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I, Albeniz T Ezme, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in Community Planning.

It is entitled:
Advocacy Planning in Urban Renewal: Sulukule Platform As the First Advocacy Planning Experience of Turkey

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Advocacy Planning in Urban Renewal: Sulukule Platform
As the First Advocacy Planning Experience of Turkey

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Master of Community Planning
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by

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Abstract

Sulukule was one of the most famous neighborhoods in Istanbul because of the Romani culture and historic identity. In 2006, the Fatih Municipality knocked on the residents’ doors with an urban renovation project. The community really did not know how they could retain their residence in the neighborhood; unfortunately everybody knew that they would not prosper in another place without their community connections. They were poor and had many issues impeding their livelihoods, but there should have been another solution that did not involve eviction. People, associations, different volunteer groups, universities in Istanbul, and also some trade associations were supporting the people of Sulukule. The Sulukule Platform was founded as this predicament began and fought against government eviction for years. In 2009, the area was totally destroyed, although the community did everything possible to save their neighborhood through the support of the Sulukule Platform. I cannot say that they lost everything in this process, but I also cannot say that anything was won. I can only say that the Fatih Municipality soiled its hands. No one will forget Sulukule, but everybody will remember the Fatih Municipality with this unsuccessful project.

Sulukule stands out as a symbolic case for social justice groups that promote the expansion of civil rights and defend neighborhoods that struggle for their rights. Therefore, the Sulukule Platform shows that another form of transformation which involves public participation in the decision-making phase of planning is possible in the cities. This study aims to demonstrate how the advocacy planning method is significant in planning for communities.

This thesis proposes to present a full report of the Sulukule Platform case. It also provides a historical background that works to contextualize Sulukule and their struggle into the broader context of socio-economic inequalities in Istanbul and the fight of inhabitants in urban transformation areas for their civil rights. The study focuses on one of the less experimented planning models, advocacy planning, and analyzes its first incidence in Turkey through the Sulukule Platform. Also it examines public participation and its place in the urban planning profession.

This thesis, first, will help to show how Turkish public officials failed to learn from the mistakes of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; second, it will look at how the urban renewal is being implemented in developing countries especially in Turkey. I will argue that because globalizing-cities like Istanbul are being pressured to implement urban renewal but are often failing to learn lessons from American and European urban renewal.
Advocacy Planning in Urban Renewal:
Sulukule Platform
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Source: Photo was taken by the author in 2008.
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List of Acronyms

AGFE: Advisory Group on Forced Evictions
AKP: Justice and Development Party (a political party in Turkey)
ITU: Istanbul Technical University (Turkey)
MSGSU: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Istanbul, Turkey)
STOP: Autonomous Planners without Borders (the group which prepared first alternative proposal for Sulukule named themselves with this name)
UCL: University College of London (England)
UN: United Nations
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHRP: United Nations Housing Rights Programme
TL: Turkish Liras (the unit of currency in Turkey)
TOKI: Housing Development Administration of Turkey
YTU: Yildiz Technical University (Istanbul, Turkey)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The undertaking of this graduate thesis aids in showcasing the knowledge and skills developed in the discipline of Urban Planning since 2004. It focuses on my concentration in the field of urban planning and the experience gained over the years. Furthermore, it attempts to analyze and question the existing planning education system and professional practices, from the perspective of a planner and urban dweller.

Due to globalization, many developing countries are experiencing a shift from industrial economy to a provision of services economy, in accordance with the ideals of modernization, and capital investment during the recent years. Turkey is one of these developing countries. In these countries, urban reorganization is taking place where there is an evident struggle concerning the distribution of resources and the maximization of assets pursued through the redevelopment of urban areas. The squatter and slum areas of Turkey are replaced with this reorganization, and the government prepares urban renewal projects for these areas. The government usually shows the squatters and slum dwellers no other place or provides new areas, which are very far from the city. Removing the squatters or slum dwellers creates an issue for them. How these people feel and the concerns that take place during this transformation process place greater emphasis on the importance of this identification stage. After this realization, we can see why in these transformation areas people are against renovation projects and why the government’s projects are criticized and protested by some professionals and academicians.
Nature of Problem

Since the 1980s, neoliberal\(^1\) programs started to be implemented in Turkey. Urban renewal projects became popular in this period, and because of this trend that developed in the last twenty years, many transformation processes has occurred Turkey’s urban areas. Based on critiques by numerous academicians, many of the implementations were unfair, failing to defend the “right to the city”\(^2\) of many low income groups in the cities. On the contrary, the income inequality in the city, social and spatial segregation, urban poverty, and urban tension have increased due to these renewal projects and urban reorganization (Oktem, 2006, p. 53).

Today, renewal projects are usually used in the built-up areas as economic development tools. In Turkey, the big cities where speedy industrialization\(^3\) and unplanned urbanization occur, try to adapt to globalization by renovation, but these processes are implemented without dwellers’ statements. It is anticipated that urban renewal projects

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\(^1\) Neoliberalism is a theory which takes the view that individual liberty and freedom are the high point of civilization and then goes on to argue that individual liberty and freedom can best be protected and achieved by an institutional structure made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade; a world in which individual initiatives can flourish (interview with David Harvey in [Lilley, 2006]). According to Harvey (Lilley, 2006), the implication being that the state should not be involved in the economy too much, but it should use its power to preserve private property rights and the institutions of market and promote these on the global stage if necessary.

\(^2\) “Right to the City” as a term and slogan was used by Henry Lefebvre in 1968 (Purcell, 2002, p. 100). Later on, David Harvey (2008) used this term again in his article by addressing Lefebvre’s writing in an updated version. Harvey (2008, p. 23) described the concept of the right to the city as follows: “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources; it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.”

\(^3\) In many developing countries such as Turkey and Brazil, industrialization has occurred in a short duration of time and without urban planning decisions or policies. Due to its effects, millions of people in the world migrated to large cities and transformed empty plots of land into squatter neighborhoods. Thus, in most of the developing countries of the world, there still exist unplanned cities and a huge rate of “urbanization without cities.”
without participation will affect the cities in the developing world negatively like periods of rapid industrialization and unplanned urbanization often produce. However, the problem of the slum dwellers’ and squatters’ inability to participate can also be attributed to their lack of education, economic status, and the local government’s reluctance to include them in the process. Generally, old dwellers of the transformation areas feel apprehension about participation; they think that they will lose their property rights if they try to attend the process of the projects or if they want more community engagement in the process; but this thought changes day by day because the renewal process began affecting the whole city in the last ten years by new projects on public spaces such as parks, public schools, and squares. For this reason inhabitants in the urban areas try to attend urban renewal processes, even though authority does not allow public participation to collaborate into the decision-making phase of the projects, in Turkey.

There are several critiques based how public participation takes place in urban renewal process in the last ten years in Turkey. The Taksim Gezi Park struggle, which happened in the summer of 2013 while I prepared this study, is one of the most important critiques in the process of urban renewal in Istanbul and also in Turkey. This struggle can be defined as the most significant protest as a part of urban planning process in Turkish urbanization history. The protest which arose from a demolition decision of a green place in Taksim Gezi Park grew and spread to entire country as a defense of civic engagement, and became a struggle against the Turkish Government’s decisions. By midnight of June 1st, thousands of people crossed the Bosporus Bridge, located between two continents Europe and Asia, on foot to protest the demolishment in Taksim Gezi Park because the municipality
did not ask for public opinion and started the demolition without the court’s decision; and the whole world followed this struggle on the news.

In this study it is important to see how the urban planning process works in Turkey; how public participation takes place in this process; how local governments implement urban renewal projects without civic engagement and public opinions; and why people protest this process. In addition to this, advocacy planning may be a model for responding to the difficult situation people in urban renewal areas face; and may be a solution to improve public engagement in the urban planning in the countries such as Turkey.

**Purpose of the Study**

The advocacy planning model has been created for these kinds of settlers such as slum dwellers and some minorities in the cities by Paul Davidoff in his influential paper, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning.” According to Davidoff (1965), the advocacy planning model gives voice to unorganized and unrepresented minorities to be defend/protect their rights in the urban planning processes. He (1965) thinks that there are large inequalities in the political system which affects the urban planning as well as a discipline interrelating political tendencies.

Equality and participation play a significant role in this model. All minority groups are equally represented in the planning process by advocating for interests of the under advantaged and looking for social change. In the advocacy planning model, the role of planners is significant for underrepresented groups. Planners play a facilitator role, which encourages underrepresented people to become a part of the planning process. Advocacy
planning was developed for low income minority communities in the U.S., and up to now most of the work on advocacy planning has dealt with developed countries in America and Europe.

Today, we can see advocacy planning practices being followed in some developing countries; but we can say that Turkey never experimented with it until the alternative project of Sulukule Platform⁴ emerged in response to the Sulukule Renovation Project undertaken by the Fatih Municipality of Istanbul.

The purpose of this study is to search for a relationship between importance of advocacy planning in urban renovation and the necessity of public participation in planning process. In this thesis, the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project, which was implemented in Istanbul, will be criticized as an international case centered in the location of Turkey, and Sulukule Platform, which was established in the Sulukule renewal process, will be analyzed as the first advocacy planning experience in Turkey. Also, the thesis will examine the successful and unsuccessful initiatives of the Istanbul Government’s current strategy to link urban regeneration and community renewal, using the Sulukule area as an example.

Sulukule⁵ is a neighborhood in Fatih Municipality, Istanbul. Sulukule’s population was around 5,000 people, 3,500 of whom were Romani in 2004 (Foggo, 2007, p. 41). According to the research conducted by the Sulukule Platform, 76% of the Sulukule

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⁴ *Sulukule Platform* can be defined as an initiative established by a group of volunteers from different disciplines: sociology, planning, architecture, etc. to protest the Fatih Municipality's Sulukule Urban Renewal Project and to give support to Sulukule dwellers' request for help. In the next sections, the Platform's story will be given in more detail.

⁵ The formal name of the neighborhood is not Sulukule. The area known as Sulukule is located within the boundaries of Hatice Sultan and Neslisah Sultan neighborhoods, but people in Istanbul have referred to this neighborhood as "Sulukule" since Ottoman Times.
dwellers were born in Sulukule and 66.3% of them were content to live in Sulukule (Foggo, 2007, p. 41). Fatih Municipality prepared an urban renewal project for the neighborhood in 2004. The planners believed that this was a project that could solve the problems in the neighborhood, and Sulukule people did not agree with various parts of the project. They objected to the project and conveyed their objections to the government by letter. They wanted to attend and have some say in the planning process, but the government did not allow them to contribute.

In this period, there were many other non-governmental groups that did not support the government’s Sulukule project especially the Sulukule Platform. The Sulukule Platform was founded by a band of planners, planning students, activists, academicians, sociologists, and other passionate volunteers, but still the government continued, heedless of the public will, finishing the plans and implementing the project. The things Sulukule Platform did can be seen as a form of advocacy planning because of two alternative proposals within the Platform. This planning experience was the first major advocacy planning action in Turkey. Through a case study of Sulukule, I will seek to describe why this example of advocacy planning failed and to derive lessons for similar neighborhoods in developing countries like Turkey.

Why I Chose Sulukule

At this point, I should explain how my relationship with Sulukule neighborhood was established and why I chose Sulukule case in this study. I started my undergraduate degree at the Planning School of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (MSGSU) in Istanbul in 2004; and it was a breaking point in my life. Because of the school, I moved to Istanbul from
Bilecik, which is a very small city of Turkey with a population of 45,000. It was a journey from 45,000 to a population of almost 15 million, from a small middle class city to a global city where urban poverty shows its worst face. It was not only a cultural but also economic and social shock for me. I was unable to understand the circumstances behind the existing yawning gap between people's economic statuses. At the age of eighteen, it seemed like I had re-discovered my country. I learned that we are not an equal society; we have varied minority groups in an unequal society with Romani neighborhoods and large Kurdish, Armenian, Jewish, and other communities. While some neighborhoods have been occupied by these groups for a long time; in the others, they have created their segregated spaces. As the name suggests, these segregated spaces had distinct boundaries, separating them from other neighborhoods and communities. I was a stranger to them who came from different world and did not know anything about their life and history.

With time I came to understand my country’s history, learned about "them" more, and began to understand why they live in a segregated society and how they go about accepting strangers into their lives. Istanbul’s cultural wealth helped me find friends from different societies, cultures, and traditions. This was not possible in my hometown due to its small-town characteristics where everyone knows everyone and people are from the same culture and background, but Istanbul is an amalgamation of various societies, and it taught me numerous lessons that changed my life.

Following the requirements for one of my classes in 2006, my classmates visited, and analyzed Sulukule Neighborhood. First, they paid a weekend visit to the neighborhood, but they were unable to gather digital documentation. They had been scared into not taking
any photographs by the neighborhood kids. As for me, I was familiar with Sulukule due to the repeated filming of Turkish movies in this neighborhood. These movies often focus on the lives of Romanies in the society, their neighborhood, and how even though they have a very similar culture to the Gypsies, they refuse to identify themselves under the same name. One of the famous and all-time favorite movies on this topic is by Emir Kustarica called *Times of Gypsies*. I was also interested because of my mother’s Macedonian origin and taste for Balkan music that is based on Gypsy music culture because of the Gypsy population in that area.

All these factors finally led me to Sulukule neighborhood after a few weeks with my friends. Our professors had access to a Gypsy journalist, who had researched for quite a long time on Sulukule. This is how my relationship with Sulukule neighborhood was established, which is still strong and thriving. During that time, I was unaware that my destiny would lead me to visit this neighborhood time and time again, to be a volunteer in their struggle, and even to end up writing two theses about them. It was only luck and an important lesson for my life. As a planning student, I attended two alternative planning processes with the Sulukule Platform; and wrote an undergraduate thesis on Sulukule. These Sulukule experiences led me to many areas such as urban sociology, urban transformation, urban policies, urban renewal, etc. In addition, I started to learn advocacy planning and participatory research via my experiences in Sulukule.

The unique situation of Sulukule Platform led me once again to consider the Sulukule Neighborhood even after the detailed study in my undergraduate thesis titled “The Relationship Poverty-Everyday Life and a Reading of Sulukule Sample via Photographs”.

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At this point, I should explain why I am studying the same neighborhood for the second time and taking into account that there have been other researchers, academicians, and graduate students who have studied the same area again and again. The grounds for choosing this case study can be articulated in the two following reasons.

First, Sulukule is the first implemented renovation project as a neighborhood in the inner city of Istanbul. Therefore, direct criticism about the project still continues in Turkish academia and the international press because the plan was developed and implemented without meaningful citizen participation and the government largely ignored the community. This was despite the fact that the community and many experts, academics and activists in Sulukule Platform sought to take part in the planning process. In the summer of 2013, the whole world watched as Turkish citizens took to the streets to their minds on urban renewal issues such as the Taksim Gezi Park Project. Their only wish was to be actively involved in decisions and to explain themselves on such crucial urban projects. After the Taksim Gezi Park protest, I understood once more why this study was important and how it might contribute to improving the urban renewal process and to develop a solution for current problems related to urban renewal.

Second, Sulukule Project is one of the most criticized local projects by academicians, planners and associations in Turkey. As a result, since 2006, many theses have been written on Sulukule and several articles have been published in national and international journals. Some of these studies have focused on gentrification, urban renewal or the globalization movement in Turkey with the Sulukule neighborhood as a backdrop, while others here focused on various other topics such as archeological, historical, cultural or
sociological values in the area. Also, a few studies have emphasized the legal procedures in an urban renewal process or the concept of “right to the city.” Prior to the present project no other study has been on the Sulukule Platform and has analyzed the Platform’s works as an example of advocacy planning. This gap encouraged me to write about the Sulukule Neighborhood again by using my two-year experience into the neighborhood along with interviews and other research. The alternative project provides a unique opportunity to examine an advocacy planning effort named “The Sulukule Platform.” Though unsuccessful in preventing the municipality from demolishing the area, this effort was also successful according to some results that still remain, including positive impact on the historic community and especially on children. This initiative has become an important focal point for opposing views, protests, and alternative visions of the future of the area of Sulukule and more generally, urban planning in Turkey.

Research Questions

In this study, research questions were classified under two different groups. Some basic research questions specific to Sulukule:

- Why did the government choose Sulukule Neighborhood as a renewal area?
- What were the characteristics of the Sulukule Platform’s works?
- Was there a distinct unified view among residents about what needed to be done, or were there diverse views?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Sulukule Platform as an organization?
- How were professional volunteers able to interact with government officials?
- Why was the advice of the Platform ultimately rejected?
- Did the Platform produce a plan that met professional standards, and how widely was it disseminated?
- Were there any long-term benefits from the Platform’s activities?
• Can we see the Sulukule Platform as an example of advocacy planning?
• Did professionals simply provide technical advice to residents, or did they impose their own views?

And, there are some significant research questions that can be used to generalize the results of this case to other places:

• How can urban renovation be implemented successfully in the life space of underrepresented groups?
• Why does public participation play a significant role in urban renewal processes, and how it can be implemented?
• How can renewal projects affect communities if they are implemented without participation?
• How can urban planners play a role in this process?
• Why is the advocacy planning method useful in these kinds of urban renewal projects?

The first group of questions based on Sulukule and Sulukule Platform help us to understand the case of Sulukule; and also function to shape the research. The second group of questions helps to understand the relationship between the urban renewal process and the advocacy planning approach. This relationship explains why advocacy planning is important in the urban renewal areas especially where the low income groups live. Also, this relationship and the need of advocacy planning explain why public participation plays a significant role in urban renewal processes. The “theoretical framework” chapter of thesis can be seen as an introductory section to explain academic thoughts and/or as an explanation of the case study focused on the first group of questions.

These two groups of the questions create a map for the entire thesis. Based on these questions, you can understand where main themes come from and where they go to in the research. The question includes urban renewal, advocacy planning, their relationship, and
also how this relationship occurred in Sulukule by Sulukule Platform. The answers of these questions form the last chapter as a conclusion of this study.

**Research Outline**

I believe that negative examples are often more effective than positive ones to show a situation in social sciences because they prevent these errors from happening again. It aims to show the importance of the advocacy planning approach in the urban renewal process, which is implemented in an unrepresented community. By giving the project background and events, which happened in the process, the study aims to analyze the situation after the Sulukule project occurred in order to show how unsuccessful implementation can affect human life in the renewal area.

There are three basic parts in to my project. The “Theoretical Framework” part of the study, Chapter 3 focuses on “urban renewal” and “advocacy planning” as two basic terms of study has been organized as literature review by using terminological comparison, and by historical evaluation of urban renewal and advocacy planning as urban movements. Then I will describe changes taking place in Istanbul generally and Sulukule specifically leading into the urban renewal controversy.

The following chapter (Chapter Four: Sulukule) has been designed to describe the neighborhood’s history and how and why the Platform was founded, along with what the need was. For this part of study, I used a variety of sources to describe the history of Sulukule prior to urban renewal, the urban renewal experience, and the neighborhood today. I also relied on a variety of published materials (reports, journal articles, and
newspaper stories) and my own observations. As a person who spent more than two years in the Sulukule Neighborhood from 2008 to 2010 and who still has contact with the Platform and the community, I utilized my observations, experiences, and connections in this study. The Sulukule Platform created a diary titled “Sulukule Gunlugu” on the internet to inform public about the urban renewal process in the area. It covers the Platform and the necessary processes and procedure involved. It constitutes another significant source for this study. To examine the Sulukule Platform I reviewed previous writings (including memorandum not previously examined). I carried out e-mail conversations with key informants, and recounted my own experiences. For the “Advocacy Planning in Sulukule: Alternative Assessments” chapter (Chapter 5), I report on my semi-structured interviews along with my past experience with the Platform and in the neighborhood. In Chapter 6, I answer the questions raised earlier in this chapter.

6 Accessible on http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com/
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Plan

Structured research began in the fall of 2012 by writing the theoretical part of the research. This was used as an advantage to look at the Sulukule Platform’s works from a different viewpoint. And it also helped to create interview questions. After finishing the literature review, in the winter break, during December 2012 and January 2013, I visited the Sulukule area for observations and interviews with target persons. The interviews for the research were done between January 5th and 30th, 2013 in Istanbul. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed after the field visit in the spring break of 2013. Also, according to my observations and experience in the destroyed area, Sulukule and the Sulukule Platform chapters started at the time I transcribed and translated the interviews. In the summer and fall of 2013, the analysis of the interviews began. Then in fall 2013, I conducted analyses of the interviews.

While creating the interview questions and the structure of field work, the University of Cincinnati requires the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for thesis studies. This study takes this advantage of the IRB procedure as well.

Research Method

This study can be seen as a qualitative research within the planning discipline. As the title of this thesis already suggests, the research design constitutes a case study.

To Yin (2009, p. 24), doing a case study research is a linear but iterative process. He argues that a case study is created on six steps: (1) plan, (2) design, (3) prepare, (4) collect,
(5) analyze and (6) share. There are some relationships between these steps and the researcher should sometimes return to previous steps. In the diagram, you can follow the steps and their relationship according to Yin’s definition in order to understand how this study happened.

Figure 1: The process of case study

Source: Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Robert K. Yin (2009, p. 24)

Bryman (2008, p. 52-54) defines a case study as the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case and adds that it is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. To Bryman, it can be qualitative or quantitative study or both.

This thesis is designed based as a case study and utilizes the interviewing method for data collection. It focuses on the Sulukule case, but at the same time it can be
generalized in order to relate the results to other urban renewal areas. It examines Sulukule’s renovation process and the Sulukule Platform’s role in this process by focusing on the theory of advocacy planning and its practice, in urban renewal processes.

Regarding the methods of data collection and analysis, past and present observation at the Sulukule Platform and in the neighborhood, qualitative interviews with the leaders of the Platform and residents, document analysis in open sources and city archives, and qualitative and quantitative data were used in this study. It can be classified as a qualitative research based on experiences in the field area, participant observation, interviews, and past experiences in community meetings and the local studios in Sulukule. I used an inductive approach to identify themes.

**Data Collection**

Original data of this study was prepared from the interviews which were performed between January 5th and 30th, 2013 in Istanbul. The questionnaires for the interviews were prepared based on the goals to be achieved and findings being focused on. The answers from different interviews created the conclusion of the study. The interview questions were prepared for different sets of people: volunteers, professional planners, professors, etc. in the Platform and for Sulukule’s dwellers. These questions are based on the same template but with a variety of sentence structures as per the requirement of the type of person being interviewed.

The questions were created to understand not only the results of the urban renewal project but also the struggle of the Sulukule people with the Platform. The basic aim was
finding whether the Sulukule Platform’s study was an advocacy planning project or not. The interviews were open ended. I used basic set questions, but the direction was established by the different interviewees.

I conducted three different kinds interviews: (1) with volunteers in the Platform including professors, students, journalists and professional planners; (2) with Sulukule dwellers including different genders, ages, and so forth (3) and with an architect and planner from the design office where the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project was prepared by the Fatih Municipality. Unfortunately, the design office’s members did not respond to the researcher’s outreach efforts. I conducted a total of seventeen interviews: neighborhood settlers (1 male + 1 female) and 15 Platform members from different disciplines (See Table-1).

