it is not a post-political or neutral concept, but rather a deeply political arena—a contested and dynamic space shaped by power relations and ongoing negotiations. It challenges the notion of resilience as an inherently stabilizing or apolitical force, and instead acknowledges its potential to be instrumentalized by dominant actors for strategic purposes (DeVerteuil, Golubchikov, & Sheridan, 2021).

Vale in 2014, adds to the discussion of holistic UR, with the aspect of the concept’s political reality as follows: as the investment priorities vary and show which parts of the city -and which residents- the governments or leaders analyze as needing the most attention at a time of crisis. Political leaders' responses are most likely to vary depending on whether the crisis has already happened or is on a serious level of danger for the near future,and by highlighting the fact that different spatial areas and different social groups have roots from different foundations so the resources required to provide social groups to reach to ‘stable state’ believed to be acceptable can vary considerably. Resilience occurs within a complex landscape of risk and is closely connected to significant political decisions made by public and private leaders regarding the management of these areas (Vale, 2014).

2.2 The relationship between Urban Form& Urban Transformation and Urban Resilience & Earthquake Resilience

Urban areas are extensive, interconnected systems comprised of key elements such as buildings, infrastructure, social communities, and green spaces. These elements coexist and interact with one another, fostering vibrant and functional urban environments (Koren & Rus, 2019). It is essential to recognize that society's well-being relies heavily on the services provided by the built environment, infrastructure, and green spaces. While this connection is crucial, we should also consider how the built environment and urban form relate to urban and social resilience. There are various concerns within the urban environment, including natural disasters like earthquakes. Koren and Rus (2019) emphasize that these concerns extend beyond earthquakes to include a range of other hazards. Therefore, it is important to understand that absolute assurance of societal well-being is not feasible. Given the multitude of risks that can affect citizens' quality of life and the functionality of urban systems, rapid response and continuous adaptation are necessary to effectively manage these various stressors (Koren & Rus, 2019).

Stressors can include natural events such as earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and hurricanes, or human-induced occurrences like terrorist attacks and cyberattacks (Koren & Rus, 2019). These stressors are typically sudden events that necessitate adequate preparation and precautionary measures. It is important to emphasize that when it comes to the seismic resilience of urban areas, earthquakes—being sudden events—are a crucial factor that sets them apart from resilience against climate change, which is more frequently explored in literature and requires a prolonged approach. However, focusing solely on the after-shock phase of earthquakes or any hazard is dangerous; cities should be prepared over time and planned accordingly to achieve Urban Resilience. Ahmadi et al. in 2024 note that over 1.4 million earthquakes happen each year, and studies show that from 1998 to 2017, earthquakes resulted in injuries, fatalities, or homelessness for over 125 million individuals, and scholars continue with reminding the earthquake occurred in the southern regions of Turkey and northern Syria in February 2023. Earthquakes measured magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.6 on the Richter Scale were described as a ‘crisis with huge proportions’ and ten provinces of Turkey were removed from the map. (Ahmadi, Ghasemi, KHAVARIAN-GARMSIR, & Ahmadi, 2024).It has been two years post-earthquake since the government have been rebuilding the totally demolished cities. Emphasizing what seismic resilience suggests may help us understand that the demolished cities were not resilient or ready for earthquakes .Seismic resilience, as outlined by Ahmadi et al.(2024), refers to a system’s ability to sustain its functionality during and following an earthquake. This implies minimal interruption and the capability to revert

to its original operational condition quickly without major modifications. Additionally, seismic resilience pertains to the speed at which the system can restore normalcy after the earthquake (Ahmadi, Ghasemi, KHAVARIAN-GARMSIR, & Ahmadi, 2024).

The relationship between urban form and urban resilience is another important issue to tackle and firmly related to socio-spatial resilience and earthquake resilience in cities. There has been an increasing interest in exploring how resilience thinking can be incorporated into the examination of urban form, which will be referred to as urban morphology and/or urban form in this context. Numerous studies have been conducted to explore and clarify the connection between urban form and resilience. We need to emphasize different components of urban form to better understand the resilience process within cities and settlements. Eldesoky and Abdeldayem(2023) describe the two components as 'the primary physical elements that organize and define the city, which are interconnected in a hierarchical manner.' These can be combined to create higher-level elements such as buildings, streets, and plots.Other elements include non-physical or form-related characteristics such as density and accessibility, which are essential in shaping the overall character and design of the city. Conversely, Eldesoky and Abdeldayem observed that numerous studies indicate that urban form significantly influences the social, economic, environmental, and energy efficiency aspects of cities, making it vital for their sustainability (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023 have done a literature review on the topic and analyzed 106 publications to get the answer of the following research questions:

1.'What elements of urban form are discussed as being resilient or can enhance resilience?'

2.'Resilience to what?'

3.'Who are the different actors involved in the planning process of resilience?'

4.'Resilience for whom?'

5.'What is the resilience performance discussed ?'

6.'Resilience for when? Short term or long term?'

7. 'Resilience for where?'

8.' Is resilience being discussed or defined as a positive concept?'

And lastly 9.' Did the author(s) define what urban form of resilience is or what resilient urban forms are? (source: Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023, p.1)

To line up the questions asked by the authors is critical because all the questions they asked to summarize the resilience perspective in the current literature.

The questions are similar to those asked by many other scholars such as; Meerow et al. (2016) and Vale (2014) as we have mentioned in the prior section related to urban resilience, Eldesoky and Abdeldayem(2023) proceed with their examination by analyzing 11 elements of urban form that can improve urban resilience against various stresses and shocks.They used the hierarchical approach for classifying urban form elements, which is called the Italian school method in urban morphology. The approach highlighted that urban form elements and layers are structured in a hierarchical manner, where components at lower tiers, like plots and streets, are designed to create structures and blocks, ultimately leading to the formation of systems such as neighbourhoods or urban fabrics that make up cities (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

At the larger scale of cities, urban form relates to the overall configuration of the city, its current status, and its future growth in relation to other urban areas and settlements. At the mid and small scales, urban form pertains to the broader organization of neighbourhoods and districts.

In their review, Eldesoky & Abdeldayem identify 11 components from various scales of urban form, including the overall built environment, type of development, individual buildings, green spaces, streets, land use, blocks, urban projects, underground spaces, and plots.

The authors examined these components as they are presented in the literature, highlighting their inherent resilience (resilience of urban form) and their role in providing resilience to people facing different challenges (resilience through urban form).

The authors noted that numerous publications emphasize different scales and components; however, they revealed that the vast majority (72%) of the 76 publications focused on providing resilience through urban form, involving nearly all urban form elements. Conversely, 26 publications (24%) concentrated on the resilience of the urban form elements themselves, primarily highlighting buildings, development types, and the built environment in its entirety. Only four publications (4%) addressed both resilience through and of urban form, as they explored a range of urban form elements that can foster resilience via both approaches (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

The research primarily concentrated on adaptation, with the vast majority of the publications addressing how individuals adjust to altered circumstances. In their review, Eldesoky and Abdeldayem(2023) observed that the most commonly exemplified scenario for people's adaptation occurs in streets and open spaces, allowing individuals to reach safe destinations following disruptions such as floods, earthquakes, and similar events. The next most examined

topic concerning adaptation is the idea that urban form can adopt. Four publications centered on how elements of urban form can be modified without significant physical alterations to address various essential factors during and/or after a disturbance (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

In the review about persistence, the authors mention that the majority of published works(among the ones they included in their review with the number of 106 studies) were discussing 'how urban form can enhance people's persistent capacity during a disturbance'. Meanwhile, the rest of the publications focused on the 'persistence of the urban form elements themselves' with more than half focusing on earthquake,flood,fire proof buildings and development patterns.

Following the topic of transformability, where the publications mostly addressed 'resilience to general unanticipated disruptions to future unknown change', only two addressed resilience to climate change and gentrification by collective action (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).Most of the literature has concentrated on long-term resilience. Eldesoky and Abdeldayem noted that emphasizing short-term resilience aligns with a pathway to resilience based on persistence, while achieving long-term resilience would probably necessitate a certain level of adaptability or transformative capabilities. Enhancing short-term resilience typically addresses sudden shocks that are brief in nature, like earthquakes and terrorist incidents, whereas fostering long-term resilience is generally linked to gradual onset events caused by gradual changes over time that last longer, such as irregular immigration/migration and alterations in rainfall and temperature patterns resulting from climate change (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).Continuing with the conversation about whether resilience is perceived positively or negatively, the authors found that almost all of the 106 studies they analyzed viewed urban resilience as a positive idea and an objective worth pursuing.The research conducted by Allan et al. (2013) highlighted that enhancing the resilience—specifically, the persistence—of structures against earthquakes could result in increased environmental impacts during the construction phase. This suggests that the efforts of urban designers, engineers, and other professionals to create resilient buildings may involve trade-offs with other important aspects of resilience. Additionally, a study by Xu et al. (2020) pointed out that strengthening urban resilience to flooding on a citywide level might lead to negative consequences at the neighborhood level, emphasizing the potential trade-offs associated with resilience.

Allan et al. (2013) discuss the influence of urban morphology on socio-spatial resilience by focusing on the importance of social capital defined as ' The capacity of people to respond together… to change and disturbance… depends on social capital' (Allan, Bryant, Wirsching, Garcia, & Rodriguez, 2013, p.247). Allan et al. emphasize that small modular communities with clearly defined identities and boundaries tend to exhibit relatively high levels of social capital. This

social capital enhances feedback mechanisms and strengthens the community's adaptive capacity, allowing them to respond more quickly to sudden disturbances; the scholars specifically focus on earthquakes in their research. These spatial and social characteristics offer a valuable perspective for examining the interplay between urban space, form, and resilience.Another study that emphasizes the significance of social capital is by Sharifi et al.(2021), who analyzed urban form resilience in the city of Shiraz, Iran. Their research highlights that mixed-use urban forms contribute to resilience both explicitly and implicitly. On a direct level, these urban forms integrate various amenities and services within close proximity, allowing for faster and more adaptive responses to disruptions. Indirectly, the integration of different land uses is believed to enhance neighborhood cohesion by fostering social ties and strengthening social capital—factors that are crucial for effective recovery and community adaptability (Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021).

As Allan et al.(2013) and Sharifi et al.(2021) provide a social capital approach for the socio-spatial resilience discourse related to urban morphology, with some studies, such as Venerandi et al. (2017), focusing on gentrification and viewing urban form resilience to gentrification as a positive aspect. The authors note that this perspective emerged because gentrification was viewed as an inevitable aspect of future changes and transformations in urban areas. Although we may need to confront the adverse consequences of gentrification, such as the forced displacement of residents and the creation of marginalized groups that are unable to maintain their lifestyles within the gentrified environment, an urban form that supports physical changes and enables transformation might be unfavourable (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

In their 2021 study, Sharifi et al. conducted a detailed analysis of the impact of urban form on urban resilience. They considered various important indicators related to urban and building form, such as density, lot size, block size, block shape, the size and shape of open spaces, access to open spaces, land use mix, building structure, street connectivity, and more. In this thesis, we will focus on selected indicators pertinent to our case study and research scope, as these have been analyzed and discussed in relation to urban resilience. Starting with lot size, Sharifi et al.(2021) points out that, large land parcels designated for single uses, such as residential functions, may lead to higher building density while significantly limiting the availability of open and green spaces—elements that are vital for enhancing resilience to environmental hazards like heat stress and flooding. As a result, extensive lot sizes may pose challenges to achieving optimal urban design and spatial configurations.

For instance, empirical data from Shiraz reveals ' a strong positive correlation between lot size and land surface temperature'(Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021,p.7)suggesting that larger lots may contribute to greater levels of heat exposure.However, from the perspective of earthquake resilience, the study assumes that small lots—common in the historic urban core—are less desirable, primarily due to their association with lower structural integrity in the Iranian context. Nonetheless, this assumption does not universally hold true; a small parcel size does not inherently imply weak building performance. Therefore, context-specific factors should be carefully considered in future research exploring the relationship between lot size and seismic resilience (Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021).

Sharifi et al.(2021) add that,similar considerations apply to urban blocks, which are defined as subdivisions of the city enclosed by streets or other urban features such as green spaces. Much like individual parcels, large, densely built blocks tend to limit adaptability to gradual change, as they hinder the ability to combine or subdivide lots when necessary. These blocks are also often characterized by extended street frontages, which can reduce overall connectivity and accessibility, thereby having negative implications for emergency response and recovery efforts.

Moreover, large, impervious blocks that lack sufficient green and open spaces can exacerbate urban heat stress and flood risks, primarily by reducing surface reflectivity (albedo) and impeding water infiltration into the soil.Well-designed configurations can help minimize the adverse environmental impacts of large blocks. The same principles that apply to parcel shapes also hold true for block geometry. Thus, any assessment of the desirability of larger blocks should be made with caution, taking into account context-specific urban and environmental conditions (Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021).

The dimensions, form, and connectivity of open spaces are key factors that affect a city's ability to absorb shocks, recover effectively, and adapt over time. Open areas play a vital role in seismic resilience, primarily by facilitating efficient evacuation and supporting post-disaster recovery efforts, especially post-earthquakes. Additionally, by enhancing the permeability of the urban fabric, such spaces promote better ventilation, which in turn helps to alleviate urban heat stress (Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021). Another important factor influencing urban heat stress and thermal comfort is the height-to-width ratio of a street canyon. This ratio significantly affects thermal comfort by altering the distribution of solar radiation and airflow within the urban environment. Therefore, the depth of the street canyon should be considered not only for its impact on accessibility but also for its role in shaping microclimatic conditions, particularly concerning heat stress (Sharifi, Roosta, & Javadpoor, 2021).In the context of earthquake resilience, street canyons bordered by tall buildings can impede emergency response and recovery efforts,

especially if these structures collapse or become inaccessible. Consequently, deep and narrow street canyons are generally viewed as unfavourable from a seismic safety (Sharifi, 2019).

In summary, I have observed, as various scholars stated, that the form of urban spaces and resilience strategies within the urban areas have multiple effects on the resilience of cities, potentially guiding them toward either sustainable or unsustainable paths. The examination of urban resilience is complex and multifaceted, particularly when attempting to understand the relationship between urban layout and social issues. A significant aspect of this intricacy arises from the notion that urban form is a complex system composed of numerous interconnected elements that operate at different scales and influence one another.We should also note that the analysis by Eldesoky and Abdeldayem(2023) has indicated that resilience strategies aimed at some populations could lead to unforeseen negative effects on other groups, similar to the phenomenon of gentrification, where urban development allows for minor yet ongoing changes over time, and the transformation of facilities may become unfavourable for the original residents who frequently encounter displacement or actors may apply some transformation policies with the effort of providing UR but causes different scenarios and segregated areas within neighbourhoods, which is an important topic for the rest of the thesis as well as disaster resilience, earthquakes in particular by being mostly related to Istanbul case. As outlined by Eldesoky and Abdeldayem(2023), the goal of attaining urban resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters may result in the temporary or permanent displacement of people, especially those who are low-income or marginalized.

This section concludes by emphasizing the significance of contemplating questions concerning who, what, when, where, and why in order to implement resilience policies effectively, and even if the creation of the policies is well done, the application of the policies and practices requires a lot of attention. Finally, the review highlighted certain challenges in applying resilience thinking to urban morphology and noted that achieving resilience in urban form could lead to potential negative effects and trade-offs (Xu, et al., 2020). As well as the significance of context-related assessment and decision making on urban form and its influence on urban resilience is highlighted by the scholars we have mentioned within this section,given this complexity, it is not possible to present a singular understanding or definition of urban resilience but it is possible to provide resilience trough a comprehensive overview of the various perspectives on the subject, alongside examples of potential implications for urban planning and design practices, so that they can determine which perspective might be the most suitable to their research question and related context (Eldesoky & Abdeldayem, 2023).

2.3. Neoliberal Policies and Waves of Gentrification

Since classical antiquity, the production of urban space has been deeply shaped by the socio-economic, political, and technological dynamics of each historical period. Far from being a neutral or passive backdrop to human activity, space has always been a medium through which power is exercised, capital is accumulated, and social relations are organized. In the aftermath of World War II, and particularly from the late 1960s onward, the spread of neoliberal economic policies transformed cities across the globe, ushering in new patterns of urban development tied to market rationality and privatization. Under this paradigm, space came to be increasingly treated as a commodity—one whose design, allocation, and circulation are governed by the imperatives of capital accumulation (Lefebvre, 2017).

This section explores how urban space has been shaped and reshaped by changing modes of production, from early industrialization to late capitalism. It critically engages with theories that view space as socially produced, economically instrumentalized, and politically contested. Among these perspectives, Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as both a product and a producer of social relations has been particularly influential. For Lefebvre, space is not an empty container but a dynamic social construct, embedded in the dialectics of production, ideology, and everyday life. It possesses both use value and exchange value, and it is never neutral: it reflects the priorities of dominant forces and reproduces the relations that sustain them (Lefebvre, 2014).

By the nineteenth century, capitalist rationality had already begun to imprint itself on the physical form of cities. Grid plans, wide boulevards, and monumental façades transformed urban centres into spectacles of visibility and consumption. Projects like Haussmann's Paris restructured not only the city's infrastructure but also its social geography, pushing working-class populations to the margins and embedding the city's core in circuits of commerce and capital. These shifts laid the foundation for a modern urban condition marked by perpetual restructuring: suburbs, highways, and airports became the spatial expression of an urbanism geared toward movement, repetition, and aesthetic uniformity (Lefebvre, 2014); Sennett, 2008).

As production expanded and agricultural systems declined, cities absorbed increasing numbers of migrants, reshaping urban societies in the process. Urban space was no longer just a site of residence or labour—it became a field of symbolic and material investment. Lefebvre (2017) emphasizes the dialectical relationship between rural and urban forms, noting that industrialization did not erase preexisting spatial logics but absorbed and transformed them. Through this process, urban space came to embody contradiction: it was both historical and emergent, fixed and fluid, productive and contested.

The industrial city expanded by consuming nearby rural and semi-urban territories, establishing new settlements and eventually abandoning them in search of more profitable sites for capital accumulation. This spatial logic, as Smith argued, mirrors a migratory pattern of capital that functions like a locust swarm—settling, extracting value, and moving on to prepare for the next site of incursion (Smith, cited in Urry, 2018). In this ongoing process, urban forms extend outward, fragmenting older spatial arrangements and replacing them with new, functionally specialized zones. These transformations privileged economic efficiency over social cohesion, reinforcing socio-spatial hierarchies and intensifying inequality. Lefebvre (2017) referred to this condition as the emergence of a 'virtual object': a city that appears coherent but remains incomplete, always oriented toward what it has not yet become.

In this evolving landscape, urban centres emerged not merely as dense physical clusters but as arenas of cultural exchange, political struggle, and symbolic production. The rise of financial districts, commercial hubs, and privatized public spaces signalled a deeper entanglement between economic models and spatial form. As space became a key site for speculative investment and social control, cities also became laboratories for testing new modes of governance, surveillance, and consumption. Against this backdrop, space is best understood as a dynamic and contested domain—simultaneously shaped by structural forces and lived through everyday practices. Lefebvre (2014) underlined that spatial practices can only be deciphered through a critical reading of the space they produce. His concepts of 'conceived space' and 'spaces of representation' link abstract systems of planning and control with the lived, symbolic, and material experiences of urban life. In this sense, the modern city does not represent a fixed or unified reality; rather, it is marked by fragmentation, contradiction, and continuous transformation. Understanding this complexity requires an approach that recognizes how spatial configurations are historically constructed, politically mediated, and socially reproduced (Lefebvre, Mekanın Üretimi, 2014).

Understanding this complexity requires an approach that recognizes how spatial configurations are historically constructed, politically mediated, and socially reproduced. This perspective is particularly relevant when considering how the processes shaping urban space, such as gentrification, have evolved over time in response to broader political-economic shifts.

Contemporary gentrification differs significantly from its earlier forms. Understanding how gentrification has transformed over time and identifying the key actors and driving forces behind this transformation, requires a close examination of its historical development. Hackworth and Smith (2001) offer a periodization of gentrification into three distinct waves: the first wave, known

as *sporadic and state-led gentrification*; the second wave, referred to as *anchoring gentrification*; and the third wave, described as *gentrification returns*.

The period between 1950 and 1973 marked what is commonly known as the classical phase of gentrification. This stage was characterised by the irregular and state-led relocation of middle-class populations into inner-city neighbourhoods previously inhabited by working-class residents, leading to the renovation of older housing stock. During this period, gentrification emerged in a sporadic and disorganised manner in major cities across the United States, Western Europe, and Australia (Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

The second wave of gentrification beginning in the early 1970s and extending into the 1980s, the second wave witnessed a rapid expansion of gentrification beyond global cities to include smaller, non-global urban centres. This wave introduced a broader and more complex spatial manifestation of gentrification influenced by diverse factors (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Although the state continued to support gentrification, its role shifted from direct intervention to facilitating the activities of private developers (Zukin, 1987). At the same time, the negative social consequences of gentrification began to attract public scrutiny. In some areas, resistance to gentrification emerged, highlighting concerns such as homelessness and growing social polarization (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Moreover, the reach of gentrification extended beyond residential neighbourhoods to include adjacent cultural and historic sites.

The second wave had several distinguishing features. First, museums and art galleries became focal points for investment. Second, the connection between gentrification and global real estate systems—particularly banking and financial networks—grew stronger (Gotham, 2005). During this period, researchers advanced several influential theories to explain the mechanisms behind gentrification. Among these, Neil Smith's (1979) *rent gap theory* and David Ley's (1986) *cultural consumption theory* stand out as key frameworks for understanding the economic and cultural dimensions of the process (Smith, 1979; Ley, 1986).

From the early 1990s through the end of the decade, gentrification entered what has been defined as its third wave. In this phase, the state emerged as a central actor in facilitating gentrification. This wave was characterized by interventionist governance working in collaboration with the private sector to promote and manage gentrification processes (Lees et al., 2008). Public policy increasingly played a role in encouraging capital reinvestment in urban areas, and gentrification became more deeply entwined with large-scale capital than ever before.

With the globalization of gentrification, the phenomenon also began to manifest in increasingly diverse regional contexts. Compared to earlier phases, the third wave exhibited several notable

features. Gentrification spread beyond disinvested inner-city neighbourhoods to more peripheral and previously neglected urban zones. Larger-scale developers entered the scene, and grassroots resistance movements diminished or lost momentum. Moreover, local and national governments engaged more assertively in gentrification processes, forming growth coalitions with private interests (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Scholars during this period began to argue for the integration of both supply-side and demand-side explanations to account for the complexity of gentrification (Hamnett, 1991), highlighting the multifactorial nature of the phenomenon.

Some researchers contend that the three-wave model of gentrification is inadequate for explaining the transformations occurring after the year 2000. In particular, a new, fourth wave of gentrification is said to have emerged in the United States and other contexts during the early 21st century (Lees et al., 2008). This wave is defined by the close integration of local gentrification processes with national and global capital markets.

Scholars have also emphasized the importance of attending to the geographies of gentrification in this phase (Lees et al., 2008). Gentrification was not only encouraged and facilitated through government programs but also expanded to include socio-economic restructuring in new residential developments, retail corridors, and outlying urban neighbourhoods. The increasing financialization of the housing market contributed to the emergence of gentrification 'everywhere'—no longer confined to central districts alone.

This fourth wave relied on political support and often polarizing urban policies to expand in novel ways. The influence of middle-income groups in driving neighbourhood changes diminished, while global capital became more dominant. State institutions began to align more openly with the interests of the wealthy, reinforcing this trend through incremental shifts in political strategy (Lees et al., 2008). A notable hallmark of the fourth wave has been the proliferation of diverse forms of gentrification, which vary in scale, mechanism, and spatial location—further complicating the landscape of urban change in the contemporary era.

Aalbers (2019) identifies the emergence of a fifth wave of gentrification after 2010, grounded in the logic of financial capitalism. In this phase, the role of financial institutions and financial capital in shaping urban transformation has become even more pronounced than in previous stages. The state has integrated financial power into market mechanisms and planning processes as a means of steering gentrification. Simultaneously, the rise of global capital markets has fostered a proliferation of corporate investors, including actors tied to digital platforms such as Airbnb. This wave is also marked by increasing investment from multinational elites and upper-income groups in global housing markets (Aalbers, 2019).

A distinctive feature of the fifth wave is the emergence of environmental concerns as a new dimension of gentrification. Amid rising awareness of climate change, gentrification has begun to incorporate environmental and climatic factors, reshaping both urban space and scholarly discourse around gentrification in novel ways. Together, the five waves of gentrification described above reveal key characteristics and structural transformations of the process. Gentrification has increasingly become a global phenomenon, expanding geographically and socially beyond its original urban contexts. The influence of state power and financial institutions has grown stronger, while the leadership of market forces and urban elites has become more clearly defined. The five-wave model illustrates how the role of the state in directing gentrification has evolved to become more assertive and interventionist. As such, contemporary gentrification can be understood as both state-led and globalized, manifesting not only in urban cores but also across suburban and even rural landscapes.

2.4. The Reproduction Process of Urban Spaces in the Neoliberal Period: Gentrification Practices

Following the devastation of the Second World War, capitalist nations—confronted with widespread societal fatigue and public demands for peace, prosperity, and security—were compelled to construct programs that could offer hope for a better future (Harvey, 1997). Consequently, the post-war political agenda aimed to redress the suffering of the pre-war period and the destruction brought by the conflict through reforms that would raise living standards and stimulate economic growth. The first phase of these reforms took shape through vast reconstruction and redevelopment programs focused on war-torn cities.

From the 1970s onward, capitalism began reorganizing urban space globally through new modes of production designed to sustain capitalist social order. This restructuring, often disregarding geographic, cultural, and social distinctions, led to a radical transformation of the urban landscape. Emerging metropolitan formations, as new spatial expressions of capital, became concentrated zones of high land value, dense population, and centralized state institutions and bureaucracies. The polycentric, fluid, and flexible structure of metropolitan areas has not only rendered urban space increasingly heterogeneous but also complicated social relations.

Harvey (2010), in *Social Justice and the City*, attributes the multifaceted challenges of urban life to the city's complex nature. To attain coherent social objectives, policy interventions have aimed to reshape the spatial configuration of cities. Urban centres—where capitalism finds its most vibrant expression—have undergone extensive socio-economic, political, and spatial reconfiguration. The built environment has been reshaped through architectural and planning responses tailored to various social classes and subcultural groups, resulting in new urban forms. This restructuring of urban space and economy is a direct manifestation of capitalism's uneven development and the exploitation of rent gaps. The emergence of a service-based economy, alongside shifting lifestyles and consumption preferences, has facilitated the suburbanisation of capital (Harvey D. , 2010).

Originally emerging in Western cities during the mid-20th century, gentrification refers to the process by which historically disinvested urban areas undergo reinvestment, leading to the influx of more affluent residents and the gradual displacement of existing lower-income populations. First conceptualized by Ruth Glass to describe middle-class encroachment into working-class London neighbourhoods, gentrification has since evolved into a defining mechanism of urban change under late capitalism (Saçlı, 2019) . It is no longer confined to inner-city cores; in various forms, it has extended into suburban and even rural geographies, adapting itself to different spatial, political, and cultural contexts.

As a hallmark of 21st-century urbanism, gentrification operates both symbolically and materially to reshape the social composition of valuable urban zones. While often presented as revitalization, its underlying function is frequently the displacement of the working class—either directly through eviction and rising costs, or indirectly through cultural exclusion and socio-spatial marginalization. In global urban policy discourses, gentrification has become not just a local phenomenon but a transnational strategy for urban restructuring. Its aesthetics, logics, and promises are replicated across cities, turning once-distinct neighbourhoods into spaces of homogenized consumption and spectacle. Öncü and Weyland (2016) argue that this repetition reflects a self-reinforcing cycle wherein gentrification is no longer the outcome of organic urban change but a prepackaged formula—mass-produced, consumed, and marketed for profit. Regardless of where individuals live, dine, or socialize within globalized urban environments, the only variation is the city's physical backdrop; the socio-spatial experience itself increasingly conforms to a uniform model shaped by market-oriented urbanism (Öncü & Weyland, 2016).

Put differently, these ongoing transformations not only homogenize metropolitan centres but also generate new lines of social separation through space itself. Gentrification—an evolving process—has become normalized within the urban landscape, as huge real-estate firms, clusters of high-rise luxury apartments, and neighbourhoods of restored historic buildings now all form part of the gentrified urban geography (Sönmez, 2014). Smith (2017) describes this urban development model as 'uneven development,' a condition that is simultaneously a product of capitalist growth and its geographical foundation. Whether at the global scale—between developed and underdeveloped regions—or within a single country or city—between affluent districts and peripheral suburbs—the deep fissures that emerge are integral to the capitalist mode of expansion. The inherently unequal nature of spatial practices maps directly onto the uneven distribution of social classes within those spaces (Smith, 2017).

With the rise of the information and communication-technology sector, production functions have shifted toward service-oriented logics, and new terms such as 'world city,' 'information city,' and, most commonly, 'global city' have entered the urban vocabulary (Erbaş & Soydemir 2011). Under this banner, cities have been reshaped to attract foreign capital flows. Repackaged with a modern, high-tech image, they are marketed on the global stage. In the neoliberal order—where cities now support national economies rather than the reverse—Istanbul, too, has been positioned as a global brand. To this end, sweeping master plans envisioning a radically redesigned future for the city have been rolled out. Legal changes have opened historic districts to redevelopment; renovation and demolition projects have altered their architectural fabric, stripping many buildings of their original functions (Erbaş & Soydemir 2011).

Since the 1980s, the presence of multinational corporations in city centres has driven urban regions to rebrand themselves as global hubs. In an era when technology allows capital to extract surplus value almost anywhere, urban space has become crucial to the reproduction of capital (Torlak 2016). As the nation-state's role has waned, cities such as New York, Tokyo, London, and Istanbul have been integrated into the world economy, effectively functioning as instruments of capital. Concentrations of international finance and business services, market-oriented provisioning of residents' needs, and the organisation of collective consumption around profitability have all been woven into the fabric of these global cities. They are restructured to meet the demands of these sectors and placed in service to the global marketplace.

Cities whose images, fashions, and cultural products have become objects of marketing are now plugged into worldwide consumption networks through transnational trade (Tutar 2015). With their luxury hotels, residences, restaurants, boutiques, convention venues, and trade fairs, global cities serve as a country's window to the world, drawing both local and international visitors. Throughout this process, the mediated images disseminated via mass communication channels render the city an attractive arena for consumers on the global stage.

2.5. The Relationship between Urban Transformation and Gentrification

Gentrification shares significant conceptual and operational ground with urban regeneration, particularly in terms of their origins, policy frameworks, and spatial focus. Both processes often arise from the same macroeconomic imperatives, namely, global competitiveness, capital accumulation, and place marketing strategies aimed at attracting investment. As such, they tend to deploy similar discursive justifications, including the goals of revitalizing neglected urban areas, improving public infrastructure, and fostering urban renewal (Güzey, 2012); Couch et al, 2008). However, despite this apparent alignment, the consequences and mechanisms of gentrification sharply distinguish it from regeneration.

What fundamentally sets gentrification apart is its propensity to produce acute social and spatial segregation. While urban regeneration may yield either positive or negative outcomes depending on how it is planned and executed, gentrification almost invariably results in the exclusion and displacement of disadvantaged populations. Regeneration, in principle, aims to enhance urban quality, promote environmental sustainability, and foster social cohesion through inclusive planning. Gentrification, on the other hand, reconfigures urban space in favour of economically dominant groups, often offering them privileged access to the city's most valuable assets while pushing lower-income and culturally marginalised residents toward peripheral or deteriorated zones (Güzey, 2012; Lees et al, 2013).

This distinction lies not only in effects but also in intent. Regeneration is a policy instrument, guided by planning objectives and theoretically open to participatory governance. Gentrification, by contrast, is typically a by-product of market-oriented interventions. Although it may emerge under the umbrella of regeneration, it reflects broader neoliberal urban strategies rather than deliberate planning for social equity. In this sense, the difference is not merely one of perspective; rather, the two processes produce structurally distinct urban conditions (Couch et al., 2008).

Ultimately, while urban regeneration carries the potential for inclusive development if managed with transparency and social sensitivity, gentrification tends to crystallize inequality. When considered as a planning instrument, regeneration may be evaluated on a spectrum of success or failure based on its implementation, stakeholder engagement, and long-term social outcomes. Gentrification, by contrast, is inherently associated with exclusionary urban restructuring and is therefore often perceived as a structural failure in terms of social justice (Güzey, 2012; Lees et al., 2013).

Although both concepts aim to produce healthy urban environments with safe public spaces and high-quality building stock, gentrification distinguishes itself by routinely neglecting the participatory rights of residents, particularly low-income populations. These groups are frequently excluded from decision-making processes and, as a result, are often displaced from their neighbourhoods to peripheral or deteriorated areas. This persistent pattern of exclusion constitutes the core of the academic and political criticism directed at gentrification. From a policy evaluation perspective, some scholars suggest that the degree to which regeneration avoids producing gentrification-like effects may serve as a measure of its success. In this view, if a regeneration project strengthens social inclusion, protects affordability, and retains the resident population, it may be considered effective. Conversely, suppose the outcomes resemble those typically associated with gentrification, such as displacement, class-based spatial segregation, and cultural erasure. In that case, the regeneration process has likely failed in achieving its integrative objectives (Şahin, 2020).

The gulf between pre- and post-transformation housing and living conditions, shifting from informal, often self-built dwellings to high-end residential complexes, translates into a significant economic and lifestyle advantage for incoming populations. This stark contrast underscores the socio-spatial impact of urban redevelopment strategies. To enhance the effectiveness of regeneration, housing investment should be reframed not as a speculative opportunity but as a social responsibility aimed at improving living conditions for all residents, including those who are economically disadvantaged (Dikeç, 2001).If regeneration proceeds in a way that prevents spatial segregation and protects existing communities, the outcome should not be classified as a softened version of gentrification. Rather, it ought to be identified as a successful, socially inclusive regeneration process, one that manages to combine spatial upgrading with social stability (Şahin, 2020). In such cases, urban identity and a sense of belonging can be preserved, and lower-income residents are not compelled to leave their neighbourhoods. Instead, they may benefit from improved infrastructure, public services, and environmental quality, thereby attaining better standards of living within their own urban context. Ultimately, this approach allows for social, cultural, and economic uplift to occur without fragmenting the urban fabric or deepening inequality. Dikeç (2001) argues, the just production of urban space requires an explicit engagement with spatial equity and the lived realities of marginalized populations. In this light, regeneration that avoids displacement and reinforces the right to remain in place contributes not only to physical renewal but also to a more just urban condition. As Güzey (2012) suggests, this form of regeneration aligns with the broader goals of social integration and urban justice, reinforcing the idea that spatial transformation does not have to come at the cost of displacement or exclusion.

