

## REPLACEMENT AND URBAN IDENTITY

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### ABSTRACT

Cities comprise a multitude of areas, creating history, culture, identity and a sense of urban consciousness, forming their own communities. While a city is built up to fulfil the requirements of urban community, it also engages in continuous renewal due to factors including natural disasters and wars, resulting in demolished and newly constructed buildings. So, over time, urban identities change. Additional factors in the evolution of urban places are the processes of replacement and relocation.

Currently, an issue referred to as 'The Right of Dwelling' concerning those who have been displaced and relocated as a result of war is receiving insufficient attention. Upon relocation of urban communities, abandoned homes and workplaces remain idle for a period of time, then people from other communities settle in these abandoned places. Consequently, an interruption in the history of urban identity takes place. Especially recently, more and more people have had to abandon their city of residence, even their country, because of conflict.

Relocations and population exchanges have taken place during the modern history of the Republic of Turkey. After the Turkish War of Independence, some Greeks in Turkey and Turks remaining in Greece were relocated by government decree and had to leave their residences, forcing people from a different culture and identity to settle in the places left behind by those who were removed. Although the Greeks of Istanbul were not displaced during this period, there was a transformation of their identity in the ensuing years. Greeks and Jews who had been living in the Fener and Balat districts of Istanbul fled in response to the Wealth Tax and upheaval of the 6th and 7th of September, 1955. At the same time, people from other regions of Turkey settled in Fener and Balat, replacing the Greek former residents. So, the city's cosmopolitan character was further eroded as people of different languages, religions and ethnic identities vanished from the urban landscape. The area's urban history, which is of replacements and migrations, has resulted in a loss of its former identity, a kind of urban amnesia.

It is important that cities are protected as places with values of urban consciousness, culture and history and are prevented from wholesale urban replacement in the pursuit of urban identity. This study discusses the effects of replacement processes resulting from wars and relocations on urban amnesia and identity loss.

**Keywords:** Relocation, the Right of Dwelling, Urban Identity, Urban Memory, Place Construction

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The basic human right of people to have a sense of belonging somewhere has recently reached a heightened state of discussion as urban replacement accelerates as a result of conflicts.

Sheltering is not only to own a house. Sheltering is to live in a 'place' where you can continue your life and culture. The identities of people forced to leave their 'places' due to wars, replacements and deportations are lost and the derelict (abandoned) spaces also lose their identities. In Turkey, the process of replacement occurred with the population exchanges and deportations. The Population Exchange Agreement concerned the exchange of Turks and Greeks excluding Western Thracian Turks, Greeks from Istanbul, Gökçeada and Bozcaada. During the population exchange, 500,000 Muslim Turks migrated from Greece to Turkey and 1.2 million Orthodox Christian Greeks migrated from Anatolia to Greece. The Greeks in Istanbul had left Turkey according to the population exchange agreement until 1964. A large portion of the Greek and Jewish population left their places of residence because of the Wealth Tax and the events of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> of September, 1955. Greek deportation resulted in the relocation of the remaining Greeks. People from other regions of Turkey came to derelict spaces and the city's rich identity comprising urban peoples of different languages and religions was destroyed. The history of the city, created through a succession of displacements and migrations, resulted in loss of urban identity and urban memory.

Replacement of people, from 'space' to 'place', changes the identity of the space, even causing loss of its identity. In this study, the destruction of the relationship between the individual and the place through the process of displacement, the results of urban amnesia and urban identity loss are discussed.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Right of Dwelling and Replacement

Cities, which are a composition of places creating urban identity and culture, are the interaction consciousness of the urban space, and change with the society. 'The city as a spatial projection of social relations is a place that separates the earthly from the sacred, fun from work, the public from private, and family from everything that is alien to it' (Braudel 2007). Urban spaces are influential in creating the identity of people who do not share many common characteristics beyond living in the same city. Every change in the place affects the urban memory.

Spaces and urban identity change with people leaving as a result of conflict and forced migration. The accommodation of refugees is now a major issue of debate around the world, but the rights of individuals have thus far not been sufficiently addressed as part of this issue. Sheltering is not only to own a house. It is the right of dwelling, to live with all the cultural and social benefits that this implies (Yalçintan and Çavuşoğlu 2009). The feeling of belonging in a place is likely only present if the space one lives in does not frequently change. It is necessary for individuals to have confidence in their homes, in a familiar environment, to maintain a normal everyday life. Fear of losing this environment results in a feeling of homelessness and the absence of belonging. A frequent change of residents within an urban area results in such a space being unable to obtain an identity.