Table 1: Interviewees’ profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Profession &amp; Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Dweller</td>
<td>a man who lost his house in the Sulukule Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derya Engin</td>
<td>an urban planner and the campaign officer of the Birdlife International Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derya Nuket Ozer</td>
<td>an instructor at Yeditepe University in Faculty of Fine Arts and consultant in the Museum of Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ece Ozden Pak</td>
<td>an urban planner and the vice-secretary in the Chamber of City Planners in Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erbatur Cavusoglu</td>
<td>a professor of urban planning at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (MSGSU) in Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erbay Yucak</td>
<td>a jurist consult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Dweller</td>
<td>a woman who lives just outside Sulukule and has many relatives who lost own houses in Sulukule Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gizem Aksumer</td>
<td>an urban planner and research assistant at the School of Planning at MSGSU in Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iclal Dincer</td>
<td>a professor of urban planning at Yildiz Technical University (YTU) in Istanbul and the board member in the Cultural &amp; Natural Heritage Conservation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumru Cilgin</td>
<td>an urban planner and PhD candidate in the Istanbul Technical University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merve Aki</td>
<td>an urban planner and an editor in the Building Information Center (YEM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murat Cemal Yalcintan</td>
<td>a professor of urban planning at MSGSU in Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nese Ozan</td>
<td>a journalist and organizer in the Kader &amp; Kismet Studio (women’s manufacturing studio) in the old Sulukule area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozgur Temiz</td>
<td>an urban planner and real estate appraiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozlem Soysal</td>
<td>a psychologist and organizer in the Sulukule Children’s Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelin Demireli</td>
<td>an organizer in the Kader &amp; Kismet Studio (women’s manufacturing studio) in the old Sulukule area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasar Adanali</td>
<td>a development specialist and PhD candidate in University of Stuttgart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Names are ordered alphabetically

There are two reasons why so far the community members participated. First, the Sulukule people were very fatigued with regards to playing a role in research, and they had already had many conversations with the researcher. I spoke with many old neighborhood members in the visit, but two of them wanted to speak with a tape recorder based on specific questions. Many of them told me that they had already spoken with me before; they thought that I knew all the processes because of my past experience in the neighborhood. Their perspective was that there was nothing new to say. Second, to understand the Platform’s structure, aims, and roles in the neighborhood, the Platform members’ ideas were really important. In the selection process, it was preferable that interviewees came from a variety of different disciplines, backgrounds, and time spent in the neighborhood.
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses two important terms in the study: urban renewal and advocacy planning. As a part of the first section in first literature review, urban renewal’s tradition and its historical background in the USA and Europe will be explained by emphasizing Urban Regeneration by Peter Roberts and Hugh Sykes (2005) and City Builders by Susan S. Fainstein (2001). Also, I will also utilize Readings in Planning Theory edited by Fainstein and Campbell; The City Reader edited by LeGates and Stout; The Urban Sociology Reader edited by Lin and Mele; and The Gentrification Reader prepared by Lees et al. will be helpful in strengthening this part of study.

Second, I will look at the advocacy planning, how the model proposed by Paul Davidoff was actually carried out in American and European cities. I will utilize A Retrospective View of Equity Planning written by Norman Krumholz (1982); Reflections on Advocacy Planning written by Lisa Peattie (1968); The Underlying Assumptions of Advocacy Planning: Pluralism and Reform written by Donald Mazziotti (1974); The Evolution of Advocacy Planning written by Pierre Clavel; and Paul Davidoff and Advocacy Planning in Retrospect written by Barry Checkoway (1994).

Urban Renewal

Urban renewal has been one of the foremost research topics in the academic world since its birth in London and in eastern coast of the USA in the 1950s and 1960s after the World War II (Lees et al., 2008). Although many researchers from different disciplines such as planners, economists, geographers, anthropologists, and sociologist have focused on this topic for a long time, the issue is still very much alive in planning literature. While Jane
Jacobs\textsuperscript{7} struggled with Robert Moses\textsuperscript{8} in New York City, she could have never guessed that urban renewal processes would prevail until the early 2000s. We still discuss urban renewal and its effects on cities.

I will discuss the concept of “urban renewal” by focusing on similar terms such as regeneration, renovation, and the controversial term gentrification. The chapter will try to explain how the idea of urban renewal began and which factors played a part in discovery of this approach. Also, in this chapter I will look into past implementations and various experiences of the urban renewal processes in two different continents. Along with this, I will investigate how the same cycle is occurring developing countries 50 years later.

**The History of Urban Renewal**

Urban renewal can be seen as reusing a built-up area in a city by using different development strategies. “Urban renewal” in the planning literature can also be identified as redevelopment, reuse, renovation, revitalization, reclamation, regeneration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, redesign, slum clearance, rediscovery of the inner city, going back to the inner city, transformation of the blighted areas, gentrification, etc. (Levine, 2004, p. 90-92). When we look at these terms in detail, we can see what differences exist, although they have an important similarity in generating a transformation.

Redevelopment means implementation of new development tools and strategies in an area by the planning processes. Sometimes, this can be realized by a new design response which is called “redesign” or a new construction, i.e. “reconstruction.” All these

\textsuperscript{7} Jane Jacobs is an American activist and author who wrote “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” in 1961. She criticized urban renewal implementations because they did not respect the needs of dwellers in the renovation areas.

\textsuperscript{8} Robert Moses is an urban planner known as the master builder of mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century New York City.
kinds of projects usually transform the class, or in another word community, in the area from low income to middle income; or from a poorly educated community to a highly educated one.

According to *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (2009, p. 790), urban renewal is a term referring to a range of strategies aimed at reshaping the urban landscape and remedying social and economic problems associated with run-down inner city neighborhoods. “These strategies usually promoted by state actors and business interests, are frequently questioned and directly opposed by residents of central city neighborhoods. Nevertheless, they generally result in massive landscape change and the displacement of large numbers of existing residents” (Derek et al., 2009, p. 790).

Peter Roberts (2000, p. 9) defines ‘urban regeneration’ as a “comprehensive and integrated vision and action, which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.”

*Gentrification* is another word which is sometimes substituted for urban renewal in the academic world, especially in Europe. It is a specific type of urban regeneration processes. Lees et al. define gentrification as a transformation of a working class or vacant area of the central city into middle class residential and/or commercial use (2008). This explanation is very close to urban renewal’s definition. The urban renewal process affects old working class areas in the inner city too. Also, people who put this renewal into action often transform the population from low income to middle income. Because of this close relationship many authors use the term gentrification in place of the term urban renewal.
In his book *Cities and the Creative Class*, Richard Florida (2005) focuses on “creative class” to explain gentrification and also urban transformation processes in cities. At the same time, Zukin (2010) in her book, *Naked City* examines gentrification in New York City by focusing on creative class as well. They both explain gentrification by defining the transformation of an inner city. Sharon Zukin argues that gentrification creates displacement while changing the class of the area as a result of the rising economic structure. We can say that creative class plays an important role in the urban renewal processes by turning the middle class back to the city core, changing the social environment of the inner city, and also by increasing the quality of life according to middle class needs. Because of this, sometimes the place is gentrified by the urban renewal processes too.

*The Dictionary of Human Geography* (2009, p. 273-274) identifies gentrification as the reinvestment of capital at the urban center. It produces space for a more affluent class of people than is currently occupying that space. Geographer Neil Smith (1996) explains gentrification by focusing on the concept of challenging in the capitalist economy. Smith (1996) explains the process of gentrification by emphasizing suburbanization and deindustrialization eras in the cities. He defines the results of gentrification as displacement and changes in the social structure. From this perspective, gentrification has a very close link to urban renewal in the planning literature although it is not entirely the same.

At this point, Ruth Glass’s definition is helpful to understand what is different. She states that redevelopment involves not rehabilitation of old structures but the construction
of new buildings on previously developed land (Glass, 2010, p. 9-10). Urban renewal is between urban redevelopment and gentrification. It aims at redevelopment in the city center or other places that are out of date, such as old industrial areas or old commercial areas in the historic core. Gentrification occurs unintentionally. There is an important similarity between urban renewal and gentrification: both of them transform the community from blue collar to white collar class, or in other words from low income to middle income population. Gentrification can only be seen as a more natural process than urban renewal, but it cannot occur without some government effort.

European studies link gentrification to urban renewal more than American studies. Urban renewal is a state sponsored process for housing transformation that sometimes leads to a change in the tenure and income makeup of the area. On the other hand gentrification is usually a market based process that leads to a partial or complete change in the income and class structure of a neighborhood. The case of Sulukule exemplifies the Turkish urban renewal process, which has been implemented by local government in the last ten years.

*International implementation of the Urban Renewal Movement*

To understand how the urban renewal has been implemented around the world, we should look at two different stories from the USA and Europe. This would lead to a better understanding of the differences and similarities in the two continents. Between late 1950s and early 1960s, while urban renewal was rising as a method to rehabilitate demolished city areas in European countries, Robert Moses was trying to modernize the city of New
York by focusing on highway projects and new suburban areas using the support of federal programs.

Iclal Dincer (2010) analyzes the evolution of urban renewal movement under the five European eras. After World War II, urban renewal transpired to renew the demolished parts of the cities in European countries, especially Germany and England, under the term “urban reconstruction.” With these applications, the European countries modernized the cities and created new suburban areas around the old city centers. Between 1960 and 1970, urban reconstruction evolved to “urban redevelopment” and “urban rehabilitation” in the academic world. Under these names, the urban renewal concept was employed to renew the historic cores and slums in the European cities. Generally, under these procedures, old areas are demolished and new modernized areas are built by displacing the existing residents. Then, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, these names were replaced by “urban renewal” and “urban revitalization;” and the low-quality poor neighborhoods were renewed continuously by demolition. In the 1980s and 1990s, the term of urban renewal took another form, urban redevelopment, alongside urban revitalization and urban rehabilitation.

Due to globalization, development gained an important place in the planning process, and urban land increased in value. Urban lands are opened not only to local investors but also to international companies. Finally in 2000s, the term of urban renewal evolved into “urban regeneration” in the planning world. In this era, generally urban renewal projects did not demolish the historic stock; on the contrary, they protected them by focusing on “urban preservation.”
Just as New York City plays a significant role in the urban renewal history of the USA, London plays the same role in the Europe’s urban renewal experience. In many studies, Dockland (London) is cited to show urban renewal effects in Europe; Dockland housing was inserted into an area with port facilities and little housing. The Dockland project does not constitute housing or community development; it is an example for industrial transformation.

Naomi Carmon (1999, p. 145-147) discusses urban renewal on three generations by focusing on Great Britain and USA: (1) the era of the bulldozer; (2) neighborhood rehabilitation; and (3) revitalization in city centers. The first era emphasized on the built environment by making better use of urban land. These developments had started on a large scale by the Greenwood Act of 1930 in the United Kingdom: in this period, over a million housing units were demolished and people were rehoused (Carmon, 1999, p. 146). This situation continued until World War II. According to the numbers provided by Carmon (1999, p. 151), British governments built over 100,000 new housing units in a year while demolishing 12,000 to 16,000 units: but most of these new units were in big blocks of public housing which did not support traditional neighborhood life.

In contrast, the number of apartments demolished under the urban renewal processes in the United States was much greater than the number of units built because of the suburbanization movement. In the empty lots left due to demolished housing, the US government built new shopping centers, cultural centers, and office buildings. Generally, the US government supported private new build new housing units in the suburban areas, and most of them were single-family houses. This addressed the requirements of middle
class families; but the working class families, who lived in demolished neighborhoods, could not have an access to these suburban areas because of their economic situation and traditional neighborhood culture. In this period between the late 1940s and early 1950s, New York City was transformed from an industrial city to post-industrial society (Zukin, 2010). The new industrialization movement was not in the city; and they were trying to form their own clusters outside of the city. Middle class families moved to the suburban areas and old traditional city life died, so said Jane Jacobs. Jacobs (1992) argued that urban renewal did not respect the needs of most city dwellers in her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She criticized the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 because it enabled and approved of “slum clearance.”

Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs are two of the most important figures in the urban renewal literature, not only in the US but also in the world. From their discussions and Jacobs’ struggle, planners and local municipalities have learned many things. After the late 1960s, US cities started to support urban rehabilitation, the “second era” named by Carmon. In this era, public opinion became more invigorated than before. This period aimed at improving existing housing and environments. In UK, the situation was very similar to that in the USA during the 1960s and 1970s.

In the third era, between the late 1970s and 1980s, the urban revitalization method was implemented in both USA and UK. Carmon (1999, p. 147) explains this era as characterized by “public-individual partnerships” and “public private partnerships.” Carmon (1999, p. 153) uses the term of “public-individual partnership,” under which the emphases are gentrification, upgrading by incumbent residents, and upgrading by
immigrants. She states that these three groups increased the quality of life in the inner city of the USA and UK. To Carmon (1999), these groups helped revitalize the inner city because the actions of gentrifiers. In Florida's words, these were members of the “creative class.” Also, she identifies the incumbents as people who spend effort improving the quality of their housing, environment, and neighborhood. Carmon (1999) argues that today’s immigrants in developed countries come from the highly-educated middle class of the less developed countries. And, these people help to revitalize the city through their knowledge and thoughts.

When we look at the urban renewal history of world, and when we look at present day renovation processes in USA, we can take lessons from renewal history. Today, in developed countries, urban renewal methods are not implemented by “bulldozers;” most of them are implemented by community engagement, and almost all of them preserve the historic neighborhood. But the situation is not the same in the developing world. In the 2000s, we can see the new city mayors supporting demolition and building new structures, just as Robert Moses did. And we can also see similar heroes who struggle against displacement just like Jane Jacobs. Today, in the USA, many urban renewal processes are implemented alongside an engaged public, who prefer preservation or renovation. This can be a good example for the developing countries where more emphasis could be given to community engagement.
Urban Renewal History in Turkey

Istanbul plays a significant role in the urban renewal practices in Turkey. To understand not only the country’s urban renewal experiences but also the planning and urbanization history, Istanbul can be seen as a big experimental area.

On the one hand, all the economic, social and cultural values, new implementations, and urban strategies have been implemented first in the city of Istanbul. On the other hand, all kinds of urban issues and new unsuccessful urban experiments have occurred in this city. Istanbul, as a rapidly industrializing, unplanned urbanized and costless modernized city of Turkey, strongly resembles the New York City of the 1960s. Turkish officials have applied the bulldozer approach in some squatter settlements such as the Ayazma and Basibuyuk neighborhoods. On the other hand, gentrification happens instead in other old neighborhoods in the inner city such as Cihangir and Galata. To understand Istanbul and urban renewal projects that occur in this city, we first should look at these three significant urban renewal areas of Istanbul: (1) the historic city center; (2) the old industrial areas; and (3) the squatter settlements which we call “gecekondu” in Turkish.

Historic districts of Istanbul have been present since the Ottoman times, but they were never abandoned before the 1980s. Also, they were not created by Turkish government but we cannot say the same thing about the other two areas. Old industrial areas and squatter settlements of Istanbul have occurred in the industrialization period due to the actions of government.

9 “Gecekondu” is a Turkish term which means a house built in a night. Some articles use the word squatter for gecekondu, but this word does not mean the same thing.
In the big cities of the developing world such as Istanbul, industrialization has occurred very fast without much planning. And, because of this, Istanbul has a large number informal housing sector today. During 1950s and 1960s, many rural people have migrated to big cities to find jobs and achieve better life standards in Turkey. The Turkish Government had different aims for economic development in those years. One of the decisions they made was the creation of new factories to support and improve the country's economy.

New industrial areas were built in the big cities and surrounding areas but the labor force was not large enough to support these new factories. This gradually caused a great deal of rural to urban migration in developing Turkey. The number of new urban citizens rapidly increased. However, there were no cheap houses for new workers without money, and the government did not have money to build new houses for new citizens of the city. And unfortunately, “due to high rates of inflation in the developing countries there are no long-term credits to make housing more accessible to the poor” (Yalcintan and Erbas, 2003, p. 95). Moreover, nobody, including central and local government, had any interest in the housing problem (Yalcintan and Erbas, 2003, p: 96). As a housing solution, the new workers of the big cities started to build their own homes to live in the form of gecekondu settlements.

Istanbul had two significant migration periods in the past: urban to rural migration and Southeastern migration. Urban to rural migration caused first informal settlements.

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10 Southeastern migration occurred due to the civil war in southeast Turkey. The Turkish Government evacuated many villages in 1990s. And, many of southeastern Turkey families came to big cities.
such as gecekondu areas, because of the unplanned and spontaneous industrialization process. This process has ensued very similarly in many other Third World countries. And the second immigrants that came to the cities from southeastern Turkey followed the same pattern with only one major difference from the stream in 1990s. The southeaster migration movement could not find affordable housing for themselves. Some built their own houses in old gecekondu areas, but the others settled in abandoned neighborhoods in the inner city and created new urban segregated communities such as the Tarlabası neighborhood.

Also, the city had many other low income areas where residents had lived for a long time. Some of these areas were hosts to the minority groups such as Romani families in Sulukule. With the 80s, neoliberal programs started to be implemented in Turkey; and this was one of the break points in the history of Turkey and Istanbul (Yalcintan and Erbas, 2003, p.93). To Yalcintan and Erbas, Istanbul, that already had been by far Turkey’s leading metropolis, strengthened its dominant role in the Turkish economy in this era (2003, p. 93). Also, urban renewal projects became popular in this period. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the local municipalities started to implement urban renewal processes in the cities.

Urban renewal arrived in Istanbul in the early 2000s via the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project. Before this project, the municipality used the name “urban transformation” for a few projects in some squatter areas. After the Sulukule Renewal Project, other renewal projects were proposed, e.g. the Tarlabası Renewal Project and Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray Urban Renewal Project. The Sulukule Project was completed from
these projects; Tarlabasi is under construction. When we look at the similarities of these projects, all three areas are in the historic city core. Most of the Tarlabasi residents are members of minority groups e.g. Kurdish, Africans, transvestites, Romanies, etc. The Fener, Balat, and Ayvansaray districts were settled by non-Muslim groups before the 1980s; but, today, they are a mix of Muslim and non-Muslim families. Sulukule was host a mostly Romani population. When we compare three renewal areas, Tarlabasi and Sulukule have lower income families by comparison with the residents of Fener, Balat, and Ayvansaray (Pak and Yılmaz, 2013). None of them includes illegal housing. Elsewhere i.e. away from Istanbul, transformation has taken the form of historic preservation or urban renewal (the bulldozer approach).

**Advocacy Planning**

In this section, the advocacy planning approach will be explained by focusing on the founder of the theory Paul Davidoff’s key article named “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning.” In order to understand advocacy planning methods in detail, this part of thesis will benefit from several writings which focus on Davidoff’s approach.

**Evolution of Advocacy Planning and Paul Davidoff**

Paul Davidoff created the advocacy planning approach in 1955 as a result of the America’s challenging times. This planning approach emerged as a major movement in the planning world during 1960s and 1970s, a time of considerable turbulence in American society (Checkoway, 1994, p. 140). We can say that the urban renewal movement in those years was one of the most important reasons for the rise of advocacy planning. Brooks (2002) shows how the large-scale migration processes accompanied by widespread racial
discrimination and residential segregation created many social problems in the low income minority neighborhoods. In Davidoff’s words, “advocacy in planning begin[s] to emerge as planning and renewal affect the lives of more and more people” (1965, p. 196). According to Checkoway, Davidoff has challenged planners to promote participatory democracy and positive social change, to overcome poverty and racism as factors in society, and to reduce disparities between rich and poor, White and Black, male and female (1994, p. 139).

Paul Davidoff (1965) starts his article with: “The present can become an epoch in which the dreams of the past for an enlightened and just democracy are turned into a reality” (p. 191). In this basic planning reading, Davidoff (1965) argues that the traditional planning approach does not involve urban minorities, and this can create new injustices in these minority groups’ lives. He states that the current planning system is an obstacle to pluralism (Checkoway, 1994). He wanted more public participation in the planning processes; and he pursued alternative projects apart from the government’s projects. Because of these observations, Davidoff tried to find a new planning approach in the politically difficult times of the 1960s. Davidoff’s central thought was based upon urban justice.

Davidoff wanted to make the planners more political and active in the planning processes by protecting justice issues. Because of this, he created “advocacy planning” that was incorporated to planning education. Davidoff is not only a planner and a professor of planning, but also a politician that emphasizes equity and justice in planning processes and in life. He defines “planning as a process to address a wide range of societal problems; to improve conditions for all people while emphasizing resources and opportunities for those
lacking in both; and to expand representation and participation of traditionally excluded groups in the decisions that affect their lives” (Checkoway, 1994, p. 139). He argued that planners should encourage justice, equity, and participation by focusing on democracy. He wanted the planning world to see disparities between segregated low income communities and middle class neighborhoods.

According to Pierre Clavel (1994, p. 146), “advocacy planning began in response to political practices that combined a superficial pluralism with the effective exclusion of the poor and minorities, and also in response to a professional culture that was monolithic in its devotion to the physical plan, the independent planning commission and a not easily accessible public interest.”

While Davidoff was developing advocacy planning, middle class White families were moving to single family houses in the new suburban areas for a higher quality of life, and the Black populations was migrating to the city (Checkoway, 1994, p. 140). Suburban life offered new schools, big yards, parks, and playgrounds for kids, not to mention parking areas. At the same time large scale highway development movements including urban renewal projects characterized the city. This situation encouraged local governments to support urban renewal projects and demolish more homes than they built. Many low income neighborhoods lost people, homes, and jobs because of this urban renewal movement. Davidoff (1965, p. 193) thought “urban politics should balance the demands for ever-increasing central bureaucratic control against the demands for increased concern for the unique requirements of local, specialized interests.” He thought that if the planning
process is to support democratic local government in the cities, it would include rather than exclude citizens from participation in the process (Davidoff, 1965).

**Planner as Advocate**

According to Checkoway (1994), advocacy planning took various forms as planners continued to struggle with neighborhood residents in opposition to federal programs or as they worked in neighborhood associations to not only protest to programs but also develop services of their own. In some planning agencies, planners were expected to design sub-area plans by focusing on community participation. Also, “...planners participated in the creation of community and community identity in the groups where they worked” (Clavel, 1994, p. 147). Clavel (1994) states that the “advocacy planning approach changed the monolithic planning system by representing the minorities’ constituencies in the planning process.” Today, in many planning schools and other educational institutions as well, students learn about advocacy planning.

To summarize Davidoff, the advocate planner is one who helps low income residents to create their own plans which can compete with plans prepared by municipalities. Lisa Peattie (1968) argues that the planners’ role is to represent grassroots groups and to seek fundamental changes in society. Not only Peattie, but also many planning scholars and theorists such as Susan Fainstein and David Harvey emphasize the importance of justice in the planning process. As a professor who received the Paul Davidoff Award, Susan Fainstein (2010) emphasizes democracy, diversity, and equity as principles of justice in planning. She also discusses how to apply the principles of justice to planning process. She does not use advocacy planning as a name, but she focuses on
inequality between different classes, participation in the planning process, and Davidoff’s pluralistic perspective on diversity. It can be said that Fainstein relies on Davidoff’s advocacy planning approach.