2.6. Some Possible Results of Urban Transformation

When urban transformation projects are implemented without adequately studying the characteristics of the urban fabric and the lived realities of its residents—neglecting their socio-economic conditions, needs, and expectations—they frequently fall short of fulfilling their stated objectives. Although the nature of unmet goals and broken promises varies depending on the specific context of each project, they often give rise to a range of spatial, social, and economic challenges. These challenges constitute what Berman (2017) has described as the 'unconcealable dark side' of urban transformation: the accumulation of unintended and, at times, deliberately overlooked consequences (Berman, 2017). These include but are not limited to social segregation, spatial fragmentation, displacement, dispossession, and the erosion of historical, cultural, and ecological values that shape urban identity. While such outcomes are frequently attributed to poor planning, they may also reflect deliberate policy choices that prioritize capital accumulation, speculative interests, or aesthetic uniformity over social equity. This section examines the forms of social and spatial disruption that lead urban transformation projects to be perceived as failures, emphasizing the mechanisms through which these impacts manifest.

Unforeseen Outcomes and Project 'Failure' Experience shows that desk-bound designs of the 'ideal' or 'best' solution do not automatically produce the best outcomes for a place or its residents. When urban transformation is planned without putting community interests first, it leads to displacement, dispossession, gentrification, and social as well as spatial segregation—outcomes that negate claims of success. Ensuring that projects are developed hand-in-hand with local inhabitants, and remain faithful to their stated goals and promises, is therefore the single most decisive factor for achieving success (Berman, 2017).

Socio-Spatial Segregation: Marcuse, as cited in Çetin (2012), identifies the root of social segregation in exclusionary practices through which one group deliberately prevents another from participating in the shared domains of social life. Segregation, in this sense, is not simply the absence of interaction but a process of active separation and boundary-making. This understanding resonates with Massey's (1990) definition of segregation as the spatial organization of populations along class, racial, or ethnic lines, resulting in structured inequalities and differentiated access to urban opportunities. While urban transformation projects are frequently presented as tools for social inclusion, in practice they often reinforce exclusion. This becomes especially apparent in marginalized neighbourhoods, where interventions impose formal spatial and aesthetic standards that disrupt existing communal relations, dismantle local cultural practices, and gradually push out vulnerable populations (Çetin, 2012; Engincan, 2015). The

outcome is a fragmentation of social life and a weakening of the collective structures that support urban cohesion.

At the same time, spatial segregation manifests through the uneven distribution of social groups across urban space. As Bektaş and Yücel (2013) explain, this involves not only physical separation but also the material imprinting of inequality onto the urban landscape. Transformation projects that demolish affordable central-city housing and replace it with high-end developments effectively encode class-based divisions into the built environment (Bayraktutan, Akbulut , & Özbilgin , 2016). As a result, lower-income residents are displaced to peripheral areas, removed from employment hubs, education, and services, thereby reproducing both spatial and social disadvantage. Together, these mechanisms constitute socio-spatial segregation, in which social exclusion and spatial displacement operate simultaneously. Rather than integrating urban populations, such projects often deepen existing inequalities by physically reorganizing the city along class lines while weakening the social networks that sustain urban life. The failure to engage with the socio-cultural and economic realities of residents during the planning process plays a central role in this outcome (Bektaş & Yücel, 2013).

Dispossession: Urban transformation projects driven by neoliberal development paradigms often result in the forced displacement of residents and the restructuring of urban space in ways that generate widespread dispossession. This phenomenon is most acutely felt by low-income communities, who are progressively removed from their neighbourhoods through a range of administrative, legal, and economic mechanisms (Üçoğlu, 2015); Engincan, 2015mar). Rather than merely unintended consequences, such processes are embedded within broader political-economic strategies that treat urban land as a site of capital accumulation.

Harvey (2017) conceptualizes this process through the notion of '*accumulation by dispossession'*, which he identifies as a contemporary extension of what Marx described as primitive accumulation. It refers to how wealth is accumulated by depriving communities of their assets—land, housing, and access to public space—often under the guise of development or regeneration. In the context of urban transformation, this translates into the large-scale appropriation of urban land and its conversion into spaces of high-end real estate, speculative investment, or infrastructure development, frequently at the expense of existing populations. This dynamic is further reinforced by the cooperation between local and central state actors, who form a hegemonic alliance that facilitates the commodification of urban land. As Erbaş and Kızılay (2015) argue, this alliance often operates with the explicit objective of generating profit through transformation projects, resulting in the systematic displacement and dispossession of vulnerable urban residents (Erbaş & Kızılay, 2015).

Displacement: Urban transformation projects that reimagine housing primarily as a marker of socio-economic status often pursue the construction of socially exclusive, 'single-class' residential enclaves. These schemes frequently target older and economically vulnerable neighbourhoods for redevelopment, displacing long-standing, low-income populations in order to make way for upper-income groups seeking secure, homogenous environments (Ayhan, 2017). The result is a cascading process through which former residents are pushed to the city's margins—areas typically lacking adequate access to jobs, infrastructure, or services.

Displacement in this context is not a singular event but a multifaceted and temporally layered process. Drawing from Marcuse's (1985) typology, four distinct yet overlapping forms of displacement can be identified:

1. Direct last-resident displacement, which occurs when the final occupant is forced to leave due to physical measures (e.g., utility shut-offs) or economic pressures (e.g., rent hikes);
2. Direct chain displacement, which accounts for earlier waves of residents who were pushed out during previous phases of neighbourhood deterioration or cost increases, long before redevelopment was formalized.
3. Exclusionary displacement, where individuals or families are denied access to housing altogether due to gentrification or abandonment, that renders it inaccessible or unavailable.
4. Displacement pressure, referring to the socio-spatial dispossession experienced by working-class communities who, while not immediately forced to leave, live under constant insecurity as their neighbourhoods undergo transformation (Marcuse, Terk etme,mutenalaştırılma ve yerinden etme: New York City'deki mekanizmalar., 2015).

This framework expands the understanding of displacement beyond visible acts of eviction, highlighting the systemic and cumulative pressures placed on vulnerable populations. Contemporary cases are especially prevalent in the aftermath of renewal projects in squatter settlements and inner-city slums (Akalın, 2016). Those affected are often individuals with precarious ties to the labour market who reside in these areas due to affordability, proximity to employment, or long-standing social and emotional connections. As Beauregard (2015) notes, for many, staying is not a choice but a condition shaped by necessity and the absence of alternatives (Beauregard, 2015).

Gentrification: Gentrification (Tulier et al., 2019) denotes the socio-spatial transformation of older, often economically marginalized urban neighbourhoods, where new investment flows in and more affluent populations begin to settle. This process typically leads to rising property values and living costs, making it difficult for long-term, lower-income residents to remain. Although sometimes portrayed as a sign of urban improvement, gentrification is closely tied to shifts in class composition, market logics, and uneven development patterns.

Urban renewal schemes that aim to attract middle- and upper-income groups to central districts often accelerate this dynamic. Even when not explicitly designed to displace, such projects contribute to increased land values and rent levels that existing residents cannot meet. As Smith (2015) points out, social displacement occurs not only through formal eviction but also via the gradual exclusion of people who no longer have the financial means to stay.

Profit-driven redevelopment strategies, combined with escalating housing costs, create an environment in which long-standing communities are replaced by newer, wealthier populations. This transition does not merely alter the built environment; it reshapes the social structure of neighbourhoods,sm often weakening local ties, eroding informal support systems, and limiting access to shared urban resources.

Sense Of Belonging: In the context of gentrification, the sense of belonging, defined as emotional attachment to place, continuity of memory, and shared cultural reference, is frequently undermined. As new, higher-income populations move in and neighbourhoods are physically and symbolically restructured, long-term residents may experience a rupture in their relationship with the urban environment. This dislocation is not always physical; even when residents remain in place, the surrounding cultural and social codes may shift so dramatically that a once-familiar space becomes unrecognizable (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

The loss of locally rooted institutions, such as neighbourhood cafés, corner shops, and informal gathering places, disrupts everyday routines and shared social interactions that once sustained a cohesive sense of community. According to Güzey (2012), regeneration projects that prioritize market value over local identity often erode the intangible yet vital dimensions of place-based belonging. When place becomes a product rather than a lived context, it loses its ability to nurture social integration and psychological stability.

Alienation (Social and Spatial): Gentrification also produces distinct forms of alienation, both social and spatial. Social alienation manifests when long-standing residents no longer see themselves reflected in the public life, commercial patterns, or aesthetics of their neighbourhoods. As newer, wealthier groups occupy the social landscape, working-class or marginalized populations may feel

increasingly out of place, even if they are not forcibly displaced (şa, 1985). This sense of being 'left behind in place' is intensified when urban change happens without meaningful participation from existing residents.

Spatial alienation, in turn, refers to the symbolic dispossession that occurs when familiar spaces are redefined through privatization, surveillance, or exclusive design. Lefebvre (2014) argues that the commodification of urban space transforms it from a domain of lived experience into a functional asset for capital, severing the connection between people and their environments. As Dikeç (2001) notes, spatial justice is compromised when the imperatives of investment and image-making overwrite the everyday geographies of marginalized populations.

Loss of Historical and Natural Assets: Projects originally justified as vehicles for conserving and integrating historic or cultural fabric often undermine those very assets once profit and economic growth take precedence (Ertaş, 2011). Even if preservation is stated as an objective, prioritising revenue during implementation erodes the historical and environmental character of the locale.In conclusion, it's essential to acknowledge that urban transformation and development projects do not always yield negative outcomes. We have discussed concepts related to our case study, and it is clear that the outcomes of urban transformations depend on various contexts, characteristics, and the specific goals of each project.

2.7. Effects and importance of waterfront area transformations and conflicts : Neoliberal Policies, Public Access to waterfront and public benefit

The transformation of urban waterfronts has become a trend since the 1970s, with these areas facing unique challenges as they serve as borders between land and water in cities. Researchers highlight that there is competition for waterfront spaces, the public's demand for access to coastlines, the economic significance of waterfronts, and the preservation of biodiversity in these natural resources have all become crucial topics in urban policy (Avni & Teschner, 2019)The transformation of waterfronts is crucial in this thesis, as Istanbul, surrounded by the sea and numerous water bodies, includes a case study in a waterfront of Ataköy neighborhood.

The processes of transforming waterfronts entail negotiating a complicated array of power dynamics among public and private entities functioning at various scales, as well as among different types and levels of government agencies (Avni & Teschner, 2019). This complex nature of the process may create many conflicts in terms of many different aspects such as;land ownership, historical heritage,culture,social and environmental justice,and environment,ecology and resilience (Avni & Teschner, 2019). Depending on the context structure, planners, related authorities, and society worldwide experience diverse results from transformation processes, either good ones or bad ones.

Avni and Teschner(2019) underline the importance of comprehending the meaning of the term ‘waterfront,’ as it is a broad concept in urban terminology that includes a wide range of definitions based on the specific landscape and environment, with key examples being riverfronts, harbour fronts or ports, coastal areas, and beaches. They characterize waterfronts as a distinctive type of urban zone that serves as both a part of the city and is adjacent to a significant body of water. This definition underscores one of the primary concerns regarding waterfront redevelopment: the relationship between water and its interaction with the built environment and nature (Avni & Teschner, 2019), meanwhile Davidson(2019) describes waterfront as; *‘a space where water(i.e:river,lake,sea,ocean) meets with urbanized land, creating a unique spatial interface.*’(Davidson,2019,p.1)

Avni and Tescnher(2019) emphasize that it is not optimal to classify waterfront redevelopment projects under a single framework or theme, as waterfronts vary in scale, usage, purpose, geographic context, and organizational structure. It is also important to highlight the key common features that distinguish waterfront redevelopments as a unique type of urban renewal: they are often seen as the face of the city and are highly visible; waterfronts act as major hubs for production, consumption, and tourism; they also contribute to the city’s inventory of open and

green spaces, typically appreciated for their sensory and physical attributes and their role as gathering places for the community. Being one of the best locations in the cities creates disadvantages due to conflicts over the use of space for waterfronts. (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

The significance of conflicts over space, particularly regarding land use, stems from the historical context in which waterfronts were predominantly used for production. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, industrial development occurred in waterfront areas, creating a legacy that continues to shape contemporary urbanism (Davidson, 2019). During the latter half of the 20th century, the decline of industrialized economies led many urban waterfronts into a state of neglect. The once-thriving industrial and commercial facilities that lined these areas became abandoned, underutilized, and deteriorated. As investment withdrew from waterfront zones, the remaining communities were often confronted with widespread unemployment, economic decline, and escalating social challenges (Davidson, 2019).

After the decline, global competition to make waterfronts more attractive has begun. City and central governments have formulated renewal efforts influenced by the effects of globalization (Davidson, 2019).As we have mentioned, since the 1970s, urban waterfronts worldwide have undergone extensive redevelopment. In response to intense global competition among port cities to remain integrated within international trade networks, outdated port infrastructure has been replaced by modern facilities. Meanwhile, centrally located brownfield sites have increasingly been overseen by semi-public redevelopment agencies granted considerable authority to convert these areas into hubs of commercial activity and high-end residential developments (Davidson, 2019).

P.Boland et al.(2017) highlight that, Competitiveness serves as a central conceptual and policy mechanism within neoliberal frameworks.

Bristow (2010) discusses how the idea of promoting competitive firms—and consequently competitive national economies—serves as a prevailing narrative that is rarely questioned in global policymaking. This is particularly evident in the field of spatial planning, which has undergone significant neoliberal transformation (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, 2010). Gunder (2010, p. 308) states that planning acts as “the ideology of contemporary neoliberal space,” thereby facilitating and sustaining neoliberal agendas. Throughout Europe, neoliberal thinking has increasingly attracted urban planners and transformed planning paradigms. (Boland, Bronte, & Muir, 2017).

In discussing high-end residential developments, which are closely related to our case study, Usher (2025) highlights a rising trend occurring worldwide. With the introduction of waterfront housing, leisure destinations, businesses, and cultural festivals, water quality has become a

significant policy issue as cities strive to leverage their natural environmental assets for downtown revitalization. Originally emerging in North America, the concept of waterfront regeneration has transformed into a widely embraced urban renewal strategy across the globe, impacting cities such as Liverpool, Istanbul, Barcelona, Zanzibar, Melbourne, Hamburg, and Cape Town. In some urban centers, this trend has progressed to include artificial beaches equipped with sand, lounge chairs, and umbrellas, showcasing an intense pursuit of global prestige through aesthetic mimicry (Usher, 2025).

Another relevant context is Malta with the rise of Luxury residential buildings at the waterfronts of the island; As tourists increasingly develop a preference for luxury and attempt to emulate prestigious lifestyles as a means of acquiring social status, luxury residential developments continue to expand. However, over time, these developments begin to cater to a broader and more varied clientele. The rise in short-term rentals may dilute the exclusivity and perceived prestige associated with such high-end living experiences, potentially undermining the symbolic value and quality of the properties. Moreover, this trend could exacerbate existing social inequalities between long-term residents and newly arrived populations, and may also generate tensions between transient groups and established local communities (Speake & Kennedy, 2019).

Studies examining Malta's waterfront development in relation to neoliberal urban governance and tourism policies (Speake & Kennedy, 2019; Billiard, 2014). Speake and Kennedy (2019) analyse the case of Portomaso and its regeneration for tourism purposes in Malta. They emphasize that waterfronts serve as centres for tourism and attractions, noting that regeneration efforts have significant potential to mitigate or even reverse urban decline.

In this context, adopting more flexible and responsive waterfront development models can provide nuanced solutions to emerging challenges, such as demographic aging, decreased competitiveness, and the erosion of both absolute and relative prosperity. A key component of these adaptive strategies involves broadening the investor base beyond initial elite stakeholders by targeting emerging market segments. Additionally, integrating alternative tourism models and diversifying tourism offerings to align with a wider range of visitor preferences may enhance resilience and ensure long-term sustainability in waterfront regeneration projects (Speake & Kennedy, 2019).

It is clear that, waterfront developments demonstrate varying degrees of resilience and adaptive capacity when confronted with actual or potential adverse changes. For individual projects, the primary challenge lies in maintaining sufficient resilience to respond to the evolving—and often volatile—demands of the real estate and tourism sectors (Speake & Kennedy, 2019).

Waterfront developments continue to serve as a driving force for economic growth and enhanced competitiveness within an increasingly globalized market .However, within the framework of neoliberal regeneration strategies, such developments frequently reinforce existing politico-economic hierarchies, sustain socio-spatial arrangements, and replicate traditional patterns of resource distribution (Speake & Kennedy, 2019).

This top-down, economically motivated model of waterfront transformation has faced considerable criticism for disregarding local cultural and ecological contexts. Critics argue that heritage and sense of place are often diluted and commodified through opaque public–private partnerships (Oakley & Johnson, 2013). In this way, the redeveloped waterfront has come to symbolize global urban renewal under post-Keynesian neoliberal capitalism, representing a prototypical "new urban space" and serving as an innovative solution for capital accumulation (Brenner, 2019).

Over the past fifteen years, financialization has reshaped state-led entrepreneurial strategies, encouraging increasingly speculative and high-risk investments. These practices frequently rely on real estate speculation and the monetization of land assets (Peck & Whiteside, 2016; Van Loon, Oosterlynck & Aalbers, 2019).

Usher (2025) emphasizes the role of governments in applying neoliberal policies to waterfront urban transformations, using Singapore as a key example. The development of waterfront areas in Singapore should be understood within the broader context of state-led land consolidation and real estate expansion. These strategies serve as tools to reshape the urban landscape in favor of service industries, tourism, and high-value property markets (Usher, 2025). Usher (2025) argues that the state has strategically transformed water into an economic asset, using it as a tool for property-driven urban regeneration, particularly in waterfront areas. This transformation generally leads to the commodification of these waterfront spaces, resulting in gentrification. While commodification views water as a finite, consumable good that can be bought, sold, and exchanged—which raises concerns about privatization and profit-making—assetization offers a different perspective. In this context, water is not directly consumed; instead, its flows, storage systems, and related infrastructures are treated as economic assets intended to provide long-term returns, similar to land, real estate, or other forms of fixed capital.

This shift highlights how state authorities are increasingly managing natural resources based on their financial value, particularly through frameworks such as green-blue infrastructure planning and natural capital accounting. Langley (2021),have pointed out that this trend highlights a significant gap in critical political economy, as the focus still largely remains on commodity production, neglecting how nature itself is being financialized (Langley, 2021).

As urban infrastructure becomes more interconnected with global finance, natural systems—especially water—are also being repurposed as mechanisms for generating rent (Nelson & Bigger, 2022) (Usher, 2025). Usher(2025) explores the interconnection between state-led processes of assetization and gentrification, particularly at the meso-scale of urban development, where planning, investment, and design converge (Birch & Ward, 2024)in his article and examines the Luxury residential buildings along the waterfront of Singapore (Usher, 2025).

Additionally, conflicts over land use arise from fragmented authority (Avni & Teschner, 2019), which refers to the public or private ownership of land, as well as the existence of a port management authority. In other words, different segments of land can be owned and managed by various public entities. This fragmentation necessitates extensive resources for coordinating and involving stakeholders. Moreover, the classification of land as publicly owned does not ensure that governments will act in the interest of the public or that they will consider local stakeholders in the planning processes for redevelopment along the waterfront (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

As previously noted, it is crucial to take into account the earlier phases of waterfront areas. The importance of heritage, identity, and culture has been emphasized by Avni and Teschner (2019), highlighting planners' attempts to connect with distinctive built and human environments. However, despite these efforts by planners,the prevailing market-driven approach to waterfront redevelopment projects worldwide can conflict with the preservation of historical sites (Avni & Teschner, 2019). This conflict not only causes the loss of historical identity but also affects the current identity of the society and culture in some cases;Paceville case examined by Billiard(2014) highlights the loss of connectivity at city center for tourism initiatives. In this matter, reclaiming local history,authenticity ,and cultural identity is an important feature of waterfront developments. Avni and Teschner(2019) illustrate the Singapore Riverside case as presented by Chang and Huang (Chang & Huang, 2011), highlighting that tourists and residents may have differing expectations concerning their interests in the waterfront. While visitors are drawn to vernacular architecture, local cuisine, and traditional boats, residents prefer modern, global dining options and amenities. When it comes to globalization, coastal developments offer cities various opportunities as different urban areas adopt similar development strategies, resulting in the replication of similar environments that fit a universal waterfront image. Nevertheless, changes to waterfronts should not focus exclusively on attracting tourists or catering to globalization; a balance needs to be achieved to meet the diverse needs of the various groups that visit the waterfront (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

Waterfront developments are often designed to meet the diverse groups of communities by promoting social and environmental equity, primarily through the creation of high-quality public spaces and ensuring access to nature. However, these projects do not always unfold in a socially equitable manner; more frequently, they result in exclusive, upscale environments that primarily serve higher-income groups, thereby marginalizing many individuals from the revitalized urban spaces (Avni & Teschner, 2019). Studies such by ;Bjerkeset& Aspen(2017),Boland, Morante and Muir(2017),have increasingly interpreted waterfronts as products of neoliberal and entrepreneurial urbanism , leading to the privatization of public space and the displacement or exclusion of long-term residents, as discussed in earlier sections (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

It is important to note that waterfront developments can have positive effects as well, especially when guided by appropriate indicators and core principles, benefiting the community when it is planned for the public good.Urban transformation can have both positive and negative consequences, which vary depending on specific cases and global contexts (Avni & Teschner, 2019). In the redevelopment project of Istanbul's Golden Horn Cultural Valley (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012), for instance, there has been an enhancement in economic vibrancy and an increase in public cultural amenities. However, the rapid pace and scale of development have posed a threat to the preservation of historic waterfront neighbourhoods.According to the analysis by Anderson and Røe (2016) (Andersen & Røe, 2016), although the aim of the Barcode project in Oslo's waterfront was to ensure social sustainability and equity, the architects did not prioritize these aspects during the design phase, focusing instead on creating spectacular architecture. Consequently, while the waterfront development delivered beautiful views, recreational spaces, public enjoyment, and architectural excellence, it revealed that even when planners and policymakers claim a commitment to justice in waterfront initiatives, the outcomes indicate that these redevelopments still pose a threat of displacement to marginalized residents (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

The natural environment of urban waterfronts offers numerous advantages, such as spaces for leisure, reflection, and stunning views, as well as the fact that living in coastal settlements offers notable health and environmental benefits, as stated by Gedikli (2011) the natural movement of wind and waves helps prevent the accumulation of urban solid, liquid, and gaseous waste. Additionally, coastal cities often have an advantage when it comes to designing wastewater systems, as their geographical location allows for more efficient planning (Gedikli, 2011). Cities situated on or near water—such as Venice and Bangkok—have historically leveraged the cleansing power of wave action, allowing them to avoid investing in expensive sewage infrastructure. From an ecological perspective, coastal settlements are also advantageous in terms

of energy flows, nutrient availability, natural productivity, and the diversity of ecological functions (Timmerman & White, 1997 as cited in Gedikli,2011).; however, often neither the community nor the entire ecosystem reaps these benefits (Avni & Teschner, 2019). This typically occurs for two main reasons: first, these areas have frequently been left in a compromised condition because of previous industrial activities, which are considered significant, and urban waterfronts play crucial strategic and economic roles at urban, regional, and national levels. The second reason is- in some cases- wrong or deficient application of urban transformation practices, we should emphasize the interconnected nature of different factors and stakeholders within the urban environment, neglecting one important aspect to achieve the prioritized one, might cause issues in the future (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

2.9. Gated Communities and Luxury Housing

Gated communities became a worldwide trend since the 1990s (Roitman, 2010; Le Goix & Webster, 2008). Le Goix& Webster(2008) highlights the emergence of gated communities, was most rapid in the United States and Latin America, where both media and scholars were quick to interpret the trend as a manifestation of security-driven, privatized urban development. This sparked widespread criticism, with concerns raised about increasing social fragmentation, uncontrolled spatial segregation, urban withdrawal, and the erosion of traditional civic structures. For many, gated communities came to represent a shift from citizenship grounded in participation and collective voice to one defined by withdrawal and market-driven individualism. Although much of the discourse on gated urbanism originated from American contexts, the actual development of such communities has distinct historical and cultural roots in different regions and countries around the world (Le Goix & Webster, 2008).

Roitman(2010) mentions that while defining gated communities, there are some discussions since these types of residential developments do not consistently foster a genuine sense of 'community' among residents, it is worth questioning whether the term *community* is truly appropriate in this context. In response to such concerns, some scholars opt for alternative terms such as *gated residential developments* or *condominiums* (Roitman, 2010) as well as braded housing (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).This discussion underlines the context related nature of gated communities as mentioned by Le Goix & Webster(2008), The existence of gated communities as a result of neoliberal policies and globalization of economy -as cited by Roitman (2010)-has effects on urban social fabric and the city structure (Sassen, 1994).Adding that, economic globalization has significantly impacted the real estate sector, leading to a substantial rise in both domestic and international investments in upscale residential and commercial developments (Sassen, 1991) (Roitman, 2010). Within this context, Sassen (1994) observed that many real estate developers have increasingly withdrawn from low- and middle-income housing markets, instead targeting the growing demand from affluent professionals. This demographic not only possesses higher purchasing power but also seeks residences equipped with superior infrastructure and services—making gated communities a preferred choice for such high-income groups (Sassen, 1994). Additionally, foreign investment has facilitated the spread of global urban trends. The gated community model, once predominantly associated with the American urban landscape, has now been widely adopted in various global cities, as developers continue to promote and replicate this housing typology internationally (Roitman, 2010).

We should emphasize Roitman's (2010) perspective on the representation of gated communities in the literature. Some scholars highlight the advantages of this concept, while others point out its disadvantages. In this thesis, the focus on either the advantages or disadvantages(see image) will be based on the responses from the community and the insights provided by the interviewees. In this section, we will examine various coincidences and the reasons behind the emergence of gated communities in different contexts, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of this concept.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. High standards of living	1. Homogeneity-loneliness-polarisation
2. Security	2. Segregation
3. Available playgrounds for children	3. No ethnicity no social diversity
4. Reduce traffic in the neighbourhood	4. Single-use zones
5. Safety, limited urban crime inside	5. Private public space
6. Sense of community- common use of recreational areas	6. Huge traffic jam moved from inner city to the outer city
7. Different scaled settlements	7. Reduction of civil involvement
8. An Increase in property values	8. No payment for the entire network
9. Private governance	9. Alienation of residents
10. Private public service	10. Local solution-response
11. New employment resources	11. No public transit inside
12. The Best quality of infrastructure	12. Displacement of the crime
13. Privacy	

Table 2.Advantages and disadvantages of gated communities *(source: Gülümser, 2005,p.21)*

The influential work of Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder (1997), as cited in Le Goix and Webster (2008), played a pivotal role in shaping academic discourse on gated communities. Their analysis adopted a primarily morphological perspective, defining gated communities as residential areas enclosed by walls and equipped with security infrastructure that restricts public access. In this sense, such neighbourhoods symbolize the privatization of what would otherwise be public space. Unlike standard apartment complexes or secured housing developments, gated communities often include shared amenities such as streets, parks, sidewalks, and even beachfronts—facilities that are typically accessible to all in most urban contexts (Le Goix & Webster, 2008).

Raposo (2006) focuses on 'the commodification processes and the the aestheticization practices that shape gated communities and on the way these are connected to their segregational dimension, which is illustrated through the case of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area' (Raposo, 2006,p.43). Raposo(2006) explains two different types of gated communities; this form of residential development can encompass a range of housing types—including detached, semi-detached, row houses, or apartment complexes—and is generally characterized by three key features: (1) privately owned or de facto privatized shared amenities (such as streets, green spaces, pools, tennis courts, or golf courses); (2) controlled access and physical barriers like walls or gates that restrict permeability (Luymes, 1997); and (3) collective private ownership or exclusive access to open spaces (Raposo, 2006).

In some metropolitan areas, such as the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, there are developments initially constructed as gated communities that also enclose areas legally designated as public, including streets and parks. Although these spaces remain technically open to the public, in practice, they are restricted and function as privatized areas. A similar phenomenon has been described in Madrid, where Wehrhahn (2003) coined the term 'pseudo-gated communities' for such cases (Raposo, 2006).

This definition encompasses both purpose-built gated communities and those that emerge socially. The latter refer to areas that were not gated initially but have been transformed through the collective efforts of residents seeking to establish greater security. These socially emergent developments, though fewer in number, often emulate the formal characteristics of commercial gated communities. However, they differ significantly in terms of social composition—often serving less affluent populations—and raise distinct issues related to governance, legal status, and community dynamics (Raposo, 2006).

Crucially, emergent gated communities tend to arise in contexts marked by heightened insecurity, crime, or deteriorating living conditions. Unlike commercial developments, they are not driven by real estate speculation and are typically not subject to the same commodification and aestheticization practices. While some may incorporate market-based elements like private security services, their primary motivation is not profit, but rather collective action and a response to local social realities (Raposo, 2006).

In the USA context,in some cases, gated communities emerge with concerns of crime and security Branic&Kubrin (2017), examines the relationship between crime and gated communities in Orange County,California, mention that for many, the term 'gated community' brings to mind images of wealthy, peaceful, upper-class neighborhoods.

However, in reality, these communities exhibit far more demographic diversity, a point highlighted in Blakely and Snyder's (1997) ,as cited in Branic&Kubrin(2017), definition. Sanchez et al. (2005: 285) emphasize that gated communities often include both homeowners and renters, noting that these two groups display significantly different demographic characteristics. Their findings also show that socioeconomic status and income levels can vary widely between different gated communities—an observation echoed in other studies (e.g., Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Stark, 1998; Wilson-Doenges, 2000) (Branic & Kubrin, 2017). Thus, the commonly held assumption that all gated communities are affluent enclaves is inaccurate. Rather, affluent gated developments represent just one subtype within a broader spectrum. This variation across communities also implies that neighbourhood-level dynamics—such as patterns of social organization or local crime—can differ substantially depending on the specific characteristics of each gated development (Branic & Kubrin, 2017). On the other hand, Kuppinger(2004) defines the process that took place in Los Angeles as follows: over the past two decades, privatization and spatial fortification policies have profoundly reshaped urban environments, as exemplified by the case of Los Angeles. Social anxieties—particularly fear of crime—have served as a major driving force behind these changes. Kuppinger (2004) cites that according to Mike Davis(1992), the city has become divided into two distinct 'humanities': one consisting of elite groups navigating high-security, aesthetically designed spaces, and the other, marginalized lower classes excluded from these zones. Rather than merely policing public spaces, the current trend emphasizes spatial segregation and the creation of exclusive, fortified enclaves for the privileged. As a result, cities are increasingly evolving into socially fragmented and security-driven landscapes (Kuppinger, 2004).

Kuppinger(2004) defines the evolution of gated communities; The concept of using physical barriers like walls and gates to safeguard property and lifestyle is far from modern. Throughout history, humanity has consistently expressed fear—both tangible and abstract—of outsiders and potential intruders. Medieval cities in Europe, as well as historical urban centers in regions like China and the Middle East, fortified themselves with impressive walls and gates to protect against external threats (Kuppinger, 2004).On a more personal scale, elites such as monarchs and nobility frequently employed walls and fencing to secure their residences. However, in pre-modern times, urban life was generally safe for most inhabitants, and such defensive measures were limited to a small privileged class (as cited in Kuppinger (2004);Ellin 1997:13).

With the onset of industrialization and the rapid urban expansion that followed in Europe and the United States, this sense of safety began to erode. The growing bourgeoisie found themselves living in much closer proximity to working-class populations than the aristocracy had in previous centuries (Kuppinger, 2004). As their numbers and influence increased, they sought to express their social distinction—both from one another and from the lower classes—by building large, private homes, often surrounded by protective barriers. Their unease about urban proximity and the transformations of the urban landscape sparked a revaluation of urban design and policy. As a result, cities adopted new models of spatial planning and control that differed radically from earlier approaches (Kuppinger, 2004).

On the other hand, in addition to concerns about crime and security, the emergence of gated communities can also be attributed to a desire for exclusivity, a better lifestyle, higher status and social distinction (Roitman, 2010); Kuppinger (2004) analyses case of the liberalization of desert land ownership regulations led to the rapid emergence of luxury gated communities around Cairo. These developments were spatially and socially distanced from the city and were marketed as safe, exclusive enclaves guaranteeing a secure lifestyle away from the urban core. His study highlights that, particularly from the mid to late 1990s, there was an unprecedented boom in new desert settlements, especially in high-end gated housing projects (Kuppinger, 2004).

Kuppinger(2004), emphasizes that these projects were deliberately branded with names in Arabic, English, or a mix of both—such as *El Masreen Gardens*, *Solaimania Gardens*, and *Al Yasmein Green Land*—to appeal to various class and cultural distinctions. These naming strategies reflect both a targeting of diverse consumer identities and a desire for symbolic positioning on a global map. While the design, social vision, and level of exclusivity vary significantly across developments, Kuppinger underlines that they all tend to offer a similar set of promises: abundant green space, a healthy environment, a high-quality lifestyle, comfort, convenience, access to community services, and a peaceful, quiet atmosphere (Kuppinger, 2004).

Giroir(2011) examines the typology of hyper-luxurious gated communities in China,defines the typology as; one of the most striking expressions of wealth among the ultra-rich is their investment in ultra-exclusive villa properties. Girior(2011) emphasizes that, this trend, often referred to as ‘residential hyper-luxury,’ has become a distinct area of academic inquiry. These extravagant villa compounds are typically located within gated and highly secured communities, yet they go far beyond the scope of standard luxury housing developments. More than just lavish architecture, these properties offer a glimpse into the fantasies, aspirations, and values of the elite, reflecting how they envision prestige and lifestyle (Grioir, 2011).

As noted by Roitman(2010) and Khamis et al.(2023), gated communities may provide some benefits such as; privacy, protection of property values, safety,and often attraction of upgraded services and infrastructure tailored to their residents, which can lead to positive effects such as boosting nearby economic activity and driving up surrounding property prices (Roitman, 2010). Roitman (2010) also highlights certain positive political aspects of gated communities, such as encouraging political involvement and civic participation among residents. Additionally, these communities may reduce the administrative burden and challenges typically faced by local governments.