### 2.2. 'Place' and Urban Identity

Discussions concerning the right of dwelling began after World War II. During the war, many people had to flee their countries, making a clean break from their homes and pasts. These

people very often felt that they had no place to go back to, so they could never feel a sense of belonging anywhere.

Sheltering means to have a place where you can live in the way of your own life and culture. The 'space' transforms into 'place' with people's experiences in that space and reflections of their culture and identity. When the place begins to take on a person's identity, that person starts to feel a sense of belonging to that place. Individuals begin to make connections with the place and feel like they belong to that place. Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) describes this by using the term 'topophilia', which means the emotional link between people and place. Edward Soja (1996) describes this with the term 'Third Space', where individuals spend their time with 'space' and gain experience with it, connect to it and transform it into 'place'. These definitions given to the 'place' create the identity of the place.

The identity of a place cannot be defined only by its physical characteristics. Place is meaningful only through the experience of the individual. The change of the individual changes the 'place' as well. Correa (1983) points out that identity is a process and cannot be planned. The process that individuals take in the same space makes the space identifiable. Urban identity is defined by urban spaces, open and closed spaces, buildings, natural characteristics and socio-cultural characteristics. The identity of the city is a whole through which everything which belongs to the city makes it different from others and adds value to it. In order to protect the identity of the city, it is necessary to protect the intangible cultural heritage as well as that which is tangible, which are the urban spaces.

### **2.3. Urban and Cultural Heritage**

Culture consists of tangible and intangible values that a society possesses. It comprises a society's information, habits, judgments, opinions and behaviors (Turhan 1994). Culture is a nation's distinctive ways of life and values distinct from those of other nations (Ergin 1986). Cultural heritage contains tangible artefacts such as monuments, buildings, etc., and intangible attributes such as traditions, languages, religions, rituals, myths, etc. Nowadays, protection of cultural heritage is an international issue.

The Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was formulated in 1972 and UNESCO, which has made important decisions concerning the protection of intangible cultural heritage, ratified it on October 17, 2003 at the 32nd General Conference of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, taking effect on April 20, 2006 (Oğuz 2008). This contract is about the protection of intangible cultural heritage, respect for the heritage of the communities concerned, and to create awareness and cooperation at the local, national and international level on the importance of this issue.

### **3. AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of this study is to discuss some causes, such as wars, forced migration and deportation, for the loss of urban identity. Within the scope of this study, the destruction of the relationship between the individual and the place through the displacement process, the loss of feeling of belonging to somewhere, struggles for the protection of identity that is integrated to space, loss of urban identity due to displacements and resulting urban memory loss are considered.

### **4. REPLACEMENT AND URBAN AMNESIA IN ISTANBUL**

The history of Istanbul dates back to 660 B.C.E. Istanbul has served as the capital of many civilizations. After the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman Empire, its character as a

multicultural, multi-ethnic city was preserved. During the beginning of the Republican period, Istanbul continued as a multicultural city with a variety of minority communities present. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, forced migrations from Anatolia to Istanbul took place, and in the 1950s the city received many economic immigrants. Due to the upheaval which took place on September 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 1955 and the 1964 Deportation, minorities in Istanbul left the country, resulting in a marked change in the city's urban identity. This part of the study focuses on the situation of minorities in the Ottoman period, the early years of the Turkish Republic and the events that caused minorities to migrate in the 1950s and after, and seeks the traces of urban memory loss.

#### **4.1. The Life of Minorities in Istanbul during the Ottoman Period**

The Ottoman Empire was an extensive multinational empire. It was composed of various nations with different languages, religions, races and cultures. These nations lived as communities with their own organization, traditions, beliefs and legal systems. This system continued until the 19th century. Minorities occupied important positions in business and were in the higher income groups that traded in the port cities of Istanbul and Izmir in the 15th and 16th centuries (Demirağ 2002). In later years, they obtained important commercial privileges through capitulations.