According to Davidoff, the alternative plans (1) serve “as a means of better informing the public of the alternative choices open [in comparison to the] alternatives strongly supported by their proponents;” (2) improve the planning process by forcing the public agency to get political support; (3) advocacy planning forces people “who have been critical of establishment plans to produce superior plans, rather than only carry out the very essential obligation of criticizing plans deemed improper” (Davidoff, 1965, p. 194).

Davidoff argues that “being isolated as the only one plan maker in the community, public agencies as well as the public itself may have suffered from incomplete and shallow analysis of potential directions” (Davidoff, 1965, p. 194). At this point, the question is, who are planners working plan for? Advocacy planning can be seen as an answer for this basic question. As planners we should serve the local interests as well as the common welfare of cities.

According to Brooks, Davidoff’s advocacy planning idea consisted of two basic elements: technical assistance and representation (2002, p. 110). Brooks states that most proponents of advocacy planning view it primarily as a vehicle for providing assistance to low income and minority groups in practice. They had been neglected by past planning processes (Brooks, 2002, p. 110). Brooks identifies advocacy planning as a rational form of decentralized planning and adds that Davidoff’s argument was not that we should abandon
rational planning. But, according to Brooks, planners should make planning’s benefits available to those previously had been excluded from the rational planning process (2002, p. 111).

Brooks (2002) discusses the way in which advocacy planning was reported by the American Planning Institute of Planners (AIP) in 1970, and now the AICP continuous. The letter (AIP) created a national cleaning house for information about advocacy planning projects. The cleaning house introduces advocacy planning processes based on the ethical issues and professional planning principles. Second, the AIP could provide technical assistance to local groups attempting to organize for and carry out advocacy projects. This could help local groups to reach a planner or group that could help the local group. Also, Brooks says that some planners could lose their jobs because of advocacy planning activities, and he suggests that AIP could help in this situation as well.

Davidoff stated that “just democracy was within reach; that radical discrimination and other social injustices required new efforts for a society offering equal opportunity to all citizens” (Checkoway, 1994, p. 140). Therefore Davidoff argued that planners would have key roles to play in the society of the future because this society will be an urban one, and city planners will help to give it shape and content.

**Advocacy Planning Experiences From Around the World**

In developed countries, such as the United States, planners began to advocate for public participation in the planning system. Richard S. Bolan said that “though planning has never operated in a vacuum, the scope of today’s urban problems seems to impose special
demands for awareness of the complex decision web in which the planner must function,” in 1969 (Bolan, 1969, p: 371). Therefore, there was a lot of criticism on the limited role of public engagement in those years. After all discussions on the role of planners and public opinions in planning system; alternative planning methods, such as equity planning (Krumholz, 1982) and advocacy planning were incorporated into urban planning.

Since those years, the United States had several examples of these methods; an equity planning experience developed by Norman Krumholz in Cleveland was one of the most important alternative planning experiences for urban planning history. While Krumholz started to work as Director of the Cleveland City Planning Commission, the city had a large poor population, high and rising crime rate, and many urban issues (Krumholz, 1982, p.164). Krumholz and his team, in his words, altered the planner’s traditional posture as an apolitical technician serving a unitary public interest; and devoted themselves to “providing more choices to those who have few, if any choices” (Krumholz, 1982, p.166). They focused on developing a new public transportation system named as CTS, a development in downtown called “Town City,” and new economic development strategies implemented in long-term period. They mostly determined on public engagement and published their projects to share with public. Afterwards, their work took place as an example of equity planning in the United States urban planning history; and many cities benefitted from their experience.
Many authors such as Brooks and Checkoway discussed the Cleveland of the late 1960s when Norman Krumholz\textsuperscript{11} served as an advocacy-oriented planning director. In Brooks’ words, “In Krumholz’s term, the needs of low-income communities were given highest priority, and equality of access to the city’s facilities and resources was a basic criterion for the recommendations made by Krumholz and his staff” (2002, p. 112). For Krumholz (1994, p. 150), equity planners were people who intentionally wanted, in their work, “to redistribute power, resources, or participation away from local elites and toward poor and working-class city residents.” He argues this idea because he and Pierre Clavel completed a research based on planners in cities around the country after his many years’ experience in Cleveland (1994, p. 150). Cleveland equity planning experience, which happened from 1969 to 1979, was implemented under three different administrations; it aimed to achieve equity objectives in the planning. This experience was called “advocacy and equity planning by many in the planning professions; it was also called “cut-back planning” by Professor Herbert Gans and “opportunity planning” by Anthony Downs” (Krumholz, 1982, p. 163).

John Metzger described equity planning programs as advocacy planning carried out inside government, and cited Berkeley, Boston, Burlington, Chicago, Cleveland, Hartford, San Francisco, and Santa Monica as cities that have, at one time or another, provided conditions hospitable to equity planning (Brooks, 2002, p. 115). These cities are very important in understanding advocacy planning experiences of the USA.

\textsuperscript{11} Norman Krumholz was a city planning student in the 1960s. He influenced by Davidoff’s ideas and later implemented them as a director of the Cleveland City Planning Commission, an agency which Davidoff himself viewed as exemplary (Checkoway, 1994, p. 142).
Conclusion

It has been observed that the urban transformation projects created displacement in Turkey during the late 1990s and early 2000s. With the help of law “5366,” which is about age-worn historic and culturally significant properties and their renovation and restoration, passed in July 2005, the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI) and municipalities were authorized to carry out urban renewal projects easier in historic areas. The urban renewal movement has grown day by day in the Turkish cities since 2005. While all these movements were taking place in the country, there were also some struggles that led to the formation of new urban activist groups, just like in Jacob’s time period. Many neighborhoods found their own neighborhood associations with the help of academicians and volunteers. There was a big advocacy movement in neighborhoods to protect their life and homes. Although some neighborhood movements such as in Gulsuyu-Gulensu, or in the Basibuyuk area succeeded, others did not. The most famous advocacy movement took place in Sulukule Urban Renewal Project in Istanbul (Cavusoglu and Yalcintan, 2010).

In retrospect, urban renewal has been defined as a modernist urban strategy, which focuses on rebuilding more than preservation of the historic stock and traditional neighborhood life. As Neil Smith (1996) said, gentrification a process allied with urban renewal can be seen as a global urban strategy which determines preservation of different cultural lives and historic buildings by using new trends in the participation and “non-demolishment” process. Gentrification does affect the existing residents by using “invisible” market effects; instead it transforms the residents by the power of demolition.
Turkey does see both gentrification and urban renewal occurring in the same era. This is one of the big differences between developed countries and Turkey. Also, there is another significant difference between them. The developed world does not have countless squatter settlements in their cities because of their planned urbanization histories. But Turkey has hundreds of squatter settlements in its largest cities. Also, we can say that Turkey is undergoing the urban renewal process and rapid decentralization at the same time, in contrast with developed countries. All these differences show us that cities transform, but this transformation does not occur in the same time period, and it does not occur in the same way.

In the developing countries such as Turkey, local governments do not have a good public engagement phase in the planning system although many citizens try to attend the process. Nowadays, while the developing world try to formulate a relationship between planning and decision-making phase in urban government; urban planners and public engagement play a significant role in planning system in the developed countries such as the United States. Many cities of developing world can benefit from these experiences and implement advocacy planning processes in their area as an alternative planning method when they need. Perhaps most important, previous experiences occurred in the developed world might draw a path for the developing countries such as Turkey before they make the same mistakes.
CHAPTER FOUR: SULUKULE

This chapter consists of four parts. I first introduce Sulukule by giving historic overview to the area, and then outline the neighborhood’s and community’s characteristics. Third I summarize the urban renewal process, and finally I explain the current situation of Sulukule. The purpose is to provide the reader with background information on the community and its interaction with the urban renewal process in order to better understand my analysis of the Sulukule Platform in chapter five.

This chapter explains why the Fatih Municipality chose Sulukule as the renewal area, why Sulukule was different than other neighborhoods, why the public generally supported the Sulukule people and protested the renewal project, and how Sulukule Platform was founded. Before looking at the Platform and its work, it is important to understand the neighborhood. It is important to understand urban renovation process to see why the Platform was needed in Sulukule. I give the reasons why the Platform was created as an alternative in the Sulukule urban renewal process; and why it created an alternative proposal. My data includes published reports including those by the Platform.

The place known as Sulukule is officially includes both the Neslisah Sultan and Hatice Sultan neighborhoods named in documents, but everyone in the area and also inhabitants of Istanbul have called the area “Sulukule” for years. In this thesis, I use the term Sulukule.
Historic Overview

Sulukule differed from many other neighborhood in Istanbul in terms of socio-economic characteristics, location, and history. In many ways the atmosphere could be characterized as a “Romani village,” although there were non-Romani people who worked and lived there. It was not located on a deedless (without legal title) land like other urban renewal areas in Istanbul.

Photo 1: Historic City Wall and Sulukule Neighborhood

The neighborhood was settled by Gypsy (Romani being their preferred term) immigrants who came from India, and Egypt on the Balkan countries to Istanbul. By the end of eleventh century, people today we descibe as Romani had arrived in Byzantium. They lived in the capital, Costantinople (Istanbul). “They were recorded as Aiguptissa, or “Egyptians”, dealers in magic charms and fortune-tellers, dancers, and entertainers, metal-workers and horse-traders” (Marsh and Strand, 2005, p.8). According to many sources, the first settlement of these people was outside the city walls at the Edirne Kapi (Gate of Charisius), close to the Sulukule neighborhood. “In the context of the Gypsies of Turkey, the communities in Istanbul represent the longest continuous presence of Romani Gypsies
anywhere in the world” (Marsh and Strand, 2005, p. 8). They lived on the same land since Byzantine and Ottoman times until the time of the Turkish Republic.

Gypsies have spoken a different dialect of Romani language in Istanbul since Byzantine times. Today, for Sulukule Romani people, the same thing is not true. They speak a different dialect of Turkish with special idioms, words, mimicry, sounds, etc. Romanies have had jobs that were different from other people’s. Paintings from Ottoman times show Romanies while dancing and/or playing music instruments with colorful clothes. We could observe a similar situation for Sulukule people in their lifestyle and job preference before the urban renewal process (2009, Ezme).

Photo 2: Sulukule in the past and present

Also, Istanbul’s Romanis, especially the Sulukule people, had contributed to the city by creating new job opportunities based on their lifestyle such as basketry, flower making, horse breeding, etc. Romani basketmakers of Sulukule built the historical Sepetciler Kasri
(Basketmakers’ Pavilion) and gave it to the Sultan IV. Murad\textsuperscript{12} as a gift. In addition to this, Romanies played a significant role in finding “janissary bands\textsuperscript{13}” in the Ottoman times because of their relation to music (Cetingoz, 2008, p. 24). The preceding shows Sulukule’s Romani population played an important role in the history of Istanbul.

Photo 3: Sulukule in the past and today

Source: Middle and right photos taken by author in 2008, and left photo shows Sulukule in the past, linked on: http://eksikhikayeler.blogspot.com/2013/03/cingeneler-bohemienne.html

Sulukule first experienced demolition in 1957 when the main artery Vatan Caddesi was opened in Fatih district. Before this, Sulukule formerly included the land south of this neighborhood. A part of the historic wall in Edirnekapi and 29 houses in Sulukule (this was on the same main street right before today’s Sulukule area) was destroyed in this process (Yılmaz, 2009, p. 54). This went across half of the neighborhood. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes promised to build new houses for neighborhood residents, but then he was forced from his position in a coup d’état in 1960. The people who had lived in the demolished houses moved to the Sultan neighborhoods (Hatice Sultan and Neslisah

\textsuperscript{12} IV. Murad was the Sultan of Ottoman Empire from 1623 and 1640.

\textsuperscript{13} Janissary band is one of the oldest military marching bands in the world. This band was very famous in the Ottoman times. Today, this tradition still continues in Turkey and the janissary bands attend many national day organizations.
Sultan). Residents incorporated this area within Sulukule again in the 1960s because of the large Romani population. Other people from the old settlement moved to Ahirkapi, Kustepe, Haci Husrev and other Romani neighborhoods in Istanbul.

In 1969, Sulukule people found the “Sulukule Tourism, Preservation and Sustenance Association” (Turizm Koruma ve Yasatma Dernegi) (Yilmaz, 2009, p.54). The aim of this association was to introduce the Romani culture and Sulukule to other citizens in Istanbul. But the first aim was to built the old Sulukule neighborhood again on the same land. In 1969, the neighborhood organized the International Gypsy Festival. After the festival, the Association leaders acknowledged that they could not build the old neighborhood again and adapted to the new area. As a result, they closed the association. After those days, Istanbul citizens called this new area Sulukule. In 1982, the core of the old Sulukule area was demolished (Foggo, 2007, p. 45).

After this second wave of destruction, Sulukule became a centre for entertainment. It became famous because of its music and dance culture. Most of the people in the neighborhood worked in the entertainment sector and some of them even became famous. Interest in Romani culture and music increased after the implementation of the entertainment houses project. The impact enjoyed by both the entertainment houses and Romani culture, in general, was greater social interest by the people of Istanbul in the 1980s (Yilmaz, 2009, p. 55). Some residents applied to the Ministry of Tourism for funds supporting “entertainment houses.” They received approval from the national government for this project, but the municipality, as the local government, did not accept the project. Despite the municipality’s veto, the project moved forward. Residents managed to reach a
compromise with the municipality to allow the number of entertainment houses in Sulukule to increase to thirty-four (Ezme, 2009, p. 97).

Through this project, many residents of Sulukule transformed their dwellings to entertainment houses, this was especially true for houses next to the historic city wall. This project created many new job opportunities in the area. 3500 people worked in this project, and it improved the economic situation of the neighborhood (Cetingoz, 2008, p. 25). Most of the high rise buildings in the neighborhood were constructed in this era as an effect of this economic development. Women had a chance to work as cooks, costumers, tailors and waitresses in this sector. Some women sewed costumes, some of them danced, the others served in the restaurants, etc. Men played music instruments, drove horse-cars, served as waiters or security, etc. This seven year period was the most prosperous era of Sulukule.

In 1992, the municipality and the police department came to an agreement to close most of the entertainment houses in the area. In 1994, the old chief of police department Saadettin Tantan became the mayor of Fatih Municipality and closed the last entertainment houses too. After this date, Sulukule’s economy steadily decreased (Foggo, 2007, p. 41).

**Neighborhood Characteristics**

Sulukule is located in the Fatih district municipality in the Istanbul metropolitan area. The area is located inside of the historical peninsula known as, the oldest settlement in Istanbul. According to many sources, Sulukule was older than the city wall right next to the neighborhood. According to census data, the population was 3,500 with about 571
households for the neighborhood. The neighborhood is located on a valuable land which is served by trams and buses. It is close to many historical sites such as Suleymaniye Mosque, Chora Museum, Church of St. Mary of the Mongols, and Saint Stephen Bulgarian Orthodox Church because of its location in the historical peninsula. Many people in Istanbul knew the neighborhood because they used these transportation routes, or because they knew about the historic city wall right next to the neighborhood.

Map 1: Sulukule’s location in Istanbul

Source: Basic maps taken from Google Earth; analysis conducted by author.
Map 2: Story height in Sulukule before the project

Existing Situation
Before the Renewal Project

Source: The map was taken from the “Socio-Economic Spatial Improvement and Cultural Sustainability Project” prepared by Sulukule Studio (2009).

The neighborhood consists in most of the low-rise buildings used for housing. Map 2 shows story height in the area, and average story height in per block varied between 1
and 2.5 floor. The black dashed line in Map-2 represents the “historic site guard band\textsuperscript{14}.” Between this band and the historic city wall, it was forbidden to build more than a 2-story building. This was done to preserve the historic panorama and helped maintain Sulukule’s low rise milieu.

**Photo 4: Civil architecture examples from Sulukule**

![Civil architecture examples from Sulukule](image)

**Source:** Photos were linked on Sulukule Platform’s first alternative project named by “Sulukule Social& Economic Development Plan& Spatial Development Strategies” prepared by STOP (2008)

Map-3 shows that there were many historic buildings in the neighborhood (24 civil architecture examples, and 45 historic structures including mosques, a historic fountain, etc.). Most of them needed restoration but were not in bad condition (Sulukule Studio, 2009). According to the Fatih Municipality’s records, there were 13 streets and 2 main streets in the renewal project area. As can be seen in the following photos, the street pattern was organic and the streets were very small scale. Because of the sloping land,

\textsuperscript{14} “\textbf{Historic site guard band}” is used in many districts of Istanbul to respect the historic artifacts in the city. Especially, in the Historical Peninsula where Sulukule located; and around this historic site, this rule is used for years; and to remove/change these “guard bands” is not easy. In the map you can see the second closely dashed line which shows new historic site guard band which was removed for renewal project by the Fatih municipality.
some of the streets offered a view of the historic city wall or one of the mosques. From the top of the historic wall, it was possible to see the whole Sulukule.

Map 3: Historic structures in Sulukule

Historic- Officially Registered Buildings

Source: The map was taken from the “Socio-Economic Spatial Improvement and Cultural Sustainability Project” prepared by Sulukule Studio (2009).
The neighborhood had a large amount of greenery; most of the houses had small yards; and it was easy to see fruit trees along the streets. The neighborhood had had an old vegetable garden in the middle of the neighborhood. They had grown some vegetables there in the 1970s and 1980s. Just before the municipality’s project, this space had been used as a soccer field by the children and a common space for the residents.

**Photo 5: Monumental architectural structures from Sulukule**

![Monumental architectural structures from Sulukule](image)

*Source: The photo of historic Edirnekapi Door on the left; and the photo of historic city wall and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque on the right was linked on Google Earth.*

**Photo 6: Street pattern in Sulukule**

![Street pattern in Sulukule](image)

*Source: Fatih News’s website linked on [http://www.fatihhaber.com/sulukule-neolacak.htm](http://www.fatihhaber.com/sulukule-neolacak.htm)*

The streets were very lively, and they were used as an extension of people’s homes. Women set outside, cooked together on the street, washed their carpets in summer time, street hawkers sold their wares, children played games, cafe owners put tables and men
used the cafes to chat (Ezme, 2009). At any given moment you could hear the sound of music from dwellings. Wedding ceremonies and parties took place outdoors. Windows were usually open in the summer, and residents did not lock their doors. The streets constituted the neighborhood's public space.

Photo 7: Streets of Sulukule

Sulukule consisted of people of varying levels of income and education, but the majority were poorly educated, with low-incomes. The neighborhood did not have any commercial zones, but it did have some small businesses spread throughout the area (groceries, barbers, traditional restaurants [lokanta], coffee houses [kiraathane], etc). Street hawkers were omnipresent. In the market, you could buy a glass of sunflower seed oil, a loaf of bread, or one egg. In the market people could buy on credit because the people knew each other and they had longterm relationships and strong social links. People were working together in small businesses or in a music groups with their relatives and/or
neighbors. Some of them cooked together everyday as well. Until the urban renewal process began, the residents lived happily together based on strong social links.

**Urban Renewal Process**

In this section, I will review the urban renewal process in Sulukule according to a timeline of events. This section summarizes the Platform's works, written sources, and includes the author’s own assessments from her experiences in Sulukule. I first will explain why urban renewal was undertaken, give details on Sulukule Platform and how it was established; describe how the Platform’s projects were prepared and by whom, and finally will look at how Sulukule is today. Under the subheadings, all the information will be given chronologically.

**Sulukule Urban Renewal Project**

Sulukule was included in the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s “urban design” program in September, 2002. Three years later the law “5366” (which is about age-worn historic and culturally significant properties and their renovation and restoration) was passed in July 2005. With this new legislation, the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI) and municipalities were authorized to carry out urban renewal projects in historic areas.

Sulukule, which was a protected historical area with unique courtyard type houses, historic buildings, civil architecture structures, a unique street texture and urban fabric dating back to the 19th Century and century-old trees, was declared as a renewal area by the Fatih Municipality (Oral, 2010). This decision was approved by the Council of
Ministers in April, 2006. TOKI, the Fatih Municipality and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality signed a protocol for the “Hatice and Neslisah Sultan Neighborhoods (Sulukule) Urban Renewal Project” in the summer, 2006. As it shown in Map 4, the project area was 18,000 square meters (193,680 square feet), which covers all of Sulukule (Sulukule Studio, 2009).

Map 4: Sulukule Urban Renewal Project’s area

Source: Google Maps

The project sought to create new “Ottoman style” villa housing. The project included a hotel, a Romani cultural centre and office buildings (Figure 2). The project aimed to “preserve the historical and cultural area,” “prepare a new space as a part of the 2010 Istanbul Cultural Center organization,” and make the area habitable. Sulukule was chosen, according to the municipality’s plan report, because of the high rate of poverty, crime, and
the need to renovate existing buildings. Before the project, the municipality had done a survey in the neighborhood based on the economic situation of the inhabitants. The study covered land-ownership, tenure status, and income.

**Figure 2: Sulukule Preliminary Project approved by the Fatih Municipality**

Right after the protocol (between TOKI, the Fatih Municipality and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) on Sulukule, in August of 2006, the neighborhood inhabitants founded the “Sulukule Development of Romani Culture and Solidarity Association.” In December 2006, the municipality of Fatih issued an emergency expropriation decision for Sulukule which sought to solve issues arising from property ownership disputes in the area. In February of 2007, the inhabitants of Sulukule and the Chamber of Architects went to the court to contest this decision (Sulukule Studio, 2009).

In March of 2007, after the municipality declared that there would be only 40 days before demolition; a group of activists, college students, scholars, Sulukule inhabitants,
non-governmental organizations and volunteers decided to organize “40 days 40 nights” events to save the neighborhood and to highlight the threat of evictions. A group of more than 50 volunteers worked together to carry out these events (concerts, art workshops, neighborhood visits, seminars on Sulukule and Romani culture, dance shows, children workshops, etc.). They did not have a specific name for their group. Most of the events happened in Sulukule and elsewhere in Istanbul. I believe; because of these events residents of Istanbul viewed this community differently. Turkish media began writing both positive stories on Sulukule and critiques on the urban renewal process. These events achieved international attention from organizations around the world, for Sulukule. For example, Miloon Kothari, a reporter for United Nations, wrote a report on the situation of Sulukule Romanies (A/HRC/4/18/Add.1, General Assembly, Council of human Rights, 4th session).

Figure 3: "40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule" event's posters

Source: Sulukule Platform’s archive

In August of 2007, Sulukule Platform was established to save the Sulukule people’s rights and to protect the current Romani culture in the area. The Platform grew quickly and
people joined for different reasons. Some joined the Platform to preserve the Romani culture, others because of their concerns about urban renewal, and some because of human rights concerns.

**Sulukule Platform**

The Sulukule Platform was an initiative which worked to block the destruction of Sulukule, protested the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project, tried to stop eviction in Sulukule, and drew attention to the cultural heritage in the area since 2005. The Platform emerged spontaneously and it is fair to say that the “40 Nights 40 Days Sulukule” events created the starting point for the organization. The Platform is composed by everyone who studied and considered Sulukule or tried to change something for Sulukule people\(^{15}\). There was a centerless working structure in the Platform. People utilize skills from their disciplinary area according to their time if there is a need in process; some people work on paperwork and others work in the area corresponding to their disciplines.