Meanwhile, some scholars argue that gated communities increase a sense of community within its borders Arizaga (2005) as cited in (Roitman, 2010). Khamis et al.(2023) have observed that, users tend to engage in social interaction primarily for safety-related or superficial reasons, rather than forming meaningful relationships. This is reflected in the noticeable decline in activities like visiting neighbors, exchanging favors or gifts, and casual conversations. Social indicators, such as community participation and interaction, disrupt the otherwise high satisfaction associated with physical aspects of the living environment. This highlights residents' concerns regarding these crucial social elements, within the gated communities of Cairo (Khamis, Elshater, Afifi, & Baher, 2023).

On the other hand Roitman(2010) lists the negative social results of gated communities,mentioned within the literature as follows; ‘(a)stimulation of social tensions between the inside and outside(b) the elaboration of ‘otherness’ as dangerous(c) encouragement of urban social segregation.’ (Roitman, 2010,p.36)The spatial, economic, political, and social impacts of gated communities underscore the multifaceted nature of urban development and highlight how these dimensions interact within the realm of urban planning (Roitman, 2010). As expected, existing literature presents a mixed view of the proliferation of gated communities, citing both advantages and disadvantages depending on the context,aim and social dynamics and underlining that gated communities are good investment ways for some cases for investors and states and are the localized versions of global trends (Kuppinger, 2004) . On the positive side, researchers have pointed to benefits such as stimulating local economic growth, generating employment—particularly in low-skilled sectors—enhancing the efficiency of managing private shared services, and providing high-quality, well-maintained environments.Conversely, the negative consequences include the fragmentation and privatization of urban space, increased reliance on private vehicles, the weakening of democratic participation and civic identity, and the promotion of social divisions and exclusion (Roitman, 2010). In the upcoming sections of this thesis we will be examining the gated communities in the Turkish context with a spesific focus on Istanbul.

Chapter 3-Methodology

The methodology section meticulously details the research process and methods employed to comprehensively understand the processes of Urban Transformation took place in Istanbul at multiple levels-country,city ,district, and neighborhood scale, with a specific focus on Ataköy's coastal strip. The research aims to address two key questions : In the case of Ataköy 2-5-6th neighbourhood, how has the neoliberal transformation of the coast affected the neighborhood's socio-spatial cohesion, how do long-term residents perceive these changes, and what are the consequences?How do these projects influence the effectiveness of Istanbul's earthquake resilience efforts?

The case study of Ataköy was chosen for its significance as Istanbul's first mass housing project, designed with sustainable principles and a modernist approach. The project, implemented over several years, was influenced by several urban planning policies. The construction of Branded housing in the waterfront area of Ataköy in 2018 is a key example of Istanbul's transformation and ongoing development discourse in the city, aimed at providing urban resilience. After 7 years of development, it is crucial to analyse the social response and the effects on the resilience of the area.

3.1. Research Tools

To answer these questions comprehensively, this research adopts a mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with residents of Ataköy to understand their experiences and perceptions of coastal transformation. Quantitative data, such as demographic statistics and land-use changes, were obtained from official sources (e.g., TÜİK, AFAD) to complement and contextualize the qualitative findings. The integration of these methods aims to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the socio-spatial effects of coastal redevelopment. This study also employs document analysis to examine planning documents, national and local development strategies, legal regulations such as the Coastal Law, Urban Transformation laws and regulations and related urban policy documents.

These sources are used to trace institutional narratives, legal justifications, and changes in land use policies that have shaped the transformation of Ataköy's coastal area.This involved a study of historical contexts, maps, and the background information of Istanbul,Bakırköy, and Ataköy. Including the analysis of news reports and online media content, on-site observations, visual documentation, and the review of official planning documents,statistical reports, development

plans, and relevant urban policy frameworks. These tools were instrumental in contextualizing the socio-spatial transformation processes in the Ataköy district.

3.2. Analysis Methods

To interpret the diverse forms of data collected, this study employed a qualitative and interpretive analytical approach. The methods of analysis included:

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, narratives, and resident perceptions regarding coastal transformation and access issues;

Content analysis of media sources and policy documents to understand how public discourse and institutional narratives have shaped the transformation of the Ataköy coastline;

Spatial analysis through the comparison of historical and contemporary maps and satellite imagery, focusing on changes in land use, public access, and privatization, from the existing literature;

Discourse analysis, particularly applied to planning documents and promotional materials of branded housing projects, to examine how policies is used to justify or market spatial changes;

Comparative analysis between field observations and the narratives found in official documents and public discourse, to assess conflicts and alignments in representations of Ataköy's coastal transformation.

3.3.Interviews

The primary empirical method was conducting semi-structured interviews with 2-5-6th section neighbourhoods' residents, commercial workers, and NGOs. These interviews provided in-depth insights into how the local population perceives and experiences the effects of urban transformation and branded housing projects.

The secondary data was used to provide background information on the present circumstances of the case study area. The research aims to understand today's situation in the transformed area, meaning the social response and ideas of residents and different stakeholders in the area.

In this process, in April and May 2025 interviews made with the residents of Ataköy, mostly the old ones in terms of the years they have been living in the area, commercial owners/ operators, real estate companies, and NGOs such as Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association, Bakırköy Urban Council as they participated at the protests in 2013-2014, as well as the local management of 2-5-6. Parts neighbourhood of Ataköy, which is called ' muhtarlık' in Turkish, is the smallest management level coming after the Municipality in the neighbourhood level.I should indicate that

for this research topic , the Ethnographic approach was very useful in order to understand the characteristics and changing dynamics of the area , as I have visited the neighbourhood multiple times,got in touch with the actors, and observed the differences between the new development by the coast and the old neighbourhood of Ataköy. determination of participants,done after the observation and research about the area. NGOs chosen as they have participated at the protests to stop the coastal transformation in 2013-2014. In addition to their involvement in the coastal transformation and subsequent planning processes, as well as their advocacy for participatory urban planning, the selection of NGOs is also significant in terms of both scale and scope of activities. More specifically, the Bakırköy Urban Council, established in 2012 by the then-mayor of Bakırköy, aimed to promote participatory urban planning and community involvement, while addressing local needs and ensuring the protection of the natural environment at the district scale,as they have expressed in the interviews, the council works as non-governmental organization since 2015. The Ataköy I. Part Neighbourhood Preservation and Improvement Association was founded in response to the neoliberal transformation of the coastal area located in front of Ataköy's 1st Section, which had undergone redevelopment earlier than the 2nd-5th-6th Sections, the case study area of this thesis. As a result, this association possesses considerable experience with similar processes. In this regard, it has also collaborated with the Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association, which is based in the 2nd-5th-6th Sections, to carry out initiatives aimed at protecting Ataköy's natural environment. The Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association, as noted, was specifically established in the 2nd-5th-6th neighbourhoods with the goal of safeguarding both the natural environment and the rights of the residents.

Real estate consultants are chosen to gain information about the economic dynamics between the branded housing at the coast and old part of Ataköy, as two of the real estate consultants were working for the marketing of the coast part's branded houses, one is working at the old neighbourhood of Ataköy and mostly responsible for old Ataköy houses. This difference provided me valuable information about the socio-economic dynamics of the two areas. Following with the barbershop, as he was getting in touch with many people throughout the day and with the nature of his job he was able to chat with people, he provided information about his customer profile and new dynamics in the Ataköy's inner neighbourhood shopping areas.

As I have determined the interviewee characteristics, I made sure interviewees participated willingly and express their opinions in a secured way in order to get in touch with the individual residents I have visited the neighbourhood and distributed some flyers in the public areas informing the community. To provide that, the goal of the interview and the research stated before the interview, as I have provided an informed consent document to them and ensured the anonymity of their personal information. Same process about consent applied for the other interviewed actors, in order to get in touch with the NGOs or the local management appointments taken in advance. Interviews were carried out with individual residents of Ataköy as well as group and association members as I have mentioned. Some main characteristics of interviewees can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Main Characteristics of Interviewees .Created by the author.

Gender	Female	12(46.15%)
	Male	14(53.85%)
Age	25-35	2(7.69%)
	36-59	12(50%)
	60 and over	12(42.31%)
How long has been living/working in Ataköy	2-9 years.	2(11.54%)
	10-24 years.	11(42.31%)
	25 and over.	13(46.15%)
Type of actor	Resident	12(46.15%)
	Commercial worker	4(15.38%)
	Local Management Authority	1(7.69%)
	NGO Members	9(30.77%)

Residents participated in interviews are living in 2-5-6.parts of Ataköy, as well as two of the commercial workers and local management authority and 6 of the NGO members. The interviewes contributed to affectively to the research as they have been in the area for long periods of time and they have witnessed the transformation of coastal area and the building process of branded housing projects between 2013-2018.Minority of residents who have been living in area for 2-9 years provided information about today's condition mostly. Different interview outlines have been prepared to ask various actors, but the semi-structured interview method used to provide flexibility and free space to interviewees to share their ideas. NGO members(Bakirköy Urban Council, Ataköy Nature and life Protection) interviewed in groups of 3 and 5 as I visited their association.

At the beginning of the research, I aimed to conduct interviews with 20 or more participants. As I engaged with a diverse range of actors, I observed a shared perception regarding the coastal transformation. Once I reached a point where no new or additional insights were being provided—commonly referred to as data saturation—I concluded the interview process with total 25 participants.

Interviews were either recorded on audio or taken notes on, for transcription manually listened over and over and paid attention to use own words and perception of the participants. To provide clear insights for the analysis of the interviews. To understand the results of the interviews , main themes are analysed and described, the analysis achieved through coding the mostly and repetitively mentioned main themes by creating tables on Excel and Word.As the interviews were in Turkish, translated to English for the related parts of the thesis.

Interviewees identified in codes to provide anonymity (see table 4), and make it clear to be able to quote in the findings and analysis section.

To conclude, ideas and comments of the participants under each main theme analysed and provided connection and conclusion of the main themes and topics discussed in the rest of the thesis and literature review.

Interviewee Code	Type of Actor	Age	Gender	Time of working/living in Ataköy
R01	Resident	65	Male	30
R02	Resident	37	Male	10
R03	Resident	60	Female	25
R04	Resident	59	Female	20
R05	Resident	52	Female	25 and over
R06	Resident	71	Male	30
R07	Resident	70	Male	25 and over
R08	Resident	48	Male	2
R09	Resident	48	Male	20
R10	Resident	70	Male	25 and over
R11	Resident	38	Female	20
R12	Resident	55	Female	20
CW1	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)	45	Female	20
CW2	Barber Shop owner (Commercial worker)	60	Male	20
CW3	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)	28	Male	3
CW4	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)	33	Male	8
LMA01	Local Management Authority	55	Female	25 and over
NGM01	Bakirköy Urban Council (NGO Member)	60	Male	19
NGM02		60	Male	20
NGM03		63	Male	22
NGM04	Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association(NGO Member)	55	Female	25 and over
NGM05		57	Female	25 and over
NGM06		55	Female	25 and over
NGM07		61	Female	25 and over
NGM08		62	Female	25 and over
NGM09	Ataköy I.Part District Preservation and Improvement Association (NGO Member)	65	Male	30

Table 4. Interviewee Codes .Created by the author .

3.4. Limits of the Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Most notably, access to gated communities along the Ataköy coastal zone could not be obtained. These areas are private, security-controlled residential complexes that require authorization for entry. As a result, it was not possible to conduct interviews with residents of these newly developed zones. Consequently, the perspectives and lived experiences of this significant group remain outside the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the thesis focuses on the experiences of long-term residents in Ataköy's original neighbourhoods, particularly the 2nd, 5th, and 6th sections, as the coastal transformation was implemented along the shoreline of this specific area. These long-term residents not only witnessed the changes in their neighbourhood over time but also engaged, to varying degrees, in the transformation processes affecting the coast.

In addition, access to certain demographic data and institutional documents was limited. Despite attempts to reach relevant planning reports and statistical data from municipalities, public authorities, and project stakeholders, some documents were either absent or not publicly available. This restricted the ability to comprehensively analyse the governance and planning dimensions of the transformation process.

Chapter 4 – Turkish Context

Chapter 4 begins by explaining the Turkish planning and decision-making system, and then discusses how disaster resilience policies—one of the country's primary urbanization concerns—have been integrated into these processes. It then examines the emergence of neoliberal policies, which have shaped Ataköy as well as Istanbul and many other cities in Turkey, and explains how these policies have manifested in the national context. Naturally, the chapter also addresses how coastal areas, which are among the most affected by such policies, have been shaped within the framework of tourism development. This discussion is particularly relevant as the case study area is a coastal zone that was designated and planned as a tourism site.

4.1.Turkish Urban Planning Framework

Turkey's urban planning processes are taking place with central authority approach for decades. Throughout the Republican period, the central government has been the leading determining actor in urbanization and planning policies. This weight of the central administration limits the decision-making capacity of local governments; especially in large-scale projects, the central authority has the final say. Although some powers have been transferred to local governments in recent years, key decisions remain under the control of central actors.

It is important to recognize that the Turkish urban planning framework possesses an intricate structure characterized by a stringent hierarchy of different types of plans, ranging from strategic plans to urban design levels. Even though urban design is typically addressed at the project level, certain regulations related to urban design are incorporated into the legal framework. Specifically, the application of urban design policies and decisions is reflected at the level of the Implementation Plan (Dede, 2016).

In Turkey, the primary legal framework regulating planning and construction activities in both urban and rural areas is the Development Law (Law No. 3194), enacted in 1985 (Yaman Galantini, 2020). This law defines the planning hierarchy—comprising regional environmental plans, master development plans, and implementation plans—and establishes the principles for their preparation, adoption, and supervision. Its objectives include organizing urbanization processes, ensuring the creation of healthy and safe living environments, protecting the public interest, and preventing unplanned or illegal development. Complementing this, the Regulation on Spatial Plans, introduced in 2014, sets out detailed rules for the preparation, approval, implementation, and monitoring of spatial plans. It also clarifies the hierarchical structure of planning instruments, from national spatial strategy plans to regional environmental plans, master plans, and implementation plans, while emphasizing alignment with national development goals, regional

strategies, and principles of environmental sustainability. In practice, environmental plans are designed as long-term frameworks (approximately 20 years) and are subject to review every five years, while master plans usually cover a medium-term horizon (10–20 years) and can be revised when needed. Implementation plans, by contrast, are short-term and more detailed, often revised in response to new projects or post-disaster conditions. The approval process also reflects the multi-scalar governance of planning: spatial strategy plans and environmental plans are prepared and ratified by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, sometimes in coordination with metropolitan municipalities, whereas master and implementation plans are prepared by local municipalities, approved in municipal councils, and subsequently subject to ministerial or metropolitan oversight. Revisions and amendments may occur at any level of this hierarchy, typically justified by demographic change, new investment decisions, or disaster risk considerations (Yaman Galantini, 2020; Dede, 2016).

The Spatial Plans regulation explicitly outlines the hierarchical structure of the Turkish planning system. The different types of plans can be listed as follows:

Socio-economic plans

- Country Plans
- Regional Plans

Spatial Plans

- Spatial Strategy Plans
- Environmental Order Plans
- Master Developments Plans
- Implementation Plans

Country Plans and Regional Plans primarily focus on socioeconomic matters, while the Spatial strategy plan possesses a socioeconomic aspect but operates at a higher level of physical planning. Environmental Order Plans can also be classified under high physical planning levels. The Master Development Plan and Implementation Plan levels are defined by the local physical planning levels (Dede, 2016).

The plan development process encompasses a thorough and logical planning approach, which is categorized into four primary groups arranged in a hierarchical structure as listed by Dede(2016):

a.Spatial Strategy Planning

b.Environmental Order Plans

c.Master Development Plans(Nazım imar planı)

d.Implementation Plans(uygulama imar planı)

The spatial planning system has some basic characteristics such as;

- Every plan must adhere to the directives set forth by the existing higher-level plans, and all plans should guide the lower-tier hierarchies.
- Concerning land use and the built environment, development authorities and all societal stakeholders must comply with the directives of Spatial Strategic Plans, Environmental Order Plans, and Master Plans.
- All other plans are required to provide input for these foundational plans.
- Local governments must follow the directives outlined in Environmental Order Plans when creating Master Development Plans and Implementation Plans (Dede, 2016).

a. Spatial strategic plans

Spatial strategic plans connect national development policies and regional development strategies at the spatial level within the scales of 1/250,000 or 1/500,000 or upper. They assist in translating national and regional planning decisions into local spatial planning while considering the relationship between spatial strategies and sectoral strategies, as prepared by the Ministry of Environment & Urbanism and Climate Change (Dede, 2016). These plans are comprehensive plans, prepared at the national level and for specific regions when necessary, which integrates economic, social, and environmental policies and strategies with spatial dimensions. It guides physical development and sectoral decisions, and is presented together with its accompanying report (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, 2023).

Spatial plans are designed to conserve historical and cultural values, reducing the dangers and risks associated with disasters—primarily earthquakes—while ensuring the sustainable use of resources. They also focus on the allocation of infrastructure, services, and production facilities that align with development policies in both urban and rural regions, as well as the data about site areas,resources, settlement systems,demography,transformation networks and housing strategies,etc. The multidisciplinary aspect of planning is also taken into account at this stage,

with involvement and input from various stakeholders who can influence or be influenced by the planning process, including Development Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Chambers, Local Governments, Universities, and representatives from the Private Sector (Dede, 2016).

b. Environmental Order Plans

These plans are executed primarily at the provincial level or particularly at statistical regional units that are recognized as high-level spatial plans conducted at scales of 1/100,000 or 1/50,000 (Dede, 2016).

Environmental order plan prepared by municipalities, outlines fundamental geographical data such as forests,rivers,lakes and agricultural lands.It establishes general land use decisions concerning urban and rural settlements,development areas,as well as sectors like industry,agriculture,tourism ,transportation ,and energy (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, 2023).

In Istanbul the Environmental order plan which approved in 15.06.2009 with the scale of 1/100.000 is still in use.

c. Master Development plans and d.Implementation Plans are the subcategories of Land Development plans. The Land Development Plan is viewed as a unique spatial plan that enables the implementation of the strategies outlined in the Spatial Strategy Plan and the decisions made in the Environmental Order Plan at the level of settlements. These urban plans present various alternative options for the configurations of settlements and their patterns of growth. Decisions regarding land use constitute a central element of Development Plans. Moreover, there are decisions related to conservation, restrictions, organization, and implementation (Dede, 2016).

All types of Land Development Plans are currently being developed and approved by the relevant municipalities. These plans must adhere to the stipulations of higher-level plans and follow certain principles such as public welfare, adaptability, long-term applicability (lasting up to 20 years), scientific basis, and the principle of participation, among others. The principle of participation involves engaging individuals residing in the concerned neighborhood in the decision-making process regarding the physical and constructed environment, as well as collaboration during the planning stages. According to the Spatial Planning Regulation, participation methods include surveys, public opinion research, meetings, workshops, informational services, and more (Dede, 2016).

c. Master Development Plans

Master development plans are at the scale of 1/5000, and are plans that form the basis for the preparation of implementation development plans. They determine the residential, commercial, tourism, and industrial zones of the settlement, as well as green spaces and non-residential areas, together with the future population densities of these regions, and designate areas for residential development, urban growth, social facilities, and technical infrastructure (Kılınç Hukuk ve Danışmanlık, 2023).

d. Implementation Plans

The Implementation Plan (1/1000 scale) constitutes the operational phase of spatial planning, translating overarching planning decisions into actionable directives at the lot and parcel level. Known for its detailed focus, this stage specifies construction conditions such as lot coverage ratios, floor area indices, building heights, and setback distances. Importantly, it addresses the three-dimensional aspects of urban space beyond typical design considerations.

Key principles of Implementation Plans include the integration of inclusive design measures to ensure accessibility for disabled individuals, the elderly, and children. The development of pedestrian pathways, bicycle networks, and dedicated bicycle parking facilities is also prioritized to promote sustainable mobility. Additionally, the plan emphasizes the preservation of natural landscapes and historical sites, embedding environmental and cultural sensitivity into the urban fabric (Dede, 2016).

4.2.Turkey's Urbanization and Urban Resilience Framework: Integration of Sustainability and Disaster Resilience Policies

As stated in the most recent Development Plan number 12, Turkey is situated on active fault lines and has historically faced various disaster risks, particularly intense earthquakes, because of its geographical position (Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2024). Consequently, it is crucial to consider disaster risks when planning spaces, constructing infrastructure, and producing housing to enhance the resilience of living environments. Beginning with documents at the national level, Development Plans address national objectives, resource distribution, and the establishment of significance for district-level initiatives that affect the entire population's objectives and aims at the national level (Yaman Galantini, 2020). The Development Plans are prepared by the Strategy and Budget Administration under the Presidency, for a five-year period and have been published since 1963 (Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2025).

The latest 'Twelfth Development Plan' has been published, covering the years 2024-2028. This document holds significant importance as it was created after the devastating earthquakes in February 2023.

In light of the advancements made in Development Plans over the years, the Tenth Development Plan, which spans the years 2014-2018, was the inaugural national plan to recognize the concept of 'resilience' as essential for construction activities associated with disaster management (Yaman Galantini, 2020). The difference between the eleventh and twelfth development plans is especially apparent in terms of disaster resilience, specifically regarding earthquakes. The transition from the eleventh plan to the twelfth plan was a critical process. In the eleventh development plan, the section on urbanization is titled 'Livable Cities, Sustainable Environment.' In contrast, the twelfth plan places a greater emphasis on resilience against disasters, with a particular focus on earthquakes, with the title of 'Disaster Resilient Living Areas ,Sustainable Environment' (On İkinci Kalkınma Planı, 2024). 2023 was a year as significant as 1999 for the Turkish Earthquake and Disaster resilience policies.

In Turkey, disaster management and resilience are conducted at both national and local levels, involving a diverse range of stakeholders such as public institutions, local governments, universities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and the citizens (Özmen, 2024). There have been many discussions about the stakeholders and actors involved in the governance process, the hierarchy of participation, and the distribution of responsibilities before and after possible disasters (Özmen, 2024).

In developing the Turkey Disaster Response Plan (TAMP), the Turkey Disaster Risk Reduction Plan (TARAP), the Turkey Post-Disaster Recovery Plan (TASIP), and their associated sub-plans at the provincial level, the core values and principles of the Turkish public administration system have served as the foundation (Önder & Güler, 2024).

The first discussion and the earthquake resilient frameworks were created in 1939, right after the Erzincan Earthquake, the law about 'The precautions before and after the earthquakes' published, in 1959 the first not -regional, comprehensive law '*Law on Measures to Be Taken and Assistance to Be Provided Due to Disasters Affecting Public Life'* (Akkaş, 2023), commonly referred to as the *Disaster Law* was published (Akkaş, 2023).

These discussions have gained particular importance since the İzmit earthquake on August 17, 1999, and the Düzce earthquake on November 12, 1999, which are considered turning points for Turkey's earthquake resilience frameworks (Özmen, 2024). Despite the precautions,some changes in the regulations, and decree laws were published right after the disaster in 1999, the results of earthquakes showed that Turkish cities, frameworks and implementation of the policies were not enough to cope with the earthquakes (Özmen, 2024). Especially in terms of structural safety. It can be argued that, from this date onward, more realistic and preventive measures began to be incorporated into legislation.

Turkey's zoning regulations, disaster prevention strategies, and emergency response plans have shown notable progress since then, particularly with the introduction of the *Law on Building Inspection* in 2001, which has been considered a safeguard for structural integrity (Akkaş, 2023).

However, the *Law on Building Inspection* initially came into effect in 2001 only in a limited number of provinces: Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Balıkesir, Bolu, Bursa, Çanakkale, Denizli, Düzce, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ, and Yalova. It was not until 2011 that the law was extended to all 81 provinces across the country. In fact, in 8 out of the 11 provinces that were declared as 'disaster zones' after the recent major earthquakes, the law had only been implemented since 2011 (Akkaş, 2023).

In 2012, the law numbered 6036, the first detailed and specific legislation on this matter, was called the 'Law on the Transformation of Areas Under Disaster Risk', with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization designated as the responsible authority. The law aimed to: 'Establish the procedures and principles related to the enhancement, clearance, and renovation of areas at risk of disaster, as well as plots and properties with hazardous structures outside these regions, to create safe and healthy living conditions in line with scientific and technical standards.'Under this law, the phrase 'risky buildings' described structures that had either reached

the end of their useful life or were deemed to be at significant risk of severe damage. Once a building was officially labelled as risky—either at the property owner's request or by the administrative authority—and if a consensus was achieved between the owner and the administration, demolition could proceed within 60 days. In situations where an agreement could not be formed, the law permitted the initiation of expropriation procedures (Akkaş, 2023).

Another important actor in urban transformation processes is the municipalities, as they have the competency by law No. 5393 on Municipalities. Urban transformation and development areas are designated by municipal councils with the purpose of implementing comprehensive regeneration projects. These projects may involve creating residential zones, industrial and commercial areas, technology parks, public service facilities, recreational spaces, and diverse social infrastructure. They also aim to reconstruct and rehabilitate deteriorated urban sections, preserve cities' historical and cultural heritage, and mitigate seismic risks (Kentsel Dönüşüm Planlama Şube Müdürlüğü).

Considering the fact that local governments are responsible with many properties of the cities which are related to urban&disaster resilience of the cities in building,neighboorhood,and city scale such as; the spatial and functional planning of cities, urban transformation, the management of building stock, and the renewal of earthquake-vulnerable structures (Önder & Güler, 2024). Local governments, being the primary entities impacted by the local effects of climate change, mass migration, earthquakes, floods, and other similar disasters, have various instruments at their disposal to improve urban resilience. These instruments are based on essential legislative frameworks such as Zoning Law No. 3194, Municipal Law No. 5393, and the Law on the Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk No. 6306, which address issues related to urban infrastructure and development planning (Önder & Güler, 2024; Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014; Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2019). However, the urban resilience approach—which is closely linked to the planning, governance, and sustainability of urban areas—necessitates a collaborative model in which central and local administrations operate within their respective domains in a coordinated and complementary manner (Önder & Güler, 2024; Yaman Galantini, 2020).After the 2019 local elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, the need and discussion for the more sustainable, environmentally friendly cities have arisen. While the central government was creating some solutions and aiming to achieve the goal of providing ‘Millet Gardens’ for all 81 provinces of Turkey until 2023, as well as the development of the spatial planning system with a framework of principles and regulations established in cooperation with central institutions, incorporating effective participation mechanisms, monitoring, and supervision processes at the neighbourhood level; planning and implementation will primarily be carried out by local administration (On Birinci Kalkınma Planı, 2019).

In light of recent disasters, it is essential for both local and central administrations to recognize their weaknesses and prioritize efforts aimed at achieving rapid and sustainable recovery (Önder & Güler, 2024). Effective collaboration between these levels of governance is crucial for the development of resilient cities. As highlighted in the Presidential Directorate of Strategy and Budget's report on the Kahramanmaraş and Hatay Earthquakes, disaster-resilient living spaces must be promoted through a holistic and multidimensional approach, accompanied by a strong culture of stakeholder cooperation. However, beyond improving policy frameworks, a fundamental transformation in societal attitudes is also necessary. In this regard, it is critical that local and central authorities avoid short-term profit-driven approaches and instead focus on long-term resilience strategies (Önder & Güler, 2024).Particularly, the emphasis on an integrated and sustainable urban form plays a decisive role in enhancing urban resilience which is the second important issue we should stress, ensuring that cities are not only more livable but also better equipped to withstand future disasters.Despite the regulatory framework outlined in Article 1 of the Land Development Planning and Control Law (No. 3194), which emphasizes the scientific, healthy, and environmentally conscious construction of urban areas, many spatial plans implemented across Istanbul—such as the Bağcılar Square Urban Regeneration Plan and the Beyoğlu Camiikebir District Special Project Area Plan—demonstrate a fragmented, short-term approach with the effect of neoliberal trends worldwide and in Turkey as well (Yaman Galantini, 2020). These projects often prioritize immediate economic gains over the holistic integration of social, economic, environmental, and physical urban dimensions, compromising urban form and, in turn, impacting environmental quality, human well-being, and urban resilience. This issue is not unique to Bağcılar; similar patterns of rent-driven, disconnected urban regeneration are widespread across Istanbul (Yaman Galantini, 2020). In this study, the Ataköy case will be specifically analyzed to critically explore how urban form and planning practices influence disaster resilience , the sustainability of urban life and social dynamics.In Turkey, accurate objectives are set for urban planning, disaster management plans are developed, and many policy documents are prepared with appropriate goals. However, there remains a significant gap between planning and actual implementation, particularly in terms of coordination and execution (Akkaş, 2023; Önder & Güler, 2024). Moving forward, it is crucial to improve these aspects to ensure greater urban resilience. Achieving this is not solely the responsibility of local and central governments; rather, it requires a multi-stakeholder approach in which the public is placed at the center of all efforts and involved in planning processes (Önder & Güler, 2024).

4.3. Neoliberal Urban Governance in Turkey: 1980–2012 and beyond

Neoliberal urbanism, as defined by prominent scholars such as David Harvey (2005), Neil Brenner, and Nik Theodore (2002), represents a shift in the state's role, whereby urban governance becomes a facilitator of market-based logics. Harvey (2005) conceptualizes neoliberalism as a project to restore class power through the commodification of space, emphasizing 'accumulation by dispossession' as a central mechanism (Harvey D. , 2005). Brenner and Theodore (2002) describe neoliberalization not as a uniform process but as 'actually existing neoliberalism,' shaped by specific institutional and spatial contexts (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). They argue that neoliberal urbanism unfolds through dual processes: "roll-back neoliberalism," which dismantles state-led redistributive policies, and 'roll-out neoliberalism,' In the context of Turkey, the urbanization effects of neoliberal policies are primarily observed in the housing sector. which constructs new regulatory frameworks to facilitate market expansion. These forms of governance are marked by decentralization in discourse but centralization in function, often manifesting in new public-private partnerships and entrepreneurial urban policies that prioritize capital accumulation over democratic participation or spatial justice provided by state-led gentrification (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

Between 1980 and 2000, Turkey underwent a significant neoliberal restructuring in urban governance, marked by a paradoxical centralization within a broader discourse of decentralization. Although legal and institutional reforms such as the 1984 Local Government Reform and the Mass Housing Law No. 2985 aimed to empower local authorities and promote privatization, in practice, these changes expanded the interventionist role of the central government.Especially after 2000s, Key institutions—including TOKİ, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Privatization Administration—were granted exceptional planning powers, particularly in designated development zones. These overlapping authorities weakened local governments and privileged project-based developments, often executed through public-private partnerships that commodified urban land while circumventing local planning processes (Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014).

The post-2000 period, particularly following the Local Administration Reform Package and Laws No. 5216 (2004), 5393 (2005), and 6360 (2012), introduced a roll-out phase of neoliberalism under the influence of the European Union accession process (Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014). These reforms aimed to enhance decentralization, improve local governance capacity, and promote participatory mechanisms such as strategic planning and civil society involvement (Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014).

As we have mentioned,a critical juncture in this trajectory was the enactment of Law No. 6306 in 2012, which marked a new phase in urban transformation under the pretext of disaster risk mitigation. This law significantly expanded the powers of the central government—especially the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change—and institutions like TOKİ, enabling them to declare “risky areas” and proceed with large-scale urban regeneration projects without meaningful local consultation or participatory planning (Çakıroğlu, 2022). Under this framework, public lands and assets previously under the control of entities such as Emlak Bank –were transferred or privatized (Çakıroğlu, 2022). Thus, Law 6306 further consolidated a top-down model of urban governance where the logic of capital accumulation superseded social and spatial justice concerns (Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014).

While the roll-back phase (1980–2000) centralized urban development authority under a neoliberal agenda of deregulation and privatization, the roll-out phase (2000–2012 and beyond) attempted to introduce participatory reforms without dismantling the strong tradition of centralized control. The passage of Law No. 6306 reaffirmed the dominance of the central state in urban transformation processes, reflecting the continuity of centralized neoliberal governance in Turkey’s urban regime (Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014).

In the context of Turkey, the urbanization effects of neoliberal policies are primarily observed in the housing sector. After the 1980s, Turkey experienced the emergence of gated communities following the introduction of new mass housing legislation (Baycan, Gülümser, & Ahu, 2004). After the 2001 economic crisis, Turkey saw a major overhaul in how its real estate markets were governed. This shift was accompanied by significant changes in governance structures, urban planning regulations, and development laws, all aimed at accelerating investments in construction, property development, and tourism (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Balaban, 2013, as cited in Serin, 2016). According to Balaban (2012) (Serin, 2016), the surge in construction activity following the crisis can be described as a boom, characterized by a sharp rise in the construction sector's contribution to the country's GDP and employment, as well as a significant inflow of financial and capital investments between 2001 and 2007. This transformation was institutionalized through specific laws and programs, most notably the empowerment of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) under Law No. 2985 (1984), which, especially after 2003, gained authority to bypass municipal planning procedures and directly implement large-scale project (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010). Furthermore, the enactment of the Law on the Transformation of Areas Under Disaster Risk (Law No. 6306, 2012) expanded state authority over demolition and reconstruction, enabling speculative redevelopment under the justification of earthquake risk (Balaban, 2012).These legal and institutional frameworks provided the basis for mega-projects and luxury housing

developments such as Sapphire, Zorlu Center, and SeaPearl Ataköy, reflecting a shift toward gated communities and high-end residential typologies as visible outcomes of neoliberal urbanization. (Eraydın & Taşan-Kok, 2013; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011).

Serin (2016) emphasizes that branded housing projects have emerged in recent years as part of the broader construction boom. These developments generate spatial enclaves that offer exclusive services and amenities solely for the residents of the project. However, this form of housing is not entirely new in the context of Turkish urbanization. The evolution of such residential enclaves in Istanbul began in the 1980s, accelerated in the 1990s—as also cited in Kurtuluş (2005: 165) as referenced by Serin (2016)—and continued throughout the 2000s (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008: 5; Serin, 2016) as an integral component of Turkey's wider neoliberal restructuring. Altun (2012: 41) notes this continuity, while Geniş (2007: 773) attributes both the initial emergence and later expansion of these developments to the facilitative effects of neoliberal policies in the country (Serin, 2016).

Baycan et al.(2006) , discuss the initial emergence of gated communities,as it took place in large metropolitan areas and major cities. Since the early 2000s, this housing typology has expanded its presence beyond these urban centers and is increasingly found in smaller cities, especially in coastal regions (Baycan, Gülümser, & Ahu, 2004). In Turkey, there are five primary actors involved in the development of gated communities: (1) housing cooperatives, (2) the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ), (3) local municipalities supported by TOKİ, (4) private developers, and (5) the Turkish Real Estate Bank (TC Emlak Bank). Baycan et al. (2004) underline that, typically, these developers—particularly private ones—also function as construction or real estate investment firms. The roles of developer, investor, and builder are often intertwined, with most companies performing all of these functions simultaneously. Private developers, in particular, concentrate their investments in Istanbul, which remains Turkey's most rapidly expanding urban center (Baycan, Gülümser, & Ahu, 2004).