The nationalist movement which arose due to the influence of the French Revolution influenced the minorities of Istanbul, and they tried to establish their own national states. Greece gained independence in 1830 (Ortaylı 2004). In order to prevent similar uneasiness from growing within other minority communities, who might also strive to gain independence, the Tanzimat Edict was announced in 1839 (Zürcher 2009). Reforms were carried out with respect to minorities to eliminate discrimination based on race or religion and to establish respect for security, honor, wealth, justice and legal rights (Mantran 2002).

Political, economic and cultural statutes of minorities were strengthened by the Imperial Reform Fermanı in 1856. The number of churches and minority schools increased in the years immediately following the passage of this act. In 1869, the Ottoman Nationality Law abolished any legal distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims (Demir 2010a). In 1876, the Ottoman Constitution was prepared with the participation of non-Muslims. This constitution sought to guarantee personal, press and educational freedoms, commercial, industrial and agricultural associations and partnerships rights for all Ottoman subjects without respect to religion. Minorities experienced their greatest period of freedom from this time until the beginning of the First World War (Akgönül 2007).

Greek migration from Anatolia to Istanbul began at the end of the War of Independence. A total of 250,000 Greeks lived in Istanbul in 1922 (Alexandris 1992). Population Exchange agreement was on the exchange of Turks and Greeks excluding Western Thracian Turks and Greeks in İstanbul, Gökçeada and Bozcaada (Meray 2002). During the population exchange, 500,000 Muslim Turks migrated from Greece to Turkey and 1,200,000 Orthodox Christian Greeks migrated from Anatolia to Greece. Migrating peoples were determined based on religion rather than language or race.

The first years of the Turkish Republic were a transition period to a modern and secular 'nation state' and the positive atmosphere for minorities in that period changed with the effect of nationalist movements spreading throughout the world in the late 1930s. Campaigns promoting Turkish language prevented minorities from speaking their own languages.

#### 4.2. Migration from Anatolia to Istanbul in the First Years of the Republic

Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the Resettlement Law was developed for the assimilation of Kurdish, Armenian and Jewish minorities. The forced immigration of Armenians from Central Anatolia to Istanbul occurred at the beginning of the resettlement. Another example of forced immigrations which occurred due to the Resettlement Law is the immigration of Thracian Jews to Istanbul. After the Resettlement Law of 21 June 1934 (Resmi Gazete 1934), houses and businesses of the Jews in Thrace were plundered and the Jews migrated to Istanbul and Palestine without their goods (Bali 1999). 10,000 Armenians from Anatolia and 60,000 Armenians from Istanbul migrated to Syria in 1930<sup>2</sup>. The Turkish population from the Balkans settled in the lands those Armenians left. 600 Anatolian Armenians from various cities and villages were resettled in Istanbul and placed in derelict houses in Ortaköy and Yeniköy in early 1934<sup>3</sup>. Attempts at 'Turkification' continued in the fields of economy and culture in the following years. In 1941, non-Muslims began to be recruited and a wealth tax in 1942 caused minorities to migrate.

#### 4.3. The Displacement of Minorities in Istanbul in the 1950s

Christian and Jewish minorities were banned from military training in the army in November 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. Non-Muslims were assigned to construction work in the military. Non-Muslim men in Istanbul and Thrace between 25 and 45 years old were recruited for a new military service in the Davutpaşa Barracks in May 1941 (Bali 1998a). Non-Muslim men in Anatolia were also recruited and placed in camps in the summer of 1941. Turkey faced the possibility of entering the war after Germany's attack on the Balkans in April 1941. The Holocaust in Europe and the approach of the German army to the western borders of Turkey caused alarm in the Jewish community in Turkey. The camps were disbanded in July 1942 (Bali 1998b).

The official government explanation for the Wealth Tax on non-Muslim middle class was to tax unfair gains due to the war conditions, and equally distribute the economic disadvantages created by the war (Ökte 1987). The Wealth Tax ended the dominance of the Armenians, Jews and Greeks in the economy, and then many minorities migrated. After the establishment of the State of Israel, 30,000 Jews migrated to Israel in 1948-1949 (Bali 2003). The table shows the numerical distribution of Turkish citizens by religion and the decrease of the Christian and Jewish populations (Table 1.).