In November of 2007, the renewal project was approved by the Conservation Board. Around the same time, criticism of the project became evident. The Sulukule urban renewal project was discussed at the European Parliament in Brussels with the attendance of the head of Fatih Municipality, Mustafa Demir, and an activist from Sulukule, Hacer Foggo (Sulukule Studio, 2009). Also, in November 2007, the Sulukule Project was discussed with

\(^{15}\)This is how the Platform explains itself under the blog of the name of “Sulukule Gunlugu,” which means Diary of Sulukule. The interested readers should consult the Platform’s website linked on [http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com](http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com) which reviews the whole Sulukule renewal process since November of 2007. Their website is written mostly in Turkish.
the Turkish Parliament; and the European Union Progress Report for Turkey included a section and discussed the Sulukule urban renewal project.

The Fatih Municipality founded a pro-municipality neighborhood association in Sulukule in the December of 2007 to develop good will with the community members. However, many people did not want to leave the area, and this association helped only people who wanted to sell their housing rights. At the time, there was widespread anti-urban renewal and pro-Romani culture in Sulukule from preservation sentiment academics, professionals, activists, and others.

**Figure 4: 3D model of the Fatih Municipality’s project**

While all this happened, the neighborhood started to change hands as buildings were sold. According to the municipal data\textsuperscript{16}, there were 645 households and 45 commercial buildings in Sulukule; 434 of 690 households were renters in the area; the total number of landholders and stakeholders together were 359. Often the title to the property was under more than one owner's name because the property had been passed on from their fathers to multiple children. Two hundred fifty of the households were owner occupied; all the other houses were rented. For some properties, there was more than one renter because they had built separated small houses on the same plot of land.

On December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2007, the mayor of Fatih municipality shared the urban renewal plan with students and academicians in Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. He said that there would be 620 new houses and 45 workplaces in the renewed area. He added 530 out of 620 right owners already made an agreement. After the project’s declaration, some of the owners in the area sold their rights to outsiders as a result the area began to change even before demolition began.

According to the protocol, the municipality was giving a house from the new project to the families who had detached house in Sulukule; but they would have monthly payment according to price difference between old house and new house. The municipality compared the values of their house and land and new house in the project; if the value of new house was higher than old house, people should have paid the price difference between them by payment per month.

\textsuperscript{16} Data was taken from the Fatih Municipality’s officially website, linked on: http://www.fatih.bel.tr
Renters in the area were offered new apartments in social house project in Tasoluk, which is almost 45 kilometres away from Sulukule. Monthly payments were between 350 and 500 Turkish Liras (TL) (about two hundred dollars) at Tasoluk. Three hundred thirty seven of the renter families signed a contract with the municipality for housing in Tasoluk, but there were a hundred ninety seven more renters in the area who were not counted as a renter by the municipality. This led to conflict between the municipality and inhabitants of Sulukule.

In January 2008, a group of academicians from the local universities in Istanbul (e.g. Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Yildiz Technical University) initiated a petition campaign against the renewal process. Also Human Settlement Association applied to the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board to investigate their proposal for 85 buildings to be registered\(^\text{17}\); later 25 of the proposed buildings were registered (Yilmaz, 2009, p. 77). Therefore, some foreign and domestic universities, such as MSGSU from Istanbul and the London School of Economics from England (with Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University), organized workshops together in the area to generate economic development strategies for the area. The University College of London (UCL) also had a workshop on Sulukule with the support of the Platform and Fatih Municipality; and prepared one of the strongest

\(^{17}\) If a building is registered by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board, it means that building will be preserved and it can not be legally demolished with any kind of projects.
proposals for Sulukule in this workshops\textsuperscript{18}. UCL presented this proposal to the municipality as well.

While all these happened, many important persons visited the neighborhood or sent their support to the Platform by sending a letter to the Turkish Government. UNESCO delegate, worldwide known Gypsy director Tony Gatlif, famous Gypsy music group Gogol Bordello are some of them who visited Sulukule. Three members of European Parliament also wrote letters on Sulukule to the prime minister. Despite the criticism of the project by the Platform and others, the demolition process began with nine homes being leveled in February, 2008 (Sulukule Studio, 2009).

Photo 8: Red "X" signs on the houses of Sulukule

Source: Photos taken by Nese Ozan

In March 2008, the municipality marked the rented houses (the ones transferred to the municipality) with a red “X” sign (Photo 8) to make them ready for destruction but the

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\textsuperscript{18} The proposal can be seen on: \url{http://www.citymaking.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/sulukule.pdf}; and the report’s summary can be seen on: \url{http://www.yildiz.edu.tr/~tislam/inura/Placing%20Sulukule%20executive%20summary_UCL.pdf}
houses had not been abandoned. As a result, the inhabitants of Sulukule hung signs which said “[a] human lives here” on the walls of houses.

Photo 9: Sulukule Children Center

In May 2008, Hidirellez (the old-Turkish celebration of spring) was celebrated in Sulukule despite the demolition. In the July of 2008, Sulukule Children’s Studio was established by the volunteers from the Platform.

STOP: Autonomous Planners without Borders

At the same time, in the very same summer, a group of urban planning professors from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and Yildiz Technical University invited academicians from other universities in Istanbul especially from planning schools to find solution for issues created by the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project. About same time, the municipality criticized the Sulukule Platform by saying “they are not doing anything but criticizing” (Cuhaçdar, 2008). In reaction statement, a group of people who attended the meeting in the Yildiz Technical University said that they would prepare an alternative plan
which would show that “another Sulukule is possible!” The idea of an alternative Sulukule proposal took shape at that meeting in the summer of 2008.

After a few months, those people made an announcement to people who would interested in this idea and who were worried about Sulukule. A workshop was held at the Yildiz Technical University in August, 2008; it was open to everyone. Around forty volunteers from different disciplines and schools came together and created an alternative proposal which focused on non-eviction along with socio-economic improvement for incumbent residents. Also one of the opinion leaders in Sulukule who was the president of neighborhood association at the same time attended to this study and shared residents’ opinions with the volunteers.

They named themself “Sinir Tanimayan Otonom Plancilar (STOP)” which means “Autonomous Planners without Borders” in Turkish, because there was a bias on The Sulukule Platform. The Authorities believed that The Platform was not objective and tried to stop the municipality’s project anyway. Because of this reason, academic people and professors thought to give another name to the group who prepared the alternative project excluding the word “Platform”; although the project team benefited from the Platform’s studies and included many Platform members.

The STOP team tried to demonstrate that they objected to the Municipality’s project because of the urban planning principles, historic values in the area, and the people. But everybody knew that STOP and the Platform had a strong relationship and the STOP group took most of the information on Sulukule from the Platform members. Many of the
volunteers in the STOP project also were members of the Sulukule Platform or they attended the Platform after preparation of the alternative project. But we cannot say that all the participants of STOP were members of the Platform concurrently.

**Figure 5: STOP's Alternative Project**

![STOP's Alternative Project](source)

**Source:** Figures were linked on Sulukule Platform’s first alternative project named by “Sulukule Social & Economic Development Plan & Spatial Development Strategies” prepared by STOP (2008)

The STOP's alternative project was prepared by 39 volunteers who were academicians or students in the planning and/or architecture departments at the universities in Istanbul. And also the head of the Sulukule Romani Association and four members of the Sulukule Platform who understood the neighborhood participated in preparation of this project. While the head of Sulukule Romani Association, Sukru Punduk was bringing STOP’s idea to Sulukule inhabitants; members of Sulukule Platform shared their observations.

The project’s slogan was “Another Sulukule is possible!” This idea was discussed at public meetings; and an alternative project was prepared. The STOP presented the plan to the Fatih Municipality Mayor Mustafa Demir and several officials from the municipality in
September 24, 2008; and then to Sulukule people in the neighborhood in October, 2008; but the municipal leaders decided not to accept. After the alternative project was presented to the Fatih Municipality; a petition was created on the internet in September, 2008. More than 1,000 people from the experts and professionals signed the petition. Also there was a strong support for the alternative from the public. Clearly there was another way to transform Sulukule.

Photo 10: STOP’s presentation to authorities from the Fatih Municipality

Source: The presentation was given in September, 2008 at the Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul. Photos were linked on: http://www.mimdap.org/?p=9568

The municipality continued demolitions in Sulukule. Sometimes the municipal’s demolition teams destroyed historic houses too and officials said that it was a mistake. In November 2008, lawyers from STOP members went to the neighborhood worked together with The Platform. Together they argued that 400 renters in Sulukule did not have housing right in Tasoluk project (STOP, 2008). They discussed with the renters about their situation and decided to write letters to the municipality about this situation. They used old electricity and water bills to show that these families lived in the area for years as renters. These letters were successful; according to information received from Nese Ozan, who is a member of the Sulukule Platform, 120 of 400 applicants who had not been given housing
rights in Tasoluk as renter were able to obtain their rights after this letter of application process.

In January 23rd, 2009, the municipality officials came to destroy the Children’s Studio, but demolition was temporarily halted by the residents and children. In the morning of January 27 at 6 am, the Children’s Studio was demolished by bulldozers, while the neighborhood’s children slept (Sulukule Studio, 2009). The children’s workshops continued in some of the evicted houses for months.

**Photo 11: Destruction of the Children’s Studio in Sulukule**

Source: Photo on the left taken by Nese Ozan while the Fatih Municipality demolished the second Children’s Studio place; and photo on the right was taken by a member of the Sulukule Platform while the Municipality demolished the first place of the Platform in the neighborhood, linked on; [http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com](http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com)

At the beginning of the renewal process, Sulukule people did not leave their neighborhood for a long time. With the start of destruction, the residents that had made an agreement with the municipality moved to Tasoluk; and families which had not made an agreement moved to neighborhoods which once surrounded Sulukule. Within the process, most of the families which had moved to Tasoluk could not get used to meeting the
economic requirements and thus returned to neighborhoods close to Sulukule (Sulukule Studio, 2009).

**Sulukule Studio**

In April, 2009, STOP presented the alternative project to the Istanbul Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board. AGFE (Advisory Group on Forced Evictions) from the United Nations visited the neighborhood in May. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights came to visit the area in June, 2009. UNESCO included Sulukule in its report in the same summer.

After all these criticisms, the president of TOKI (Housing Development Administration of Turkey), Erdogan Bayraktar asked to meet with the first alternative project’s volunteers. In July, 2009, a few representatives of the project group, all professors and lawyers, met with Bayraktar. He asked to members to revise the alternative project, so as to be ready for implementation. In the meeting, there were no representatives from the Fatih municipality; and Erdogan Bayraktar said that they could implement the alternative project after revisions according to the current situation. In this way, the Sulukule Platform, the volunteers of STOP project and other volunteers came together under the name “Sulukule Studio” to create a revised plan according to demolished houses and new right owners who bought the houses from old Sulukule housing owners in Sulukule. Platform members knew more about the area because of their experiences in Sulukule while STOP group knew more about planning practice because that was their profession.

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19 Istanbul Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board will be henceforth referred to as the “conservation board.”
The preparation process of a second alternative was different than the first one because it was prepared at the authority's request. This difference was expressed in that the TOKI was in this process as the government agent; the TOKI authorities shared the current data with the Sulukule Studio and had a meeting during the preparation process. In this process almost 200 volunteers from different disciplines and professions worked for two months. Also a few residents did bring information and their wants from the neighborhood.

**Figure 6: Sulukule Studio's alternative proposal**

*Source: Sulukule Studio's alternative project named by "Socio-Economic Spatial Improvement and Cultural Sustainability Project (2009)*

The alternative plan followed to the current block and street patterns. Besides, the circulations in the area and the size of the blocks have been rationalized. It aimed to create new jobs to preserve Romani culture, to increase quality of the area, to better educate the
people, to grow the local economy, to protect historic and cultural values in the area, and to use existing socio-economic relations to build a renewed Sulukule.

Figure 7: Sulukule Studio’s alternative project

Source: Sulukule Studio’s alternative project named by “Socio-Economic Spatial Improvement and Cultural Sustainability Project (2009)

The alternative plan emphasized seven points: (1) current Romani culture in the area, (2) unique social links, (3) historic building blocks and street patterns, (4) registered historic structures and civil architecture examples in the area, (5) yard-type houses, (6) the rate of renters and landholders, (7) new right owners who bought the properties during the renewal process.

The proposal plan sought to rebuild all the destroyed historic houses according to restoration projects because the architecture student members of the Platform had already finished their measurements on historic houses and yard-type houses. Figures 7 shows the
alternative proposal’s sensitivity to historic buildings, current street pattern and building blocks. The alternative plan also protected current public spaces in the area (e.g. historic garden in the middle of the neighborhood) by suggesting some new functions such as a producer cooperative, urban garden, amphitheater, playground, etc.

**Figure 8: Historic Garden in the alternative project**

The alternative proposal suggested a tourism function in Sulukule based on Romani culture, especially on Kaleboyu Street. This part of the project focused on a mixed of Romani culture and historic values in the area and created a touristic zone by creating a few entertainment houses. More specifically the plan recommended (1) creation a horse-car trail, such as in the past, around the historical city wall, (2) restoring the civic architectural sites, and (3) creating or restoring other cultural attractions.

**Source:** Sulukule Studio’s Alternative Project named by “Socio-Economic Spatial Improvement and Cultural Sustainability Project (2009)
Revised plan was presented not only to the public authorities but also to civil society and the Sulukule inhabitants. In August of 2009, Sulukule Studio’s members presented their alternative proposal to the inhabitants of Sulukule in the neighborhood and explained the aim of this project. The inhabitants discussed the project, and the majority of them really hoped the project would be implemented. About this time, only 75 people currently resided in the neighborhood. Former residents of Sulukule also attended the presentation, interested in seeing the alternative project. After a few days, the municipal authorities decided to implement the original plan instead of the alternative proposal.

By the end of November 2009, the whole of Sulukule, except for several historic buildings, had been destroyed by the municipality. Since then, a large number of reports, articles, and documentaries have been released on Sulukule. One of the most important
research presentations was “International Architectural Biennale Rotterdam” in September 2009; Sulukule urban renewal process and the neighborhood’s struggle were presented with a timeline project in the biennale.

In January 2010, the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board of Istanbul made a decision for an archeological dig in Sulukule. In March 2010, only seven families remained in the Tasoluk neighborhood provided by the Mass Housing Administration, and all the others had returned to a place near Sulukule because the apartment expenses were more than their income\(^\text{20}\), also, they could not adapt to that new lifestyle because of socioeconomic and cultural reasons (Gul, 2011).

**Photo 12: Archeological values in Sulukule**

On 7\(^\text{th}\) of May in 2010, the Fatih Municipality began construction of new buildings in the area by organizing a groundbreaking, but this was before looking for the results of archeological research. On 11\(^\text{th}\) of May, the Chamber of Architects in Istanbul criticized Mayor Mustafa Demir because he began construction in the area without archeological investigation. In August of 2010, the European Court of Human Rights accepted the application of Sulukule people under the Sulukule Romani Association. In December of

\(^\text{20}\) While the Istanbul average for renting stands between 20% and 30% of households, the number for tenants in Sulukule topped 50%; many residents were simply too poor to afford their own property.
2010, the expert acknowledged the Sulukule people as being in the right and explained this decision to the court.

In 2010, the municipality began implementing the project in the area in front of the old inhabitants’ eyes: they were now living in the neighborhoods which are neighbor to the old Sulukule area.

**Photo 13: Construction of the new Sulukule area**

Source: Photo on the left shows the new construction in Sulukule with the historic mosque in the area, linked on: [http://i.ekolay.net](http://i.ekolay.net); and photo on the right shows new housing style produced by the Municipality as an Ottoman style housing project in Sulukule, linked on: [http://www.fatih.bel.tr](http://www.fatih.bel.tr)

**Photo 14: The construction of the new Sulukule**

Source: Photo on the left shows the new housing area and two historic building which were not demolished, linked on: [http://www.f5haber.com/files/ajans/2013_03_12/haber/AA142290.jpg](http://www.f5haber.com/files/ajans/2013_03_12/haber/AA142290.jpg); and photo on the right shows how the same area was in the past, linked on: [http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=18373#.UlRfuoasiSo](http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=18373#.UlRfuoasiSo)
Sulukule Today

Sulukule Platform still stands with the Sulukule people who mostly live in the adjoining community called Karagumruk, right next to the old Sulukule area where a new housing development is growing and anticipating new owners. The Platform members rented a place close to the old settlement. There is still a children’s studio in this building. Sulukule children who live near the old neighborhood attend the Studio’s activities; many children take classes at the Studio after school. The Sulukule Children's Orchestra wrote their own songs which are about their urban renewal stories. The Orchestra gave concerts all around Istanbul; and it also performed several duets with famous singers at the concerts and in music videos²¹.

Photo 15: Sulukule Children's Studio

Source: The photo was taken by Ozlem Soysal in 2012

²¹ To watch the Orchestra’s music video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4szdwOmrt4 And also the Children Orchestra performed duet with the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra (Caracas Brass Ensemble) from Venezuela in August 7, 2011: http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/131952-galata-konseri-oncesi-sulukule-cocuklari
A women’s studio “Kader & Kismet” produces their own productions that involves the Platform members and old inhabitants of Sulukule. They stamp their own figures such as (1) the Hidrellez (the name of their traditional spring festival) tree, (2) an old historic house which reminds people of the old Sulukule days, or (3) a bulldozer which reminds others of demolitions.

Photo 16: The Women’s Studio’s productions

Source: Photo on the left top shows a scarf produced by the Sulukule Women’s Studio; photo on the right top shows a cloth bag which houses eaten by a bulldozer on, designed by the Women’s Studio
to show the neighborhood’s urban renewal story. The other photo shows the Platform’s logo on a paper bag produced by the Studio. Photos were taken by Nese Ozan in 2012.

The images in Photo-16 show some of the products of the Sulukule Women’s Studio, such as t-shirts, cloth bags, and scarves. They use residual clothes scraps from the factories because to remain cost efficient, and they use old newspapers to create shopping bags and then sell them to the ecologist shops. Many of the women from Sulukule earn money from this women’s studio, and the studio allows them a place to grieve and overcome the psychological effects of the demolition alongside other women (Individual interview with Ozlem Soysal, a psychologist from the Platform).

In June 2012, the fourth administrative court of Istanbul decided to cancel the “Sulukule Urban Renewal Project.” In response, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ertugrul Gunay stated: “this was very late decision to cancel the project; probably they will change the decision according to current situation in the area and/or the municipality will change the project according to their decision. It is really hard to change the project after this point. The buildings are almost done...” (Ince, June 14, 2012). Thus many experts and professors said that: “there was another way, the Platform had prepared an incredible alternative based on the same things which court mentioned as reason [sic] to cancel the project; but the municipality missed that chance” (Ince, 2012). The reason given for the cancelation of the project was that “there was no entitlement to public welfare;” the project office revised the project; and the revised project was approved by the municipality on September 2012. Thus, the Fatih municipality had appealed to the council of state to cancel the court’s decision, but the council of state refused this application in September 2013.
The court’s decision ruled that the project was implemented illegally prior to the court’s decision regarding the project.

**Photo 17: A view from Sulukule**

![A view from Sulukule](http://img.fotocommunity.com/images/Turkey/Istanbul/Sulukule-Sisli-a30773246.jpg)

**Source:** The new housing complex in Sulukule with the skyscrapers of Istanbul in Levent District, and with the historic city wall and historic Mihrimah Sultan Mosque in Sulukule. Linked on: [http://img.fotocommunity.com/images/Turkey/Istanbul/Sulukule-Sisli-a30773246.jpg](http://img.fotocommunity.com/images/Turkey/Istanbul/Sulukule-Sisli-a30773246.jpg)

**Photo 18: New Buildings from top of the Historic City Wall**

![New Buildings from top of the Historic City Wall](http://img.fotocommunity.com/images/Turkey/Istanbul/Sulukule-Sisli-a30773246.jpg)

**Source:** Photos were taken by Sehnaz Bozankaya for this study in October, 2013. They show how the area’s density increased.

Today, the construction of the project is complete, and newcomers have settled into the new housing in Sulukule. In some new houses, women from Sulukule worked as cleaners to make ready the apartments for their residents to move in\(^\text{22}\). The municipality gave priority to Sulukule people to work in these jobs\(^\text{23}\). According to the Platform’s

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\(^{22}\) This information was given by the interviewees.

\(^{23}\) This information was given by the interviewees.
observations and news in September 2013, immigrants from Syria mostly live in the area (Onur, Sep. 28, 2013). Most of the Sulukule owners, who had right to move to new ownership housing, chose not to live there and rent their houses out to others. “For rent” signs rest on many of the new houses’ windows, but the rents are three to four times higher than the rent old Sulukule residents paid.

Photo 19: Underground parking garage (left) and commercial area (right)

Source: Photos were taken by Sehnaz Bozankaya for this study in October, 2013.

Property values of surrounding neighborhoods increased dramatically as a result of the project. Some people speculated on some properties prior to the construction of the new development. Others purchased with the intention of moving in, though many opted for renting the property since the neighborhood would still be surrounded by Sulukule people of a drastically different socio-economic class. Some of the new home owners already sold their new property in the project area at the price of 450,000 TL (225,000
dollars)\(^{24}\) in 2011 where the municipality bought homes from Sulukule people for 100,000-150,000 TL ($50,000-75,000 dollars).

**Photo 20: New houses on rent**

Source: Photo was taken by Marko Gundogdu for this study in October, 2013.

Today, according to many real estate website these prices increased; a 100 square meters two bedroom house is priced at 600,000 TL ($300,000); and Sulukule people who sold their houses for prices between 100-150,000 TL rebel against the Fatih Municipality and its urban renewal project again. Especially after the law court’s decision on the cancellation of the project, this rebellion is justifiable. It is worth mentioning again that in

June, 2012 the court’s decision was that “there was not any public welfare in Sulukule renewal project.”

**Photo 21: New buildings, old buildings and the Historic City Wall**

Source: Photos were taken by Sehnaz Bozankaya and Marko Gundogdu for this study in October, 2013. They show the relationship between new constructions and old buildings around the area.
Conclusion

There are several lessons from the Sulukule urban renewal process for not only people who live in a renewal area but also for local authorities, judicial process, and planners in Turkey.

First, planners should be more careful while preparing urban renewal projects and connect with the community of the area. Planning cannot be seen as a discipline only on paper; it should be interconnected with the people who live in the cities. By implementing this kind of project without public participation could be defined as an “eviction.” Local municipalities naturally get negative reactions from affected stakeholders. This type of project creates a reputation for urban renewal work amongst city residents. People worry...
even if the project is useful for some inhabitants when they hear news of renewal. Also the local authorities, e.g., local municipality and metropolitan municipality should be more sensitive to current residents by preparing urban planning projects for existing built-up areas.