While acknowledging the stakeholders involved in the process, Serin (2016) explains that branded housing projects, as emerging spatial formations, are co-produced by both political and civil society, drawing on Gramsci's (2000) conceptual framework. According to Serin, political society directly shapes and contributes to the development of these projects through public entities such as TOKİ and Emlak Konut GYO. Meanwhile, civil society plays a crucial role in generating public support for these developments. This support is largely cultivated through the media, including news coverage, promotional content, and advertisements related to the projects (Serin, 2016).

4.4. Waterfronts, and Tourism as Coastal Development Strategy in Turkey

Another important and relevant topic for this thesis, particularly in the context of Turkey's neoliberal urbanism and sustainable development, is waterfront areas, often referred to as 'coastal areas' in the Turkish context as well.

During the Ottoman era, coastal lands were generally considered unproductive and labeled as 'dead land' due to their unsuitability for agriculture (Gedikli, 2011). In the Republican period, regulations concerning coastal areas were governed for many years within the framework of the Civil Code and relevant provisions of the 1961 Constitution.

The first significant legal regulation regarding coastal zones came with the amendments to the Development Law in 1972, specifically through Articles 7 and 8 added to Law No. 6785. These articles stipulated that private individuals could not construct buildings on the shores of seas, lakes, or rivers—within a minimum distance of 10 meters or more as designated by the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement—unless those structures were designated for public use.

Scholars (İrtem et al., 2005; Gedikli, 2011; Özügül et al., 2017) emphasize the importance of several principles when planning waterfronts. These principles include: correctly determining the shoreline, defining coastal zone, planning in harmony with the natural and historical environment, avoiding conflicts arising from fragmented governance (ensuring coordination between central and local governments), considering the effects of land reclamation on the natural environment and the socio-economic balance of the area, and promoting the sustainable development of waterfronts and coasts (Gedikli, 2011; Özügül, Yerliyurt, & Seçilmişler, 2017).

This set of principles is especially significant in the Turkish context, as they often form the core of major conflicts and are frequently at the center of legal disputes concerning coastal transformation. Gedikli (2011) characterizes coastal zones as inherently contested spaces, stating that since the enactment of the 1930 Public Health Law (*Umumi Hıfzısıhha Kanunu*), a wide array of legislation and regulations related to the protection of natural and cultural environments has been introduced. Numerous international agreements have been signed, institutional frameworks have undergone reforms, and civil society organizations and professional chambers have played active roles in key conservation efforts. Despite these well-intentioned initiatives and occasional successful cases, Gedikli (2008), as cited in Gedikli(2011), emphasizes that Turkey has not yet achieved the desired level of effective coastal protection.

As spaces that comprise both natural and cultural elements, coastal areas are frequently the subject of legal disputes due to conflicting claims of authority and opposing perspectives on conservation versus utilization. A wide range of institutions hold legal jurisdiction over coastal areas, often leading to disputes not only among themselves but also with civil society organizations, professional bodies, and private individuals or entities (Gedikli, 2011; Avni & Teschner, 2019).

Regarding the issue of fragmented authority along the coast, Gedikli(2011) stresses that when multiple institutions share jurisdiction over coastal spaces, planning processes must inclusively involve all relevant actors. Furthermore, local governments should always participate in any decision-making process concerning urban coastlines. Scholars also highlight the need for active involvement of all relevant professional groups in managing coastal zones. The foundational principles guiding coastal management must be enriched by place-specific insights during implementation (Gedikli, 2011; Özügül, Yerliyurt, & Seçilmişler, 2017).

On the other hand ,coastal areas of Turkey had played a very significant role for tourism sector, and unsuprisingly, had encouraged the shift towards tourism sector in urbanization. Gezici et al.(2006) summarize the process as follows;tourism has been recognized as a key sector in Turkey's national economy since the first Five-Year Development Plan (1963–67) and has consistently received state support. To promote the development of tourism, three priority regions and eleven tourism centers—mostly located in the Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean regions—were designated. In 1969, the coastal strip stretching from Çanakkale to İçel (now Mersin) was officially declared a priority area for tourism development.

During the 1970s, emphasis was placed on physical planning for tourism. The enactment of the Tourism Incentive Law in 1982 marked a significant turning point, triggering a noticeable increase in tourism investments;Özügül et al.(2017), explains the shift within the theoretical framework from Comprehensive planning to Strategic Planning(and related sectoral plans) took place in 1980s.Özügül et al.(2017) underline that the shift of planning theory in Turkey had consequences as follows;from a traditional top-down hierarchical planning model, there has been a shift toward sector-specific planning approaches—such as tourism master plans, transportation frameworks, and agricultural strategies—where integration, coordination among sectors, planning institutions, and specialized plans, as well as effective management, are central principles.

- From a strictly plan-led vision of the future to one guided by strategic frameworks and project-based development;

- From rigidly defined end goals to more adaptable, flexible, and probabilistic understandings of urban space;
- From a technocratic, instrumentally rational planning logic to a more participatory and communicative decision-making process(Özügül et al.2017,p.4,5)

Another relevant legislation is Law No. 5366(2005), which governs the renewal of urban areas that have been officially declared as conservation sites but are facing deterioration. Although the law was originally intended to protect and restore historical and cultural assets, in practice it has facilitated the transformation of such areas into tourism, cultural, commercial, and social facilities zones (Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2019). Law No. 5366 allows for the transfer of Treasury-owned properties in renewal areas to municipalities or special provincial administrations by presidential decree, provided they are used for the intended purpose within five years. This reflects the law's focus on serving the public interest. These projects aim to protect historical and cultural values, promote urban regeneration, and improve quality of life — all in line with the principle of public interest (Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, 2019).

These incentives were primarily directed toward the Aegean and Mediterranean coastal areas, which already had sufficient infrastructure and development potential. The development of large-scale tourism complexes was actively encouraged (Gezici, Gül, & Alkay, 2006).

Tourism Bank (TKB, 1995) focused its financial support on tourism hubs in more developed provinces such as Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Muğla, and Aydın. In the 1990s, policy efforts aimed to distribute tourism-related benefits more evenly across underdeveloped regions and promote alternative forms of tourism. Nevertheless, coastal areas continued to dominate both tourism investments and tourist demand (Gezici, Gül, & Alkay, 2006).

Until today, neoliberal influences and tourism initiatives continue to shape Istanbul, which is not only Turkey's largest economic center but also its most populated city. Istanbul and its waterfronts have always represented Turkey's identity and its approach to globalization. In the next section, we will focus on this unique city, where the case study of this thesis is located.

Chapter 5-Urban transformation of Istanbul & the city's Waterfronts

Chapter 5 focuses on Istanbul, beginning with an overview of the city's transformation over time and its contextual background. It specifically examines how neoliberal policies implemented post-1980 have shaped the city. The chapter then addresses concerns about earthquake resilience that emerged in the early 2000s and continues with developments from 2012 to the present, highlighting the rise of gated communities and mega projects. The discussion further explores major ongoing urban trends, with particular emphasis on urban transformation aimed at improving earthquake resilience. It then looks into policies related to sustainable development and earthquake preparedness. Additionally, the chapter examines the intersection of Istanbul's globalization objectives with issues of seismic safety and sustainability, notably how coastal areas have been influenced by neoliberal and global trends. Building on this foundation, the chapter discusses the emergence of mega projects, gated communities, and luxury housing developments, as observed in the case study, and explains how these phenomena have developed throughout Istanbul. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive analysis of these trends.

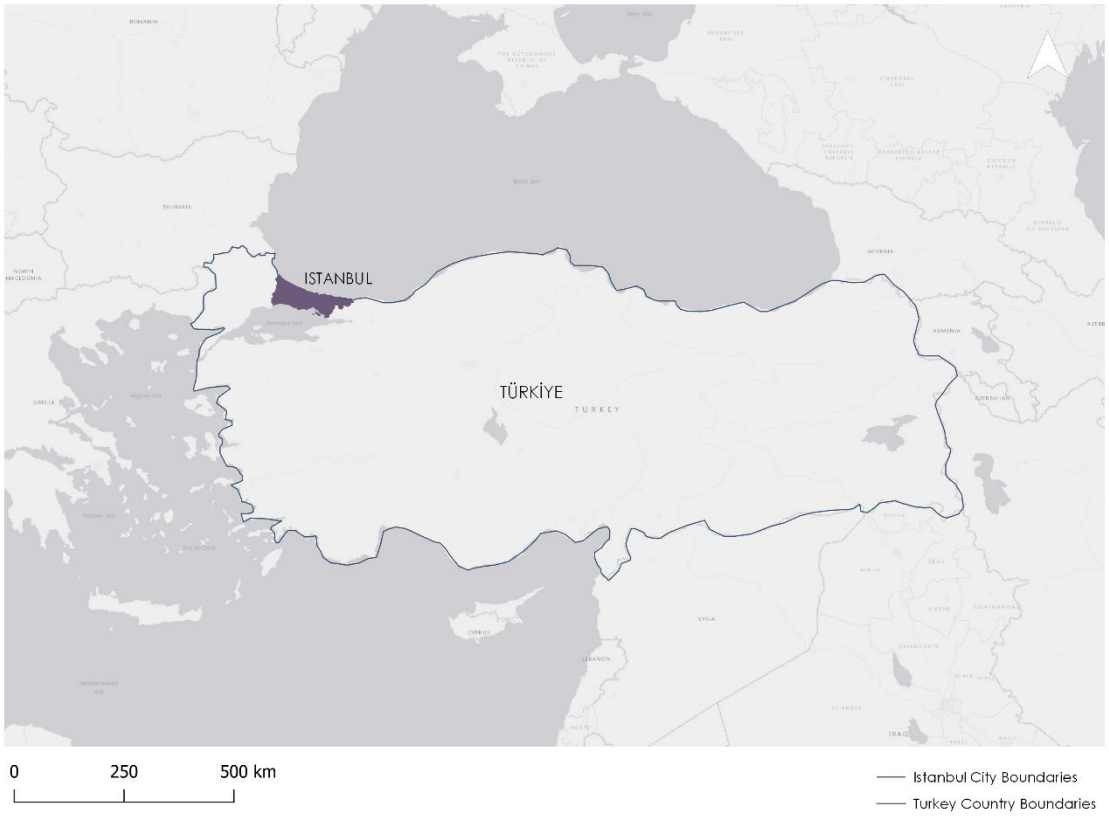


Figure 1| Showing Turkey's and Istanbul' boundaries (created by the author)

5.1 Istanbul and city's identity through centuries

Istanbul is Turkey's most populated city(TUİK,2025) and for centuries has been home to many different civilizations. Istanbul, also historically known as Byzantium and later Constantinople, has undergone significant urban transformations over the centuries, shaped by political, economic, and environmental factors, particularly its vulnerability to earthquakes. The city's development can be traced from the Byzantine Empire, through the Ottoman period, to the modern Turkish Republic, with each era leaving distinct marks on its urban fabric (see figure 2).

The interplay between historic preservation, earthquake resilience,sustainable development, and rapid modernization continues to be a critical challenge in Istanbul's urban planning discourse.

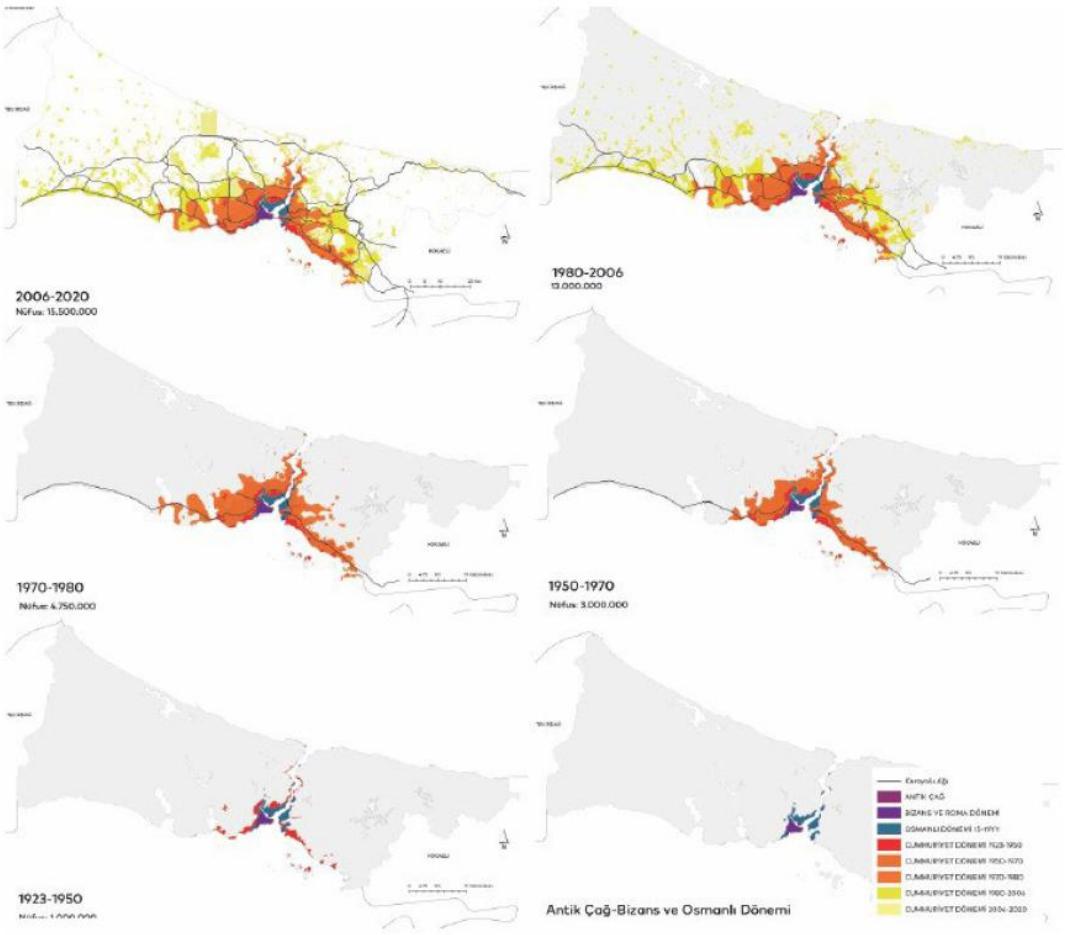


Figure 2| The Historical Evolution of Istanbul's Urban Macroform

(Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2050 vision and action plan (VEP) ,2022,p.28)

During the Byzantine era/ East Roman Empire (330–1453), Emperor Constantine the Great established Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire, initiating one of the earliest large-scale urban planning efforts. The city's urban structure was defined by monumental architecture, including the Hagia Sophia, aqueducts, and defensive walls, which not only reflected imperial grandeur but also addressed infrastructural challenges such as water supply and security (Mango, 1995). However, seismic events, such as the devastating earthquakes of 447 and 557, required continuous reconstruction efforts, shaping Byzantine engineering techniques, particularly in dome and arch construction (Mainstone, 1988). These historical resilience strategies provided a foundation for later urban development.

With the Ottoman conquest in 1453, Istanbul underwent another significant transformation. Sultan Mehmed II and subsequent rulers introduced new architectural and urban planning paradigms, expanding the city with mosques, bazaars, and residential neighborhoods based on an Islamic urban model (Kuban, 2010). Despite its architectural brilliance, rapid expansion, and the adaptation of wooden housing structures, made the city highly susceptible to both fires and earthquakes. The 1894 earthquake highlighted the structural weaknesses of Ottoman-era buildings, prompting discussions on seismic resilience, yet comprehensive planning reforms remained limited until the early 20th century (Eldem, 2016).

The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 marked a shift towards modern urban planning, heavily influenced by European city planning principles. The 1930s and 1950s witnessed major road expansion projects, particularly under the guidance of city planners such as Henri Prost, who aimed to modernize the city while preserving its historic core (Tapan, 1994). However, post-1950s industrialization and rural-to-urban migration led to unplanned urban sprawl, resulting in informal settlements (gecekondu,slums), which were structurally vulnerable to earthquakes (Ergün, 2004). The catastrophic 1999 Marmara Earthquake underscored these vulnerabilities, accelerating legislative and planning reforms, including Turkey's Law No. 6306 on Urban Transformation (2012), aimed at reinforcing seismic resilience and replacing unsafe structures with earthquake-resistant buildings (Boğaziçi University Kandilli Observatory, 2013).

5.2. Urban Transformation for Earthquake Resilience (Kentsel Dönüşüm) in Istanbul

Currently, urban transformation is a key subject in the urban planning discussions of Istanbul.Ongoing neoliberal policies since the 1980s and centralized policies such as the Law on the Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk (Law No. 6306, 2012) as we have mentioned earlier and the expansion of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) authorities after 2003 have positioned construction activities as one of the primary drivers of the national economy. These policies, reinforced by neoliberal development strategies, establish the legal and institutional framework that supports the transformation process by enabling large-scale redevelopment projects and prioritizing private investment (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Enlil, 2011). Although urban transformation initiatives are officially framed around earthquake resilience, their implementation often extends beyond risk mitigation, serving broader objectives such as urban renewal and real estate valorization. In Istanbul, this transformation unfolds through two main approaches: area-based regeneration projects—frequently implemented by TOKİ in cooperation with municipalities—and individual building renewal processes. Yet, even the latter contributes to the city's long-term restructuring by reshaping neighborhood dynamics and accelerating socio-spatial change (Kısar Koramaz, Koramaz, & Özer, 2018).

As urban regeneration is a critical topic in Turkey at present. Particularly following the Kocaeli and Düzce earthquakes in 1999, the focus of urban planning and renewal in Turkey has increasingly leaned towards interventions aimed at physical and structural improvements. As a result, legislative and procedural modifications have emerged within the national planning framework. Nonetheless, these legal changes serve purposes beyond just earthquake risk mitigation; they are also utilized for the redevelopment and revitalization of buildings and neighborhoods.

In many instances, urban renewal efforts, especially in Istanbul, have been developed by the notion of the threat of earthquake risk, yet they primarily aim to address social and economic decline in neglected and deteriorating housing areas. After the Van earthquake in 2011, the Law on Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk (no:6306) was enacted in 2012, which stands out as one of the most unique legislative measures. This law provides a dual legal framework that functions through both single building renovation efforts and area-wide regeneration initiatives. However, this law has faced criticism for leveraging earthquake risk merely as a justification for these actions, as the main focus of both types of projects tends to be structural enhancement and boosting economic value. Many of the challenging regeneration projects in Istanbul thus far suggest that area-based renewal efforts and building renovations are influenced by various economic and social factors rather than solely the risks linked to earthquakes (Kısar Koramaz, Koramaz, & Özer, 2018).

Building-base renewal projects started mostly in the districts of Istanbul with high earthquake risk (see figure 3). The process includes the buildings; done before 1999 earthquake since the regulations in building code has changed after 1999 and the buildings have done before that time mostly are considered not resilient enough, and the very old ones , the buildings in bad physical condition and with weak structure. The initiation of an urban transformation project typically begins with a property owner requesting a structural risk assessment from an institution licensed by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Should the building be identified as structurally unsafe, this status is officially registered in the land title records, triggering either demolition or retrofitting measures. To ensure a smoother and more equitable transformation process, especially in residential areas, it is generally recommended that property owners first reach a consensus with their neighbours. Collaborative engagement with municipal authorities and contractors, followed by collective evaluation of development proposals, is considered an effective strategy to minimize conflict and accelerate the transformation process (Kentsel Dönüşüm Şube Müdürlüğü - İBB Bilgi İşlem Dairesi Başkanlığı). If a building is declared structurally unsafe, the owners are given a period of no less than 60 days to vacate and demolish the property. After demolition, a decision regarding the redevelopment must be made with the approval of at least two-thirds of the co-owners, based on their shares. If some of the owners do not agree with the decision, their shares may be sold through a public auction to the agreeing stakeholders, based on the appraised value. In cases where this two-thirds majority cannot be reached, expropriation may be carried out by the Ministry, TOKİ, or local municipalities (Kentsel Dönüşüm Şube Müdürlüğü - İBB Bilgi İşlem Dairesi Başkanlığı).

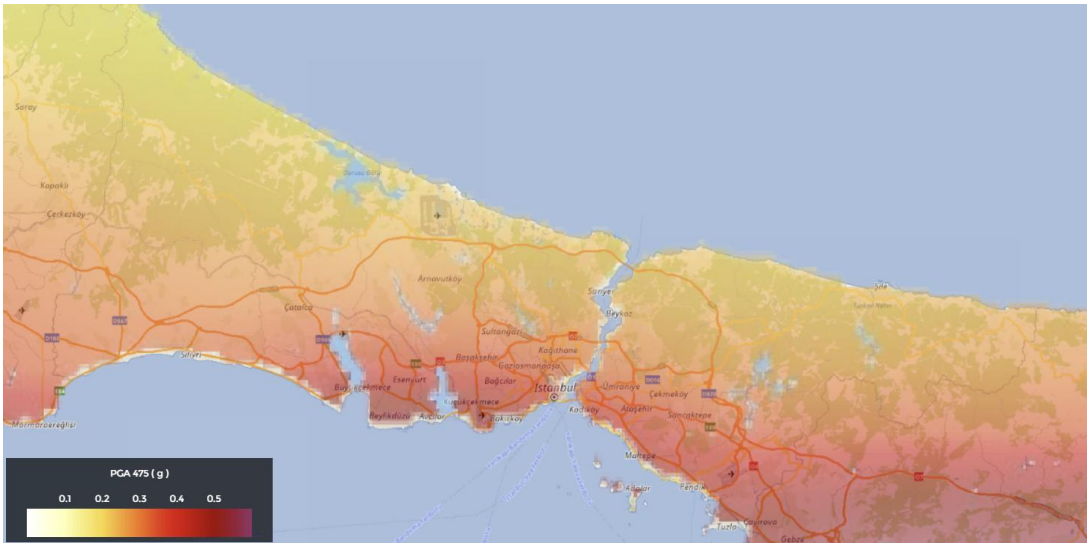


Figure 3| The Earthquake risk map of Istanbul

(source: Türkiye Deprem Tehlike Haritası Interaktif Web Uygulaması , AFAD 2025 https://tdth.afad.gov.tr/TDTH/main.xhtml)

The urban transformation process has started in 2012 at Esenler, Istanbul. Continues with the completion of 695.000 buildings by 2022 , As part of the efforts to renew 1.5 million urgently needed housing units under the "2023 Vision and Action Plans," collabrating with municipalities and private sector (Minister of Environment,Urbanization and Climate Change, 2022).

As the building-based earthquake resilience efforts and transformation of the city continue, another type of transformation has occurred in Istanbul, dating back to the early 2000s. Istanbul underwent a significant shift in its urban vision and mission, from an industrial city to one increasingly defined by tourism, finance, and service industries, with the influence of globalization and neoliberal policies. This period marked an acceleration in the decentralization of industrial functions and the rise of significant urban developments, including large-scale shopping malls, private hospitals, and gated communities. The city began to evolve rapidly into a finance- and service-oriented metropolis. However, this transformation also entailed substantial interventions in public spaces and the commodification of Istanbul's historical urban fabric. These type of transformations are often called 'mega-projects' or 'large-scale projects' by scholars (Dogan & Stupar, 2017; Şenik & Uzun, 2025).

5.3. Istanbul's background and future urban planning initiatives on earthquake resilience and sustainable development

Istanbul is a metropolis characterized by ongoing debates and challenges related to its urban and economic development. While discussing the city's sustainable development goals and urban planning issues, it is essential to examine both past and ongoing planning initiatives, as this background provides crucial context for understanding the root causes of Istanbul's current urban challenges. However, it is important to note that within the scope of this thesis, not every aspect of the city's complex dynamics can be addressed. Therefore, the examples and key discussions presented in this section will be limited to those relevant to the selected case study and the ones that may provide information about Istanbul's urban planning background..These initiatives have had a significant impact on today's sustainable development and urban planning efforts.In the early 20th century, Istanbul was a more sustainable city, featuring planned and organized green spaces, notably influenced by the French architect-urbanist Henri Prost's Master Plan. However, throughout the mid-20th century, the city experienced shifts in urban dynamics, causing it to gradually abandon these green-centric planning concepts. Uncontrolled developments adversely affected the city's green spaces and forests. From the 1960s to the 1970s, existing issues were exacerbated by unregulated mass migration and haphazard urban expansion. By the 1970s, with significant population growth, Istanbul began to expand along the east-west axis. This change transformed Istanbul from a mono-centric urban structure into a polycentric mega-city (Coskun, 2024).

The transformation that began in the 1970s marked the development of one of the most important features of Istanbul: the emergence of a polycentric mega-city. This expansion has grown from the Historic Peninsula, which served as the original boundaries of Ottoman Istanbul, to the modern mega-city we see today. In the early 2000s, two pivotal projects emerged in the context of sustainability and earthquake resilience, addressing significant challenges facing the city.

The first project was the Eco-City initiative in the Küçükçekmece district by Ken Yeang. This project aimed to enhance sustainability in areas surrounding the Küçükçekmece River and to revitalize the degrading ecosystem. it was never implemented.

The second project arose after the 1999 earthquake, the first seismic event that had a profound impact on the city. This earthquake sparked discussions about the city's earthquake resilience issues and catalyzed a state-led regeneration effort to renew the poor-quality housing stock that did not meet updated seismic standards.

This second project, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, aimed to contribute to the city's earthquake-related planning in the Kartal district of Istanbul. The extensive Kartal regeneration project was a parametric initiative focused on transforming the old industrial area of Kartal.Although these two projects were never implemented, they significantly influence Istanbul's earthquake resilience and sustainability efforts (Coskun, 2024).

The next significant event for Istanbul, as well as for cities around the world, was the 2019-2020 pandemic. This situation highlighted the importance of sustainable and green planning nearly 20 years after the first seismic movement in 1999. Following the pandemic, a new housing trend emerged in Istanbul, reflecting a change in people's perspectives on living spaces after spending extended periods at home. Citizens recognized the need for features such as; balconies, gardens, terraces, and attractive facades with green views. The mega-city-style housing projects in Istanbul, typically designed as skyscrapers without balconies or access to green areas, no longer met the needs of some residents. This trend brought the idea of low-rise buildings and 'garden cities' into focus, highlighting the importance of green spaces over tall residential structures . This strategy promotes a sustainable connection between city residents and their environment. As a result, particularly during and after the pandemic, there has been a significant shift towards more sustainable and nature-integrated urban living, which has now gained traction due to the emphasis on green spaces and environmentally friendly planning in response to evolving global circumstances and heightened public awareness (Coskun, 2024).

In 2023, the issue of seismic safety in Istanbul has taken on critical importance, especially following the recent earthquake in the southern parts of the country, which has led to a renewed focus on this challenge. This latest incident has revived conversations about the earthquake dilemma and encouraged the concept of developing new seismic-standard housing in the northern regions and green spaces, which represent the city's last remaining green areas (Coskun, 2024). At the same time, it has highlighted the urgency of accelerating ongoing building-based urban transformation projects across Istanbul to enhance the city's overall earthquake resilience.This change is driven by the planning recognition that the coastal regions along the Marmara Sea and the limited coastal green spaces in the city center are among the few remaining green areas in the city, in addition to the northern forests. This recent earthquake and increasing focus on sustainability have created a planning dilemma, underscoring the importance of preserving the northern forest and coastal green areas.

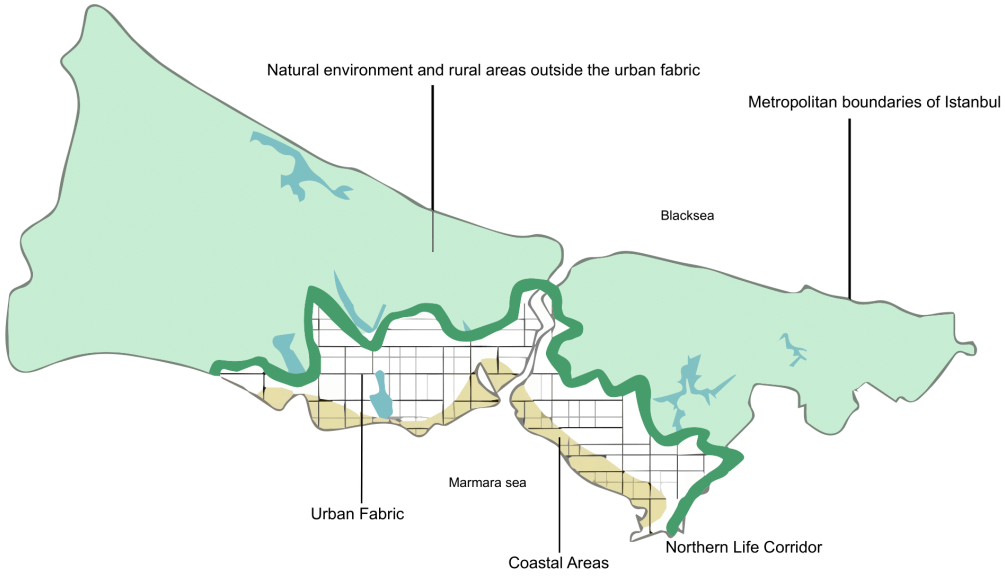


Figure 4| The Scheme of main Urban components of Istanbul defined by IBB *(translated to English by the author) (source: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2050 vision and action plan (VEP) ,2022,p.29)*

Despite recent urban renewal efforts, Istanbul continues to face challenges related to balancing heritage conservation, social justice, leisure and green areas with modern infrastructure demands. Large-scale projects, such as the Istanbul Finance Center and Kanal Istanbul, raise concerns regarding ecological impact and urban resilience in a city already under significant seismic risk (Şen, 2021). While urban transformation policies aim to address safety and modernization, critics argue that top-down planning approaches often neglect socio-spatial inequalities and historic preservation (Özdemir, 2018). Moving forward, an integrated urban resilience strategy that combines seismic risk mitigation with sustainable planning is crucial for Istanbul's long-term urban future.

The newly developed 2040 Vision Plan by the Istanbul Municipality centers around climate issues as part of the city's future planning to become more sustainable and earthquake-resistant, especially in light of the seismic events of 1999 and 2023 on the other hand the 2050 Vision and Action Plan (VEP) is more focused on ecological issues and centring the seven main issues for Istanbul's future such as ;

- An environmentally conscious and climate-resilient city
- A transformative and resilient economy

- Accessible and equitable opportunities for all
- Vibrant and responsive spaces that ensure a good quality of life
- Efficient and inclusive mobility
- Integrated and intelligent infrastructure systems
- An equal and free society (IBB Şehir Planlama Müdürlüğü, 2022).

The seven main themes of the VEP document, created by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, highlight 38 strategic aims and 246 goals set for the city's vision for 2050. These themes clearly define the challenges the city faces and outline strategies to address them by that year. However, Istanbul is currently grappling with several significant problems. Efforts to improve the situation have largely been confined to zoning-based urban planning, particularly in developing green corridors, pedestrian-friendly areas, bike paths, and car-free zones, all aimed at achieving zero carbon emissions. Considering the recent demands in the city, the discourse about an urgent need to expand toward the northern forests due to earthquake risks has arisen, which has also brought climate challenges to the forefront in 2023 (Coskun, 2024). stanbul, a city rich in history and unique characteristics, currently has a population of around 16.6 million, which is anticipated to grow to 18.8 million by 2040, according to the Istanbul Municipality. Despite the challenges posed by intense urbanization, Istanbul continues to grow, experiencing the emergence of new neighbourhoods and suburbs around the Historic Peninsula. As a megacity, Istanbul spans two continents, with the Asian side primarily regarded as a residential area, while the European side is recognized as the hub for business districts. These two sides are interconnected by three bridges: the Bosphorus Bridge (also known as the 15th July Bridge), the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, and the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, which is situated in the northern region where recent discussions about urban sprawl into the Northern Forest are taking place (Coskun, 2024) .

Within the VEP document, this issue is highlighted as the city has historically relied on its surrounding natural resources to meet vital needs. However, with rapid population growth and urban expansion, Istanbul has increasingly contributed to the depletion and pollution of these resources, affecting a much wider ecological territory. Large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Istanbul Airport and the Northern Marmara Motorway, along with housing developments near the Northern Forests, are identified as major threats to the city’s biodiversity.

In response, the municipality proposes an ecological macroform strategy under the framework titled 'Ecosystem-Based Istanbul Macroform: Wings of Istanbul.'

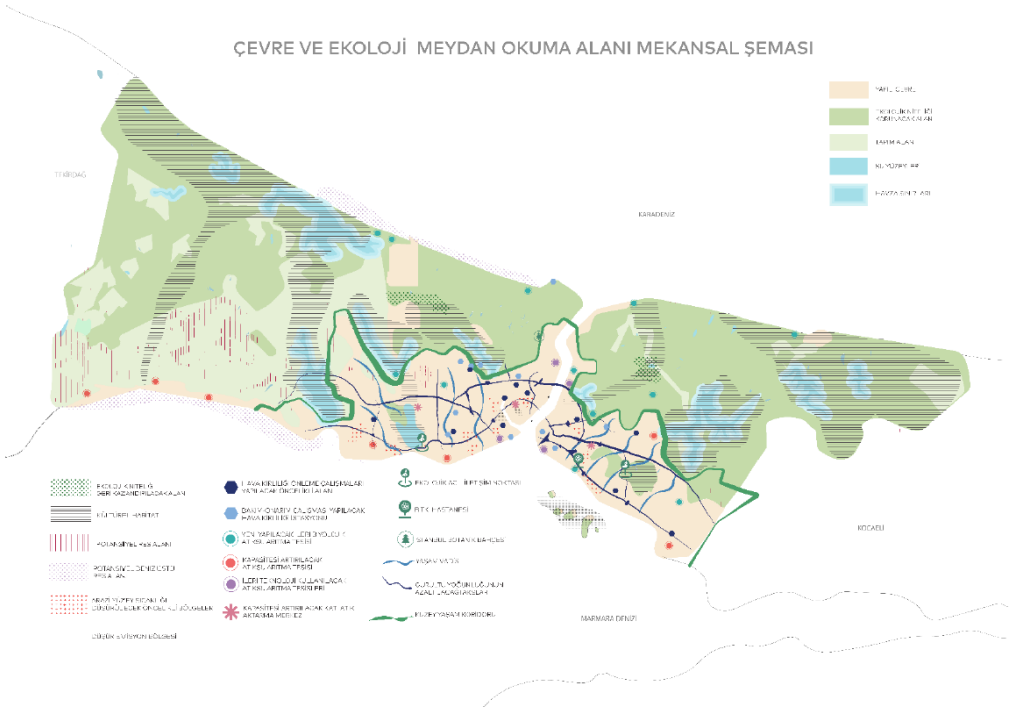


Figure 5| The Scheme of Environmental and Ecological Areas defined by IBB

(source:Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2050 vision and action plan (VEP) ,2022,p.105)

The goals set by IBB and the overall approach envisions transforming Istanbul from a consuming and polluting metropolis into a city that actively protects and sustains its ecological environment. The plan prioritizes limiting urban sprawl, preventing deforestation, and respecting ecological thresholds (İstanbul 2050 VEP, 2022).