Table 1. Numerical Distribution of Turkish Citizens by Their Religions (Karabey 2012)

GROUP	1914	1965	2010
<b>TURKISH POPULATION</b>	18,520,000		73,723,000
<b>GREEK</b>	1,792,000	80,000	3,000-5,000
<b>ARMENIAN</b>	1,294,000	70,000	40,000-60,000
<b>JEWISH</b>	256,000	40,000	20,000-30,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	3,342,000 (18%)	190,000	63,000-95,000
<b>HOUSING</b>	668,000	40,000	15,000-25,000

<sup>2</sup> NARA 67.404/208, Nr. 946, USA Consulate General, From İstanbul to the Department of State, 24 02.1930; Cited: Güven, D. 2005. Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları. Tarih Vakfı Yayınları. İstanbul.

<sup>3</sup> NARA 867.4016 Ermeniler/1, USA Embassy, From Ankara to the Department of State Devlet Departmanına, 02.03 1934; Cited: Güven, D. 2005. Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları. Tarih Vakfı Yayınları. İstanbul.

The single-party period finished with the establishment of the Democratic Party on July 18, 1945 and discriminatory practices against the minority population also decreased during the initial multi-party rule. Migration from villages and towns to large cities led to the rapid growth of the urban population in the 1950s and increased dwelling in slum areas. The villagers living in these slum areas created a new social class, continuing their traditions and lifestyles in the city. These new arrivals also began living with the non-Muslims in the upper income group, and the social balances changed with this immigrant class.

People in September of 1955 were often seen as linked to the Cyprus problem, but the situation in the country, city and society also caused the process to become established.

The Events of September 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> were generally considered as being related to tensions which were occurring on Cyprus, but the situation in the city and the society also caused the process to occur. Britain wanted to dominate the Middle East, took the right to have soldiers on the island during the Ottoman era (Kuloğlu and Özkan 2003) and the British dominance on the island was officially sanctioned by the Treaty of Lausanne (Şar 2005). The Turkish population on the island was forced to migrate unless they accepted British citizenship within two years of the signing of the treaty (Şar 2005). This is the primary reason the Turkish population on the island decreased (Yurdagün 2008). Britain imposed liberal policies on the island to garner support from Greece during World War II while an anti-colonialist policy was accepted around the world after the war. Greece requested self-determination on the island from the United Nations in 1954 (Demir 2010b). Meanwhile, Turkey requested that the island remain under British governance, (Armaoğlu 1959).

The Cyprus issue grew to become a larger problem for Turkey due to Greek terrorist activities on the island. The Turkish government could not remain unresponsive to the reaction of Turkish citizens in 1955. Britain made many attempts with Greece and Greek Cypriots to end the violence on the island, but peace was not achieved. Therefore, a conference was organized in London to which Turkey and Greece were invited on 29 August 1955 to discuss the Cyprus and Eastern Mediterranean issues (Şar 2005). The Turkish delegation concentrated on the Cyprus issue at the conference.

Atatürk's house in Thessaloniki was reported to have been bombed on the afternoon of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1955 and the report spread rapidly (Hiçyılmaz 2004). Increasing tension between Turks and Greeks due to the Cyprus issue exploded in response to this report. People came to Taksim on foot from İstiklal Caddesi in the evening hours, chanting the slogan 'Cyprus is Turkish, Turkish it will stay!' (Cumhuriyet and Akşam 1955), and Greek and Jewish shops, houses, consulates, schools, churches, synagogues and press buildings were attacked and plundered (Öymen 2009, Demirel 1995, Cumhuriyet and Akşam 1955). There had also been dead and injuries.

The batons, all in the same size and colour, used in the plunder and simultaneous attacks in different districts indicated that this was a planned act and plundered houses and shops were marked beforehand (Zayas 2007, Güven 2005 and Ulus 1955). Participating groups in the pogrom were all low-income and did not only attack Greek shops but also wealthy Turkish shops (Sakin and Dokuyan 2010). According to Tarhan (2006) people who migrated to Istanbul from Anatolia in the 1950s and were living in the slum areas thought of the non-Muslim middlemen as very rich, and these reasons caused the events.

The events were not only limited to Istanbul but also spread to Izmir and Ankara. The upheaval was finally brought under control by the military after midnight. During these events, 73 churches, 8 hagiomas, 3 monasteries, 5,538 houses and workplaces were destroyed during the events (Kılıçdere 1998). Damages were paid by the state (Ceylan 1996).