Second, urban citizens should attend the decision-making phases of the projects, which will be implemented in their city; and they should fight for this right even if authorities do not include them in the process. This fight should be shaped by consideration of our cities and our cities’ futures; not solely for our property rights.

Third, if the local authorities make a bad decision or planners follow an unethical process, there should be an active judicial process, which makes decisions faster. For planners there should be a code of ethics, which effectively regulates the professional behavior of planning practitioners with authority to punish. According to many professors of urban planning in the Platform, this urban renewal process was unethical and the planners who prepared the municipal project did not apply urban planning principles to the area.

Sulukule has gone down as an extremely heart-rending chapter in Turkish urban renewal history. Moreover, it came at a high cost to the Turkish history and culture. However, this loss might serve as an invaluable lesson of not repeating the same mistakes in future for the local authorities. In the light of which, the alternative project idea might open new doors that meet Davidoff’s school of thought and helps renewing the professional planning principles in Turkey.
The Sulukule episode was unfortunate for many of the previous residents of neighborhood. Despite best efforts of the advocacy group, municipal authority and the political power structure's clout succeeded over desires of neighborhood residents. An important factor to reflect upon in this instance was the imbalance of power between the people and their government. If the situation had been equivalent, perhaps the people of Sulukule had their say and representation in the process of the development plan. This insight presents alarming prospects for residents as well as planners.

The incidents at Taksim Gezi Park, Istanbul in the summer 2013 exposed this disquieting situation to the world, the root cause being the same issue in both the projects. The authorities gave an approval for renewal project in the Park, minus any public participation whatsoever. While, civil society and trade associations including the Chamber of Architects of Turkey (CAT) and the Chamber of City Planners objected to the decision and the Court's decision has not been decelerated; irrespective, the municipality still tried to implement their project without passing sentence on the project. This was a mirror image of the events of Sulukule renewal process. Finally, members of civil society, activist groups, and the trade associations protested against this implementation, and camped in Taksim Gezi Park. The project would not have come in limelight, if the law enforcement officers had not attacked the silent protestors. Consequently, the Turkish citizens oblivious till now or ignorant of the legalities of the project such as final law yet to be passed on the project, became aware of the development. A significant development of this was the criticism of top-down autocratic political structure omnipresent in the country.
Furthermore, the awareness led to opening of dialogue again on cancelation of the Sulukule urban renewal scheme.

Today, urban population of Turkey wants to have a say in decision-making process of their cities. This is how a democracy works in the developed countries; and likewise, aiding in progress of a developing country. This, hence, highlights the urgent need of public participation segment in urban planning and importance in growth of the future cities.
CHAPTER FIVE: ADVOCACY PLANNING IN SULUKULE ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

This chapter is the core of the thesis; it will present the main findings from my direct observation in the Sulukule Platform and include key highlights from my informant interviews. I will focus on the uniqueness of the Sulukule Platform within the Sulukule urban renewal process by analyzing the interviews completed by ‘members’ of the Platform and old residents of Sulukule.

This chapter utilizes seventeen informant interviews to compare and contrast the views of the volunteers from the Sulukule Platform on the one hand and those held by the Sulukule inhabitants on the other hand. I interviewed these two groups between January 5th and 30th, 2013 in Istanbul. Platform members were determined according to their professions, genders, ages and also their positions in The Platform. Some of these interviewees spent much time in the area with the inhabitants in the renewal process. Others played a key role in the preparation of an alternative project as advisors but did not spend much time in the area. Fifteen volunteers who participated in the Platform’s studies, and two of the residents – one of whom lost his house in the area, the other still lives in her house near the demolished area in Sulukule— accepted to be a part of this study, and shared their view on the renewal process, the municipality’s plan, the Platform and the Sulukule neighborhood.

The interviews and analysis focused on five themes (1) how the Platform members established their relationship with Sulukule and connected with Sulukule people; (2) how

25 Some of the interviewees introduce themselves as non-members of the Platform, although they played significant roles. They say that they helped in the Platform but that this was not a kind of membership.
the neighborhood functioned before the renewal process, and how it was influenced by Romani culture; (3) how public participation took place, if at all; (4) how the advocacy planning played a role in the process; and (5) how the newcomers and former inhabitants are living today and the extent to which they have been able to maintain their relationship with the Platform.

The informants from the Platform will be referred to by their initials and last names for example: M. C. Yalcintan or E. Cavusoglu; and the two (former) residents who were old inhabitants of Sulukule will be referred to as “woman dweller” and “man dweller.” The names of the old Sulukule inhabitants have been removed for confidentiality. All Platform members agreed to be referred to by name.

**Relationship with the Neighborhood**

First, I should mention some of the interviewees stated that they are not from the Sulukule Platform although they took part in the Platform’s studies especially in the alternative project’s preparation. They said that there was a need and that they took part in solving the problem but it was not enough to define themselves as a Platform member because they were not actual organizers of the Platform. I will refer to them as “Platform members” in this study because there is no written list of Platform members and according to the Platform’s website called the “Sulukule Dairy” everybody who participated in the controversy is a member of the Sulukule Platform.

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26 [http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com](http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com)
Twelve out of fifteen platform member interviewees had never been in Sulukule prior to the urban renewal process. Most of them visited Sulukule right before the Fatih municipality’s announcement for the urban renewal project. Three of them had been in the area while the entertainment houses were there. They saw the area, in their words, “... [as] the golden age of Sulukule.” The other platform members visited the area at different times and for different reasons. Some of them had been in the area before the urban renewal process (Some of them wanted to see the area or other want some other places around Sulukule and saw the neighborhood).

All of them visited Sulukule after the project had been announced. Figure 15 shows in which periods the informants had visited Sulukule; the green circles are Sulukule Platform members. There are more circles than the number of interviewees because some of them visited the area during more than one time period as displayed in the info graphic. The overlaps seen between some circles represent relationships formed during the history of Sulukule documented in the study. And the four circles in the last time period shows the Platform members who still are in the neighborhood with the community due to the Women’s or Children’s Studios.
I identified time periods as “before 1992,” “between 1992 and 2006,” “between 2006 and 2012,” and “after 2012” according to some important points in Sulukule’s history. The year 1992 was a very significant time in Sulukule history due to the demolition of the entertainment houses, and Sulukule became impoverished shortly after. The year 2006 marks another important date for Sulukule as the urban renewal process started in that year. And 2012 was determined as a breakpoint for Sulukule because the new construction was completed that year. Therefore I can state that this info graphic also might be a reference to show how often the Sulukule Platform members had been in the area.

All the interviewees heard about Sulukule before their visits; some of them mentioned that they knew the area because there was a Romani population. Some knew the area because of the entertainment houses while others knew that the area had many
historic assets. Most of them heard about the neighborhood from their relatives or friends but all of them tried to read about the area as much as possible after the urban renewal project had been announced. Many of them learned of the urban renewal project from newspapers, email groups, or social groups. Some of them, who were undergraduate urban planning students in those years, learned of the project from their classes or professors.

The reason to visit the area was different for every informant. Some of them visited the area because The Platform invited them, some went to Sulukule because of the studio project or assignments, some attended “40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule” events or organization meetings. After the Fatih municipality announced the urban renewal project, all the interviewees visited Sulukule at least five times.

“Romani Culture in Sulukule” in the Eyes of the Sulukule Platform’s Members

For the purposes of understanding how Sulukule was influenced by Romani culture, most of the informants mentioned that Sulukule was a dramatically different neighborhood than the other neighborhoods in Istanbul, but very similar to the other Romani neighborhoods in Turkey. Therefore some of the interviewees stated that Sulukule is lively than other Romani neighborhood, in part because of their historic relationship with music and dance. E. Cavusoglu stated:

Something was distinctive about Sulukule’s cultural music; it was totally different from anything else. You won’t encounter that kind of lively, vivid music when you walk around anywhere in Istanbul, other than Sulukule. Even people’s voices and their loud quarrels were in harmony with this
music; therefore, it sounds remarkable, at least that’s what I felt like when I wandered around Sulukule.

Other than this, informants gave specific characteristics which can show that Sulukule was influenced by Romani culture. I have categorized these characteristics under four groups, e.g., as social, spatial, cultural and economic characteristics; the following table displays these results.

Table 2: To what degree Sulukule was influenced by Romani culture

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>PLATFORM MEMBERS</th>
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<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  0  1  2  3  4  5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
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<td>Names</td>
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<td>Wedding Ceremonies</td>
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<td>SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS</td>
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<td>Daily Life</td>
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<td>24/7 Alive</td>
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<td>Social Relations</td>
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<td>Women's Position in Society</td>
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<td>Animals: Horses, Doves, etc.</td>
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<td>SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS</td>
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<td>Historic Characteristic</td>
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<td>Street &amp; Street Culture</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<td>ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS</td>
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<td>Relationship with Money</td>
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<td>Sharing Culture</td>
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<td>Job Preferences</td>
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Source: Figure was created by the author according to interviewees’ answers
Most of the interviewees mentioned music and dance as elements which define Sulukule’s identity. Thus, colors on the clothes and/or houses were another characteristic which comes from the colorful Romani culture. N. Ozan highlights Sulukule’s relationship with colors:

You can see the Romani culture from the colors. They have a strong relationship with colors. You can put twenty scarves on the table for a woman from Sulukule. She will choose the red one. There is no other option. Red is the first color for everyone there. You can see this relationship to red in their houses as well.

N. Ozan mentioned that names of people and apartments were also very different and characteristic of Sulukule.

People’s last names, nobody can hear their last names in another place. How you can see ‘Yandimalamadim’ (means I loved but could not reach) as a last name in another place in Istanbul? Or the apartment names! “Hergunkosar Apartment” (means everyday run), this was the exact apartment’s name in that neighborhood. People’s names, apartments’ names, streets’ names, last names, all of them were very different.

Two of the informants also recalled traditional wedding ceremonies in Sulukule. They took place on the street (often closed-off) and often included horse drawn buggies, and Romani cultural music. In these ceremonies, people of the area played music and danced together. These ceremonies were celebrated for an entire week.
Sulukule had also several socio-economic characteristics which might be associated with Romani culture. Daily life which was mentioned by all the informants was one of these characteristics. E. O. Pak explained this well by her observations of the area:

In Sulukule, there were lots of things which reflected Romani culture. For example, the district was lively 24/7. I spent some nights in the district. I saw the neighborhood living day and night. The way of living ran counter to normal city life. Kids, for example, they didn’t go to sleep and wake up early like other kids. They woke up in afternoon and they played soccer on street until midnight. We were not used to seeing laundry on the main street. But here, you could see colorful laundry on the rope between electrical towers and the balconies. Using a horse car was illegal in Istanbul, but regardless, there were horses in the district. They fed horses behind their houses, and we asked about it. They worked on phaetons\textsuperscript{27} in the Princes Islands during the summers. Some people fed chickens for economic support in the district or some people fed doves and sold them. Some families made money like this. These are not the images and animals we used in city life.

Hence, G. Aksumer mentioned social relations and the position of women in the community:

I noticed some differences. If you described this as Romani culture, it could be, I don't know. Naturally, every neighborhood has different lifestyles. They do too. It is a normal thing. They show some differences regarding relationships between men and women, street culture, and courtyard houses. For example, when compared to other neighborhoods, women talk more and spend more time with men in Sulukule. That was my observation. Women could join any kind of conversation; they speak about their ideas concerning

\textsuperscript{27} Phaeton is the term for a sporty open carriage drawn by a single horse.
any topics. They were more sociable. I mean there is no discrimination when someone comes to Sulukule neighborhood and wants to talk with a native person. It could be man or woman. I don’t know how you define this culture or attitude, but that was the difference which I noticed.

Day to day social interaction (sharing culture) was very common in Sulukule. Most of the interviewees mentioned this behavior as a reflection of Romani culture. People cooked and ate together in the neighborhood. Their social capital was concentrated here, compared to other areas in Istanbul. They had a strong social-links in the community. E. O. Pak gave an example to demonstrate social links in Sulukule:

They had a social-link as a Sulukule community that arose from their needs and their low-income households. And they survived by supporting this social relation network. Actually, this is an important reflection of the district culture. Simply, if a mother has to send her child to school and can’t buy her child’s lunch, she could ask a neighbor or ask the grocery and pay back later. If I have to explain here, we have terrible education system. Teachers write a list for children as a monthly meal program, and they want them to bring something. There was a system found for these daily necessities in the district. For example, buying half a loaf of bread or one spoon of tomato paste from grocery was a common thing. If you didn’t have money, you could pay back later. This was something you couldn’t find in any other district in Istanbul.

The local market (grocery store) in the area was one of the most important areas to see social links in Sulukule because the people relied on credit; keeping everything on account for several months at a time. The Romani’s traditional life style is not based on money or property. O. Temiz highlighted this point:
Sulukule people did not care about the future or money for example. They were not trying to make money (like other people). When they had enough money for a day, it was enough for them to relax for that day. We can call this “freedom.” They were an independent community. There were some hierarchies in the community, some conflicts, some solidarity; all of those were together. They were nested. To give an example for the hierarchy, for example, when they are going to work as a music group somewhere, there is a leader who finds jobs, and he invites from the neighborhood who he wants. He chooses who he will work together with. This is only one example, of course there are more examples.

Day to day life did not support existence of a stereotypical traditional gypsy lifestyle, O. Temiz stated:

In an informal life, there are lots of hierarchical chains. In traditional Gypsy life, there is also a hierarchical system. There is a gypsy chief; he has a strong position in the community. Everybody asks him all their questions. His decisions are very important for everyone in the community, etc.... When you look at Sulukule, there were not these kinds of relationships, but still there was a hierarchical system. As a Romani neighborhood in a city life, they changed this kind of culture a little, but still you can see some traces from that culture. Actually this is not a characteristic only for a Romani or Gypsy community. If you go to any places in Anatolia, there is an oldest man in the village; everybody listens to his decision. In a family, the oldest person still has a strong position. This is also a part of our culture which still continues in the rural places [sic].

Job preferences in Romani culture in Sulukule were dramatically different than in other neighborhoods in Istanbul. E. Yucak stated that:
Their perceptions about jobs differ. They are classified into job fields like music, drapery, and haberdashery or they work as barrowmen or peddlers. These Romani inhabitancy characteristics identified in big cities can be found here in Sulukule as well.

Spatially, Sulukule differed from other neighborhoods in Istanbul. Specifically Professor I. Dincer, the Istanbul Conservation Commission member, mentioned this deviation:

In Sulukule, there was an urban type which meant that local people have constructed their own houses had just a few floors, detached type houses, and we know that Romans have preferred almost the same type of houses. In addition to this, I know a little information regarding Edirne and its Romani District. There were also some close similarities between the Romani District in Edirne and Sulukule. At the same time, another Romani District in Canakkale was in protected area, in which time I was a member of the Commission, we have declared an area of Canakkale as a protected area. There was the Fevzipasa Street, we have argued on it about what kind of things could be particularly done for the Fevzipasa. That structure was a bit discrete, it was closer to center of the city, however, the people’s lifestyles was similarly.

D. N. Ozer also mentioned this difference in Sulukule by giving examples on street usage:

As a person who went to Sulukule before the demolitions, I can say that Sulukule was totally representing gypsy life style and culture. The people were living on the street and common life places. Yards, doorsteps, streets... all of these were a piece of their life. There were not any borders between streets and houses. They were not locking or knocking the doors. This was
creating a community life different than other neighborhoods. There was a different living communication between people in this neighborhood. Their happiness, sadness and fighting were on the street in the community. Everybody knew everything in their community. Every time there was music. Music was one of the most important pieces of their neighborhood. Whitewash was really important in the neighborhood. The poorest family was whitewashing with calcimine at least one time a year. I have seen this culture before in other Gypsy neighborhoods too.

Street usage, urban fabric and courtyard housing typology were significant points of consideration, according to the interviewees, in distinguishing Romani identity in the area. The peoples’ relationship with money and people’s seeming lack of concern for the future were important in understanding Romani distinctiveness. However, as E. Yucak said during the interview, “Instead of commenting on a pure Romani culture, it would be better to talk about Romanies that live in big cities like Istanbul.” Sulukule was one of those places where Romanies, who adapted to urban life but did not lose their identity, transformed traditional elements into their limited modern culture. Y. Adanali explained this as well: “Sulukule was the best example to understand how the culture could be influenced by space, and how the space could be influencing culture as well; so we could see how they were interrelated in Sulukule.” It could be called a “Romani neighborhood” and/or a “special-characteristic neighborhood” but it was different from the other neighborhoods in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey.

I should mention however that there was also a non-Romani minority in the area, as an old dweller stated during the interview:
In Sulukule, there were some non-Romani families too, for example: Arabic, Laz, Kurdish people. I mean they are from this land, but their cultures are different. For example, next to my house there was a Kurdish family. But you know that my people are different. We had a different relationship with Romani people in among us. When my salt finished I was asking my Romani relatives or neighbors. We were sharing our bread. I was asking my people when I needed something. The majority was Romani people in Sulukule. The others came later to Sulukule, but we lived there for a hundred years. My father’s father had come to Sulukule. Ataturk gave land to them. They came from Salonika.

The Sulukule Platform’s members made similar comments as former Sulukule residents. Both described the area as an energetic and lively place. Everybody knew each other, lived together, and helped each other. They mentioned that they had neighborhood relations in Sulukule that were lost during the urban renewal process. This was the most significant outcome for them.

**Evaluation of the Urban Renewal Process**

Four of the interview questions explored the Fatih Municipality’s urban renewal project with regard to citizen involvement. In this section I will analyze the urban renewal process by examining the interviewees’ answers including their observation and experiences.

First, I asked them to what extent the municipality’s project took into account the needs and culture of Sulukule residents; and to what extent the project focused on the local people as compared to new comers. All the interviewees stated that there was nothing related to Romani culture or the existing problems, in the project. Therefore, they think
that the municipality did not prepare this project for Sulukule’s people. O. Temiz explained for whom this project was prepared with the following statement:

In any case, the municipality already did not prepare this project for Sulukule people. The municipality’s officials spoke about Sulukule people, but the project did not say anything about them. If you are the Mayor of the Fatih Municipality, Istanbul and you have the best project group to create an urban renewal project, you have to know Sulukule better than me, right? Anyone can see that this project was not for Sulukule people. They also knew that there were not any benefits for Sulukule people. They prepared this project fully knowing the results. What the municipality did—they found a neighborhood which is poor and alone, one where no one would make a sound for this neighborhood! But this plan did not work. They would make money without any protesting—but people from outside supported Sulukule people. The municipality did not think on this scenario. The Sulukule Platform was a surprise for the municipality.

If this project was not for Sulukule then for what purpose was it conducted? E. Yucak explained why the municipality chose this area for urban renewal:

[That] the project ignored the issues mentioned above is to be expected. It was not the intention of the municipality and hence of the project itself. Since we are speaking of the ancient fortification walls inherited by the Byzantine Empire, there are many projects under the “Global City Istanbul” idea. I don’t use the word “gentrification” because of its meaning. I think this word is not explaining this situation correctly. It is merely the conversion of the place into a Meta (goods) and turning it into investment and profit. Also, the Historic Peninsula takes an important place in this transformation period. The municipality sees this. There is a historical complex of buildings adjacent to a mosque near Edirnekapi, where Sulukule is located. It is not only the
commoditization of Sulukule because this complex is also a place which is really important for the religionist [sic] people. Sulukule is a neighborhood which is not close to the other around it not only economically but also culturally. The impression of gender on the community is totally different than the other neighborhoods. Lifestyle, street use, children, etc.; they are all different and right next to the conservative culture. In fact, this project is an intervention on the lifestyle of Sulukule. This project was to change this differences; it was for creating the same culture in the same area. They tried to move in a high-income conservative culture instead of Sulukule people.

Sulukule's locational significance took precedence over the potential historic and housing value to its residents. This place in the city of Istanbul could be used as an economic development tool. E. Yucak also noted this factor to explain why the municipality chose Sulukule and why it was prepared for new comers:

Considering the commodity value of the quarter, there is already a road that branches off to TEM and E5. It is also close to a light rail, at the entrance of the Vatan Street, and highly valued in terms of location. As a result, it would be imprudent to expect that the policy of the Fatih Municipality would match the will and demands of the inhabitants of the area. Moreover, people are looking at this project differently. They ask some questions themselves such as: did the municipality show a place to the Sulukule people? Did the municipality give money to the land owner? Also did the municipality give right to the renters of the area? That's it! For people who do not know about planning, these are perfect rights for them. They do not care about Sulukule people's right to live in their neighborhood. They don't care about the people who could not reach [sic] these rights in this process. Until the municipality knocks on their doors, they will not able to understand why Sulukule people were wronged.
As a lawyer criticized the project on civil rights grounds:

The Fatih Municipality defends itself against the accusations of ignorance about the needs of the inhabitants of the neighborhood by claiming compensation of accommodation and payback for confiscation. The rights of utilization are thoroughly fulfilled with the right owners, and hence no lack of legality is incurred. In order to turn the place into profit, they must be deserted by the inhabitants, who are unable to produce profitable assets. Subsequently, the onset of the design process of this project is not based on the renovation of the structural deterioration. The following process claims it true as well. All in all, this neighborhood is not a place to be protected for its inhabitants, but a place to be newly rebuilt for profit, and the municipality acted in this course.

To reiterate how the project was implemented, O. Temiz summarized the whole story and explained why Sulukule people had an agreement with the municipality. He also mentioned how the municipality later added some cultural elements into the project:

The municipality explained to the other people around Sulukule that their house would be three times as valuable. They were silent because of this. The municipality explained to the new comers [sic] that this new housing would be more expensive in time and that they would make money; they bought these houses because of these reasons. The municipality explained to Sulukule people that they would have new houses; because of this they signed the agreement. But the municipality did not tell them that they had to pay for these new houses. And the municipality did not think about renters and multiple title holders [sic] (stakeholders) on the houses. They asked, “what is going on here?” They did not calculate the support for those people. Yes, some people really made money on this project. Maybe they benefited from this project. But with it, there is no benefit for most of the Sulukule
people. Later they added some kind of things for Romani people such as a music school and horse cars, but those were really funny renovations on the project. Who will go to the musician school? Who will drive the horse cars? There are not any Romani people in the new housing area. They all left. Do you think that new comers will want to play drums like Sulukule kids? Do you think that deputy Hakan Sukur’s kid will want to play drums and go to this school?

Y. Adanali, who is an economic development specialist, clarified why these cultural revisions into the project were meaningless and unsuccessful:

Later with all these pressures, news about what is happening there and new comers will replace old Sulukule people, etc. and also this whole development means that the issues related to the form become irrelevant because of whole this new target group. So because of all these pressure, we saw some introduction of some elements of you know giving reference to the culture. You know supposed to be some cultural specific occupations to be reform in the new project, you know some kind of phaeton element that is mainly kind of giving this shallow understanding of the culture, and how this can be capitalized for the tourist and the comers, but this was only because of this the pressure they felt and they need to kind of give an impression that and we also thought some Romani elements that can be integrated into the project. But this could, as I said, only be meaningful if they really aimed for the people but that is not the case.