It has been observed—and likely will continue to be observed over time—that such transformations have yielded different outcomes across Istanbul, depending on various factors such as the background of the transformed area or neighbourhood, demographic structure, type and scale of the transformation, and its geographic location (Coskun, 2024).The recent issues show that a concept has emerged suggesting that the large-scale transformation process initiated after the recent earthquakes could present a chance for the megacity Istanbul to evolve into a sustainable city by making changes from district to district or neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Another challenge involves maintaining the coherence of the already densely populated areas while adhering to sustainable principles, fostering social equity, and effectively utilizing ecological processes (Coskun, 2024).

The Ataköy case study serves as a significant example of the ongoing urban debates and challenges facing contemporary Istanbul. For decades, issues of urban resilience and sustainable development have been pursued alongside neoliberal policies. This thesis will examine the transformation of Ataköy's waterfronts—an essential element of the city's natural environment—and its social consequences. Before diving into this analysis, it is important to discuss the background and evolution of Istanbul's waterfronts.

5.4. Istanbul as a Global City, Neoliberal Urbanism& Waterfronts of Istanbul

This section of the thesis is essential since Istanbul's urban transformation has been significantly shaped by its waterfront areas, given the city's strategic location on the Bosphorus Strait, the Golden Horn, and the Marmara Sea, and our case study in Ataköy is being located in a waterfront area. These coastal areas have undergone various stages of regeneration, reflecting the shifting priorities of governance, commerce, and resilience against natural disasters. From Byzantine harbours to Ottoman shipyards and modern waterfront developments, Istanbul's coastal transformation reveals a complex interplay between economic development, heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability.

During the Byzantine era, the city's waterfronts played a crucial role in trade and defense. The Golden Horn, a natural harbor, housed key port facilities, including the Neorion and Theodosius Harbors, which facilitated the city's economic dominance (Müller-Wiener, 1998).

The city's coastal infrastructure included sea walls to protect against invasions and floods, but these structures also required continuous maintenance due to seismic activity and rising water levels . Under the Ottomans, the waterfront areas evolved to accommodate shipbuilding industries, such as the Imperial Shipyard (Tersane-i Amire), and commercial centers, including the famous Eminönü and Karaköy ports, which became hubs of international trade (Eldem, 2016). However, unregulated urban expansion and reliance on wooden construction made these areas vulnerable to both fires and earthquakes.

The Republican era introduced modern planning approaches to Istanbul's waterfronts, aiming to transform them into industrial and commercial hubs. Henri Prost's 1930s master plan sought to integrate coastal areas into the city's new road network, expanding port facilities while preserving historic sites (Tapan, 1994).Çoşkun (2023) highlights that, during the Republican period until the 1950s, Istanbul's coastal areas largely retained their spatial identity despite limited interventions such as land reclamation and coastal roads (Gül & Kılıç, 2002 as cited in Çoşkun,2023). However, the structural transformation of the coastline accelerated significantly with the expansion of land reclamation practices. From the 1950s onward, Istanbul's shores underwent intensive planning interventions that profoundly altered the form and function of these areas. Post-1950s rapid industrialization and informal settlements along the Marmara coast led to environmental degradation, with pollution affecting the Golden Horn and Bosphorus (Keleş & Daniş, 2002). These changes mirrored broader political and economic shifts occurring globally, which were also reflected in Turkey (Tekeli, 1991 as cited in Çoşkun,2023). Particularly after the 1980s, the rise of the global economy and the prevalence of neoliberal urban policies began to shape Turkish cities.

Istanbul, in particular, experienced a rapid transformation process. Under investment-driven urban policies, previously underutilized coastal zones were increasingly viewed as tools for economic development. However, the conversion of these coastal areas into sites of capital investment, combined with insufficient attention to public benefit within these projects, triggered widespread social concern and debate (Bilsel, 2006) (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

By the late 20th century, deindustrialization and global economic shifts prompted efforts to revitalize waterfront areas, with a focus on tourism, residential development, and the preservation of cultural heritage. During the 1980s, Istanbul began to emerge as Turkey's primary gateway to the global stage. Globalization efforts initiated by the government at that time allowed Istanbul to access significant financial resources, even amid prevailing austerity measures and a reduction in state subsidies (Ekmekci, 2012). These approaches laid the foundation for a new discourse on Istanbul, centered around themes such as environmental quality, urban identity, and city image. Between the 1980s and the late 1990s, urban transformation efforts—particularly those focused on waterfront developments—played a prominent role in reshaping Istanbul's urban image. While the city's northern coastline has largely retained its natural character, the southern shores have become significantly urbanized (Ferah, Gemci, & Algburi, 2022).Consequently, the city saw the implementation of major infrastructure projects, including the construction of the second Bosphorus Bridge, the development of the Trans-European Motorway, and the expansion of Atatürk International Airport. These initiatives reflected the broader objective of neoliberal policies: to transform Istanbul into a 'Global City' and to serve as a model for successful integration into the emerging global economy (Ekmekci, 2012).During that period, alongside the redefinition of the mayor's authority, many municipal services underwent privatization. One of the most significant displays of mayoral power was the initiation of urban renewal projects, particularly in historic districts such as Tarlabaşı and the Golden Horn (Haliç). Enabled by Law No. 5366 — 'Law on the Renewal, Protection and Reuse of Deteriorated Historical and Cultural Properties'— local governments were granted the power to implement large-scale redevelopment projects across multiple urban blocks without needing the consent of property owners in these dilapidated historic neighborhoods (Ekmekci, 2012).

Ekmekci (2012) mentiones that,the transformations experienced in places like Tarlabaşı during the 1980s bear resemblance to the urban interventions led by Robert Moses in New York's Bronx during the 1950s. Much like the Haussmann-style reforms, Istanbul's urban renewal efforts in the 1980s followed a tabula rasa approach, favoring widespread demolition and reconstruction over preservation of the existing urban fabric (Ekmekci, 2012).

By the 2000s, in terms of urban fabric, the increasing presence of luxury hotels, high-rise office towers, upscale residential projects, shopping malls, and newly constructed cultural and entertainment venues in Istanbul had become undeniable. These developments have contributed to framing Istanbul as a 'success story' within the context of neoliberal globalization (Keyder, 2005, as cited in Ekmekci, 2012).

Dogan(2010) and Ekmekci(2012) highlight that,since the 1980s, Istanbul has undergone a radical transformation in land use and construction practices—accelerating notably in the early 2000s and intensifying through the 2010s—due to the deepening impact of neoliberal policies, increased exposure to private capital, and rapid population growth and government's goals on boosting Istanbul's economy with international tourism (Dogan, Reimaging the City: Istanbul towards Globalization and Commodification, 2010), within the framework of the "Global City Istanbul" vision, the development of coastal parks and recreational areas has become an integral part of urban development plans initiated by the government and the metropolitan municipality (Ferah, Gemci, & Algburi, 2022). Dogan(2010) describes the process as follows; the government explicitly prioritized the "marketing of Istanbul" within the highly competitive global tourism industry and supported the idea of turning the Historic Peninsula into a museum-like zone. In line with this vision, the Council of Ministers approved Law No. 5366 in 2005, titled 'Law on the Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties.' The legislation aims to reconstruct and restore areas designated as conservation (SIT) zones by cultural and natural heritage boards—particularly those that have become degraded and are losing their original character (Act No. 5366, 2005) (Dogan, 2010).

As a result of market-oriented urban strategies&investments and the commodification of land, land itself has come to be viewed as a prime asset for investment and development . A key feature of this new urban paradigm is the speculative real estate market, which has manifested spatially through a construction boom across the city—even in areas previously deemed unsuitable for urbanization (Ekmekci, 2012).Ferah et al., add that, these investments—alongside dominant residential and commercial functions—have largely restricted the public's access to small-scale maritime and green spaces. These projects have primarily concentrated along Istanbul's coastline, particularly in districts such as Kumburgaz, Küçükçekmece, Bakırköy, Zeytinburnu, Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Beşiktaş, and Beykoz (Ferah, Gemci, & Algburi, 2022).

Since 1980s , Istanbul has seen the emergence of new socio-spatial formations that divide the city into increasingly distinct zones. The proliferation of gated communities, large-scale mass housing developments on the urban periphery, aggressive urban renewal projects in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, and the persistence of informal housing (gecekondu) areas all reflect the

growing spatial segregation and widening socioeconomic divide between the affluent and the poor (Ekmekci, 2012). Following with the trend on waterfront redevelopment projects.Yildiz et al. Define the situation of waterfronts as follows;in contemporary cities, waterfronts have become key urban zones that reflect the competitive development strategies of the 21st century. Particularly, large-scale investments are directed toward these areas to revitalize abandoned port zones, ensure economic sustainability, and support urban regeneration. On a global scale, the competition between nations has shifted to interurban rivalry, turning coastal and port cities into laboratories for transformation—integrating residential, commercial, tourism, and recreational functions (Yildiz, Senlier, & Ozyilmaz Kucukyagci, 2015).

Waterfront redevelopment projects not only reshape the spatial structure but also redefine the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of cities, offering a renewed vision for urban functions, including the revitalization of the Golden Horn, the transformation of the Galataport district, and the pedestrianization of coastal areas (Yildiz, Senlier, & Ozyilmaz Kucukyagci, 2015). The Golden Horn clean-up project successfully removed industrial waste and rehabilitated historical landmarks. Meanwhile, the Galataport project transformed the historic port area into a cruise ship terminal and a commercial district (Şen, 2021). Similarly, the regeneration of Kadıköy and Moda's coastlines has improved public access to the waterfront, creating more pedestrian-friendly urban spaces. However, these projects have raised concerns about gentrification, displacement, and the ecological sustainability of large-scale construction in a city prone to seismic activity (Çavuşoğlu & Strutz, 2014). While some of these initiatives have brought benefits to their respective areas, they have also raised issues regarding citizens' rights to access waterfronts, similar to our case study, Ataköy, which is located in a district with a long coastal strip; Bakırköy.

5.5.Gated Communities and Luxury Housing in Istanbul

As we have mentioned in the prior section, since the early 2000s, Turkey has experienced a significant construction boom, and Istanbul — the country's largest and economic capital — has been the city most deeply affected by this surge (Can & Fanton Ribeiro da Silva , 2023). The Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ), endowed with expansive powers, played a central role in accelerating the implementation of neoliberal urban policies through highly centralized means (Batuman, 2013 as cited in Can&Fanton Ribeiro da Silva,2023). As we analyze the role of the neoliberal state in land development, it is important to highlight the role of TOKİ in facilitating the privatization of public land through its institutional empowerment. By consolidating the real estate assets and portfolios from former public entities like Emlak Bank and the Urban Land Office under its control, and by utilizing the 2003 Law No. 4966 that grants it the authority to request the free transfer of public properties, besides its role of providing social housing in the areas of Istanbul such as;Kayabaşı, Başakşehir,Tuzla any many other (Bozdoğan, 2020; Bingöl, 2019), TOKİ has become one of the largest landholders in Turkey. This combination of direct asset transfers and legal provisions has allowed TOKİ to transform extensive areas of public land into profit-driven residential projects targeted at higher middle-income demographics (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).

Through state-led urban regeneration and redevelopment initiatives, along with the production of social housing by TOKİ, vulnerable urban residents were either displaced to the city’s peripheries or forced into mortgage debt, becoming financially dependent on the state or state-backed banks (Can & Fanton Ribeiro da Silva , 2023).

Project-based development — including mega-projects, private gated communities, public–private urban regeneration schemes, and so-called social housing initiatives — has become the dominant mode of housing provision in both Turkey and Istanbul. These projects have also served as key instruments in advancing the neoliberal transformation of local and urban governance across the city (Can & Fanton Ribeiro da Silva , 2023). Candan and Kolluoğlu (2008) highlight that the spatial structure of Istanbul and the social relations within it have experienced rapid transformation due to the city's neoliberal restructuring. This change has elicited mixed reactions, ranging from admiration to dismay. The city's skyline has been reshaped by the increasing number of banking, office, and residential towers, as well as large luxury hotels. Additionally, the urban landscape has become denser with the rising presence of shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, and nightclubs, all of which serve as visible indicators of this ongoing transformation (Bartu Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008).

Given that the processes are interconnected, Serin et al.(2020) underlines that,it is important to analyse how the neoliberal state influences the current commercialization of urban space, particularly through the example of 'branded housing projects' which are defined by Serin et al.(2020) as; private neighbourhoods created through public-private partnerships in Istanbul.In this process, the neoliberal state has assumed two critical roles in the commodification of urban space: first, as a regulatory authority reshaping modes of production and resource distribution; and second, as an active agent in urban development — functioning both as a land developer and a large-scale housing provider (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).In other words, as defined by Geniş(2007),new legislative regulations concerning land use were introduced to facilitate and encourage the operations of large capital holders in the housing sector. Extensive public lands located both in the city center and on its periphery were privatized and subsequently sold or transferred to major construction firms and banks (Geniş, 2007).

Metropolitan and local master zoning and construction plans were either relaxed or bypassed altogether. In this way, previously protected areas, such as the Bosphorus hills, lake basins, and forested zones, were opened up for profitable development projects targeting upper-income segments through large-scale luxury housing schemes. Through these mechanisms, the housing sector was transformed into a highly lucrative field of investment for major capitalists, who had formerly regarded urban land merely as a fixed cost of production (Geniş, 2007).

Istanbul is notable for its branded housing projects, as it serves as the country's largest economic hub and plays a central role in urban transformation processes. In the 2000s and 2010s, a surge in construction significantly altered urban areas: the construction industry's contribution to GDP, job creation, and financial investment reached record highs, the yearly rate of new builders established doubled, and foreign direct investment in construction skyrocketed from about US $6 million to nearly US $987 million between 2004 and 2008. The approvals for building permits increased almost fivefold from 2002 to 2012, while capital from other sectors—like tourism and textiles—shifted towards housing. At the same time, the quantity of urban development projects, including branded neighbourhoods, social housing initiatives, and various project-based developments, saw a sharp rise, solidifying project-based development as the prevalent model in the period following 2001 (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).By 2014, EVA Real Estate reported,cited in Serin et al.(2020), that 852 such branded housing schemes had been completed in Istanbul, accounting for roughly 7.7 percent of the city's total housing stock (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).

It is essential to explore the concept of branding in the context of housing projects and how they have evolved into consumption objects for society. Cinar et al. (2006) define this transformation as a consequence of changing consumption patterns following the implementation of neoliberal policies by the state. Gurbilek, as referenced by Çınar et al. (2006), characterized the shift in consumption into a spectacle as 'living on the screen' (2001). This phenomenon has prompted the emerging middle class to redefine their lifestyles to align with new consumption patterns, with the primary objective of making this lifestyle more visible and distinctive (Cinar, Cizmeci, & Koksal, 2006).

In this context, housing has historically been a significant indicator of status and identity. For the middle and upper classes, housing has moved beyond its traditional roles as merely a private living space or a financial investment; it has become the central medium through which social standing and personal identity are conveyed. The architectural style, interior design, and social symbolism associated with one's home now serve as material representations of class-based wealth and lifestyle. This shift is closely linked to the concept of 'place branding' and 'residential branding,' where housing projects are marketed not only as physical assets but also as lifestyle products (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Kavaratzis, 2005). In Turkey, and particularly in Istanbul, this process has been significantly shaped by the emergence of branded housing projects, in which the reputation and identity of the developer itself—such as Sinpaş, Ağaoğlu, or Varyap—serve as markers of prestige and exclusivity (Kimyon, 2014; Bilgiç, 2018). This dynamic reflects what Harvey (Harvey D. , 1989; Harvey D. , 2001) describes as the entrepreneurial turn in urban governance, where urban space is commodified and packaged as part of a competitive, market-driven logic. Similarly, Colomb and Kalandides (2010) emphasize that branding strategies extend beyond marketing aesthetics to include cultural symbolism, lifestyle imaginaries, and the production of socio-spatial inequalities. In this sense, the branding of residential projects in Istanbul mirrors global trends: architectural design, lifestyle amenities, and even project names are marketed as exclusive branded experiences. The construction company's name itself adds symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), thereby increasing the project's value, credibility, and market appeal, and ultimately transforming housing into a commodified lifestyle product (Bourdieu, 1986).

Particularly in Turkey and Istanbul, well-known developers act as brand names, and their corporate identity becomes a symbol of prestige. This branding strategy is not limited to domestic markets; it mirrors global trends in which the architectural design, lifestyle offerings, and even the name of the project are marketed as exclusive, branded experiences. The construction company's name adds value, credibility, and market appeal to the project, transforming housing into a commodified lifestyle product. This performative display has become so pervasive that the homes of the 'rich and famous' frequently become spectacles in the media landscape (see figure 6) (Cinar, Cizmeci, & Koksal, 2006).

Figure 6.Advertisement for Kemer Country private town 1995 *(source: Cinar, Cizmeci, & Koksal, 2006,p.4)*

Kemer Country example is an important example in order to understand dynamics and typologies of gated communities in Istanbul, as the project is an example of a private town and a settlement example as well as the exclusive villa type of gated communities such as; Selenium Country, Kemer Hill, Cekmekoy County and many more, 'which are translated form of global urban form into local sociocultural sensitivities of Istanbul's elites' (Geniş, 2007,p.780).

Type	Features
High-rise condominium	Located in the city centre, particularly in the prestige areas; high-technology security; smart building; top-notch yet limited sport, consumption and service facilities; private management
Exclusive villa	Located along the Marmara coastline and forestry areas; small in size and highly exclusive in price; high-technology security coupled with small number of private security personnel; top-notch communication, sport and service facilities, limited social services; private management
Private town	Located at the fringes of the city on rural land and near the lakes and forests; large in size and a variety of housing types; high-technology security and large private security personnel; top-notch communication, infrastructure and sport facilities; large variety of social services; private government

Table 5. typology of upper-class gated communities in Istanbul *(source: Geniş,2007,p.776)*

Cinar et al.(2006) explain these trends and the emergence of the 'luxury housing' concept as a response to the evolving demands of the new middle class. This shift led to a significant rise in the supply of luxury residences, which allowed individuals to spatially distinguish themselves from those they perceived as outside their social stratum. In this sense, luxury housing developments have effectively become the gated communities of the new middle class and upper class (Cinar, Cizmeci, & Koksal, 2006).

Cinar et al.(2006) emphasize that,one of the most striking features of gated communities is the privatization of public spaces. Facilities such as open and closed sports centers, restaurants, social clubs, recreational areas, educational institutions, and shopping venues within these developments are accessible exclusively to residents. Because almost all urban needs are met within the confines of these compounds, residents' interactions with the broader urban environment and with 'others' outside the gates gradually diminish (Cinar, Cizmeci, & Koksal, 2006).Serin et al. interpret this phenomenon as follows: although branded housing projects prioritize capital accumulation, they also contribute significantly to socio-spatial inequality. These developments offer exclusive services only to certain income groups, thereby disrupting the spatial coherence of the neighbourhood. This division fosters a sharp social distinction between those who can afford such privileges and those who cannot, often triggering gentrification processes (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).It is important to note that, in addition to luxury and branded housing projects, there are also affordable gated communities in Istanbul, such as Kayabaşı, Bezirganbahçe, and the Ataşehir Yenişehir TOKİ Project (Bartu Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008; Karaman, 2013), among others, as mentioned in the literature review. However, within the scope of this thesis, we have primarily focused on luxury housing and branded housing in the context of gated communities, as these concepts are directly related to our case study in Ataköy.The

cohesion of cities and neighbourhood cultures can be undermined when urban development focuses narrowly on specific, profit-driven projects. This dynamic forces residents of poorly planned urban areas to seek housing in branded or gated communities as their only viable option. However, fundamental amenities such as green spaces, safety, and essential municipal services should not be limited to these exclusive enclaves. Instead, cities must be planned holistically, with a focus on public interest, inclusivity, and equity. By embracing such comprehensive urban planning, we can mitigate social injustices and restrain the uncontrolled gentrification that frequently accompanies urban transformation and development initiatives (Serin, Smith, & McWilliams, 2020).

Chapter 6 – District Scale | Bakırköy

Chapter 6 ,examines Bakırköy, the district in which the Ataköy case study is located. After providing the contextual background, the chapter addresses the spatial transformation of Bakırköy over time and incorporates analyses from the existing literature. It then explores how the district and its coastal areas have been shaped and transformed by neoliberal policies, with particular attention to the changing dynamics between public and private space.

6.1.Contextual background of Bakırköy district and Urban Planning Processes, Spatial Change

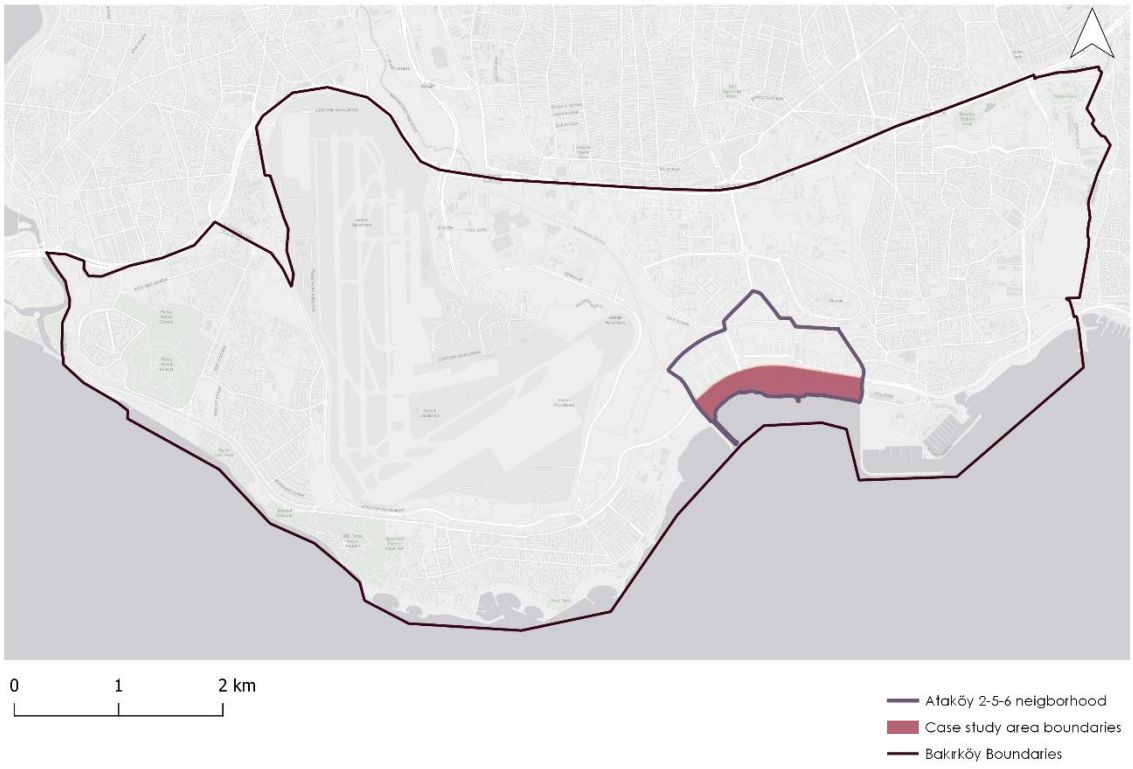


Figure 7| Showing Bakırköy's (the district Ataköy is located) and Ataköy's 2-5-6 th parts' (neigbourhood of the case study) boundaries and case study area *(created by the author , source of map base: gis esri)*

Bakirköy is among the most ancient neighbourhoods in Istanbul and has consistently held importance within the urban landscape. Originally named Makri Koy, meaning "distant town" in Greek, it was one of the earliest peripheral towns of Ottoman Istanbul.Today the area is home to 219.893 people, consisting of 15 neighbourhoods(TUİK,2024).

Bakırköy has a history that traces back to the 2nd century BCE. Referred to as Hebdomon from the 4th century prior to the Ottoman Empire, it was a significant settlement situated just outside of Constantinople. Positioned along the Via Egnatia, the main route linking Constantinople to Europe, it functions as a fishing village located seven miles to the west of the Million Monument, which stands at one end of Augusteion Square in front of Hagia Sophia. Augusteion Square is regarded as the point of origin for all roads departing from the capital (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

The true importance of Hebdomon began during Emperor Constantine the Great's reign when it transformed into a resort area featuring summer residences, grand homes, gardens, cisterns, churches, and monasteries. The region experienced several fires and later faced destruction, gradually diminishing its significance over time. In the later periods of Byzantium, it became a small fishing settlement known as Makri Khori, a name derived from its extensive coastline. Following the conquest, during the Ottoman era, the name Khora was replaced with Makri Village (Makriköy). In the Ottoman period, the area acquired additional important roles, not only through new settlements such as mansions, palaces, mosques, and baths but also due to the relocation of the gunpowder mill to the district. Over time, the ease of transportation, which was the establishment of the railway in 1871 (Kısar Koramaz, Koramaz, & Özer, 2018), provided enhancements to the town's spatial and functional connections to central Istanbul,resulting in increased population and economic activity, led to the establishment of many factories, transforming the old fishing village into an industrial hub (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).Later on when the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, with the new law of Turkification of the names, Makriköy became Bakırköy.

The features of neighbourhoods in the Bakirkoy district underscore the significance of the area's housing framework and its developmental history. The district is made up of five main sub-districts: Atakoy, Yesilkoy, Florya, Ataturk Airport, and the central parts of Bakirkoy, covering a total area of 35 km² with 15 neighbourhoods *(see figure 8*) (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024). Traditionally, these neighbourhoods were mainly developed for residential use, and Bakirköy was noted for its individual houses, picturesque coastlines, and beaches (Kısar Koramaz, Koramaz, & Özer, 2018).

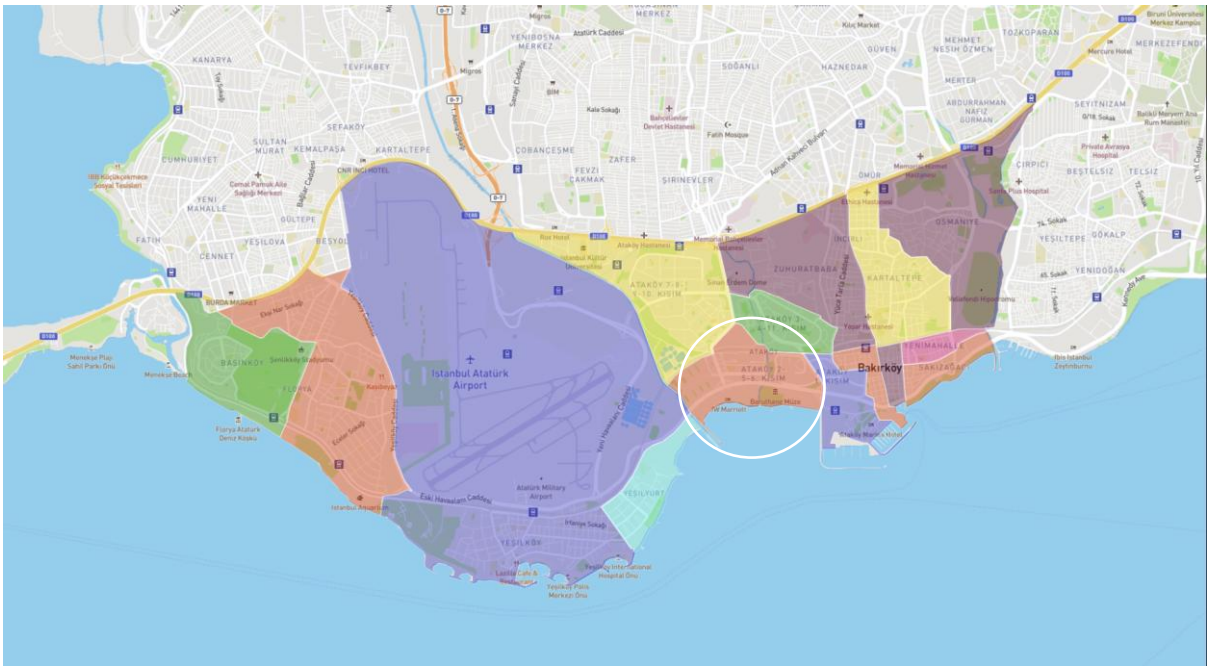


Figure 8| Showing Bakırköy's 15 neighborhoods with todays form and Ataköy's 2-5-6 th parts' (neigbourhood of the case study) boundaries and case study area

(source: https://atlasbig.com.tr/istanbul-bakirkoyun-mahalleleri)

Formation of neighbourhoods in Bakırköy dates back to 1900s;in the northeastern corner of Makriköy, a migrant community had established a village in the area of Çobançeşme, with the number of households surpassing 35. This settlement was officially named Osmaniye in 1902. Osmaniye can be regarded as the first clustered residential area between the railway line and both the İncirli Farm (present-day İncirli-Ömür vicinity) and the stone/lime quarries. Furthermore, in 1903, a new cemetery was designated near the lime quarries, and a decree stipulated that burials for Makriköy residents would be conducted there. This suggests that Makriköy's boundaries expanded as far north as Osmaniye.Within the historical center of the settlement, rising population density prompted the construction of new buildings. This expansion of Bakırköy marks the beginning of the development of the district's neighbourhoods, as we have mentioned, there are fifteen neighbourhoods today in the area. In 1913, the extended boundaries of Bakırköy necessitated the division into five new neighbourhoods of the area (Aydın & Eres, 2018)

6.2. Bakırköy and its waterfonts' transformation over time; Globalization,neoliberal policies and mega projects

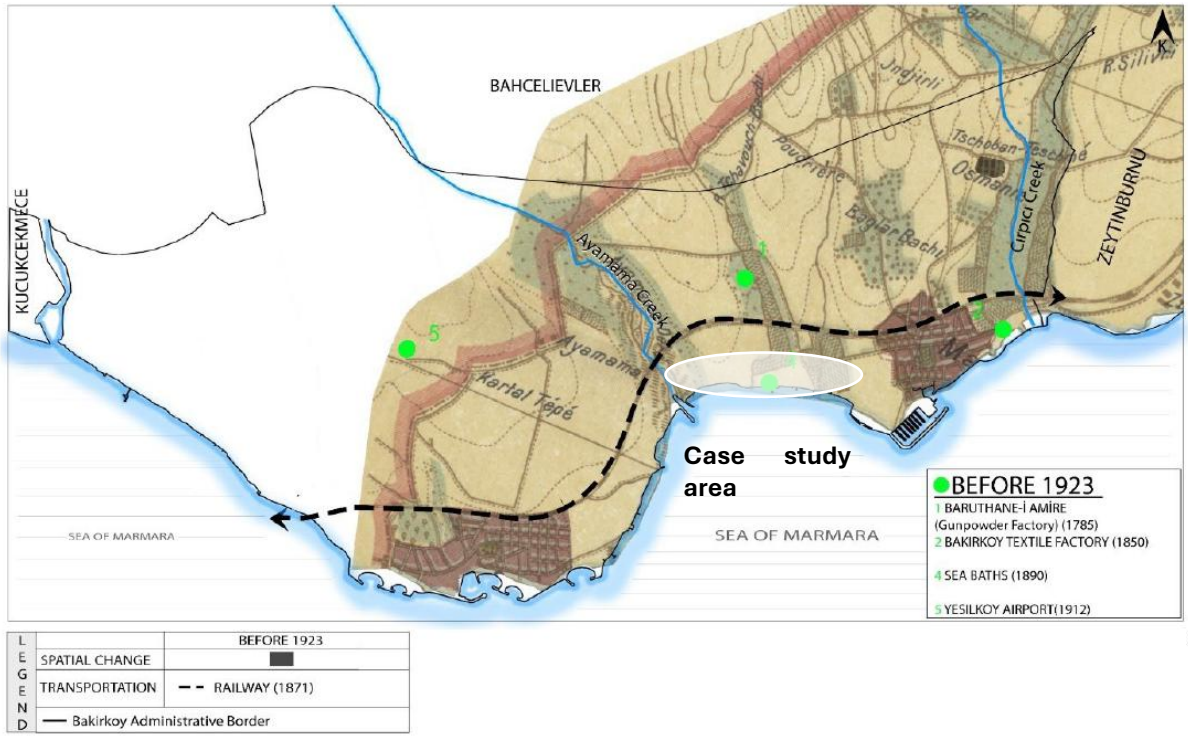


Figure 9| Land use before 1923 (foundation of the Turkish Republic) Marking the important buildings and built environment components in the district during the last period of the Ottoman Empire. *(source: Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024,p.107) this thesis's case study area marked by the author)*

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, state-led development occurred throughout Turkey. Between 1930 and 1950, the state took on the role of an investor. This was followed by the establishment of the State Industry Office and the Industry and Loan Bank in 1932 to support industrial growth. These two entities later merged under the name Sümerbank in 1933. Sümerbank was the responsible authority for implementing the first Five-Year Plan and overseeing the industrialization process (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

The strategic location of industrial areas and the incorporation of railway systems significantly influenced the spatial development of the historical settlement. In Bakırköy, residential construction mainly occurred between the coast and the railway tracks, particularly in the regions now identified as the Zeytinlik and Cevizlik neighbourhoods.. Historical maps indicate that during the early 20th century, Bakırköy evolved from a small seaside resort into an urban settlement (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

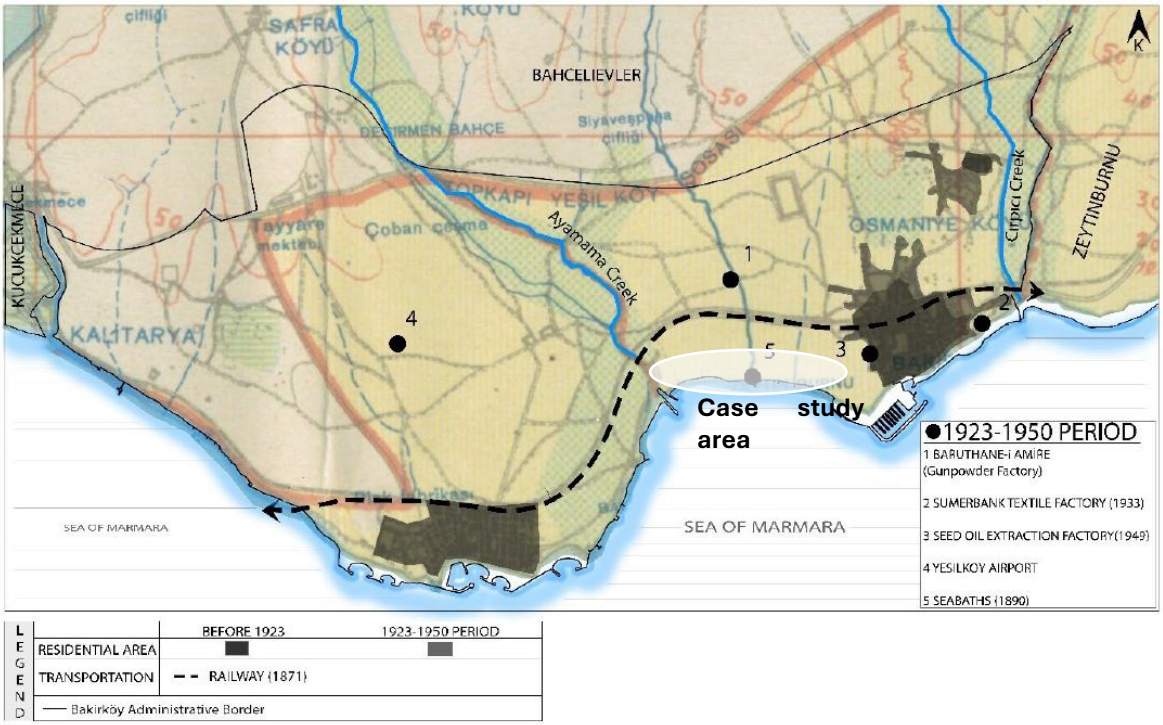


Figure 10| Development of Bakırköy during 1923-1950 *(source: (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024,p.108)*

The 1950s hold a significant role in the history of Bakırköy especially Ataköy. The social residential projects led by the government started during those years (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

After World War II, changes in Turkey's political landscape had a significant impact on urban planning and architecture. A major factor driving changes in the built environment was the rapid increase in urban population during the 1950s, which led to accelerated urban growth. This situation resulted in a critical housing crisis, causing unregulated and informal settlement patterns to emerge, notably the gecekondu (slum) developments in 1960s (Kurtuluş, 2011). Concurrently, economic challenges and a lack of basic construction materials—like cement, which had to be imported—hindered the construction industry and raised building prices.