The Jews who forced to pay the Wealth Tax for an extended period of time migrated to Israel after The Events of September 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 1955. A large part of the Greek minority did not migrate immediately after the events in an effort to prevent the Patriarchate from losing power and to maintain the Byzantine tradition. Also, the economic conditions in Turkey were more suitable for trade compared to Greece, and those who had been subjected to attacks often were not financially able to migrate because of the loss of their property. According to official data, 79,691 Greek speakers lived in Turkey in 1955. This number decreased to 65,139 in 1960 and to 48,096 in 1965. (Alexandris 1992). Table 2. shows the population of Greeks living in Istanbul.

**Table 2.** Number of Greeks who were living in Istanbul (Yücel and Yıldız 2014)

1927	26,431
1935	17,672
1945	13,598
1955	11,879
1960	10,488
1965	-

The Greek minority lived a comfortable life from 1959, when the Cyprus problem was resolved, until 1964. The main reason for the migration of Greeks was that the agreement on settlement, trade and ship transportation signed with Greece in 1930 was cancelled unilaterally on 16 March 1964 due to the Cyprus issue. The Greeks of Istanbul, who had Greek passports, were forced to migrate with only 20 pounds of their goods and 20 dollars of their wealth according to the 1964 Deportation Decree. One third of the Greeks living in Istanbul had to leave the country. According to official data, 13,000 Greeks and some Greeks with Turkish passports migrated. About 30,000 Greeks with Turkish passports migrated from the state after October 1964. The Greek Orthodox population decreased from 100,000 to 7,000 between 1960 and 1978. Thus, one of the greatest ethnic migration movements in the history of the Republic of Turkey took place due to the 1964 Decree (Erturan 2010). Greeks went mostly to Athens and settled in Palaio Faliro. They strongly influenced the district with their identity and the region became known as ‘Little Istanbul’ (Yücel and Yıldız 2014). The migration with the Events of September 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 1955 and the 1964 Deportation, ended the cosmopolitan character of Istanbul and the city became a homogeneous Turkish city.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Sheltering, creating a place and belonging somewhere are among the most basic needs people have. Moreover, they are among the most important human rights. But this fundamental human right is also among one of the least-considered, as it is often contrary to the policies, ideologies and benefits of states. People have had to evacuate their homes and countries because of conflict throughout history, many of them have become ‘the other’ due to being from a different nationality, race or religion. Nowadays, obtaining the Right of the Dwelling is the biggest challenge because ideologies are cultivated more than human rights. Those who become displaced due to war, population exchanges and deportations become individuals who do not belong anywhere. On the other hand, places lose their sense of meaning and identity. People from other cultures come to these derelict spaces and they struggle while creating the place over time. So, spaces gain identities again. However, these changes cause disruption and

deviation. This identity chaos, which causes a cultural chasm between past and future generations, causes a crisis of identity and urban amnesia.

In this context, the process of displacement as it has occurred in Istanbul regarding the policy concerning minorities has been examined. Istanbul was a multicultural city in which minorities lived since the conquest by the Ottomans. The cosmopolitan character of Istanbul continued until the 1950s, despite the enactment of various laws and policies designed to curtail their influence. However, the Armenians, Jews and Greeks had to leave the city because of the Wealth Tax during World War II, the practice of The Twenty Classes in the military, and finally the Events of September 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>. Istanbul became a homogeneous city devoid of foreign capital and people of different languages and religions after the Greek Deportation in 1964. The forced migrations of these people caused them to lose their identities and sense of belonging to a place. In addition, this caused the loss of culture, identity and history of the city, as Istanbul has lost its multicultural character. The urban space attempts to gain a new identity through people from other cultures who settle in these derelict places. If an urban landscape has a chaotic nature, this landscape has no true identity. For this reason, the current preservation of urban spaces is inadequate for the continuation of urban values, history, and identity, to protect against urban amnesia and to transfer the urban identity to future generations. Also, intangible cultural heritage, different cultures, lifestyles, traditions and those which exist within the urban spaces, must be protected. Although Istanbul still has an identity, the multicultural richness it once possessed and an important part of its urban identity has been lost by the displacement of minorities.

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