And I asked him if he thought this project was intented for new comers only:

Yes. Especially when you think of, before we all know that in a transformation area, when you declare the area as transformation area, and

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20 Hakan Sukur was one of the most famous soccer players in Turkey. Today, he is a deputy from the AKP political party, in the Turkish Grand National Assembly.
if the aim is to improve the area, for the people who already live, you need to take certain measures. This is same everywhere in the world. Because if the area will increase its value, people are not wealthy enough they will not be able to survive, etc., you need to put certain limits certain support mechanisms or to stop to investors to come in, etc., but in this case we all know it is not the case. I mean, they were actually welcoming the investors to come and to buy the houses. So this is I think major issue. And then second, the cost of the project was fully reflected on the people meaning that regardless of their socio-economic development level, they have to bear that cost which means if they cannot bear that cost it become like an abuse game like you will not be able to effort new project so you have to sell it but it is your decision you sign it you leave. So in that sense it became an abuse lie that certain elements reconsidered and etc., so if the project is not for the people.

A professor of urban planning, E. Cavusoglu also focused on why the municipality chose this area and he argued that the existing community was another motivation for the project:

The municipality never defined the existing lifestyle – what was already there – as a culture. To them, what was going on there was crime. It was crime, which was also combined with poverty. The project committee even saw the common activities like cooking and living in the same yard together as wicked and an invasion of privacy; thus, this wasn't cultural to them. So this project was not concerned with keeping a culture alive or enhancing it; in fact, its aim was to destroy it completely. And the project was designed accordingly to accomplish this. It was a project which would not let the people survive and live there. We always defended the enhancement of the existing culture. Also, culture is defined as improving the existing routine and habitual activities. In their yards, Romanies mostly gathered and talked
collectively or made music as though each one was a small conservatory. We wanted to ensure that it would stay as it was, but I didn't find anything in the municipal project that related to this if you asked me. But the responsibility for the project was not only the municipality but also planners who prepared the municipality’s project and several authorities who approved the project. Urban planner E.O. Pak mentioned those responsible:

First of all, as a city planner, planning is not only the drawings on the paper. It is a fact that planning should include social values and the needs of the area and the residents. But, we cannot see any of these in this project. I believe that the project does not have a social aspect. There was no solution for the problems of the neighborhood. Also, the residents were not allowed to take advantage of the profit that would be made. The project was only focusing on moving residents out. In addition, the project was inconsiderate. It was not only disrespectful to Romani culture but also to current history. The historic peninsula is under the obligations of both national and international regulations. New projects were not supposed to increase the population in the area. And the new project doubled the lowest population density in the historical peninsula. The plan destroyed the entire historical structure that was preserved until now. All values, culture, architecture, and history were ignored. We can certainly say that the project was prepared only for newcomers, not for Sulukule people or existing historic and cultural values.

I asked interviewees to what extent was the public involved in the planning process. According to M. Aki, the municipality invited some experts and academicians; spoke with them, took pictures, put them on the municipal website, and called this participation. N.
Ozan recounted that the municipality did invite people, only once, from the neighborhood to the municipality building to explain the project. And she added:

But Sulukule people who went that meeting, ninety percentage of them did not understand anything from their presentation and explanations because the language was different from the language which Romani people speak, also it is different for any other people from anywhere. Normal people cannot understand the urban planning jargon.

Y. Adanali focused on the international schools (e.g. London School of Economics, University College London) that came to do research on Sulukule, and explained how the municipality described these involvements as part of the participation phase of the project:

They were being welcomed by the municipality; it is like the mayor is welcoming these schools, having workshop with them, listening their presentations, having some round table discussions, and few times welcoming the people to the municipality building, and giving this image that there is an open door policy that can come whenever. And all these kind of suppose to be participatory process. You see that they have been published and represented in the media and local media. So there was a conscience attempt of, conscience strategies for participation. So clearly that the municipality thought about participation, this is an important element. But then they kind of use this as a kind of public relations activity as a PR activity. So you would see that the municipality would welcome the schools but they would not welcome their ideas because a few of the projects that I know they were directly, they had very clearly measures planning principles are completely against what the municipality did. So it become a kind of there is a dichotomy there that the people that the municipality welcome recommends certain things but none of them has been applied by the municipality. So then it makes you kind of question the meaning of
participation, the level of the participation, etc. So what I see more like a manipulation of all these participations concept giving the image that yes we welcome the people and then the stakeholders, etc., but there is nothing actually been done. And there were a few examples that were mentioned by the people of Sulukule, I think it was quite interesting that when they had the meeting at the municipality, so the representative of the community would go there, the municipal mayor would end up, a guy take the photo of the meeting, and then the mayor leaves. And then you see this photo being published in the municipal website so giving this kind of image that we even listen them at the mayor level but an then this is only for the publicity. So I don’t consider that a real participatory process.

According to a professor of urban planning, M.C. Yalcintan, the participation process happened differently in the Sulukule Project. First, he mentioned that the renewal area notice did not include any participant mechanism. Nothing existed. To him, after announcing the renewal area, the processes the municipality intended for the project did not take place within a transparent and open framework.

Also another professor of urban planning and a member of the Istanbul Conservation Board, Iclal Dincer stated the same thing. She said that the municipal government preferred to be more secretive and it internalized the secrecy strategy to manage the project. After announcing the renewal area, the public was informed about the project on the municipality’s website. M. C. Yalcintan stated that besides a few meetings set up by the municipality, the project team (meaning the architectural office which prepared the project) never interacted with the residents or people who put efforts into Sulukule. He continued:
After the project was announced, a group started to build up from people who recognized Sulukule and had prior knowledge about it. The Sulukule Platform was established around this time. At the same time, a few people from the neighborhood founded an association. The Platform and this association started organizing together and standing up against the municipality. Most of the time, the municipality or local authorities stepped back in these cases because they usually didn’t want to encounter the opposition parties. The authorities even establish their management’s reactions having this idea in mind. However, the Fatih municipality interestingly pressed the issue and decided to face everything [sic]. Meetings were arranged, the Platform and association were invited, and municipal authorities also went to universities where they had opponents and gave speeches to defend themselves. They didn’t give other municipalities’ reaction. Did this reaction produce any result? It wasn’t enough, but still a few little things happened. The Fatih Mayor started a small music school project and several job trainings, which involved Romanies, as a result of the encounters. I believe the opposition groups, the speeches given, and the alternative project were beneficial for local politics in the decision making process. Sulukule helped shape a new public opinion about not accepting the municipal project offers if they weren’t formed with public and various group involvements. Some municipalities still continue proposing projects without participation, but they make themselves look ridiculous in the public eye.

For many interviewees, this effort was only to show that they had a public participation phase in the process. According D. Engin the municipality did not listen to, implement, or attempt to implement any of the comments from the presentations which they did in the schools or public meetings. Therefore she added:

As volunteers in the neighborhood, we knew that municipality officials neither came to the neighborhood to speak with the Sulukule people nor took
their ideas or comments about the project into account. There was no place for Sulukule people or Romani culture in this project. Because of this, it makes sense that they did not come to take Romani residents’ ideas. Although the municipality did not take the residents’ ideas, the head of municipality used all the presentations to advertise for the project. They never used any of ideas from professors, academics, journalists, etc. in this process as they said. They only listened to opposing views of academicians and college students at the universities’ conference rooms, and then presented their project to public, not to Sulukule people. They only came, presented, listened to comments and went back to their offices at the municipality. Then, they put these organizations’ pictures on their official website as an example of participation.

E. O. Pak spoke about the project team. In the Conservation Board's meeting, she was a member of the Sulukule Platform and had a chance to meet with the project team.

At that time, we had the possibility to meet with the project committee. I guess that was 37... They were talking about that they revised the project 37 times. They said to us that “you should accept the project; there is no deficiency in the project and let us approve the project.” Meanwhile, we thought that if the project was renewed 37 times, based on what is this being done? If the project was revised several times by technical people, why was it not asked to the residents? There were no answers to these questions. There was no effort to include the social structure in the project.

O. Temiz mentioned national and international efforts to get involved into the process:

There were lots of people who spoke about this project. From the universities, professors, architects, sociologists, etc. There were many
different actors in this process. From European Parliament, UNESCO, ICOMOS, many people visited the neighborhood and gave public statements. They spoke with the authorities from the municipality or government. But they did not listen to them carefully; by the end, they did what they wanted to do at the beginning. They focused on the money, and it closed their ears.

Urban planner, K. Cilgin also mentioned the same thing. According to her, “...this was a normal process; the municipality did not want to create a participation process because it was not doing this project for Sulukule people but everybody was speaking on Sulukule inhabitants then why they should care their ideas.” E. Yucak supported the same view as well:

First of all, it depends on why the process is begun. The municipality hasn’t accounted for participation given its intentions. The amendment of the socio-economic standing of the inhabitants, preserving cultural assets, curing the ailments of the neighborhood, producing more credible structures in terms of natural disasters, and delivering urban infrastructure to the surrounding area are not included. Secondly, another approach is necessary in regards to urban planning considering the facts mentioned before. Urban planning must be perceived as a form of discipline which realizes the location with its economic, social, cultural, i.e. with all aspects, a physical intervention mean instead. You have to both observe the whole thanks to the local elements and carry the motivation to compensate all the needs of inhabitants living at that locality. As for the third fact, there is the interaction capacity of the administrator between himself and the people, where the administrator is able to be in charge of or be free to develop its administration practices. This is the critical thing of democratization: the existence of interaction capacity. Now it is up for debate whether the municipality and its cohort, TOKİ, which are quite powerful in this case, have this sort of capacity or not. Obviously,
they don’t. Since it doesn’t exist, they only keep in mind their enforcement upon the landowners in the area, not the contracted ones, to be a part of the profit dividend that will be yielded in this neighborhood. Is the process of drawing permission participation? Obviously not! ... To sum up, it is impossible to speak a word about participation.

I also asked two of the informants who were formerly Sulukule residents about participation and how they viewed the urban renewal process. One of them said that:

They never asked anything to us about the project or our problems in Sulukule. They (the municipality officials) came only one time to our neighborhood. They were girls like you (address to the author). They asked me for my house and my rent. I told them that I paid 150 TL (equal to 100 dollars) for my rent. That’s it!

Urban planner, M. Aki summarized the whole participation process with only one sentence:

If it was a project prepared according to Sulukule people’s problems or commends, if it had a real public participation in the process, its results would not be like this.

Therefore I asked about the purposes of the municipality in implementing such a project. O. Temiz stated that “...in the city center, they tried to clean a poor area. They thought could make money from this area, and they did. They took the land from the poor and gave to the rich.” According to him, this was only reason for the municipality. To M. C. Yalcintan, the Fatih District Municipality was under the Government of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)–the English name is the Justice and Development Party–and this was the AKP Political Party’s general policy:
Fatih is a conservative area, and they certainly didn’t want a neighborhood like Sulukule in this region. The way I see it, one of the reasons putting the project into place would be a purification operation stipulated by conservatives. They determined that Sulukule was an unwanted place with brothels and drug trafficking. I also stated that there were drugs involved, but I don’t criticize that. Another reason could be that the Fatih region was rising in value as central location. Ultimately, bedraggled lifestyles and cheap housing were not explicable in a developing area like Fatih. And this was seen as an opportunity to establish profitable investments in the area. If you could increase the low rent prices (50-100 liras) up to 1,000 liras with the project, then this project was well worth the benefit. These reasons led the Fatih Municipality to take action in Sulukule. These are also two motivations which could well be why the project was supported by AKP administration. Therefore, local government and central government united during the project and things went faster because of this partnership.

Therefore, according to Y. Adanali the reasons were multifaceted and primarily related to politics and economics:

One of the main reasons maybe was the potential of the area promising for the investors. Second, it was possible to do it there because it was relatively weak community with lack of organization and lack of kind of mobilization. It was easy to legitimize within the broader public from the other part of the city. So this was a kind of assumption that first we could do a project there, we could make a lot of money there and it would be relatively easier to do it because it was a gypsy community. They were easier to break them down. Plus, maybe perceived problems of the community light being relating them with crime, immorality, etc., all those cultural arguments and they can be excuses but also it is a real believe from the perspective of those guys and charge and many parts of the society as well. So “we have to clean this area”
was the mentality. I can say that there are social, economic, cultural reasons behind, and they are not equally but they are all important as a reason.

According to K. Cilgin, this project was one part of the whole transformation picture in Istanbul, specifically in the Historical Peninsula:

Sulukule is an important piece of land in the Historic Peninsula. It has many locational advantages, and also it has a historic city wall view. So, the current authority and their ideology thought that the Sulukule people did not deserve these advantages. Because according to them, Sulukule was a marginalized neighborhood. This was only one of the cases which showed our governmental policy on minority groups. Especially, in the last years, we saw many of these kinds of experiences in Istanbul. If the land value increased, the municipality looks at your neighborhood and starts to think about an urban renewal project, which means you are going out. I mean, if you are not in a high income neighborhood. If the Sulukule people still lived in this area, the municipality would not earn anything; I mean money. Transforming urban land to money, it was more profitable.

All of these answers demonstrate, in some way, that the municipality’s goal was misleading in the process.

Then, I asked to what extent the municipality’s project was a success for Sulukule residents, in other neighborhoods around Sulukule, and for Istanbul as a whole. The answers were very telling. In some sense, many of the successes mentioned by the informants were a result of the whole urban renewal process but not directly from the municipality’s project, i.e., some property values were probably affected as a result of the
urban renewal and the newly renovated area of the city. However, the residents of Sulukule did not benefit, in fact some were hurt.

Y. Adanali stated that the property value increased in the area:

Those property owners might think positively about the project. Those who are not found as a part of the Romani culture might be happy about the eviction and relocation of the Sulukule neighborhood. Those who are seeking a kind of similar profited from the speculative urban transformation project, it might be positive from their perspectives. But then also, this might also make some other parts of the neighborhoods worried. Now they were experiencing this kind of the problems of the urban renovation. For example, people are not being able to pay; people are forced to leave, etc. Maybe some part of the neighboring areas where people are not so affluent and organized enough, they might be also stress [sic] and worried, if they going to keep living in the area or not. And maybe I don’t know maybe there were some few minorities among the Sulukule people who are relatively in a better condition; they had a chance to kind of make most of this process for those who were looking to go away from Sulukule and make a bit of money with this project. Maybe they benefit some things. But overall, I don’t know this can be considered as a kind of success for the people. If we look at the overall attendance of the people, how they reacted how they participated to the process, etc., I guess it is almost impossible to talk about success for the people. Maybe success for the certain individuals but I am not really sure about this either, but I assume there must be some a few examples or some kind of personalized relations with the municipality with the investors, they, some people must have benefit out of this.
And then I asked him about Istanbul: In general, had the city made some benefits from the project or had it been a relative loss for the city? He argued that the Sulukule project was a loss for Istanbul’s urban identity:

The project was quite visible later because of many different reasons. Many people protested and struggle the project. I guess for Istanbul, Sulukule transformation project reminds a kind of a danger and there is a romanticization of Sulukule neighborhood for different parts of the society. So it did not make the effect that maybe at the first those people behind the project were hoping to make like cleaning the Romani area but instead now this I guess for Istanbul it is more a kind of lost for the city’s identity for history and it represents the kind of wild speculative drive for urban transformation. So in that sense I guess it was not considered to be a successful project for Istanbul as a whole. We can argue this. This is from an objective perspective, how I see. I don’t think at all, that gives an idea that urban transformation equal to spatial transformation but not social. You know this is the thing; anywhere can be transformed even if people cannot effort or do not want. This was maybe the biggest harm that it makes to Istanbul overall.

Most of the informants shared the same view about effects of the project. E. Yucak made a point about the poverty in Sulukule, and those Sulukule people who had recieved a settlement payment for their property (which was far greater amount than any they had previously). E. Yucak stated:

A group of people, who never had that much cash in their daily life, received an amount of money which is far greater than any they had previously. They sold their houses and obtained the money in return. They, all of a sudden, obtained a king’s ransom (though the amount is not that impressive indeed).
For instance, when the renter’s lawsuit to be rightful owners receives an affirmative verdict, the rightful owners from Tasoluk underhandedly sold the houses for 3000-5000 TL since they weren’t able to show up. Thus, they contacted that sort of money. It is up for debate whether this was a positive undertaking or not, but it can be shown to have a positive side.

Then Yucak commented about whether this project was beneficial for Istanbul:

Sulukule was a place the other inhabitants of the city could visit. Now, it will lose this characteristic. The area will be like a gated community with the walled borders. Consequently, this project deteriorates the property there, this neighborhood that anyone in the city could visit and see. Before, you could go to the coffeehouse and have your tea or wander through the city walls or take a walk and wander and explore the Historic Peninsula. Secondly, this transformation is made especially by the criminalization of the area. This method is carried as if this area was purulent and this purulence was being rid by the administrators. To be eligible for this cleansing, drugs, prostitution and similar criminals were agitated as if normal. Suppose that there were such vices in the lives of the inhabitants, even if you approach them as a security problem, you would spread this lifestyle to the other sections of the city. What happened to the vicinity of Sulukule? The people from there did not move far away and rented houses in the neighborhoods. They rented the basement cellar – places they should never rent. The ones that live nearby Sulukule assumed an increased value in their holdings, but they were wrong. It had no chance ever. However, it would be already perilous if this assumed increase manifested as expected because it means the same scenario that happened to the inhabitants of Sulukule would happen to them as well.

O. Temiz made the following comment about the new project:
Maybe if old Sulukule people lived in these new houses, it would be more comfortable than old times for them. I cannot say that they would be more happy but more comfortable. Also this new area was not built according to historical preservation codes in the Historical Peninsula. They did not respect the historic city wall. Houses are bigger than wall and you cannot understand that there is a historic city wall now. But in the past, you could see that wall there. Yes, there were old houses, but it was an organic urban fabric. They had built a house in the past; after years they had added one more room or more floor, etc.… These were not a bad view for me. It seemed organic, but now it is like a computer-game view. It seems like you copied and pasted in Photoshop. It seems like an urban fabric which you moved from the other city.

E. O. Pak also mentioned the same situation. She said:

When we look at the physical situation of the neighborhood, before the project, you could see the historic Istanbul Wall and its doors easily while passing from the Topkapi district. Now, we lost this view with the project. The municipal project increased the building height in the district. This affected the view of Mihrimah Sultan Mosque known as one of Mimar Sinan’s most famous works. The roofs’ heights became the same height as the mosque’s roof. On the other hand, the municipal project let more householders come into the same sized place; and this increased the population density of the Historic Peninsula. The most important thing was this project erased the identity of the district, in other words, the urban memory of Istanbul.

According to city planner, G. Aksuemer, the project created a class polarization:

The project wasn’t successful for Sulukule and its surroundings like Karagumruk because it created an urban disintegration. We could say that it
created a class polarization because you put these people suddenly in a different socio-cultural group. It wasn’t a project of mixed housing estates. Ultimately, you will put these people in as a new group and then put this group in walls and separate them from all the other places. It can transform into a dangerous situation; socially, there is a risk. From the point of view of Istanbul, many building complexes are constructed. Lots of the same types of buildings are built. All of these will become a source of social polarization in the future. I think other social fractures, which are generated by these projects, will create bigger problems. We could even say that it has already started. A lot of research is being done about the problems that happen when people who are sent to out of the city. And this research shows us the problems that we may face in the future.

On the other hand, according to E. Cavusoglu, K. Cilgin and M. C. Yalcintan, there were some lessons for the whole city and urban renewal process in Turkey. K. Cilgin mentioned that any other urban renewal projects were not heard of or spoken about, like the Sulukule project until this time. She added:

None of them were written about in the academic world. We do not know how many articles, papers, or theses were written on the Sulukule project. Also, the Sulukule project influenced local and international media. If you search on the internet, you can find hundreds news articles about the Sulukule project. Everybody knew the process was wrong; also the municipality knew that, I think. There was a really big struggle to cancel the project from not only the planners or architects, but also artists, painters, photographers, singers, and different kinds of intellectual groups, etc. To understand what was happening in the cities in the name of urban renovation, it was a “good” project, of course, I mean bad. But the bad project created a great collaborative struggle in the urban movements. Also, some of
the other municipalities in Turkey understood that its flaws in the urban planning process, and many of them said that they would not implement any project like Sulukule. This was a bad example of urban renewal according to public and to some of the municipalities. Many people took a lesson from this project. After this project, urban transformation began to be spoken about in public. And it prompted municipalities to be more careful while implementing urban renewal processes...

E. Cavusoglu mentioned another important point from this urban renewal process:

When I look at the project in general, I don’t see any progress in people’s lives. I may not be weighing every person one by one, but there is no positive impact on the lives of those I’m still in touch with. The only thing this project did well was to show us how some of the future transformation projects might result in destructive outcomes and how people can find ways to oppose these types of projects.

M. C. Yalcintan said, in regard to the area around Sulukule, explaining benefits of the project:

There was a faithful conservative sector in the area. This sector united an alternative anti-Platform organization. Some people even thought that the municipality had helped out these conservatives to arrange the group, but there was no proof of this. In general most people saw it that way but no matter what happened, the conservative oppositional group found an arena to promote their ideas. Now, it was already hard for the conservatives to live there in peace with the Sulukule lifestyle. For those people living in the surrounding area, the project may have actually seemed successful because their neighborhood had been cleaned out from theft and prostitution. They saw this as a purification operation right from the start anyway. I’m just talking about the areas especially closer to the Fatih center. I don’t think this
is case for the Karagumruk side. Actually, this is just an assumption based on my observations. Let me think of it for Istanbul.... The general Istanbul population could also see the project as a success because they also had a similar Sulukule image in their minds. To them the project would help to remove the dirt off the streets.

Basically I can say that the informants had a consensus that there was no benefit for the Sulukule people; some of them highlighted that maybe a group of people benefited from the increasing property value in Sulukule and around it, but not all of them. Objectively all the interviewees thought that this project was a lost for the entire city because of the cultural and historic values in the area. They added that perhaps some of the Istanbul citizens thought that the area was cleaner as a result of this project, though this group does not seem to be a majority in the city. Other than these, the interviewees spoke about the Platform’s “use of media in the urban renewal process” to reach out to the public concerning the project, and the potential benefit of “mixing Romani culture with Turkish society.” They saw these benefits as positive in the process but they had thought that these benefits arose from the Platform, not from the municipality or its project. I will explain these thoughts in the next section under the title of “advocacy planning approach.”

**Advocacy Planning Approach**

To analyze the Platform’s studies as an experience of advocacy planning, I asked about the alternative plans and what role the Platform played. I asked several questions, their participation in the Platform, their roles were in the Platform’s research, the goals in the alternative plans, the Platform’s general goals, and the extent to which Sulukule benefited from advocacy planning.
First I asked them why they attended the Platform activities how often, and their roles in The Platform. Most of the interviewees attended the Platform after it was established; N. Ozan and D. N. Ozer were two of the founders and organized many activities of the Platform since 2007. N. Ozan and P. M. Demireli still work with women of Sulukule in the Women’s Studio (P. M. Demireli having started in 2008). The Istanbul Conservation Board member, I. Dincer said that her relationship with the Platform started after the Platform visited the Istanbul Conservation Board and warned the board of the situation for the neighborhood.