However, after the military coup in 1960 and the establishment of the 1961 Constitution, there was a resurgence of the social state concept that emphasized national development efforts driven by social goals. An example of this is the Ataköy/Baruthane Project, which was designed and executed by the organization formerly known as Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bankası AO. This project highlights and chronicles a pivotal moment in Turkish history, serving as a unique and groundbreaking model for organized urban development and mass housing creation during that era.

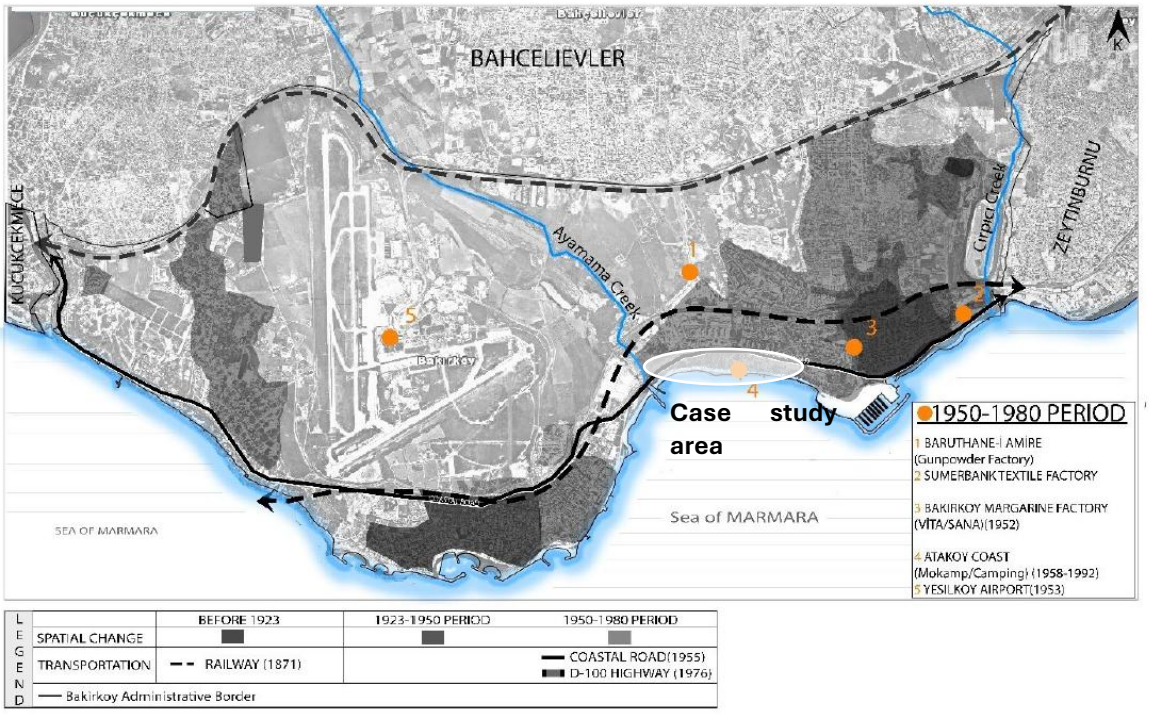


Figure 11|Spatial change from 1950 to 1980 *(source: Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024,p.109) (this thesis's case study area marked by the author)*

The post-1950s period marked a significant transformation in Bakırköy, driven by infrastructural developments such as the opening of a coastal road and the modernization of Yeşilköy Airport. While the district initially retained its resort-like character, rapid population growth, internal migration, and inadequate infrastructure led to unplanned urban sprawl and informal settlements, particularly in neighbourhoods like Osmaniye. In response to rising housing demand, old low-rise homes were replaced by apartment buildings through agreements between small contractors and homeowners. Policy shifts in the late 1950s and 1960s, including the establishment of the Ministry of Development and Housing and the introduction of the 1963 Five-Year Development Plan, aimed to regulate housing production, encourage cooperative involvement, and address the squatter housing issue. However, by the mid-1970s, the national housing deficit remained a growing concern (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

As we have mentioned in the previous parts of this thesis, in Turkey, the neoliberal urbanization policies started to take place in the 1980s (Kurtuluş, 2011). During this period, Bakırköy has undergone a transformation, and that transformation continues to this day, especially in the coastal zones of the area. In Bakırköy, urban growth extended northward toward the D-100 highway in the 1980s, facilitated by improved access through transportation initiatives such as the Bosphorus Bridge and better public transit, resulting in near-complete spatial saturation except for specified public spaces (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

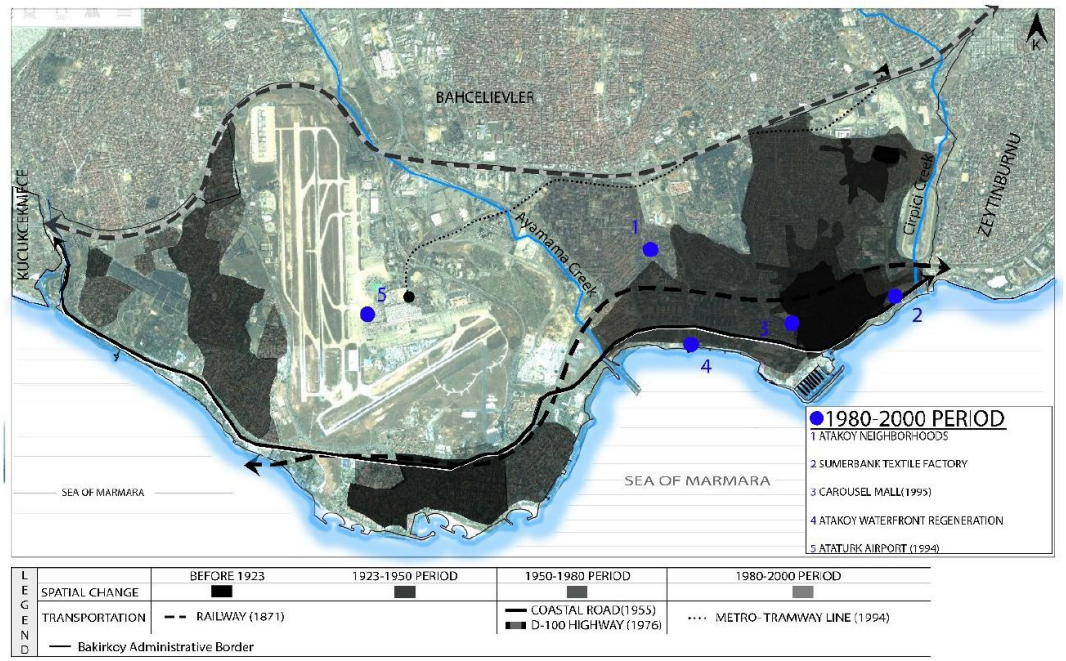


Figure 12| Spatial change from 1980 to 2000s *(source: Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024,p.111)*

As we have mentioned before, the urban transformation for the earthquake resilience movement started in the early 2000s in Turkey. Giving the Municipalities to declare urban renewal zones by the 2005 municipal law No.5398,through article 73. This authority was expanded in 2010, , enabling municipalities to designate renewal areas regardless of existing developments and to set building regulations such as floor area ratios and height limits. Later, the 2012 Disaster Risk Area Transformation Law No. 6306 further centralized this power by authorizing the central government to define renewal zones and carry out redevelopment projects. These projects are typically executed by TOKI (Housing Development Administration of Turkey), which had its funding capacity significantly boosted by the 2003 Law No. 4966, allowing it to engage in profit-driven construction initiatives (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).From these dates forward, partnerships with the private sector and profit-based urban planning decisions started to be taken besides the earthquake resilience efforts. The transformation initiatives of this era demanded a new model of governance which is not considering public interest (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

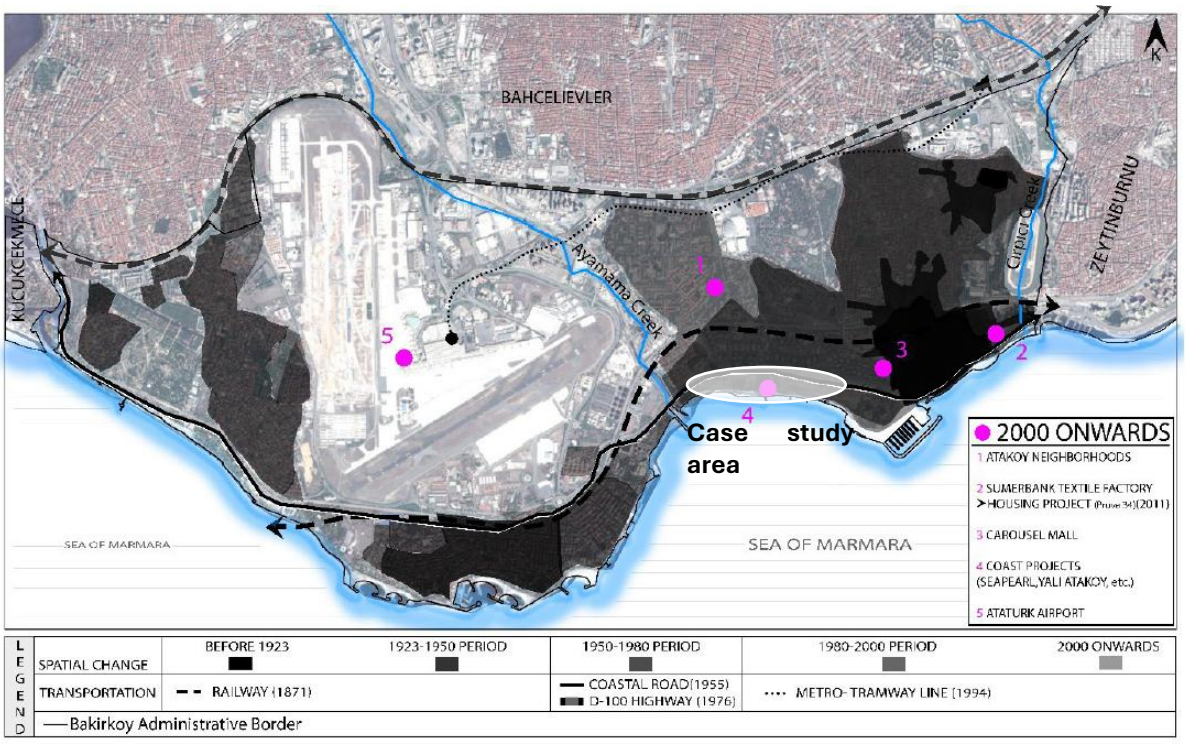


Figure 13| Spatial change 2000s and forward *(source:Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024,p.112) (this thesis's case study area marked by the author)*

Privatization efforts have transformed large parcels of publicly owned land, once dedicated to public infrastructure and services, into investment assets for the private sector. In the case study areas, this shift in land use has led to the creation of consumption-oriented spaces. Former industrial or public-use sites have been redeveloped into upscale housing and tourism-oriented zones. However, this process, often steered by uncoordinated planning practices, has brought several challenges, including disruptions in the development of integrated transportation systems, the weakening of clear urban center definitions, and inefficiencies in directing local investments effectively (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

Moreover, Usanmaz Çoşkun (2023), in her analysis of the coastal areas, including the Bakırköy shoreline and the case study of the thesis, carried out a quantitative analysis and evaluation of the spatial transformation of the Marmara Sea coast of the European side between Yenikapı and Atatürk Airport between 2003 and 2018. She examined the large-scale coastal projects, investments, and new urban areas developed under neoliberal policies during this period.A 150-meter buffer zone was defined along the coastline. The land use and spatial transformation between 2003 and 2018 were analysed based on this buffer zone(see figure 14) (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

Figure 14| Showing the large-scale coastal projects developed under neoliberal policies, between Yenikapı and Atatürk airport *(source: Usanmaz Çoşkun,2023,p.331) including case study area and projects of this thesis ,marked by the author)*

In this study Usanmaz Çoşkun(2023) focused on 11 projects along the coastline between Yenikapı and Atatürk Airport.These projects are: Sea Pearl Ataköy, Millet Bahçesi, Yalı Ataköy, Ataköy Marina, Yedimavi, Büyükyalı, Ataport Seaport and Cruise Terminal, Pruva 34, Radisson Blu, Hyatt Regency, and Yenikapı landfill and rally area.

Aydın and Eres (2018) conducted a detailed spatial analysis of Bakırköy to examine the historical transformation of public and state-owned areas, particularly emphasizing their social function and accessibility. The study is significant for understanding the shifting urban landscape, especially in coastal areas that historically held collective and institutional value. The authors divide part of Bakırköy into four subregions, highlighting varying trajectories of urban change, privatization, and spatial restructuring. A central observation is the gradual erosion of public character, especially along the coast, in favor of high-density, privatized developments.

In the 1st subregion, Bakırköy's historic center has lost much of its original architecture but maintains urban coherence through public monuments and street layouts. The 2nd subregion, which includes the Veliefendi Hippodrome and adjacent coastal areas, was historically used for military, leisure, and industrial purposes, but has recently transitioned into high-security residential zones with limited public access. The 4th subregion, once rural with vineyards and wooden mansions, experienced zoning-led apartment development following mid-20th-century migration. While lacking expansive public green areas like Ataköy, it still maintains a relatively open urban fabric. The 3rd subregion, which is also the case study area, historically functioned as a state-

managed and publicly accessible zone—from Byzantine monasteries to Ottoman baruthane (gunpowder factories) and later the Ataköy housing project. While initially preserving public coastal access and heritage buildings, this area has been significantly privatized in the last decade with luxury hotels, offices, and residences. The adjacent psychiatric hospital area, once a vast public green space, is now under threat from new development plans.

Overall, the studies by the scholars (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023; Aydın & Eres, 2018; Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024) at Bakırköy and Ataköy's coast reflects how historically public and state-managed spaces—especially along the coast—are being replaced by exclusive, high-rise developments with the influence of neoliberal policies. This transformation signifies not only the loss of open, green areas but also the symbolic breakdown of urban spaces once associated with collective ownership and public life.

In the next chapter we will be focusing on our case study area Ataköy and Luxury waterfront developments at its waterfront area.

CASE STUDY | Chapter 7 -Ataköy

Chapter 7 constitutes the core case study chapter and begins by presenting the contextual and urban development background of Ataköy. It outlines the urban principles on which the neighborhood was established and explains how it was originally designed, providing the reader with a comprehensive understanding of its foundations. The chapter then examines the processes of privatization, with particular attention to the transformation of the coastal zone under neoliberal policies, drawing on relevant analyses from the literature. Building on this, it discusses the current situation, addressing the conflicts and protests that emerged during and prior to the construction of luxury developments along the waterfront, while supporting these observations with scholarly analyses on environmental issues. Finally, the chapter narrows its focus to the smallest scale, examining the branded housing projects as well as other luxury hotel and hospital developments located on the waterfront, introducing them in detail and situating the discussion within the context of previous research in the literature.

7.1.The historic and Urban development background of Ataköy

Following World War II, the economic crisis further constrained investment in the housing sector. In response, scholars like Ernst Reuter—who also founded Turkey's first urban planning department—advocated for a model inspired by European practices, wherein local governments would take the lead in producing affordable housing and improved the Turkish urban planning vision with many other suggestions.After the war the Real Estate Credit Bank launched its first large-scale project, realized in Ankara's Yenişehir district (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

The Turkish Real Estate Credit Bank was established in the early years of the Republic to spearhead state-led initiatives in housing and zoning development, particularly with the aim of providing social housing in the capital, Ankara. However, during this formative period, the newly founded Republic faced more pressing priorities, such as industrial development, transportation infrastructure, public administration, and educational facilities. As a result, the Bank's intended role as a key actor in residential development remained secondary in the early years.

One of the primary drivers behind the transformation of the built environment in Turkey was the significant population growth and rapid urbanization experienced in the 1950s (Özdamar, 2019). This surge led to a substantial housing shortage, which led to unplanned settlements such as *gecekondu (slums)*. Simultaneously, economic difficulties made it challenging to procure even the most basic construction materials—such as cement—often requiring imports.

These material shortages constrained the construction sector and led to increased costs (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

Following the military coup in 1960 and the establishment of the 1961 Constitution, the notion of a welfare state regained significance, prompting national urban planning initiatives to focus on social goals. Within this framework, the Ataköy/Baruthane Project, which was created and carried out by the Turkish Real Estate Credit Bank (Türkiye Emlak Kredi Bankası), became a notably important example (Özdamar, 2019). The project showcased a unique and pioneering approach to organized urban development and large-scale housing production, representing a pivotal moment in the history of urban planning in Turkey (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

Baturayoğlu Yöney(2018) underline the role of the bank with reminding the regulation made in 1946, Emlak Kredi Bank (The Real Estate Credit Bank) had a regulation with the law 4947. Underlining the bank's tasks as 'with carrying out construction and repair works within the country and, in particular, with providing loans and opening credit lines—against mortgages on buildings and structures, including the land they sit on, for a period not exceeding fifty years—to build affordable housing for citizens who do not own homes. It is also authorized to construct buildings on land owned by the bank or others, to sell these buildings either for cash or in installments secured by mortgages, and to engage in the production and trade of building materials and construction-related industries, as well as to establish partnerships or become a partner in existing enterprises (Baturayoğlu Yöney,2018,p.59).'

These objectives aimed to address the national housing shortage and the difficulties in supplying construction materials through state intervention, utilizing a state economic enterprise (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).Following the re-evaluated tasks of the bank, Emlak Kredi bank became responsible of credit provider for the housing projects all over Turkey after the declaration of 'The Building Construction Promotion Law framed housing production as a "matter of state concern' (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

While the bank promoted housing production through long-term, low-interest loans, it also developed an alternative approach to support the provision of affordable and high-quality housing. This method involved acquiring large plots of land along the growth corridors of major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir to implement new mass housing projects. Designed by prominent architects of the period, these projects were generally planned in accordance with 'garden city' and/or 'new town' principles. Independent of existing zoning plans and regulations, these areas were comprehensively developed by the bank, including the construction of municipal, commercial, socio-cultural, and educational infrastructures, which were later transferred to relevant public authorities (Özdamar, 2019).

A significant legislative development occurred on January 6, 1954, when an amendment to the Land Registry Law legalized the concept of 'condominium ownership.' This made it possible to offer mortgage-based housing loans for individual apartments within multi-story blocks built on the same plot. Mass housing production in these newly developed areas became a primary mission of the bank, which also assumed the role of contractor in order to minimize costs and maximize construction quality.Between 1946 and 1972, using this model, the bank financed, constructed, and sold over 11,000 housing units in cities including Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Diyarbakır, Uşak, and Erzurum (Baturayoğlu Yöney, Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy,İstanbul, 2018).

7.2. The Ataköy Project of Turkish Emlak Kredi Bank

Figure 15| Ataköy coastal settlement; illustration featured on the cover of the sales brochure, 1957. *(source:' Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy İstanbul' by Nilüfer Baturayoğlu Yöney in the journal Mimarist volume 61. page 62)*

The Ataköy Project, initially known as the Baruthane Project, took its name from the historic industrial structure located along the Ataköy coast. In 1957,this large-scale housing initiative was developed by Emlak Kredi Bank and covered an area of 3,769,483 square meters in Istanbul (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018). In response to the growing need for mass housing and the trend toward planning new urban settlements in the post-1945 period, the bank purchased the Baruthane land in 1955 from the Machinery and Chemical Industry Institution (Makine ve Kimya Endüstrisi Kurumu). This marked the beginning of Turkey's first major mass housing project in Istanbul (Her Umut Ortakarar, 2021).

The reason Ataköy was chosen is that , the neighborhood consists of unique components such as; Baruthane-i Amire building which was the center of gunpowder production until the end of world war first in the Ottoman era built in 1689. The constructions within the Baruthane site varies as the oldest one being the Baruthane building as we mentioned, the most recent one being the İspirtonahe building can be translated into english as ' ethanol distillery' which is another industrial building was in use until 1917 (Baturayoğlu Yöney, Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy,İstanbul, 2018). Another property of Ataköy is located by the coast of the Marmara Sea and close to Yeşilköy Airport (Özdamar, 2019), later named as Atatürk Airport, and nowadays not in use anymore.

Ataköy held a strategic position within the urban planning policies of 1950s Istanbul, as it was situated along the city's western development corridor (Özdamar, 2019). During that period, Ataköy was considered one of the peripheral areas of Istanbul, but with the city's rapid expansion and the adoption of a polycentric urban planning approach in the subsequent decades, Ataköy has since evolved into one of the city's key urban sub-centers. Its integration into the broader metropolitan fabric was facilitated by major infrastructure projects of the time, including the construction of the Sirkeci–Florya Coastal Road and the E5 highway, as well as the completion of the Sirkeci–Florya railway line, which significantly improved accessibility and connectivity with the

city center (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018). Today Ataköy has the connection to Marmaray and metro lines increasing its connectivity to many central locations of Istanbul and being one of the centers in the city.

In 1956, two competitions were held simultaneously. The first was a naming contest for the new residential area, which ultimately resulted in the name 'Ataköy'—the name it carries to this day. The jury, composed of prominent historians, politicians, and writers of the time, selected the name due to its symbolic connection to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, reflecting the modernist and republican ideals that the project sought to embody. The second competetion was the urban and architectural design contest of Ataköy, resulted in 7 september 1957 with the involvement of famous Turkish architects and Italian urban planner Luigi Piccinato (Özdamar, 2019).

In the design of Ataköy , prioritazion of touristic facilities and the use of beach, differentiates Ataköy from other 'summer resort' or 'suburb' areas of Istanbul. The urban planning properties, show that, the bank adopted a distinctive and innovative approach that became its hallmark. As we have mentioned before,this approach diverged from existing zoning regulations and the conventional block/parcel system, aligning instead with the 'new town' principle. Under this model, all infrastructure, as well as commercial and socio-cultural facilities, were constructed by the investor bank and then transferred to the relevant public authorities. Moreover, the common areas—excluding the plots directly occupied by buildings—were placed under the supervision of local administrations, reflecting a comprehensive and integrated planning vision (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

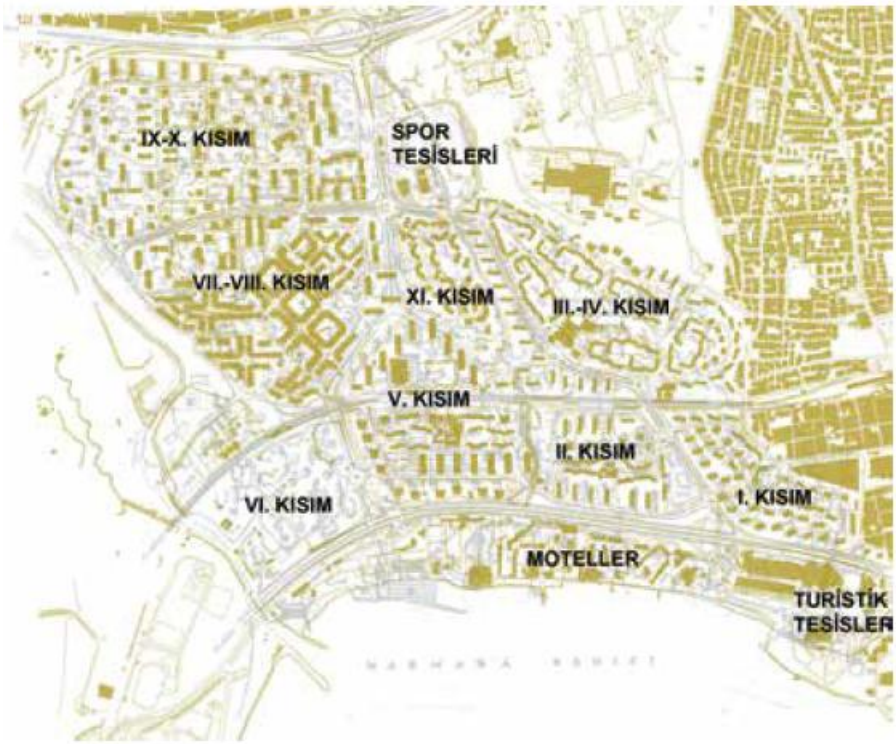


Figure 16| Ataköy implemented settlement plan. *(source: 'Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy İstanbul' by Nilüfer Baturayoğlu Yöney in the journal Mimarist volume 61. page 63)*

The different parts(kısım) were built in diverse periods, the building properties varied and got affected from the political environment and new legislations on social residence providing task of the governments. Primarily completed parts of the neighbourhood were Ataköy first part and Ataköy touristic facilities in front of the first part. This 'satellite town' was originally planned to accommodate a total of 53,000 people, divided into ten neighbourhoods, each designed to house between 3,000 and 7,000 residents . Over time, this master plan underwent numerous revisions during the later phases of design and construction. It is likely that the beaches, motels, and Sections I and II—either completed or in the planning stages during that period—were developed in accordance with this original layout. Generally, the constructed phases followed a twin-block pattern as reflected in the conceptual plan (chronologically I-II, III-IV, IX-X, and VII-VIII), while Sections V, VI, and XI were developed as standalone units (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018).

The design principles can be described as ;' Buildings of various sizes but unified by a shared architectural language were set within expansive green spaces, reflecting modernist principles of planning and design in every aspect—from healthcare and education to transportation, commerce, environment, and recreation infrastructure.

The layout embraced open floor plans, well-lit interiors, large windows, and thoughtfully designed service systems and mechanical installations. Structures were elevated on pilotis or broad supports, incorporating design features like service shafts, chimneys, and reinforced concrete pergolas. Flat roofs served as communal terraces, often adorned with cubist façades that blended pastel shades with bold, vibrant colors—hallmarks of modernist architecture' (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018,p.63; Özdamar, 2019).

'Attention was paid to controlling the physical environment: all residential units were oriented southward to maximize sunlight, and buildings were positioned to prevent shadowing one another. Design strategies were also employed to ensure natural ventilation throughout both indoor and outdoor spaces, enhancing overall living comfort and environmental responsiveness' (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018,p.63).

These design principles show that ,not only the housing units considered while planning Ataköy ,but also the units for education,neighborhood bazaars for each section,sport facilities and,commercial units were planned with the high level consideration of user needs and sustainable environmental principles.

The kindergardens were planned to built in the first and second sections, however only the second section kindergarten was built which is designed by M.Giray with special attention pay fort he children and modernist approach.The way the transportation and traffic was planned made it easy to access to the kindergarden from the all parts of the second section in all possible ways of transport.

The ease of transportation and well-planned road system with increased connectivity in Ataköy is one of the best examples of urban planning practices in Istanbul. The design process often summarized as follows, 'Ataköy was originally planned as a 10-section development, designed to include a beachfront, tourist and social facilities, educational institutions, sports complexes, shopping centers, and expansive green areas. In 1987, the plan was expanded to include an 11th section. The area, which was previously marshland, underwent significant transformation—drainage works were carried out, and large-scale afforestation was implemented through the planting of trees and greenery under the guidance of agricultural engineers from Atatürk Forest Farm, turning what was once an agricultural field into a liveable urban environment (Her Umut Ortakarar, 2021).

Completed between 1957 and 1962, the First Section of Ataköy spans 20 hectares and is regarded as one of the pioneering examples of modern architecture in Turkey (Her Umut Ortakarar, 2021). An important point to emphasize is that Ataköy's First Section stands out in terms of design quality compared to the later phases, primarily because it was the first to be built and was implemented in close adherence to the original planning principles. As previously mentioned, the subsequent sections were constructed over a longer period and were influenced by Turkey's shifting political landscape, evolving regulations, and the changing role of Emlak Bank over time.

To elaborate on the construction process of Ataköy's various sections, the development unfolded over several decades, shaped by shifting political dynamics, urban planning priorities, and evolving housing policies.

The Second Section was initiated in 1959 and completed in 1964, encompassing 18 hectares and featuring 852 residential units ranging from 85 to 140 square meters. This phase reflected the integrated neighbourhood planning ideals of the era, with a central shopping arcade and a primary school designed to serve the local community.

Following the 1960 military coup, which led to the dissolution of the Democrat Party government, a new design approach emerged in response to growing demand for social housing. The Third and Fourth Sections, constructed between 1963 and 1974, adopted a more compact and linear block structure, diverging from the more spacious and modernist layout of the First Section. However, these changes did not alter the fact that, as in the bank's other projects, the primary target group remained predominantly upper-middle-class bureaucrats. This led to the emergence of a utopian social structure that lacked class diversity—something that would never be found in the older neighbourhoods of the city and which was far from aligning with the socialist ideals of modernism (Baturayoğlu Yöney, Modern Bir Planlama Deneyimi: Ataköy,İstanbul, 2018). This fact about the Project is very useful in order to understand changing social Dynamics in Ataköy.

The Fifth Section—developed over a longer period from 1972 to 1984—marked a turning point in Ataköy's planning logic. Spanning 35 hectares, it included 2,993 residential units, a large commercial center, and two primary schools. This phase also saw a shift toward higher density land use and the introduction of partial prefabrication techniques. By the time of its completion, Emlak Kredi Bank's role had begun evolving in line with new legal frameworks such as the Mass Housing Laws (Law No. 2457 in 1981 and Law No. 2984 in 1984), which paved the way for the establishment of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ). In 1988, the bank was restructured as Türkiye Emlak Bankası.

The latter stages of Ataköy's development—including the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and ultimately the Eleventh Sections—further reflected these institutional and economic changes. These phases employed tunnel form construction methods, enabling faster and more standardized building. Unlike earlier sections, they were not built directly by the bank's subsidiaries but were instead contracted out to private developers. Moreover, these newer sections increasingly catered to upper-income groups, signalling a departure from the bank's initial mission of providing accessible social housing.

The Sixth Section, planned to occupy a prestigious seafront location, was conceived as a more exclusive residential zone to be developed after the completion of the earlier neighbourhoods. Similarly, Sections Nine and Ten, situated along the E-5 highway corridor and encompassing approximately 3,100 housing units, marked the outward expansion of Ataköy toward the urban periphery.During this broader period of transformation, Emlak Bank also played a key role in the production of more than 80,000 housing units across Turkey—particularly in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir—either through direct construction or by offering credit to homeowners. These developments reflect the bank's expanding influence in shaping the urban fabric of postwar Turkey, as well as the gradual shift from public-led social housing toward market-driven residential development.Following the bank's official closure through Law No. 4684 in 2001, its remaining housing-related operations were handed over to TOKİ in 2002. The Sixth Section of Ataköy, developed between 2004 and 2006 under TOKİ's direction, signalled a stark departure from earlier stages in both design and urban layout. With skyrocketing land values and real estate prices post-2001, this development phase leaned heavily toward the construction of luxury residences, diverging sharply from the initial mission of providing accessible mass housing (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2018; Özdamar, 2019).The evolution of the Ataköy project over time highlights the profound influence of the political landscape on Turkey's urban planning history, particularly the impact of the neoliberal turn that began in the 1980s and gained significant momentum following the 1999 earthquake and early 2000s policy shifts. The neoliberal policies of the 2000s, which increasingly reshaped Ataköy, continue to transform the area today. In this context, the privatization of urban spaces—especially along the coastal strip—and the reallocation of formerly public-use areas into exclusive, inaccessible zones represent a critical transformation. When examined alongside similar patterns observed throughout the broader Bakırköy district, the branded housing developments along the Ataköy coastline stand out as a significant and illustrative case study.