D. Engin, E. O. Pak, and M. Aki, were urban planning students at the time. They attended the organization of 40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule events, and then became Platform members in subsequent years. They first visited the area as a part of their undergraduate studio class. O. Soysal attended the Platform in 2009 and she still works in the Children’s Studio in the neighborhood. Y. Adanali connected with the Platform by way of his professor from University College London, Yves Cabannes, in 2008 after UCL’s workshop on Sulukule in Istanbul in May of 2007.

M. C. Yalcintan and E. Cavusoglu, who are professors in the School of Planning at MSGSU in Istanbul, attended The Platform after one of The Platform’s founders, Funda Oral, visited them and spoke about Sulukule. Their relationship with the Platform started because of the alternative project in 2008. Before that they were only supporter from outside.
O. Temiz, K. Cilgin, and G. Aksumer were members of the Solidarity Studio, an initiative created by a group of city planning students and academics in MSGSU in 2003. They began working with the Sulukule Platform by way of this group. O. Temiz explained this relationship:

The Platform contacted with us. There were the 40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule events. Why I did not try to contact with them before, because I knew that there were lots of volunteers. I thought that there was no need for me. As solidarity studio, we were also volunteers in many neighborhoods which are affected by urban transformation. There are 900 neighborhoods like this and people do not care about 890 of them. There are many reasons to not come to these neighborhoods for people. Some of them think that they are illegal or informal if that is a gecekondu area. Some of them think that they are gecekondu, they are insecure; and some of them think that there are Kurdish people, etc. There are many reasons for them. I am not saying these can be reason but they think like this. It is their problem. I was spending my energy for these neighborhood where no volunteer this much like in Sulukule. In Sulukule, there were already support and I did not go because of this reason there. I thought if they needed something they could contact with us as Solidarity Studio. Because of this I did not have an organic relationship with Sulukule at the beginning. So, in the 40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule organization’ times, they invited us because we had had a participatory planning experience in another neighborhood in Istanbul “Gulsuyu- Gulensu.” It was a workshop based on a representative system for every street. Because of this workshop, they invited us to share our experiences there. We had a meeting in Sulukule and shared our experiences with the Sulukule people and Platform. Then we thought about what we could do. It was my—and also for some of studio members-- first contact with Sulukule people.
E. Yucak was another member of the Solidarity Studio, and also a member of 1 Umut Association. He explained why he attended The Platform later but he also criticized the Platform because of its goals:

While we were discussing with the friends about what to do (in the Association), we decided that the only way to stake out their claim to the neighborhood was through commonly shared supporting practices and not to ignore their standard of living in those difficult circumstances. Therefore, being a reason for the kids having milk in the mornings if they don’t have, for the ills having their soup if not attained. Notwithstanding, developing these processes ended up failing because there was no common ground between the people who were sensitive to the related problems. In the end, people thought that protecting the neighborhood was something physical, tangible, whereas the reality was not the same. If you say it is totally far away from the current lifestyle of the neighborhood you are also mistaken. Therefore, stating that the inhabitants are fully content with the current lifestyle of the area would be tricky as well. Hence it is a must to produce more solidarity and to create more commonly implementable policies. It wouldn't be credible. The Sulukule Platform is a platform constituted on the displacement of the area. I was invited to join the Platform related to owners’ and renters’ rights. I felt that I should be interested in Sulukule people’s property rights as a lawyer. I was there due the determination of the right owners. I prepared appeals etc.

As E. Yucak said the Platform first aimed to protect the neighborhood with its current situation, but there were some problems which everybody could see from outside. The community was poor, most residents did not have good jobs, children left school early, and the infrastructure was also below the standards. The people understood that their livelihoods were disadvantaged and that they were underrepresented in urban renewal
process such as in other governmental processes. This could not be explained as a part of Romani culture or some external reason. E. Yucak mentioned this because he thinks that there was a need for “transformation” [sic] in the area but surely this transformation should not have been as bad as urban renewal process was.

He also mentioned that the transformation should have been done with socio-economic development strategies with support of the community. This was one purpose of preparing an alternative project, exploring a possibility through a different approach. It was also important as it served to demonstrate that there was another available solution to approach problems that could save the neighborhood. In the alternative project preparation, some strengths and weaknesses evident. E. Yucak mentioned these strengths and weaknesses by stating that the project was not prepared by the Platform alone; e.g., professors, academics, experts who were not from the Platform but supported the preparation of the alternative proposal.

First of all, it was not the Platform’s project. The Platform was something outside and beyond the residents, for the residents did not want to leave the neighborhood and be concerned about the issue. Accordingly, the alternative project was something born from the municipality’s claim that we could not accommodate the tenants and landlords altogether in the neighborhood. Actually, the alternative project was made to show the municipality that it could be done. Actually, it showed that the municipality’s claim was not correct. It was initiated by academics, and we were invited by them. There was a collective work named STOP, which indicates autonomous planners without borders. It showed that the alternative project could be realized. It was a good working experience that considered the lifestyle, culture and
necessities of the Historic Peninsula and reconciled it with the planner rules. TOKI gave the appointment because of the public opinion and the pressure of the press. I was on the committee that went to the appointment. However, as I have mentioned before, their intentions were not honest, and they did not listen the solutions with heart. The appointment was a formality necessitated by the pressure of the public. And it was like, we call you as authority and listen to you, but your solutions do not fit. However, it still proved that the project could be designed by considering lifestyle, socio-economic class, and coexistence, with spatial and social solutions.

Y. Adanali also mentioned that the alternative project was prepared in order to show the municipality that there could be another solution for Sulukule:

Overall the alternative project shows that they are many other ways of doing things; they are many ways of doing urban transformation or improvements. And the opposition or kind of urban resistance, it can be cooperative, it can be pro-solution and try to find offer certain strategies that could make things better etc. so in that sense, it was you know very clear demonstration that yes, another Sulukule is possible, another solution is possible, another project for the people is possible: they are all on the table. There is no excuse left that why this project that they are doing but not something else. If this is the best project for people, for the area for the history, etc. so in answering all these issues, our alternative project was very important. And then what were the weakness of it, I think it was also strength but also the weakness that the idea that we had to make a plan also for the third persons, not only for the people of Sulukule but also third person. It gives a lot of complications and also gives certain level of legitimacy to the project.

Then he explained more about this situation:
There was a believe that this alternative planning process could actually change the real project. So this was a naïf believe that we all shared. If we do something that can be applicable we can actually manage to keep the people of Sulukule of the great extent of them on Sulukule. But the precondition for that was at least this is how we were informed by the officials that we have to co-habit we have to include investors in the area. So it means that we have to think for not only people of Sulukule but also for those who invested in the last few years who wants to take the benefit of the area. So first we discussed a great extent we should still knowing that this is a not the optimum situation if we should accept this call or not. And then it gives us certain headaches as I said this was from the very beginning in a way we accepted them as a legitimate actors in this process. And second it also gives a lot of in terms of just thinking project’s parameters; it gives a lot of problems: how to put all these people there, and what kind of life, what would be best for people, how to keep Sulukule culture at the same time kind of bring these people in, etc. maybe that was not the strongest part of the project. So and then, another weakness maybe, we were doing a kind of advocacy planning, so at the same time we were trying to force those actors, decision makers to accept this project. It was not very open a kind of tender that we received and say “please do this project for us” but it was in a way a pressure and a giving us a bit of hope and then also kind of keeping this very delicate balance. So we have to be informal we have to be sometimes discreet, etc. but and then this kind of informality also keep authorities to be fully independent from accountability and responsibility. So you know we made all these plans, we spent a lot of times there, we produced ideas, but then just this all. So this was I guess the kind of weakness that we did not have some source of open relations, open strong starting point maybe.

Many other informants also considered the owners of newer property, i.e., those who bought properties in the last few years to benefit from the project. This was seen as a
weakness in the alternative project. D. N. Ozer was one of those interviewees; she explained how this situation was a weakness not only for Sulukule people but also for the history of the area:

I took place in the alternative project process while the Platform was preparing. It was a strong project because of the creative team which prepared the alternative. There were numerous people from different disciplines. The weak part was the lack of neighborhood ownership in the process. I wish we could have prepared the project before the destructions and before the municipality sold the new houses titles. When we prepared the alternative project, most of the houses’ owners had already changed. Then because of this exchange, we had to focus on two groups: Sulukule people and newcomers [sic]. And this situation created a high density of alternative projects. Normally, as an art historian I would not support this kind of high project-density initiative, but to protect Sulukule culture and people, I had to. This was totally the municipality’s fault, and we tried to find a solution for it.

Dincer also mentioned the team which prepared the project by pointing out that the alternative project was a long-term project:

Actually the alternative project has many positive sides. For example, all the people worked unselfishly on it without thinking their cost and without a competitive environment. Every coworker aimed at solely generating a perfect work, and so the project’s preparation process was managed successfully. As a consequence, the output was convincing. Sulukule was a difficult place to prepare an alternative plan. Only preparing a physically renovation such as restoration would not have made satisfy the municipality which wants an architectural in another words urban design project. The Platform’s project was a long-term project based on economic social
improvement. Because of this, its meeting with the municipal project could not be possible.

Dincer brought up a very important point. The TOKI wanted a quick solution which it could be easily implemented but the alternative plan was a long term project. They did not have adequate time after all the previous criticisms. They were also not aware that such vigorous criticisms would remain after the implementation. The alternative project defended keeping old residents in the area, though it should have added new housing for the new property owners. O. Temiz mentioned strengths and weaknesses as:

First, the alternative was a project which defends holding old residents in the area. Second, it was an interdisciplinary project. Third, it was not created by one person; there were lots of different ideas from different perspectives. The strongest part of the project was its consideration of local people. It was trying to save people’s current life. It was defending the on-side transformation idea. It was not ignoring any people from the local community. It was a project based on people’s needs and issues not for new comers. We were showing that another transformation is possible. We showed that it would be better for Sulukule people, for Istanbul people, and for other people if the Sulukule people stayed in the same area.

The weakness part of the project: we did not have money. We did not have any financial support. If we had, we could have implemented our project ourselves with the community. If you do not have money, authority will not listen to you. They try to make money from every urban piece of land. I did not have a chance to overcome this idea. In the Platform side, the weakness part was a lack of time and urgency. Although we tried to prepare our project with the community together, it was not the best ideal participation process because of the limited time. We could not include the whole community into
the planning process. We did not have enough time to do this. We listened to the community’s issues and needs, but we couldn’t listen to everybody. In the end, we did a project for them but not with them. This was resulted from the limited time. We did not have a chance to meet with every street’s residents in our 20-25 meetings. In short, it was really important for the intellectual people and media but not that much for all the local people. Sulukule people could not say that “this is our alternative project.” They only said that “these people did this alternative, and this is better than your project.” It was stronger than what it was, but we could not use it.

E. O. Pak stated another important point from the project. According to her, the alternative project was a little utopic because the authorities manipulated the Platform by forcing them to increase the number of housing units in the project. She says that it was her dilemma. According to D. Engin, this was the hardest part of the final alternative; putting these two groups of people in the same housing complex:

Because we knew that make these two groups live together was almost impossible. One of the groups would marginalize the other. And that led to the conclusion that the alternative project was useless. Although we tried to change this, it was one of the weaknesses of the project. Also, there was always pressure of finishing the project before the implementation of the other one. However, we always had hope. We had the strength to prove that an alternative Sulukule was possible.

And she added the project’s strengths:

The alternative was prepared by a strong and diverse team. The team included academics who worked on very different subjects. Those academics would not have been brought together for any other topic. This was one of the reasons for all of this support from all over the world. Many academics
from different disciplines – sociologists, city planners, architects – almost 100 people came together. Most of them conducted research on the social structure, history, culture and economy of the neighborhood. Some of them were activists from Platform who spent much time in the field and knew the field and residents very well. A very comprehensive survey was made. That’s why demands of the residents were known very well. Actually, we have tried to make the plan participatory and effective, something we always defend.

According to Professor M. C. Yalcintan, the first alternative project was very amateur but the second revision one was very professionally prepared, having discussed it with a large interdisciplinary group. He added that he liked the decision making process. To him, “...in the end, the outcome might not even be a great powerful plan because of this back-and-forth decision exchange/process, but I don’t think anyone could have come up with such a powerful plan in Turkey. Presumably, these kind of influential plans are rare in the world to begin with.” He added some more advantages and some disadvantages in this alternative plan:

We had strong decisions, and they came to the surface after long, enduring discussions, even if some of us were impatient with the decision period. I tried to stay calm and patient during this time. Another advantage and what separated the project from all other planning periods was the discussions about the things that were social, economic and cultural and determining the relevant issues. We drew a path that would help us to go through each step, and we headed towards the required spatial regulation. The space reconstruction plot was designed according to existing social, economic and cultural facts. This is a really differential and special circumstance. Hence, we tried to stay as close as possible to project’s real cost and finance, using cooperative operating system models. Wasn't there a Utopia? Of course there
was one, but it contained down-to-earth movements. What we aimed could certainly be impossible and out of our reach, but there was a possibility to come close. So I also set the bar high and gave a fight to achieve this goal in planning. In the project, everything from implementation to the decision-making phase was taken under consideration. We didn’t leave out anything. But these were all valid for the second plan, like I said before the first plan was only a starting point and limited. The second plan was a negotiation project. Some buildings were already demolished and several people had already left the neighborhood before our project started. Therefore, the neighborhood wasn’t a complete neighborhood anymore, and there wasn’t a potential to keep the neighborhood fully alive like before. So implementing a compromised scheme could also be seen as a disadvantage in this case.

According to P. M. Demireli, if Sulukule people did stand up for the alternative project, it would have been more easily put into place. She believes that this was one of the most problematic weaknesses. But according to other interviewees, the Sulukule people were scared; they already lost their life and did not have any more hope. This was the reason that fewer attended the alternative project’s decision-making phase.

K. Cilgin highlighted another important point: solidarity in the alternative project. She says that professionals did not come to prepare the alternative project because of money or their political views, but as civilly minded people. She also argues that non-implementation is not a fault of the alternative project. Some people may say that the greatest fault of the project was its failure to be launched. According to her, the alternative proposal was prepared to show that there was another solution available which could solve the community’s ailments, and it succeeded in that. Also, for her, it was an example to explain how an urban renewal project could bring solutions problematic issues of a
community through economic and community development in parallel. Therefore, she added that maybe they knew/felt that this alternative project would not be implemented but that that was the last opportunity to stop the municipality’s project, and thus they tried.

E. Cavusoglu emphasized “legality” as a weakness and “usage of media” as a strong part in the process:

We didn’t have any legality; we weren’t the dwellers or an appointed official or an elected municipal officer in fact. But on the other hand there was an academically generated project. It would be an issue if anyone asked whom we were acting on behalf of. We couldn’t just say public because in reality Sulukule people weren’t involved with the process that much. While we were trying to do something on behalf of the Platform, there wasn’t any legitimate sole behind us. I think this was the first challenge. Second it was to get strong public support because there was an unfair promotional campaign conducted by the media which was in favor of municipality but against Sulukule folks. To the public, Sulukule was a criminal neighborhood that needed transformation because they already segregated Romanies as guilty thieves, dirty people, etc. So for them it was unnecessary to do anything helpful or supportive for Sulukule community. Third it was always to be perceived as creating obstacles for the existing project even if our great ideas were favorable, because there was already a political decision made to apply the current project which would achieve its economic benefit. So we weren’t invited to the moot-hall during the negotiation process, and when we did, the opposite side always looked at our ideas with a jaundiced eye. Sometimes during the TOKI meetings we had over at municipality and ministry, we were even asked whether we were Romanies or Gypsies in a strong insulting racist tone, because we were caring and supporting Romanies and trying to keep their culture alive. These were all so difficult to deal with, but besides any of
these problems to me the most saddening thing was to receive very harsh criticisms from the organized left parties mostly involved in helping disadvantageous public groups. This even confused and discouraged other people who were willing to help us out. (What kind of criticism did you receive?) We were blamed for doing something on behalf of public rather than doing it with public. We were falsely accused of encouraging the public to be less involved “making them lazy” when we acted on this civil duty. We were criticized simply for being revisionist because of altering/modulating the existing system moderately (instead of changing it completely) and satisfying our egos by branding ourselves. When we told about our desire of keeping as many Romanies as possible in the neighborhood, we were indicted of being bad planners for preventing ideal urbanization by increasing the population and dense housing. Our ideas were seen as pointless. 5-6 years later people who made these accusations came to us and confessed that they were wrong, also apologized to us at different occasions.

I just want to add one more thing...The Platform started using the media well against the campaign. Sulukule stayed in the news for a long time because of some courageous reporters and columnists. I believe the Platform succeeded well in keeping Sulukule in local agenda by building a relationship with the media. In my opinion this should set a good example for other future projects and opposing struggles and conflicts. Knowing how to use the media was really powerful. We always tried to keep them on our side.

N. Ozan, who spent the most time in the neighborhood during the urban renewal process and works in the Women’s Studio, discussed some strengths and self-criticisms of the approach:

The alternative project was a wonderful job. In reality, this women’s studio idea came from the alternative project. You remember, you suggested some
small manufacturing studios in that project to improve the economic situation in Sulukule. There were many perfect ideas in that project which could be implemented very easily if the municipality accepted our alternative project. Kader & Kismet Studio was one of that project’s steps. It is the only one idea which we could implement after the destructions [sic]. Maybe we can show the children studio as a second step of the alternative project too. It was also very important for the children in the neighborhood. I believed that idea so much also. But the only weak part is that we could only implement these ideas slowly after we lost the neighborhood. We had limited time, and we lost all those times to protect the neighborhood and we focused on Romani culture every time at the beginning of the Platform but there were other people; it was not important from which ethnic group. When I look back now, I think like this. Every time we thought that they were Romani people and they could not organize very well, Erbay (Erbay Yucak) told us every time that they could. We would have opened these studios with the community when the neighborhood was still standing if we listened to Erbay earlier.

I also asked the two former residents of Sulukule what they knew about the alternative project. The woman stated:

Of course we know it. They presented it to us. You were there. It would be great if they could implement it. It would also affect our houses positively. You would not demolish houses in the neighborhood. The Sulukule Platform did everything what they could. They did all what we needed. Also after the demolishment, they are still here for us. They found a job for me next to our house. Look this is my job (we did the interview in the Women’s Studio), this is my home at the same time. Nese (Nese Ozan) and Pelin (Pelin Demirel), those are my sister. They are not from the Platform, they are from us. They
are from Sulukule people for us. They did what my family did not do for me sometimes. God bless them!

The former resident man said something similar:

We know the project. The municipality did not ask anything to us but they did. Also, they came to the neighborhood to present it to us. It was a great project but the municipality did not accept it. If they did we would not lost our houses and jobs. They really did everything. They did all that we needed. They discussed the project with the municipality. They wrote official letters to the municipality for us. They prepared the alternative project. They showed us that there was another way for renovation. They helped our children to return to the school. They gave extra lectures to our children to improve their education in the children studio. They made our children forget the effects of destructions by using dance, music, etc. They helped us to find furniture for our houses. They did everything. I can only remember these now.

Then I asked the Platform members about the goals of The Platform and the goals in alternative project. As in the Platform’s aim, most of them told me that there was not simply one goal: the goals changed over time according to the municipality’s efforts and new news which came from the municipality. N. Ozan said that at the beginning of the platform, the aim was to create a public support system while organizing the 40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule organization and to protect the neighborhood. The alternative project was one of the protection mechanisms. And she added “...maybe now it seems like the neighborhood could not benefit from these, but in the future we will see the results of the Platform and alternative project because it was the first alternative urban project in Turkey.” She thought that this project would serve as a model if there is another unethical
urban renewal process. And also she added: "...authorities will be more carefull about other urban renewal areas after this project because they know these neighborhoods (potential sites for urban renewal) are not alone!"

E. Cavusoglu emphasized differences between the alternative project and the municipal project:

The project examined the real lives and issues, so such involvement made the project important. The aim was to come up with a suitable spatial regulation which would improve those people’s lives the best way possible. This part required a broad analysis and was very strong on its own. Maybe we did not exactly do the project with the public, but we definitely worked with the public. People who worked with the project led us into good direction. Therefore, we analyzed the needs and problems very well. We always looked for ways to enrich their living conditions without displacing them from their neighborhood. The project we did was not an architectural one and we never claimed that its architectural points were strong. But you should fully consider finding ways to improve the socio-economic sustainability with this type of projects anyway. Ours had a significant advantage over the other project, it offered a different perspective on how people themselves could gain economic sustainability and boost their solidarity relations as a society, it mainly focused on these two things. Furthermore, we provided physical solutions on how to increase the urban quality and comfort. Other project’s approach was directly related to site interference and had nothing to do with society. Our project answered the questions like what could be done to provide better social and economic living conditions to this local group. Concrete steps would be like mutual/common restaurants, heating solutions to reduce the cost of common living. While the project provided ownership rights to the tenants, it also prevented economic rent entering into the
neighborhood. It wasn’t based on proprietary, it mainly offered reasonable rational solutions to provide employment opportunities for locals. I believe these are the strengths.

And then he explained how the Sulukule people benefited from the project:

Our project didn’t happen. If it had come true as desired, we could have mentioned more tangible outcome but despite this we could still talk about some gains and benefits of our defeat. The fight between the project groups and getting project’s approval was like a collective bargaining deal. Being in this bargain actually rose the price up. If there was no opposition or resistance from different groups, the families in the neighborhood would have had to leave all their possessions for nothing. By having the alternative project study, these families earned some money. They could have earned more money if they resisted longer. I’d say the investors also earned money but we’re talking about the residents here now. I can easily say that having residents at least earning some money from the offer was the first gain. And second gain was to have the study become an educational experience to teach the dwellers how to stand up for themselves, claim and protect their neighborhood by defending their rights. Normally in daily life they wouldn’t question if they liked their homes, streets, and neighbors or not, but when it became a reality and they were under duress/pressure, they would be forced to think and decide. Some might have not joined the alternative project or boycotts directly but at least they had talked about the resistance in the coffee houses while they were playing Rummy Cube or sipping tea. And this action gave them a chance to consider their social standing and existence. I think this was also a gain on their end. The third benefit happened when the dwellers gained several urban environmental services. Fatih Municipality offered to give renters their rights to ownership, to provide convenience to get education to students and some of the people, to bring public transportation services in the new location after they moved. These offers
were done to construct some convincing arguments and to get rid of the public pressure but they were also beneficial to the community residents. In fact the residents gained these offers as a result of the struggle put up by the alternative project. I think these are the direct gains in the neighborhood.