7.3. The changing dynamics of waterfronts: From a natural beach to Branded Housing and Luxury developments: Ataköy

Figure 17| Ataköy's coastal strip before the waterfront transformation and Branded Housing Projects and luxury developments in 2010s *(source: https://www.sozcu.com.tr/atakoy-sahili-betona-doydu-55-donum-millet-bahcesi-oldu-wp2739738)*

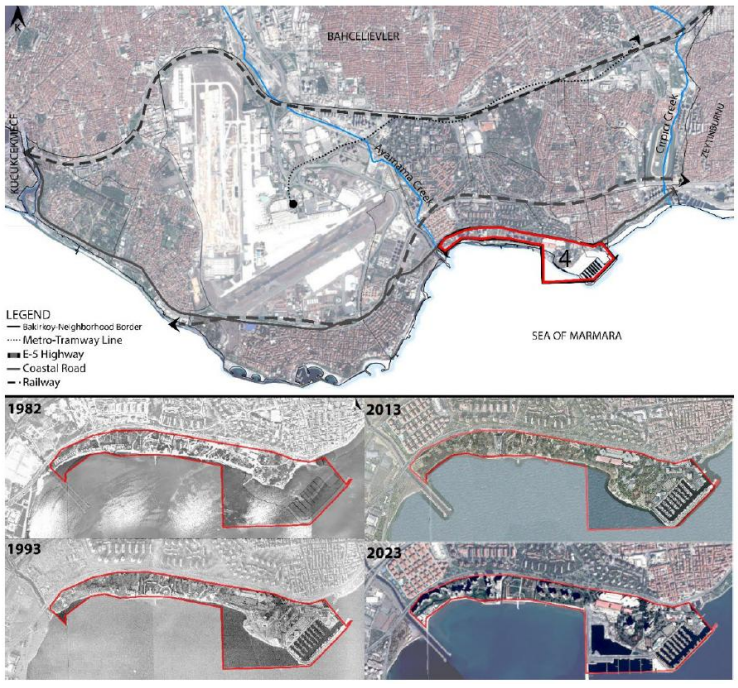
Figure 18| Ataköy's coastal strip after the waterfront transformation and Branded Housing Project 2018*(source:https://www.sozcu.com.tr/atakoy-sahili-betona-doydu-55-donum-millet-bahcesi-oldu-wp2739738)*

In order to understand the spatial change in the coastal strip of Ataköy, we should underline the evaluation of the area over time. As we have mentioned in the previous part, Ataköy project designed with the embracement of Ataköy's natural environment in 1950s and the most important part is the coastal strip and particularly the beach area , historically called as 'sea baths' (see figure 19).

Figure 19| Ataköy beach and Baruthane in 1957 (source: Eski Istanbul Fotoğrafları arşivi, https://www.eskiistanbul.net/6293/bakirkoy-baruthane-plaji-1957)

Sea baths were enclosed structures resembling sheds, featuring a central pool-like area where people could swim, accessed via a long pier extending from the shore. These facilities, surrounded by wooden partitions, functioned as early forms of beaches within four wooden walls. The term 'sea baths' reflects their traditional use. In 1875, the Istanbul Şehremaneti (municipal authority) issued the 'Regulation on Baths,' which noted the presence of such sea bathing facilities in Makri Karyesi and Ayestefanos, with separate areas designated for men ('zukura') and women ('inas') (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024).

As we mentioned earlier,the initial developments completed under the project—formulated and approved following the transfer of the Baruthane land to the Real Estate Credit Bank of Turkey, a State Economic Enterprise—were the Ataköy Beach facilities, located seaward of the coastal road. In 1959, the Ataköy Beach Motels were constructed adjacent to these facilities. Additional motel blocks were added in 1962, and between 1961 and 1963, Camping Ataköy and Camping 2 were planned and built on either side of the beach complex . The motels were further expanded in 1967. However, due to increasing marine pollution in the 1970s, these beach and camping facilities gradually lost their intended function and were ultimately demolished between 1986 and 1988 to make way for the Ataköy Tourism Complex, following the area's designation as the 'Ataköy Tourism Center'; In 1991 and 1997, the zoning plans for Ataköy's coastal areas were approved, designating them as 'tourism and recreation areas' (NTV, 2009; Gedikli, 2011). This legal framework enabled the transformation of public coastal land into high-end residential and commercial zones under the guise of tourism development. While such classifications are typically intended to encourage tourism-related infrastructure, in practice, they often open the door to real estate speculation and exclusive urban redevelopment. In the case of Ataköy, the designation of these lands as tourism areas has enabled the construction of luxury branded residences that are heavily marketed to international buyers (Gedikli, 2011).



Boundaries of Ataköy coastal strip

Figure 20| Spatial Change in Ataköy's coastal strip over time (source: *S. Sönmez Özdemir, G. Erkut / Drivers of socio-spatial change in Istanbul: Historical and longitudinal analysis of 5 cases from Bakırköy,2024 p.116)*

In 1988, a large-scale tourism development plan was introduced for an approximately 50-hectare area, including the construction of a shopping mall (Galleria), an international marina, hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and a sea bus terminal (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024). The motels, which had remained in use until the early 2000s, were eventually demolished in 2009 by TOKİ and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality to make space for new residential developments along the coast (Sönmez Özdemir & Erkut, 2024). Today, apart from the section designated and opened as the National Garden, the southern side of the coastal road has become privatized, with public access to the sea restricted by luxury residential and hotel and hospital projects, accessible only to private residents ,which is our case study area and we will be discussing the social results of this transformation in the waterfront of Ataköy.

7.4. Case Study- Urban Planning Processes, Protests,Conflicts over natural environment and disaster resilience and Luxury developments at the waterfront of Ataköy

Ataköy Neighborhood was designed as a self-sufficient area that includes its own shopping areas for each section of the neighbourhood (kısım çarşıları), sports facilities, green spaces, and schools, with the aim of meeting all the needs of its residents (Baturayoğlu Yöney, Omay Polat, & Salman, 2024). Today, the area features two shopping malls/ commercial centers, a university, and various service units that continue to fulfill the daily needs of those living in Ataköy. Our case study area locates in the coast of Ataköy 2-5-6.parts and for the analysis of social outcomes the residents of this neighbourhood have been interviewed.

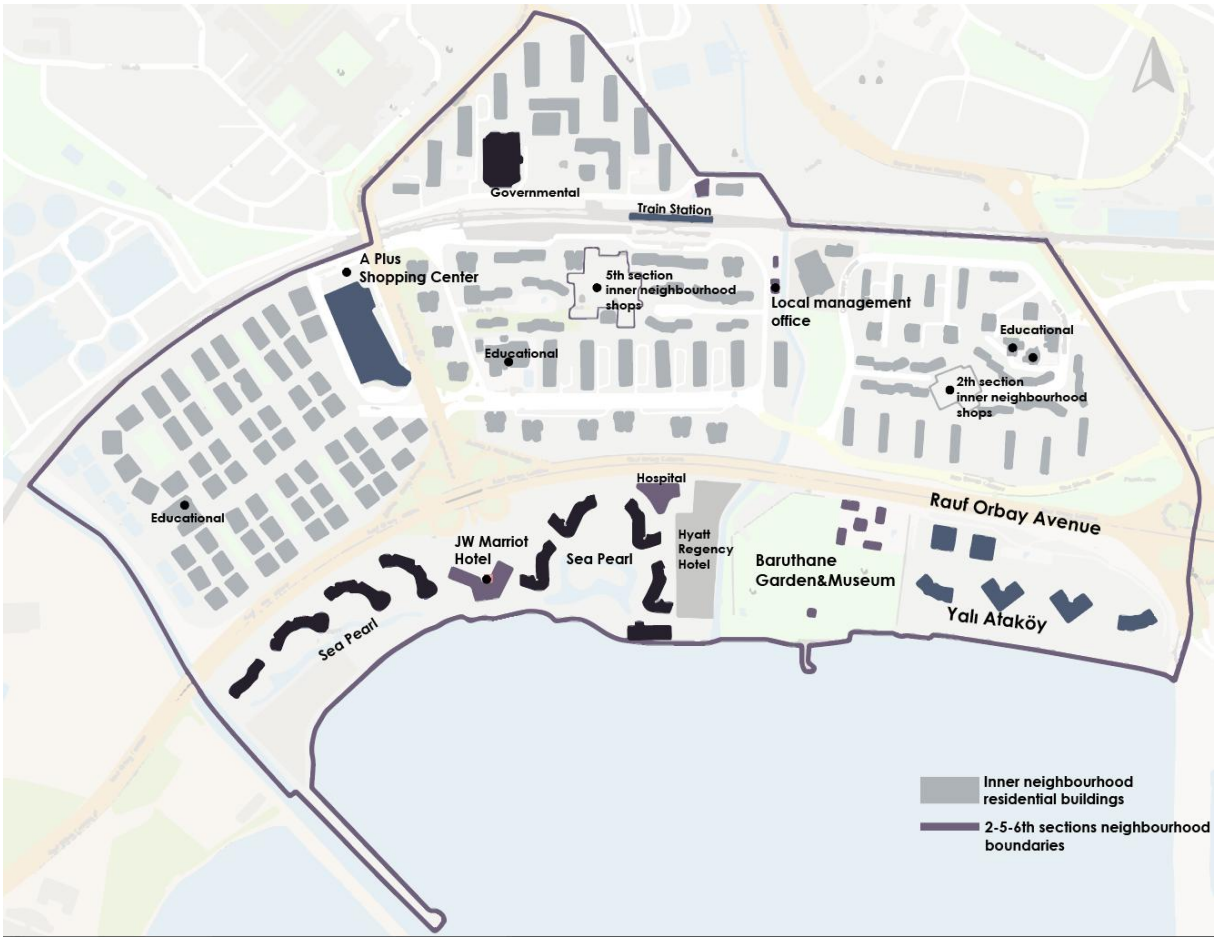


Figure 21| Analysis of the recent built environment at Ataköy's 2-5-6. Parts neighbourhood (2025)
(created by the author)

The transformation began in the coast of the neighbourhood early 2000s , The 412-decare Ataköy coastline was transferred to TOKİ in 2001 and designated as a ‘tourism area,’ allowing for developments such as hotels and shopping centers. Once a popular public beach , the coastline was divided into parcels and put up for sale by TOKİ. Construction companies later obtained permits for hotel, hospital, and residential projects on these plots, following zoning plan amendments in line with the new functions (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

The first project launched was ‘Yalı Ataköy’ in 2013 as a branded residential complex, completed in 2016, alongside the development of a hospital. Subsequently, another branded residential complex ‘SeaPearl’ was introduced. Today, the area includes not only luxury housing but also hotels and various commercial functions (Indigo Dergisi, 2018).Sea Pearl Ataköy is a residential building project that began in 2013, with the first part completed in 2017. It features mixed-use functionality, including commercial, residential, and tourism aspects (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

The last undeveloped part of the area, the historic Baruthane site located on parcel 564, block 160, was leased by TOKİ in 2010 to a private company for 49 years at an annual rent of 6 million TL. The company initiated the Blumar Ataköy project, which proposed seven high-rise blocks (ranging from 19 to 70 meters) featuring a mix of hotel, residential, office, and retail uses. Excavation began despite the presence of registered historical structures on the site (Indigo Dergisi, 2018).

Local residents filed lawsuits to halt the Project and the protests took place in the area fort he preservation of Baruthane-i Amire industrial buildings as well as the coastal area surrounding the historic buildings in 2013-2014 , leading TOKİ to terminate the lease agreement in 2017 (Şahin, 2018). In early 2024, a protocol was signed between TOKİ and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality to convert the area — which includes officially registered historical buildings — into a public green space. Under this agreement, the site has been leased to the municipality for 25 years. Today the land Baruthane located, is the only area accessible to the community and residents of Ataköy (Şahin, 2018).

Figure 21| Protests took place in 2014 at Baruthane

(source: https://www.turkiyedireniyor.org/atakoyde-sahil-talanina-protesto/)

Figure 22| Protest took place in central Bakırköy to Baruthane ,2014 *' The coasts are open to equal and free use by every resident'.* Quoting the Law numbered 3621

(source: https://www.turkiyedireniyor.org/atakoyde-sahil-talanina-protesto/)

Two major protests took place in Ataköy and Bakırköy in 2014. In order to 'stop the planned waterfront transformation which blocked the public access to the big portion of Ataköy coastline' by the residents of 2-5-6th section neighbourhood and 1st section neighbourhood residents and including NGOs; Bakırköy Urban Council,Ataköy 1st section Protection and Development

Association,Ataköy Nature and Life Protection and local authorities as residents and NGOs stated (NGM04,R01,NGM09 interviewees,personal communication) .

Debates emerged around issues such as the allegedly incorrect designation of the shoreline boundary and claims that Ataköy does not qualify as a natural beach.In a period characterized by intense public debate, including suspension orders, protests, and ongoing legal disputes concerning the construction of the buildings, experts helped clarify and contextualize the two dominant discourses promoted by different authorities (Acar & Can, 2014).

In response to the claim that Ataköy does not constitute a natural beach, architects argued that this assertion was not supported by historical and geological evidence. They noted: 'The court states that the Ataköy coastline is not natural. However, this area has been home to historical structures for centuries. In addition to geological data, historical sources indicate that the section of the road extending westward from the eastern edge of Ataköy toward Yeşilyurt, particularly the areas south of this line closer to the sea, is not artificial fill but rather a natural landform. For instance, near the Sheraton Hotel on the western side of the area, underground tunnels dating back to the Byzantine period are partially preserved. Further west, there are stone buildings that were used as an Ottoman gunpowder depot and a clock tower standing right by the sea. The presence of these historical structures suggests that this region has existed as natural land since the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, rather than as an artificial reclamation' (Acar & Can, 2014).

Another point of contention regarding construction in the coastal area concerns legal regulations. According to Article 5 (Supplement: 01/07/1992 - Law No. 3830/2) of the Coastal Law No. 3621, no construction is permitted in the area between the shoreline and the coastal setback line under any circumstances. Any development must begin at least 50 meters inland from the coastal setback line (Aksoy & Özgür, 2020).Moreover, in 2021, the Istanbul Chamber of Architects publicly announced a court ruling that confirmed the coastal boundary line (kıyı kenar çizgisi) in the area had been incorrectly designated (see the figure 23). The coastal boundary line defined in 2004 for the Ataköy shoreline was confirmed to be inaccurately drawn and lacking a scientific basis, as evidenced by a report prepared by Istanbul University and upheld by a court ruling. The Istanbul Chamber of Architects, which was a party to the lawsuit filed by local civil society organizations such as Ataköy I.Part Preservation and Improvement Association , also declared that the shoreline demarcation—used as a legal basis for extensive construction along the coast—was found to be incorrect (Chamber of Architects İstanbul, 2021).

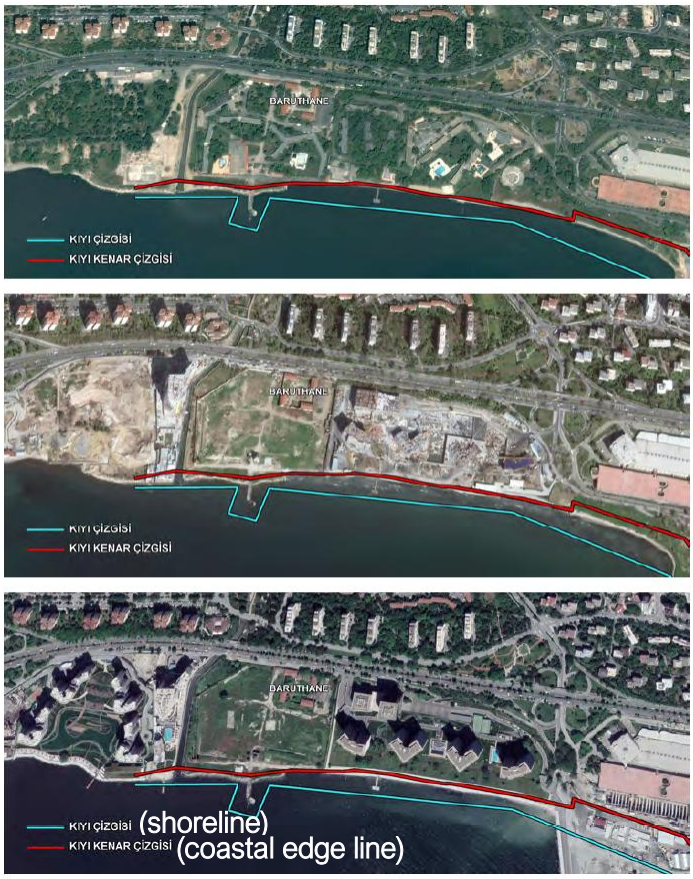


Figure 23| From top to bottom, satellite images from the years 2008, 2014, and 2018, along with the coastal edge line and shoreline prepared by the Directorate of Public Works and Settlement *(approximately drawn by Aksoy and Özgür in 2020 based on data obtained from the Ataköy 1st Section Association and overlaid on Google Earth images)(source:* Aksoy & Özgür, 2020,p.48*)*

On the other hand, there have been many debates and news (Hurriyet, 2015; politeknik, 2015) about the artificial shoreline extension that took place in Ataköy,over the years. These debates are highly significant in terms of protecting public spaces and ensuring that coastal boundaries are determined through scientific criteria as well as the disaster and earthquake risk at the waterfronts of Ataköy. Aycim and Baskaya(2015) in their analysis about disaster sensitive landscape planning, have analyzed Bakırköy district as well, including the coast of Ataköy and the case study area of this thesis. Aycim and Baskaya (2015) in their classification of hazardous boundaries, show that the coastal area where luxury developments and high rise buildings located today, is secondary hazard area (see the figure 24)and explain as follows: In the case of the at-risk megacity of Istanbul, factors such as the scarcity of open spaces, high population density, ageing urban fabric, rapid urban expansion, massive urban infrastructure, earthquakes, and accompanying secondary hazards—including tsunamis, landslides, liquefaction, flooding, and fire—collectively contribute to the complexity of disaster management. In this context, securing prospective technical support from all relevant professional disciplines is essential for building a disaster-resilient future (Aycim & Baskaya, 2015).

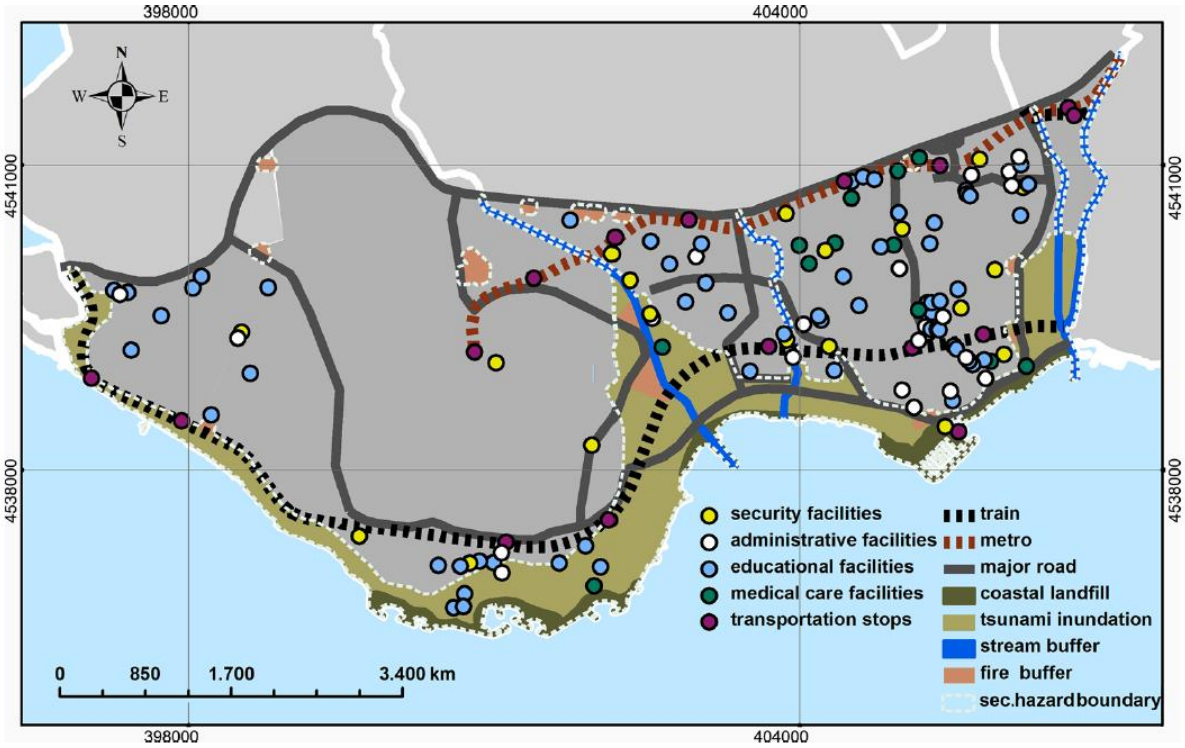


Figure 24| Types of secondary hazards and dispersion of urban facilities *(source: Aycim and Baskaya,2015,p.736)*

Figure 24, illustrates the interaction between urban facilities, transportation elements, and secondary hazards, with particular emphasis on the types of secondary hazards located within the secondary hazard boundary—namely coastal landfill areas, tsunami inundation zones, stream buffer zones, and fire outbreak buffers (Aycim & Baskaya, 2015).

Based on the analysis of Aycim and Baskaya (2015), figure 25 presents the interplay between existing open spaces, urban facilities, transportation elements, and secondary hazards. Their findings suggest that, in this study, secondary hazards are assumed to generate various impacts on exposed areas and to hinder urban functions, at least during the immediate post-earthquake period. Consequently, any emergency response plan should avoid relying on secondary hazard areas. The elimination of public and semi-public open spaces in these zones would significantly exacerbate the scarcity of open space available for an effective emergency response.

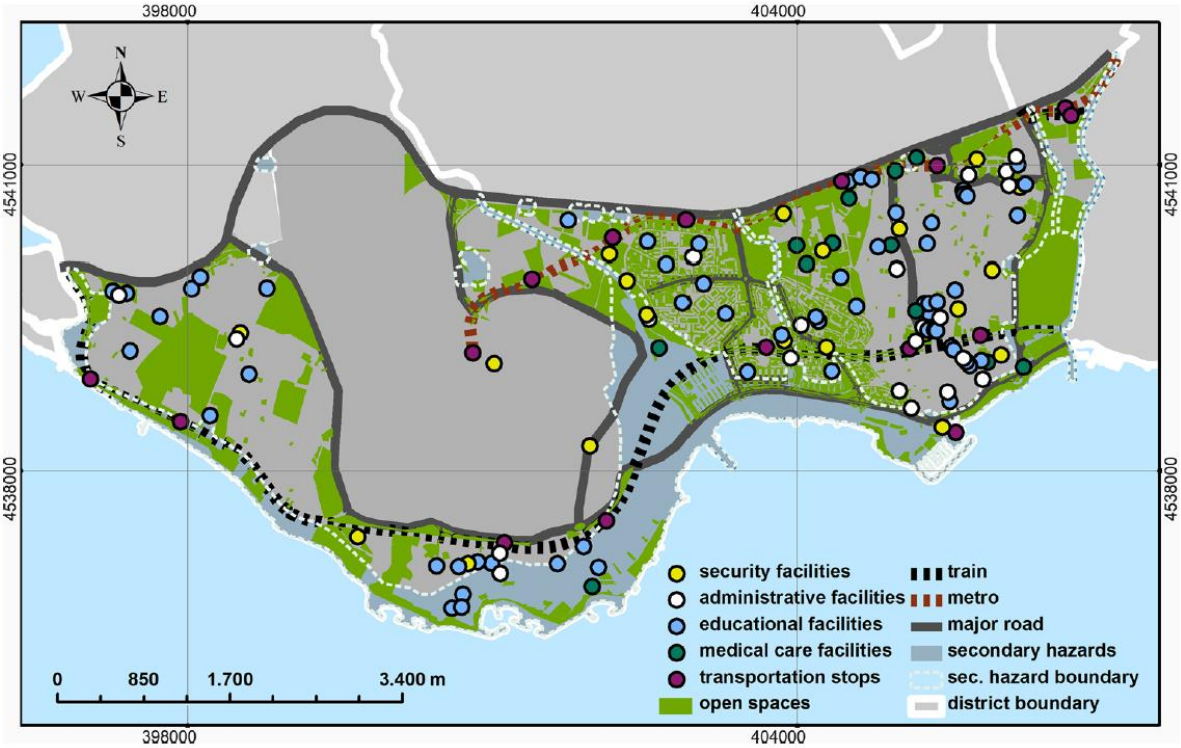


Figure 25| Secondary hazards and status of Bakırköy district in 2015. *(source: Aycim and Baskaya,2015,p.737)*

Ciritci (2019) summarizes the transformation in Ataköy as follows: In recent years, the urban renewal projects implemented in Ataköy have been shaped by the neoliberal spatial production policies of contemporary politics. Once characterized by a green coastal strip, all areas—except for the site of the historic Baruthane—have been privatized, with the construction of high-rise buildings disconnected from their surroundings. Although the Constitution mandates that coastlines remain accessible to the public, legal decisions have favored investors, granting these areas to private companies and leading to the development of entirely gated communities closed to public access (Ciritci, 2019).

Ciritci(2019),further notes that the 'perceived fortress wall' effect along the Ataköy coastal road is strongly felt within the Ataköy residences themselves. The Ataköy Konakları complex has completely lost its visual connection with the sea, while the high-rise blocks in the 5th Section have also been almost entirely cut off from such views. The newly constructed buildings offer no positive contribution to their surroundings; on the contrary, they negatively affect the quality and character of Ataköy, which holds the distinction of being Istanbul's first large-scale housing project (Ciritci, 2019).

Ciritci (2019) adds that , regarding micro-climatic conditions of the neighbourhood newly developed high rise Luxury developments at the waterfronts have effected the area negatively and explains as follows: The only natural shoreline along the coastal stretch between Eminönü and Avcılar is located in Ataköy. Until the recent wave of construction, the Ataköy coast—excluding the registered Baruthane structures, which are part of the cultural heritage—consisted of a continuous green belt. Prior to the commencement of construction, TOKİ commissioned the forestry firm Efem Ormancılık to conduct a survey of the number, species, and condition of the trees on the site. The report identified 1,057 trees, including specimens over 100 years old. These comprised species such as mastic, spruce, ash, oak, pine, linden, cedar, chestnut, and plane trees. Due to the presence of registered trees, construction activities were repeatedly halted by the Regional Conservation Board and sealed by the Bakırköy Municipality (Ciritci, 2019).

Ciritci (2019) underlines that,in urban planning, regional climatic characteristics, urban environmental conditions, and users' thermal comfort requirements are essential parameters to consider. The original planning of Ataköy took these factors into account in the positioning of its buildings, aiming to benefit from the positive environmental contributions of the sea. The sea breeze and the wooded area between the shoreline and the neighbourhood offered significant advantages, while the arrangement of apartment buildings was designed to maximize sea views.However, the destruction of green areas, the replacement of permeable surfaces with impermeable asphalt and concrete, the increase in energy consumption, and the proliferation of large, high-rise urban structures have all contributed to rising temperatures in the city. This has led to the emergence of urban heat islands, one of the most prominent climatic indicators of urbanization (Ciritci, 2019).

Numerous scholars have discussed the similar cases to Ataköy within the literature (Avni & Teschner, 2019; Eldem, 2016; Gedikli, 2011), as we have mentioned several times. Coastal areas are often sites of potential conflicts, and ,in Ataköy, these conflicts have manifested in three primary ways. First, there is ongoing debate regarding the incorrect determination of the shoreline and related environmental and disaster resilience concerns as we have mentioned. Second, fragmented authority has emerged because the land is owned by different entities, leading to coordination issues between local and central governments. Finally, there are discussions around public access and concerns about privatization.

Gedikli (2011) defined the process that took place at coast of Ataköy even before the development of gated communities and luxury hotels& hospitals as follows; one of the most critical issues in interventions on urban coastal areas is the conflict of authority. As is well known, the authority to plan within municipal boundaries belongs to the relevant municipalities. However, when an area is granted a special status due to its natural or cultural characteristics—such as being designated as a Special Environmental Protection Area or a Tourism Center—this authority is transferred to the central government (Gedikli, 2011).

The dispute over Ataköy Tourism Center reflects the tensions arising from the transfer of authority between local and central governments. The designated Tourism Center spans the Ataköy shoreline from the airport vicinity to the historical city walls and includes developments such as the Galleria shopping mall, accommodation facilities, and the Ataköy Marina complex. The Expert Committee that examined the issue emphasized that, in terms of public interest and sound planning principles, planning and boundary designation efforts in municipal and adjacent areas should be carried out collaboratively by both the central and local governments to ensure a more comprehensive and integrated approach (Türel, Altaban, and Günay, 1998 as cited in Gedikli, 2011).

Gedikli (2011) underlines that a city is an integrated whole composed of interrelated parts. He adds that any intervention in space does not remain confined to the affected area alone—it can influence the entire urban scale, and in some cases, even regional dynamics. If the intervention involves elements such as a port, airport, highway, railway infrastructure, bridge, or the declaration of a tourism center, the magnitude of its impact is greatly amplified. Such unilateral decisions have the potential to drastically affect the socio-economic structure and ecological integrity of cities. In fact, a single top-down decision may render the assumptions of the Master Zoning Plan—prepared within the municipal authority—invalid. Since the authority to prepare the Master Zoning Plan lies with municipalities, including the relevant municipality and its planning framework in the process is crucial for promoting planned development, preserving and sustainably managing coastal zones, and serving the public interest (Gedikli, 2011).

7.4. Branded Housing Projects & Waterfront Developments

Despite the protests and legal disputes regarding the waterfront developments, the construction of two housing projects, two hotels, and a hospital along the Ataköy coast was completed in 2018. As a result of these protests and legal actions, the project was temporarily suspended and officially sealed by the relevant municipal authorities in accordance with heritage protection regulations regarding the Baruthane area. Subsequently, the transformation was completed in 2018 with the designation of the Baruthane land as a 'Millet Bahçesi' (Nation's Garden), ensuring the preservation of its cultural heritage and maintaining its character as a public space, while incorporating luxury waterfront developments. Yalı Ataköy Project was completed earlier in 2016 (Barutçular & Dostoğlu, 2019). Today, the only publicly accessible non-commercial space along the coastline is the Baruthane Millet Garden as the heritage protection and public access concerns resulted with the protection of the area as we have mentioned (Ciritci, 2019). Over the years, the Ataköy coast has been used for a variety of purposes such as camping areas, motels, hotels, and beach facilities as we have mentioned in the previous sections.

In line with ongoing globalization trends and in response to capital-driven demands, the authority to carry out urban planning has been distributed among multiple institutions. This has led to coastal areas being designed without adherence to upper-scale plans and instead being planned on a parcel-based level (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023). In the case of Ataköy, the planning authority over the coastal zone being assigned to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as the first part of the Ataköy waterfront declared tourism area in 1990s following the tourism area declaration of our case study area locates in 2-5-6th section of Ataköy's waterfront, along with numerous plan amendments, has disrupted the area's silhouette, allocated land use functions primarily for private purposes, and ultimately resulted in the coastal zone becoming disconnected from the residents of Ataköy (Aksoy & Özgür, 2020; Ciritci, 2019).

The residential developments along the coastal area have been constructed as *gated communities*, a housing typology widely observed in contemporary metropolitan cities. The two flagship projects, *Yalı Ataköy* and *Sea Pearl*, are equipped with extensive security measures and are physically segregated from their surroundings by tall walls, controlled entry points, and wire fence (Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023) (see figure 26) . However, beyond these physical boundaries, the projects also exemplify the defining characteristics of luxury housing in Istanbul. As analyzed by Barutçular and Dostoğlu (2019), Yalı Ataköy consists of mid- and high-rise residential blocks, offering a wide range of apartment typologies from 1+1 to 5+1, designed to attract high-income

groups. Units feature spacious balconies, sea-view living rooms, and high-quality finishing materials such as marble flooring and glass façades, all of which emphasize prestige and exclusivity. Residents additionally benefit from amenities such as private underground parking, landscaped courtyards, fitness centers, and children's playgrounds (Barutçular & Dostoğlu, 2019).

Figure 26| Analysis of the private and public spaces at the waterfronts of Ataköy 2-5-6th neighbourhood (2025) *(created by the author)*

Similarly, the Sea Pearl project, promoted as one of Istanbul's most exclusive coastal residences, offers larger apartment typologies ranging from 2+1 to duplex penthouses. At the time of its launch, unit prices ranged between 7,000–10,000 USD per square meter, positioning it among the highest-end residential projects in Turkey (Emlak Konut, 2016; Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023). The project integrates luxury facilities including indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spa and wellness areas, concierge services, and direct access to a privatized waterfront promenade. According to Usanmaz Çoşkun (2023), this current configuration of the neighborhood reflects the broader impact of ongoing neoliberal policies, where the privatization of urban space, supported by the designation of waterfronts as tourism zones, has facilitated the development of luxury coastal housing that is effectively restricted to residents of these gated communities. As emphasized by

Barutçular and Dostoğlu (2019), while such projects provide comfort and satisfaction for upper-income residents, they simultaneously undermine the collective identity and sense of belonging within the wider neighbourhood.

Within the tourism context, branded housing projects have been marketed primarily to foreign tourists and they have been living in the projects since according to local authority of 2-5-6th section neighbourhood, promotional materials prepared in their native languages(to see the video:https://x.com/ATADAN /status/1911314671157510504?t=6M3UrWrwe2d5zIF-TNmb7Q&s=08) and incentives such as citizenship or passport offers (Demircan, 2024).

On the other hand, the marketing strategies of projects in the area; *SeaPearl* and *Yalı Ataköy,* prominently feature exclusive access to the sea and coastal amenities as major selling points. Their promotional materials emphasize not only a secure and peaceful lifestyle within gated compounds, but also luxurious features like private seafront access and even the private tours by the boat and private access from the sea (SeaPearl Ataköy, 2025)—projecting a carefully curated image that appeals to a wealthy and select clientele (see figure 27.)

However, according to long-term residents(R04,R02,R01,interviewees,personal communication,April 2025) and scholars (Baturayoğlu Yöney, Omay Polat, & Salman, 2024; Ciritci, 2019; Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023) this vision sharply contrasts with the original character of the Ataköy neighborhood, which was developed as an open and integrated urban area. The original residential zones are not enclosed by walls or fences, fostering a strong sense of community life and public accessibility. In the past, the shoreline was freely accessible to the residents, and beach facilities were available for public use with either no charge or very minimal fees (mimarizm, 2008). Today, the transformation of the area into a zone dominated by exclusive branded housing projects has restricted coastal access almost entirely, effectively denying that right to anyone outside these developments (Aksoy & Özgür, 2020). While the Sea Pearl project completely restricts public access to the coast by marketing the shoreline as part of its private residential complex (Aksoy & Özgür, 2020), the Yalı Ataköy development leaves only a narrow pedestrian path between the site and the sea (Yalı Ataköy, 2025; Usanmaz Çoşkun, 2023).

Figure 27| The private boat of the gated community from the advertisement ;Sea Pearl ,providing exclusive tours to the residents of the Project. *(Source : https://www.kuzugrup.com/Proje/Atakoy-SeaPearl)*

Beyond the residential developments, the hotels and the hospital built in the area have also targeted mainly international clients, as well as with the advertisements specifically tailored to attract a certain and/or so called 'prestigious' high level audience (LMA01,personal communication/ interviewee, May 2025). As we have mentioned,in addition to the fact that these gated communities restrict public access to the coastline, the other functions developed along the shore—such as hotels and hospitals—are also designed to appeal to higher-income, more affluent groups since . As a result, a significant social and spatial segregation has emerged between the inner neighbourhoods of Ataköy and the coastal strip, which are already physically separated by the Rauf Orbay Avenue.Although projects like Yalı Ataköy and Sea Pearl, along with hotels and private hospitals, have faced criticism by the original community of Ataköy neighbourhoods who were already residents for long term in the area as well as by the local NGOs -the actors interviewed for this thesis- and Chamber of Architects of Istanbul for limiting public access to the coastline. Promotional materials for these luxury housing developments highlight features such as secure living environments, private marina services, and direct access to the sea—elements designed to appeal to high-end clientele and reinforce the exclusive status of the projects (SeaPearl Ataköy, 2025).

Apart from the Baruthane area—which has been preserved as a green and recreational public space—there is virtually no remaining unrestricted public access to the coast (Aksoy & Özgür, 2020). The social impacts of this transformation, along with current neighbourhood dynamics and Ataköy's long term residents' perceptions, have been explored through interviews and will be discussed in the following section.

Chapter 8 - Analysis & Findings

Chapter 8 presents the findings and results of the interviews conducted with residents of Ataköy's 2nd, 5th, and 6th sections. The analysis is structured around several key themes that emerged from the interviews: *Waterfront Transformation and Public Benefit*, *Socio-spatial Segregation and Sense of Belonging*, *Incompatibility of the Waterfront Transformation with Ataköy's Urban Identity*, and *Environmental and Earthquake Concerns – Urban Resilience at the Neighborhood Scale*. Each of these themes is discussed in detail, exploring how they manifest within the context of Ataköy from the perspectives of the interview participants. Through their insights, the chapter highlights the ways in which broader processes of urban transformation intersect with local experiences, perceptions, and everyday life in the neighbourhood.

This chapter, presents the findings derived from the analyses and interviews in order to answer research questions; In the case of Ataköy 2-5-6th neighbourhood, how has the neoliberal transformation of the coast affected the neighborhood's socio-spatial cohesion, how do long-term residents perceive these changes, and what are the consequences? How do these projects influence the effectiveness of Istanbul's earthquake resilience efforts?

The findings primarily focus on the residents of Ataköy's 2nd, 5th, and 6th section neighborhood and the processes of change and transformation in these areas, since the luxury waterfront developments have taken place along the coastal edges adjacent to these neighborhoods. In addition, the interviews conducted with residents of the 1st section neighborhood and local NGOs are equally significant, as they were directly involved in the protests and the overall transformation process. This is particularly important because, as previously discussed, the coastal area of Ataköy's 1st section had already undergone a similar transformation prior to the 2nd, 5th, and 6th section waterfront developments, and NGOs played an active role throughout these processes.

This thesis centers on Ataköy's original residents—those who have observed the waterfront developments both from an external perspective and as long-term inhabitants who experienced the 'before and after' of these transformations. These residents became aware of the differences brought by the projects. They actively participated in protests, driven by concerns over environmental issues, public benefit, and the loss of public access to the coast. The participation of local NGO members, who are themselves Ataköy residents and who have closely followed the area's changes over many years, further enriches the research.

The NGOs included in the study are Bakırköy City Council, Ataköy 1st Section Preservation and Beautification Association, and Ataköy Nature and Life Association. Among them, Ataköy Nature and Life Association is located in the center of the 2nd–5th–6th section neighborhood and works

in coordination with the neighborhood's local management(muhtar) office and its residents. The 1st Section Preservation and Beautification Association, based in Ataköy's 1st section, contributes to this thesis because the neighborhood had already experienced coastal transformation under similar neoliberal processes in the 1980s and 1990s. Importantly, the 1st section and the 2nd–5th–6th sections are the only neighborhoods of Ataköy directly connected to the coastal zone, while the remaining sections are located inland. The 1st Section Association has been involved not only with the coastal changes in its own neighborhood but also with the waterfront developments in the 2nd–5th–6th sections, participating actively in the 2014 protests.

The Ataköy Nature and Life Association, founded in 2012, was established with the aim of protecting the neighborhood's green and coastal areas. Bakırköy City Council, on the other hand, was established in 2015 by the then-mayor of Bakırköy with the goal of promoting participatory, transparent, and community-inclusive decision-making processes in urban governance; however, the council has operated as an NGO since 2015, as they stated in the interviews. The council plays an active role in multiple areas, including fostering a sustainable urban environment and providing social support, and works in coordination with NGOs in Ataköy at the district level.

This chapter presents the findings derived from the analysis of interviews conducted with NGOs, residents, and the local management authority (muhtar) of the 2nd–5th–6th section neighbourhoods. It focuses on the most frequently observed themes and highlights the perspectives of the interviewees, while examining how these issues are perceived and experienced in Ataköy. The codes of interviewees are presented in Table 6.

Interviewee Code	Type of Actor
R01	Resident
R02	Resident
R03	Resident
R04	Resident
R05	Resident
R06	Resident
R07	Resident
R08	Resident
R09	Resident
R10	Resident
R11	Resident
R12	Resident
CW1	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)
CW2	Barber Shop owner (Commercial worker)
CW3	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)
CW4	Real Estate Consultant (Commercial worker)
LMA01	Local Management Authority
NGM01	Bakirköy Urban Council (NGO Member)
NGM02	
NGM03	
NGM04	Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association(NGO Member)
NGM05	
NGM06	
NGM07	
NGM08	
NGM09	Ataköy I.Part District Preservation and Improvement Association (NGO Member)

Table 6. Interviewee Codes *(derived from Table 4. in the Methodology chapter)*

Following the interviews with diverse actors at he neighbourhood,the prominent issues identified through interviews with residents and public authorities include the restriction of public access to the coastline following the emergence of luxury residential developments in the form of gated communities, as well as the introduction of hospital and hotel functions that do not align with the needs of the area's original inhabitants. This coastal transformation has contributed to socio-spatial segregation, a diminished sense of belonging, and feelings of alienation among long-term residents. Moreover, the incompatibility of the newly constructed high-rise waterfront buildings with the established architectural and urban identity of the neighbourhood has emerged as a significant concern. In addition, environmental challenges and issues related to earthquake preparedness and disaster resilience have also become critical points of debate.

As outlined in the case study section, Ataköy's waterfront transformation has generated conflicts that are strongly reflected in the narratives of local residents. Importantly, these conflicts are not limited to individual perceptions; they are also critically examined and supported within the academic literature. Thus, the empirical findings from the fieldwork are reinforced by theoretical validation, as scholars have likewise emphasized the detrimental consequences of waterfront privatization, socio-spatial segregation, the erosion of urban identity, and insufficient disaster resilience in similar contexts. This intersection of residents' lived experiences with scholarly analyses provides a robust foundation for understanding the broader implications of Ataköy's transformation.

Building on this point, the conflicts that emerged during the construction of the waterfront transformation in the neighborhood, as well as the public reactions that followed, were clearly reflected in the interviews. From these narratives, several key themes were identified. As previously discussed, the fact that these issues are also well-documented in the literature and supported by scholarly analyses strengthens the validity of the findings. At the same time, the thematic categorization of the interviews provides a structured framework for understanding the lived experiences of residents in relation to Ataköy's transformation. Main themes derived from the interviews such as; *Waterfront Transformation and Public Benefit*, *Socio-spatial Segregation and Sense of Belonging*, *Incompatibility of the Waterfront Transformation with Ataköy's Urban Identity*, and *Environmental and Earthquake Concerns – Urban Resilience at the Neighborhood Scale,* will be discussed in the following parts of this chapter.

8.1.Waterfront Transformation and Public Benefit in Ataköy

Many participants expressed overall satisfaction with life in Ataköy, particularly emphasizing the neighbourhood's planned urban fabric, abundance of green spaces, and walkable environment. For instance, residents,R01 and R05, stated general contentment with their surroundings, while R03 praised the area's spatial planning, and R02 highlighted the accessibility afforded by pedestrian-friendly design. However, this positive perception has been significantly disrupted by recent large-scale developments on the coast of the neighbourhood.

According to the neighbourhood head/local management authority (LMA01), projects such as SeaPearl and Yalı Ataköy and other luxury developments at the waterfronts of the neighbourhood; hotels and hospital,have led to the privatization of public coastal spaces, blocking access to sea views and fresh air. She notes that these developments have visibly degraded the quality of life for long-term residents. Residents (R08,R10,R11,R01) and NGO members of Ataköy Nature and Life Protection(NGM04,NGM08) and Ataköy 1st section Preservation and Improvement Assosicaiton (NGM09) supported this idea of the neighbourhood head and adding that 'they have fought for their rights to keep the coastal area of the neighbourhood open to the public and as a recreational area which serves the community not only certain group of people'. To do so, NGOs have actively participated in the legal process and organized protests in the years between 2012 and 2018. Ataköy Nature and Life protection members underline that one major protest took place in 2014, as we have mentioned earlier. NGM04 emphasizes that, 'after the protest, there was a suspension decision regarding especially the Baruthane area, and the constructions were stopped in 2016; however, they were restarted and reached today's situation.' Both NGOs members add that, 'they feel like their rights are taken away and future generations will never get to use the coastal areas of the neighbourhood as they did in the past.' One of the residents (R05) expressed that she was born and raised in Ataköy and had the opportunity to use the coast as a camping area, beach, and for recreational purposes. She adds that 'in the recent years (late 1990s and early 2000s), we noticed degradation and pollution in the coastal area, and the facilities shut down. It wasn't feeling safe anymore; regeneration was needed, but we never expected this type of high-rise buildings and gated communities.' Residents R03 and R04 also expressed that they were 'shocked' with the outcome and how high the buildings were at the coast, and they used to go for walks in the area, but now they have 'no access to the sea'. R12 adds that 'the waterfront area of our neighbourhood does not serve the whole community but a particular group of people who can afford to buy houses in the luxury gated communities.'

R06 underlined that ‘we have the right to access the waterfront and should have been designed considering public benefit, not only rich people’.

They expressed a deep sense of loss regarding their previous relationship with the coastal area. R01 stated, ‘We used to walk there regularly, the coastal path was part of our daily life,’while R05 added, ‘We used to have picnics by the sea, it was open to everyone.’ These nostalgic reflections contrast sharply with current realities. R05 described the present condition by saying, ‘Now the area is gated and controlled; we cannot access it without permission.’ Similarly, R03 emphasized that their ‘right to access has been taken away.’ R07 underlined the emotional importance of accessibility: “Access to the sea means a lot to me. I feel it is part of my well-being.” This individual sense of spatial attachment has been significantly disrupted by privatization.

CW1,CW3 and CW4 as they are real estate consultants, underline the housing prices difference between the transformed coastal area and the inner 2-5-6th neighbourhood as follows: ‘ of course at the inner neighbourhood the buildings are older that’s why they are more affordable but at the waterfront the housing prices are 10 to 100 times higher and rents are 10 times higher so it surely creates a more affluent group at the coast meanwhile at the inner neighbourhood mostly middle income people live, in the same neighbourhood there is this economic and social segregation.’

The neighbourhood head (LMA01), reported that the newly constructed hospital primarily caters to foreigners, with a focus on medical tourism (e.g., hair transplantation) as well as cafes and other shops such as expensive car shops target different group of people then who lives at the significant portion of the neighbourhood, thereby reinforcing socio-spatial segregation even in essential public services and designed with a focus on a particular group of people with a certain income which according to neighbourhood head(LMA01) causes residents not to go to the coastal line and the public benefit has not considered in the planning process. Speaking of services, the diversity of services in the neighbourhood was another important topic for this analysis, meaning that the inner neighbourhoods of Ataköy have their own ‘section shops’ coming from the urban planning principles followed while designing the Ataköy neighbourhoods, as we have mentioned in detail in the earlier chaptersThis urban plan provides residents with shops, schools, and everything else they need to maintain their daily lives within the neighbourhood. This approach fosters self-sufficiency and creates a sense of community, as people are likely to interact with one another regularly. Many interviewees emphasized the importance of feeling a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, a topic that will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

8.2.Socio-spatial segregation and Sense of Belonging in Ataköy

One of the main themes emerging from the interview analysis is socio-spatial segregation in the 2nd, 5th, and 6th section neighbourhoods. While the original residential areas located to the north of Rauf Orbay Avenue and the luxury coastal developments to the south were already spatially separated, interviews with residents, local heads, and NGOs highlighted that socio-spatial segregation has become increasingly evident following the coastal transformation. This segregation has been further reinforced by the creation of luxury gated communities and the disparities in access to and use of services. A more detailed discussion of these dynamics will be presented in the following sections.

2-5-6th section neighbourhood head (LMA01) ,stressed some issues regarding soco-spatial segregation at the area . She discuss that 'the road, Rauf Orbay Avenue, was already dividing our neighbourhood into two before the waterfront developments. However, now spatial segregation is reinforced by social segregation, since we no longer have free access to the coast, the developments at the coast are gated (see figure 28) , and the people living there do not interact with the inner neighbourhoods. It is easier for them to use the services within their area or visit shopping malls. Our section shop usually serves the inner neighbourhood residents and/or mostly long-term residents.' She adds that with the changed social structure at the waterfront area, there is a language barrier with some residents of the waterfront developments. To answer the questions and/or address the needs of those residents, she usually requires a translator.

Figure 28| Gated developments at the waterfronts (May,2025)

(taken by the author)

This creates another social segregation for them, according to LMA01. She underlines that ‘many foreign people moved to the branded residential complexes ,Seapearl and Yalı Ataköy, as they have been promoted to foreign tourists mostly’ (LMA01,interviewee,May 2025). Lastly she underlines that ‘ this segregation makes me feel like I do not manage that part also because that part does not feel like Ataköy to me , restricted access and language barrier with foreign people living there makes me feel like I do not belong to that part. Even thought I try to do my job and nature of my job is to listen what people of this neighbourhood need. So I do not have the same interaction with the residents of that area as the inner neighbourhood residents’(LMA01,interviewee,May 2025).

Meanwhile CW2 as he owns a barbershop at the ‘section shop’ of 2-5-6th inner neighbourhood ,discuss that ‘there are more tourists and I have more clients since there are workers of hospital and hotel at the coast and they come shop here.’ Adds that ‘however they do not interact with the local community and residents of the coastal area mostly shop at the shopping malls or around the waterfront , mostly they do not shop here’ (CW2,interviewee,April 2025). The use of ‘section shops’ by the hotel and hospital workers provides some connectivity; however, there is generally lack of connection between the waterfront residents and those in Ataköy's inner neighborhoods. This indicates an evident socio-spatial fragmentation of shared communal spaces.

As we have mentioned above, socio-spatial segregation is visible in terms of services being used in the area and daily interactions of residents.When it comes to use the services at the coastal developments some residents(R01,R03,R08,R09) expressed that ‘the services at the area are not for us, probably very expensive. I would never go and use them.’ R08 added that ‘young people go there to show off they enjoy luxury, they are not aware of what is taken away from them.’

Meanwhile some residents (R02,R07,R10,R11) expressed that they would go to use the services if needed,especially the hospital might be useful for them but they do not feel like those services or buildings belong to their neighbourhood. Is ‘another world’. R08 adds that when he sees the skyscrapers at the coast of the neighbourhood, he feels like the buildings does not belong to Ataköy or he is in somewhere else not at his neighbourhood.

Another important point to underline about the sense of belonging is, from the view of long-term residents of the inner neighbourhood of 2-5-6th area, that the luxury waterfront developments and provided services are perceived as not ‘for them’ and/or ‘not for public benefit’ were very common phrases throughout the interview process. As we have mentioned, the luxury waterfront developments are heavily marketed to tourists as the coastal area has been declared a tourism area, and with the effect of neoliberal policies, the residential areas have been sold at high

prices(CW1,CW3,CW4). In the literature, this situation in Ataköy is explained as commodification of urban space. Lefebvre (2014) explains the process as follows: the commodification of urban space transforms it from a domain of lived experience into a functional asset for capital, severing the connection between people and their environments. The perspective provided by Lefebvre(2014) supports the socio-spatial segregation and alienation seen in Ataköy. The alienation issue is strongly connected with the incompatible architectural identity of high-rise buildings in relation to the original buildings of the neighborhood, which will be discussed in the following section.

8.3.Incompatibility of the Waterfront Transformation to Ataköy's urban identity

Another prominent theme is the architectural and urban identity difference between the waterfront buildings and those located in the inner neighbourhoods, where the long-term residents of Ataköy live and which reflect the original planning of the district. This issue is also related to spatial segregation, as a distinct architectural and urban language characterizes the gentrified part of the neighbourhood along the waterfront, while the inner neighbourhood continues to represent the authentic identity of Ataköy.

On this matter the members of NGOs I have interviewed, underlined that one of their primary concerns, as these concerns lead them to actively get involved in the planning,legal and protest processes in 2014,one of them was the compatibility of waterfront developments to Ataköy's original urban identity Which they mutually describe as 'walkable,green and well-planned', 'we have lots of green areas and the design of Ataköy is in accordance with the natural environment, we do not have extremely high rise blocks' (NGM04,NGM05,May 2025). NGM01 adds that, 'Ataköy neighbourhoods were designed without blocking the connection to the sea, before the high rise transformations we had a visual and natural relationship with the coast, now the buildings are like a wall.'NGM07, as well described the new developments as 'fortress-like walls' that block visual and physical access to the coastline (see figure 29).

Figure 29|The look from the inner neighbourhood of 2-5-6th neighbourhood to its waterfronts (April,2025)

(taken by the author)

She also highlighted 'once again that public lands originally designated for recreation uses were later rezoned with tourism area declaration and transformed into luxury residences and hospitals — without community involvement'. According to NGM07, this non-participatory urban governance process has led to an incompatible waterfront transformation of the area to Ataköy. NGM08 adds that 'this is not only a concern about the height of the buildings, there is another issue regarding protection of natural assets and historical heritage of Ataköy which is Baruthane, it is nice that the area is preserved and now open to public access but its surroundings(the waterfront developments) are not compatible. Also, I feel like they do not represent or emphasize the historical significance of our waterfronts (see figure 30).'

Figure 30 | Baruthane Museum and Yalı Ataköy. (August,2025) *(taken by the author)*

Figure 31 | The look from Rauf Orbay Avenue, which separates the inner neighbourhood and waterfront area spatially. (May,2025) (taken by the author)

Additionally, about the incompatibility of the new buildings with Ataköy's original architectural identity. R02 stated, 'Skyscrapers do not fit Ataköy's design; we expected 2–3 story buildings.' R04 described the high-rise buildings as 'unexpected and visually disturbing,'indicating a break from the neighbourhood's modernist and low-rise heritage. For R03, these developments were not only unexpected but also symbolic of a broader disconnection: 'the atmosphere changed—now it feels more like a place for the wealthy and foreigners.'

The local head (muhtar)(LMA01) adds that 'the skyscrapers do not represent Ataköy, they are not what people have in their imagination when you talk about Ataköy so they do not represent the identity of long-term residents as well.'

The situation that has emerged in Ataköy,,contributes to explaining the social impacts of urban form and urban governance policies, as discussed in the literature review. However, according to the interviews conducted and based on the analyses of scholars mentioned in previous chapters, urban form and urban governance policies in Ataköy have not only generated social results among residents but have also raised issues related to environmental and disaster resilience (particularly earthquake resilience), as well as microclimatic effects. These aspects will be discussed in detail in the following section.

8.4.Environmental and Disaster concerns -Urban resilience in neighbourhood scale

On the one hand, Istanbul continues to undergo urban transformation projects aimed at earthquake resilience, primarily through the renewal and strengthening of building stock on a building-by-building basis in preparation for the anticipated Marmara earthquake. At the same time, neoliberal policies have led to the proliferation of mega projects and branded gated communities, the effects of which are also visible in Ataköy. Since Ataköy is considered one of the well-planned neighbourhoods of the city, earthquake resilience efforts have not yet prioritized this area, and renewal of the building stock has not begun. However, as Ataköy was established in the 1960s, the building stock is relatively old. When I asked the interviewed actors about their perspectives on the coastal transformation and the neighbourhood more broadly, one of the key responses and recurring themes was inevitably related to earthquakes and secondary disasters. Participants primarily expressed their views on the necessity of renewing the inner neighbourhoods' building stock in order to enhance earthquake preparedness(R02,R11,R12). However, they also stated that 'we are concerned if the urban renewal starts in Ataköy, the inner neighbourhood might end up like the coast; full of skyscrapers and Ataköy might lose its identity'(R01,R03,R03) as multiple residents stated. Similarly, members of the Bakırköy Urban Council and Ataköy Nature and Life Protection Association highlighted that ' if there will be an urban renewal project for earthquake preparedness in Ataköy,it should be community benefit-centered, not profit-oriented, like at the coastal area'(NGM01,NGM04).

A member of the Ataköy I. Part District Preservation and Improvement Association (NGM09) emphasized that, 'Urban renewal for earthquake resilience can certainly be initiated, but in line with the Chamber of Architects, we submitted a petition to both the municipality and the ministry at the time when these coastal transformations began. Our main concern was that the high-rise buildings were constructed on a semi-reclaimed coastal area, which carries significant tsunami risks. In the event of an earthquake, this situation would pose serious threats not only for the residents living there but also for the surrounding neighbourhoods. However, much like the protests, our warnings had little impact, and construction proceeded regardless.'

Residents (R07,R08,R09) expressed that 'we personally think that our (in inner Ataköy neighbourhoods) 30 years old buildings are more resistant for earthquakes than the high rise buildings at the coast' and R09 adds that 'I do not trust the earthquake resistance of those buildings not because they are not built well, just because they are not suitable to waterfront environment and they are too high' regarding disaster risks.

In addition,resident R06 stated that ' even if urban transformation is carried out for earthquake and disaster resilience, the skyscrapers on the coastline pose a major risk and weaken the possibility of resilience.'Following important topics were environmental concerns and micro climatic results of the coastal transformation, according to the participant(NGM08), 'the Sea Pearl residential project was built on reclaimed land by filling in the sea, leading to what he called an 'ecological disaster.' The new high-rise buldings block the wind coming from the sea, trap pollutants, and exacerbate respiratory issues due to poor airflow. Additionally, the once publicly used beaches have become polluted and inaccessible to the public, fundamentally altering the coastal ecosystem.' The participant (NGM09) emphasized that 'over 1,000 trees were cut to build those mega projects at the coast and all those trees were monumental, and the high-rise buildings have altered the microclimate — leading to hotter summers and stagnant airflow. Raised alarm about air pollution from increased traffic and claimed that the coastal development had erased designated emergency evacuation zones, exacerbating earthquake vulnerability'.

The local management (LMA01) also emphasized the environmental consequences, including worsened airflow, hotter summers, and blocked wind currents due to high-rises, alongside ecological degradation caused by sea infill projects. 'Despite protests and legal action by local organizations, no effective results were achieved. The interview paints a picture of disenfranchisement, reflecting local frustration toward administrative overreach and unresponsive urban planning.'

Regarding micro-climatic and environmental issues residents(R05,R06,R08,R09,R10) added that 'We used to not turn on the air conditioning , we had a breeze coming from the sea. Now we do not have it, it is blocked and air is polluted.'

These findings I have derived from the interviews done at the case study area show that how urban form and neoliberal policies might effect urban resilience in neighbourhood scale as well as the well-being or sense of belonging of the residents, and indicates some major issues in Ataköy's 2-5-6th neighbourhood with the reflection of residents and local authorities.

We should once again note that, these insights reflect the views and experiences of Ataköy's inner neighbourhood residents and listed NGOs as well as the local management interviewed in this study. Due to restricted access, interviews could not be conducted with residents of the luxury gated communities, and as such, this narrative reflects the perceptions and observations of locals from outside these developments. As this thesis aims to understand social response of long-term residents who have witnessed the before and after phases of the area.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

As this thesis aimed to address two main questions; In the case of Ataköy 2-5-6th neighbourhood how has the neoliberal transformation of the coast affected the neighborhood's socio-spatial cohesion, how do long-term residents perceive these changes, and what are the consequences? How do these projects influence the effectiveness of Istanbul's earthquake resilience efforts?

In addressing the research questions, this study has demonstrated how neoliberal urban policies and tourism-oriented coastal developments operate across multiple scales. At the national and city scales, Turkey's and Istanbul's development trajectory illustrates the tensions between growth-oriented urban policies and earthquake resilience needs. At the district level, the case of Bakırköy shows how mega-project trends reshape the balance between public and private spaces, eroding the collective urban fabric. Finally, the Ataköy coastal zone highlights the neighbourhood-scale conflicts that emerge from luxury redevelopment projects, undermining socio-spatial cohesion and weakening broader urban resilience strategies. Taken together, these findings reveal that luxury coastal redevelopment not only transforms neighbourhood life but also challenges Istanbul's long-term disaster preparedness and equitable urban resilience. This study contributes to the literature by addressing urban resilience not only through technical measures but also through the lens of spatial justice, socio-spatial cohesion, and the critique of neoliberal urban policies.

The findings derived from the interviews indicate that although daily life in Ataköy is generally perceived positively—particularly due to its planned layout, walkable environment, and residential complexes—several critical issues have emerged. Socio-spatial segregation and earthquake preparedness concerns have been emphasized as we have discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Environmental changes, including reduced coastal access, loss of sea views, and rising temperatures, have negatively impacted the quality of life.

While Istanbul continues its efforts to build resilience—across disaster preparedness, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion—the case of Ataköy reveals a conflicting direction driven by neoliberal urban transformation. The redevelopment of the coastal zone through luxury residential projects has not supported, but rather undermined, the city's overarching resilience objectives. Ataköy, situated at the intersection of historical significance and environmental value, exemplifies the tensions between capital-driven development and the lived realities of long-term residents.

One of the most critical issues is the privatization of public spaces. Residents reported restricted access to the seafront and increasing disconnection from formerly shared places. Skyscrapers have not only blocked views and airflow but also contributed to symbolic alienation. The sense of belonging has eroded, with many participants remarking that 'this is no longer Ataköy.'

Social transformation is another prominent theme, as we have discussed. What was once a middle-class neighbourhood is now perceived as home to elites and foreign investors. Community cohesion has weakened, and meaningful interaction between old and new residents is rare. New services and commercial zones are not integrated into the local social fabric, further deepening spatial and cultural divides.

In this context, the transformation observed in Ataköy strongly aligns with Neil Smith's (2002) argument regarding the globalized nature of gentrification as an urban strategy under neoliberal governance. Smith contends that gentrification is no longer a scattered, localized phenomenon but has evolved into a widespread, strategic tool driven by global capital and cultural circulation. The redevelopment of Ataköy's waterfront—through projects like SeaPearl and Yalı Ataköy and other commercial luxury developments—reflects this shift: it prioritizes productive capital investment while marginalizing conditions of social reproduction. The exclusion of long-term residents, the privatization of public spaces, and the central government's overriding of local planning authority exemplify what Smith(2002) characterizes as a revanchist urbanism, where urban space is reclaimed not for the public good but for elite consumption and investment flows.

Yılmaz (2019), in his study examining the reflections of the urban transformation process in Turkey, noted that while the urban transformation process has positive effects in terms of improving social and economic living conditions, it also brings about negative consequences such as the destruction of natural and historical textures, the reduction of fertile agricultural lands and agricultural production, the disruption of cultural continuity, temporary housing problems, the loss of green spaces, and the increase in vertical construction (Yılmaz, 2019). Moreover, there is social incompatibility and segregation among different groups. These findings are consistent with the statements of the participants in this study.

The environmental concerns include the loss of green spaces, obstructed air circulation, and microclimatic changes—such as hotter summers—that have diminished the area's livability. Residents have also expressed concerns that evacuation zones might be compromised, and that the new buildings lack adequate earthquake resistance, which contradicts the city's broader resilience efforts. Aycim and Baskaya (2015), in their analysis of the coasts of Kadıköy and Bakırköy (which serves as the case study for this thesis), emphasize the importance of landscape-

sensitive planning. Coastal areas, especially in earthquake-prone cities like Istanbul, require specific attention to mitigate the risks of both earthquakes and secondary disasters.

Avni and Teschner (2019) emphasize that waterfront urban transformations can give rise to various conflicts, including issues related to urban governance, environmental concerns, disaster resilience, and public access, as seen in the Ataköy case. Scholars (Avni & Teschner, 2019) highlight that the outcomes of waterfront developments can be either positive or negative, depending on the specific context and the goals guiding the transformation. Influenced by globalization, waterfronts continue to evolve under the impact of neoliberal policies and tourism-oriented objectives, as well as the inherent human desire to be close to water. Additionally, Billiard (2014) notes that tourism initiatives and luxury developments along the waterfronts of Paceville have led to a decline in connectivity in the city center, resulting in increased socio-spatial segregation. This transformation, according to Billiard, is incompatible with the local identity and urban form, a finding similar to those made in the Ataköy case. In this context, Billiard (2014) emphasizes the significance of reclaiming local history, authenticity, and cultural identity as essential components of successful waterfront developments.

Considering the global significance of waterfront urban transformations, it is necessary to set forth key recommendations both for future projects and for the Ataköy case. These recommendations are informed by the main themes and challenges identified through the interviews conducted with residents and stakeholders, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

9.1.Recommendations

This part builds on the empirical findings and literature reviewed in the previous chapters to propose policy and planning recommendations for Ataköy and other waterfront transformation projects.. The proposals address four key challenges identified in the analysis: waterfront transformation and public benefit, socio-spatial segregation and sense of belonging, incompatibility of recent development with Ataköy's urban identity, and environmental and disaster resilience at the neighborhood scale. Each recommendation is grounded in both the case evidence and relevant urban theory, thereby moving beyond abstract prescriptions and offering a more contextually informed framework.

Waterfront Transformation and Public Benefit

The findings highlight that Ataköy's shoreline has been increasingly privatized through luxury residential and touristic developments, limiting public access. As Desfor and Laidley (2011) and Hoyle (2000) demonstrate (Desfor & Laidley, 2011; Hoyle, 2000), waterfronts have historically shifted from industrial to commercial and residential uses, often at the expense of public benefit. In line with Harvey's (2003) critique of neoliberal spatial strategies, these transformations prioritize global capital while eroding collective access (Harvey D. , 2003).Planning frameworks should reinforce the principle of the 'right to the city' (Mitchell, 2003) by safeguarding public access to the waterfront and ensuring that new developments incorporate publicly accessible promenades, recreational spaces, and cultural facilities. Policies must embed community benefit agreements that bind developers to provide amenities accessible to all residents rather than to private enclaves.

Socio-Spatial Segregation and Sense of Belonging

Interviews revealed growing socio-spatial segregation between Ataköy's original neighborhoods and the Luxury developments& gated communities at the waterfronts of the neighbourhood. This aligns with Lefebvre's (2014) notion that commodified urban space produces alienation, as well as Wacquant's (2008) concept of 'advanced marginality.' Marcuse (2005) similarly identifies gated communities as reinforcing both physical and symbolic exclusion (Lefebvre, 2014; Marcuse, 2005; Wacquant, 2008).

Policies should promote social inclusion and shared urban life by implementing mixed-income housing strategies, integrating public facilities, and fostering neighborhood-level cultural initiatives. Zukin (2010) emphasizes that authentic belonging arises from everyday practices and shared spaces (Zukin, 2010); thus, planning in Ataköy must strengthen local community centers, common services, and neighborhood-scale events that allow diverse groups to interact.

Incompatibility of Transformation with Ataköy's Urban Identity

Ataköy's original design reflected mid-20th-century modernist planning principles, with integrated services and low-rise buildings fostering neighborhood identity as well as the architectural heritage at the waterfronts of the area; Baruthane. Recent high-rise developments disrupt this identity, creating a condition of 'placelessness ' as described by Relph (1976). Similarly, Sennett (1994) warns that homogenized forms undermine the diversity and complexity vital to urban life (Relph, 1976; Sennett, 1994).

Urban design policies must prioritize architectural continuity and cultural identity by setting design guidelines that respect the related context's original spatial fabric. This includes regulating building heights, preserving green spaces, and integrating heritage-sensitive planning. As Low (1996) highlights, identity is also tied to memory and everyday use (Low, 1996); hence, transformation projects should be required to document and incorporate elements of the neighborhood's history.

Environmental and Disaster Concerns – Urban Resilience

Given Istanbul's seismic vulnerability and ecological pressures, the environmental risks of Ataköy's coastal developments are particularly significant. Scholars such as Vale and Campanella (2005) and Davoudi et al. (2012) stress that resilience requires both structural safety and adaptive community capacity. Eraydin and Taşan-Kok (2013) show that speculative development in Turkey has often undermined resilience by prioritizing profit over safety (Davoudi, Shaw, & Haider, 2012; Desfor & Laidley, 2011; Eraydın & Taşan-Kok, 2013).

Urban transformation in Ataköy must integrate resilience as a core planning principle, not as an afterthought. This includes stricter enforcement of seismic building codes, climate-responsive and tsunami resilient waterfront design, and the integration of green-blue infrastructure to promote environmental health. Resilience planning must also include community preparedness programs and participatory frameworks that engage residents in shaping disaster mitigation strategies.

The recommendations outlined above emphasize the need to realign Ataköy's urban development trajectory with principles of equity, resilience, and identity preservation. Drawing on urban theory and empirical findings, these proposals move beyond abstract prescriptions to provide a grounded framework that addresses both local realities and global urban debates. Crucially, the future of Ataköy depends on embracing participatory planning, protecting public spaces, promoting social inclusivity, preserving cultural identity, and fostering resilience—not only as isolated goals, but as interdependent dimensions of sustainable urban transformation.

The findings in this research revealed that waterfront transformation has altered the economic, socio-cultural, and fundamental dynamics of the neighbourhood, and that long-term residents are not satisfied with these changes. The findings indicate that Istanbul's earthquake resilience policies should be shaped not only with a focus on structural reinforcement, but also by considering spatial justice, the ease of public access to coastal areas, and social cohesion. The proposed transformation model should be designed with a holistic approach that prioritizes not only physical change but also social cohesion, democratic participation, and public interest. Ataköy exemplifies how global neoliberal strategies manifest locally, transforming not only the built environment but also urban resilience, identity, and belonging. Its future, like that of Istanbul, depends on reclaiming the city for its residents.

It should be noted that the study's focus on Ataköy and the limited sample size may not fully capture the diversity of urban transformation processes across Istanbul. Recognizing this limitation, the research nonetheless provides an in-depth perspective that can serve as a foundation for broader comparative studies. Future studies may provide a more comprehensive picture through a comparative analysis of similar transformation projects across different districts of Istanbul.

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