K. Cilgin expounded on the Platform's studies in the area, specifically relating to the Children's Studio:

In all these urban renovation processes, people are forced to move out. This especially affects children; it is a kind of trauma in a child’s brain. As well as these forced evictions push people to live in a lifestyle which they never had previously; people see their houses destroyed right under their eyes. They see their neighbors on the street. The municipality did not mop up destroyed house because of their psychological effect, which forced the people who did not leave the neighborhood yet to do so. Especially for children, this was a really difficult situation. In this case, the Platform was really effective and did many things to save children from these bad effects of the renovation. While doing this, the Platform did not force children to do something; they tried to find some games or some enjoyable activities which the Sulukule children liked – such as playing tom-tom or drum, painting, reading-writing activities. Some of the children who dropped out of school because of economic reasons returned to school after these activities. Now, some children from Sulukule play the drum in concerts, and they have a music group named by the "Sulukule Children’s Orchestra.” This was one of the most important impacts of the Sulukule Platform. All of the children in Sulukule already had the ability to play musical instruments because of the gypsy culture. Every person in Sulukule has played at least one music instrument. The Platform only used this potential to minimize the bad effects of the urban renewal processes on children. Some of the members of the Sulukule Children’s Orchestra went to the European cities with the Platform’s connections.
She also explained the alternative project’s main goal because, in general alternative project tried to use the existing assets to improve the area as was the case with the Children’s Studios:

It was a plan which did not try to change people’s habitat, culture and daily life. It was trying to support their culture by improving their local economy and their social structure. We tried to protect their vernacular architecture in the area and also did not change the traditional urban structure. We didn’t change the parcels or land-blocks in the area. We suggested making strong some old houses; reviewing some of them, and beautifying all the houses by painting. Also we tried to design new public spaces on the common areas. Our project cannot be defined as a spatial plan or design project. You can see from the name of the project; it was a socio-economic development project which uses the potentials and values in the area such as Romani culture, community relations, social links, etc. To be honest, I can say that our project was better than the municipal project. There is not discussion in my mind.

P. M. Demireli remarked on another important benefit from the Platform:

First, residents who did not have new houses in the other mass housing areas were given these rights back with the Platform’s works. What was this exactly? The Platform helped them write letters to submit to the municipality. Many of these residents did not know how to read or write. Also, they did not even know that they could write a letter for this purpose. There were many attachments required with these letters, such as renter contracts, electricity bills, etc., but of course many people in the neighborhood did not have a contract because homeowners were their relatives or neighbors. The contract system is not useful when determining holder rights in these kinds of neighborhoods. Of course, the municipality knew this, but they did not search for another solution to determine who
held the rights to the properties. On the other hand, who saved contracts from the 1990s? They wanted these or electricity bills from the 1990s. People did not have these documents. Volunteers from the Sulukule Platform wrote letters to the municipality to explain the situation. Also, they went to get documents about the electricity from the electric company because residents did not have bills from those years. After all of this, we understood how many renters, who lived in this neighborhood for ten plus years, had no rights until the Platform. The municipality had not counted them correctly for mass housing project. There was discrimination in the distribution of rights. But after they had their rights back, this situation established a precedent for the projects in the other neighborhoods. There is still a children’s music orchestra which continues. Kader-Kismet Women’s Studio is another project continued from the Platform. In this atelier, housewives of Sulukule contribute to their house incomes. All these affect the neighborhood’s daily life. These are positive effects of the Platform. But on the other hand, all these volunteers affected the neighborhood’s psychology. I am not saying this about all the volunteers in the neighborhood, but some of them came to the neighborhood for a kind of touristic visit and left. This situation created some media-maniacs in the neighborhood. Also, this situation was bad for the children’s live. They did not understand why these people came to their life and left and then never returned.

G. Aksumer mentioned that maybe everyone did not benefit perfectly from the alternative project or the Platform’s studies, but it was a significant majority. According to Aksumer, some of the residents had moved away from the neighborhood earlier, and the Platform could not touch them because of this. She also added the Women’s Studio was a great gain for the area; it improved some families’ incomes after the demolition.
M. Aki emphasized the benefits enjoyed by the Sulukule people during the process of developing the alternative project:

First, the neighborhood understood that they were not alone. Even though the municipality started to destroy the neighborhood, people in the neighborhood were still hopeful and happy because people were standing with them... Second, the children’s studio was really important for them. They knew that people were trying to make them forget this bad situation. Children were going to the Children Studio’s building everyday like they went to school. They were not playing games only with the volunteers—at the same time they were studying more than normal with them through enjoyable activities. Many of the children who left school from the neighborhood returned after these studio activities. I think this was the most important benefit for the neighborhood. And today the same activities continue in the studio’s last place around the old Sulukule area. Third, the municipality’s project was really bad, but it set a precedent for the other renewal areas/neighborhoods. They took many lessons from this project. Now they do not sign any papers without a lawyer's help.

D. Engin emphasized that “The struggle was really important in the Sulukule urban renewal process; and many people learned how they could struggle for their rights, it doesn’t matter for what they were struggling, it could be for a house, clean water, the natural environment, parks, or rights to their city...” I. Dincer went on to discuss how the alternative project was informative for the community: “The most important benefit was that the alternative project has broadened their horizons, used technical words and outlooks were changed, they noticed what planning is and they perceived how the process might work. Additionally, they learned of the soul of the struggle in the district.” Then she
reminded the head of Sulukule Association Sukru Punduk’s sentence, which can summarize the whole renovation process: “They [means the Fatih Municipality] changed our habitat, but we cannot adapt to live in a modern apartment complex.”

Besides all these, there was a really important benefit not only for Sulukule people but also for the whole Romani population in Turkey. Turkish Parliamentary began speaking about Romani citizens and their rights as a minority group in the Turkish Republic after the project and the public support for it. People’s minds on Sulukule changed in Istanbul and also throughout the entire country after all the news and TV programs on Sulukule. Sulukule became a famous Gypsy neighborhood in the world with the help of the news; unfortunately the fame came after the demolition. Some local and international music groups wrote and/or composed songs about Sulukule. For example, “Kardes Turkuler” wrote a song to a girl from Sulukule named “Nazar,” and a world-famous Gypsy music group “Gogol Bordello” wrote a song, “educate thy neighbor” about Sulukule after their visits to the neighborhood. Numerous studies were done on this neighborhood. These were other benefits from the whole urban renewal process to the Sulukule people. M. C. Yalcintan explained these benefits:

First, there were people on the streets, even important people, crying out that Gypsies were alive, living different lives than others in their Gypsy

29 Sukru Punduk said this in a very famous TV show while experts were discussing about the project, and one of them said him that they had new houses from the Tasoluk mass housing project.

30 Kardes Turkuler, which is one of the most famous ethnic music groups, performs in different languages spoken in Turkey besides Turkish. The group members visited Sulukule several times during urban renewal process. They made a song about a girl from Sulukule. You can listen to Kardes Turkuler’s song at this link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1EE89GjknE

31 You can find Gogol Bodello’s song on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_ZGuHPiG-I
neighborhoods. A period started for Romanies where they even began to look at the bylaws in constitution. The Sulukule community Romani council had different meetings; the prime minister attended and moderated some of them. The events of these days stirred many people into action. Second, there was a mechanism to improve the support system for poor individuals in the neighborhood; therefore, these individuals started learning various ways to stand on their own two feet. This resulted in an increase with the number of rightful tenants. For example, a group called Destruction Riot formed up in the neighborhood. The Sulukule Orchestra was developed. These types of artistic movements expanded. Sulukule was also used as a subject in different artistic works, for example various articles were written mentioning its name, and consequently these works contained a large number of references to Sulukule. On the other hand, a problem rose after people started coming to the neighborhood and spending time with the community, especially with children. Sometimes the attention people got from others would be so overwhelming. It could even be traumatic, especially on some children in the neighborhood. I know some kids who were affected by this deep interest. For example, everybody who saw Nazar (a kid from the neighborhood) thought she was so likable; she was always carried on someone’s shoulders. A band even wrote a song about Nazar, right? I mean, there could be some psychological effects on the community as a result of this deep interest. Many visits by artists, students, academics, researchers to the neighborhood brought the term “slum tourism” into our planning literature. Discussions about whether these psychological effects exist or not still continue.

I, therefore, asked about the possibility of the implementation of the alternative project to the interviewees. E. Yucak said that it would require effort, but it would be practical. Y. Adanali explained:
The destructions have been already started, almost in the summer of 2009, maybe more than half of the neighborhood was demolished. So the alternative plan was in a way for stopping the destruction but mainly for how to keep Sulukule neighborhood for the people of Sulukule. I think this was the main aim of the plan. Of course it was not the best project in terms of, because I already mentioned that we had to include those new investors which come from the outside of the neighborhood. This situation has given a new challenge for the project that limited our space and increased the density of the area. But then, it was definitely better than what we have now because it was a project for the people it wasn’t a project for the investors. So in that sense, that was better, it was better in the sense it was not only a housing project. We really thought about a kind of site management, how social and public actors could be involved, it was more kind of community development plan that could also realized to eliminate the problems of the neighborhood. So I think the mentality, the approach, the process, the plan were definitely much better than current plan. It can even consider as a really good practice to show how an urban transformation plan should be made. But because of the municipality’s limitations for the new comers, it was not the best. This is what I think.

O. Temiz focused on financial support. He argues that if the Platform had money or financial support from somewhere else, they would have implemented the project. He added that “Our project was explaining a process in time. There were many significant points in our project to improve the local economy, to make strong social relations, to cultural tourism, etc... There would be a public kitchen, community gardening, horse car, music school, common manufacturing, public spaces, etc.... So, all these pieces would create the whole project. And it was all about sustainability. Our project was more sustainable than the municipality’s.” D.N. Ozer mentioned that the alternative project was not only
better for the community but also for the historic and cultural values which are now lost. She added it was more realistic than the municipal plan but they opted for the unrealistic one. According to I. Dincer, as far as politics were concerned, its chance of being applied was 0%. However, she added that “The alternative did not square with the municipal authority’s short-term perspective; this is a problem not only for this project but also for the urban renewal in Turkey.”

M.C. Yalcintan looked at the chance of implementing the project from a different perspective:

There was no chance anyway for our project. If there had been a chance, it should have been earlier to begin with. The purchases and sales were all completed; the investments were done under the AKP’s political wings – meaning the AKP and its administration already allocated their resources, finished the projects, expropriated the land from the locals, etc. There was only a slim chance of implementing the project from that point on, probably 1-2%. I always told this to people in my inner circle. You can’t measure the meaning of this project just with its importance or if it was implemented or not. I wish it was implemented of course, but I knew it wouldn’t be. The meaning of this project was to reveal that there might be a possibility of something different happening. This fact alone is also important.

D. Engin, K. Cilgin, and M. Aki also shared the same view with M. C. Yalcintan; they thought that there was a really low chance of implementing the alternative project because it was a long-term project and the municipality normally did not want to change their project but wanted to show goodwill to the Platform because of the international
oppression. P. Demireli also mentioned the money problem; she argued that if the Platform had money, the alternative project could have been implemented.

On the other hand, E. Cavusoglu was one of the interviewees who really believed that the alternative project would be implemented:

From beginning to end I was really confident that the project could be applied. I really didn’t see anything which could not be done through this project. Our struggle was a long lasting one. Many times we were disappointed with the news of demolition or displacement of the families and the municipality’s explanation, but I was always hopeful of the project’s feasibility. There were some people even from the Platform thought that the meetings and discussions we had with the municipality and TOKI were kind of their delaying tactics because our negotiation struggle was taking too long and it was frustrating. My will to continue on the discussions wasn’t from a stubborn act, I truly believed in the feasibility of the project because the public authorities had begun to be bothered quite a bit by national and international pressure, and I had thought that they would also settle for this alternative solution just so they could save their reputation even if they were reluctant to the idea. Actually, that’s exactly what happened. At our first meeting with TOKI we asked why they were interested in our alternative project. We were curious because they were the ones who had started the previous horrible project, an all-inclusive demolition plan. They told us that first our project was cheap, second it would save their international reputation, third the project has often been mentioned in the media and they were getting pressured; all these reasons basically had made them consider our project. I thought this explanation was sincere, and really it wasn’t a delaying tactic to me. In the second meeting, the chairman of TOKI told us that his status was in a critical stage within his political party, he could be
forced to resign from TOKI to become a cabinet minister; in fact he was elected as a cabinet minister later on. He told us that our project could get okay now and he would possibly support us but he wasn’t sure how long this support might last, in the end he might still have to implement the other municipal project which he didn’t like. I think he was being honest with us when he said that the political gain and economic rent in Sulukule had already been shared and there was nothing he could do. I don’t assume he was saying these things just to stall for time. I don’t like the guy personally, he was kind of a racist person but he was frank with us. In the situations like getting a project’s approval, the public authority had to put forward a clear attitude, but the prime minister had given a strict order on applying the municipal project in the area back then. Later people talked about having similar strict orders for other projects as well. If they were do-gooders and approached the idea a little bit favorably, I definitely think our project could have been implemented. I’m not saying that we could have done it better or the community could have adopted it more. I think we have done our best. Even if there was more pressure and support from the public, the municipality would waive our project. The problem wasn’t us, it was the attitude taken by the municipality and public enterprises towards the project. They were determined to do whatever they had decided before.

K. Cilgin summarized what would have happened in Sulukule had the project been implemented:

If the project was implemented exactly like we designed, I cannot say that it would be successful one hundred percent. There would be some small problems, but it would be successful because we would be there also. We would not go anywhere else after implementation. I promised this to the Sulukule community. When they had any problems, we would go to help and solve them. And also, success depends on the person. It can be successful for
me, but it might not be for another person. But I am 100% sure that it would be better than the current project. There is not any doubt about this. But I guessed that the alternative would not be implemented because of the political nature of the decision. This was not a planning decision or municipal decision; this was coming from the high political stage. It was only about money and different Romani culture.

Some other interviewees commented that there may be a little tension between groups if the alternative plan were implemented as the residents of the neighborhood would necessarily need to cohabitate in proximity of new residents from different socio-economic backgrounds and cultural values. They also emphasized that if Sulukule people were given the opportunity to live in the new development where Sulukule once was, they would have access to better infrastructure and services. Though, if this were to happen, more affluent residents may not be attracted to the area.

I also asked the same question to the old dwellers of Sulukule: how Sulukule would be if the alternative project was implemented? The male former resident said that “It would be like heaven. It would be wonderful. We would not lose our houses. We would have our jobs. But there was big money in this project, and because of that the municipality did not implemented the alternative one. They did not even listen to the project.” According to the old dwellers, the alternative project was much better than the municipal project, and it would have created better conditions and living standards for them.

Finally, I asked the interviewees about their roles in the Platform, to what extent the municipality’s project forced people to move who did not want to, and to what extent people were forced to move back versus moving to other distant neighborhoods. O. Soysal
took part in the Platform as a psychologist; and played a significant role to minimize the negative effects of the urban renewal. She explained her position as:

As I am a psychologist, my first concern was about the psychological state of the Romani residents of Sulukule. I worked and still work since 2009 with mainly children but as well as with women. We have founded the Sulukule Volunteers Association to support Roma families. We work especially on the education of children and women. Since 2010, I have worked 5 days a week at our tiny center to support the Roma people of Sulukule. According to the Platform's studies, almost 317 families had to leave Sulukule by forced eviction. Many of them started to live in Tasoluk which is a neighborhood about 42 km away from city center. They experienced heavy and dramatic financial problems. They also experienced social difficulties. The flats in Tasoluk were not proper for their life and they could not stay there long. Almost all of these families moved back to Karagumruk, a neighborhood very close to Sulukule. Some of them moved from Tasoluk to Balat, Gaziosmanpasa, Fener, and Ayvansaray. In 2013, many of the families of former Sulukule neighborhood live in the streets next to the old Sulukule. Sulukule Romani residents became more fragile and unhappy because of the Fatih Municipality's project. They all were affected from this process.

D. N. Ozer explained why those people came back to the neighborhoods which were around Sulukule, and how their lives were affected by this whole process:

Because of the project, almost 5000 people had to leave the area. Tasoluk, where the municipality sent the renters to, was 40 kilometers far from the city center. The municipality had not completed the construction yet. They had not finished the school or designated a bus route. There was not any public transportation yet. It was not possible to go and come back in a day for people who worked in informal sectors such as dancing, playing music
instruments, hawking wares, etc. Also, for these people, it was impossible to pay monthly payments for the payments. Those houses were not given freely; Sulukule people had a monthly payment to occupy there, but they did not have enough money to pay these payments. Maybe this was a good payment schedule for any family in Turkey, but not for them because they were really poor under the poverty line. Then they came back to around the old neighborhood from Tasoluk. Most of the Sulukule people now live in Karagumruk which is really close to old Sulukule area. I mean they live in the same area again which is really close to their culture. They prefer this neighborhood because of the similar culture and close destination. This is the eviction part of the project—but people also lost their jobs in this process. Some families were destroyed. Some marriages were divorced. People went to prison, etc.

Professor E. Cavusoglu explained the municipality’s project as an eviction and/or displacement process:

I can call this because we determined that 5,200 people were living in the neighborhood, but nobody is left today. All were removed from the area. Some left at the beginning of the project, and others abandoned gradually. Some stood up and gained their rights then left, some sold their places and left, and others collectively moved to Tasoluk as you know; but I know nobody is there now, if I remember correctly there were only a couple of families. Most of them moved back to the closer neighborhoods like Karagumruk because they could bring themselves into existence there. There is no one-to-one research done but just by studying some sort of tracking system, we can see that some lost their jobs and houses, some lost their neighbors, and some lost their solidarity relations. Some of them obtained money by selling their property shares but in the end they became poor again because they couldn’t make good use of their money. I don’t think any
of these lives actually changed for the better. In fact some of the lives were even lost because they couldn't reach to the hospital on time. I believe the municipality was responsible for all these. I suppose Uncle Asim from the neighborhood remarked the best sentence about this subject. He asked me once if I knew the worst part of the project and I asked him to tell me. He said “They turned siblings into enemies”. The municipality bribed some community members in a way that they were really fooled. People who were neighbors and friends to each other in 30-40 years practically stopped talking to each other. I think this was the greatest harm of the project because when it tried to set up new lives in this place, it actually reached to a point of people’s isolation. In my opinion this was an evil thing to do.

**Remaining Lessons**

I asked interviewees how they were affected from their experiences with the urban renewal process. D. Engin mentioned how her time working with the Platform and her involvement in the urban renewal process affected her:

There are negative and positive aspects. The negative one – I cannot go to the neighborhood anymore. I cannot stand to see the new buildings in the area. Positively, I was a part of participation and a struggle for rights. With the Sulukule team and local residents, we have done something together, and I feel lucky about it. During the 40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule event, I had a chance to see the culture of the neighborhood very closely. Being a witness to all of this before the neighborhood’s destruction is very important for me. We are all upset about the result of the project’s destructions. However, it is not an end, and this struggle is not over.

This situation is same for almost all the members of the Platform. When I visited the area in the winter of 2013, I met with the Platform members who are still with the
community in the Children’s or Women’s Studios; they told me the same thing. There was a metal fence between the construction area and the area next to Sulukule. The Sulukule people and platform members were sitting up against the temporary fence and drinking Turkish tea; I also joined them and we had a conversation about the divider. One of the Platform members said that the municipality probably would build a wall between the two areas; and she thought former Sulukule people would like the fence because they would not see their old neighborhood with other people living in it.

Professor M. C. Yalcintan explained how his life was affected after this experience and how he benefitted from the whole struggle:

I still attended the seminars. During the project, I was on TV and in the newspapers many times. I published an article a few years later. So I can easily say that it was a beneficial experience for my career. It was also so exciting to be part of an ideology, which I supported in theory in the past, but seeing it actually happening by being a platform member was a real experience put in practice. I got a chance to see what exactly was functioning or not functioning in the area. During this period, I was part of the Sulukule oppositional group so I learned how to approach differences of opinions and how to accept and understand them. It wasn’t because the Sulukule dwellers needed protection or to be normal but because they could all exist along with their differences. I had the chance to experience some of these things which should also be part of the foundations of democracy. I built relationships with several Romanies and Gypsies, and they personally helped me look at life differently in terms of joy and happiness. Three or five of the friendships I built still continue. That’s probably it.

Y. Adanali is also one of the members affected from this experience:
I learned from it. For my profession, it was a great experience. When I talk about certain issues, concepts, processes, I could feel more confident and relate to real experience because the deeper you get into the to a case or to a struggle, it makes more sense what you live, what you teach, what you learn. So in that sense, whole this Sulukule experience made rich my life. Of course there was a sad part but on the other hand a destroyed neighborhood made my life better. So, we were all affected by this process positively and negatively but it did not affect us directly negatively because I was not leaving there, I was an outsider, etc. Maybe in one negative aspect was question changed in habit, you know this kind of keep struggling, keep resisting, etc... but at some point it changed. Overall I guess being involve, being participant, being engage, it affected my life positively.

D. N. Ozer described to me her experience in the Platform and how this has separated her life into the time “before Sulukule” and “after Sulukule:”

I spent six years in Sulukule; this time thought me lots of things. I had an experience and struggle which never let up. It was one of the most important experiences in my life. As the Platform, we were not under any other organizations or associations; we were all volunteers and there were not any managers; there was not any hierarchy. This was a wonderful model to struggle within, and we did our best. From my experiences in Sulukule, I had a chance to discuss with my colleagues the relationship between cultural heritage and communities in archeology. These discussions opened new vistas in my academic life. I also made new Romani friends in Sulukule; and they affected my life philosophy positively. They taught me to examine the conflict between life and theory. I had many good friends from Sulukule Platform. I can say that my life is separated as “before Sulukule” and “after Sulukule.”
Professor I. Dincer felt hopeless about the direction that development in Istanbul has been going:

The last term’s applications in Turkey adversely affected me. The rate of the despair is growing among people. Nevertheless, when we face a situation that must be addressed, we take some actions such as collecting signs, writing reports, and so, finally we are getting tired mentally. This is extremely important that civic society feels tired. Because there has been no success in recent years, right! (There are many criticisms and petitions to change or cancel most of the renovation projects because of their wrong processes but they do what they want/know. It seems like a fighting with a shadow.) At this point, the Taksim Project\textsuperscript{32} can be a breaking point. If we can achieve that the military post construction can be stopped with civil organizations’ pressure, there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. Regarding situation, there is a lot of work ahead of us.

Second, I asked what the Platform members thought about the future of Sulukule. E. Cavusoglu felt that the area would be a kind of gated community:

I think to myself...I know it’s not easy to empathize with those people who invested in Sulukule but I think it would be so hard for the new comers to live in peace when they try to settle down in a place where investors have forcibly displaced the local people. If I did wrong by investing in this housing development so I could become a homeowner, I would probably rent the

\textsuperscript{32} After this conversation, the Taksim Project became a real breaking point in the summer of 2013 not only in the struggle of urban renewal in Turkish planning history but also in the struggle for rights in the Turkish Government’s history. And this could be explained as I. Dincer said, “...as a light at the end of the tunnel.” The society stated clearly that “we are here”; they showed that they wanted to be a part of decisions made in their city and their country. I will give more details on the Taksim Project in the last chapter.
place instead of living in it. That way my conscience might be relieved a bit. But I'm not sure if the people actually would live there in peace like this. I think most people must have bought the place as an investment anyway; I don't suppose their purpose was actually to live there. So there will be new comers. Some investors will not stay in newly finished houses, they will rent them instead. I don't know much how the profile will be. The fact that a number of things will determine this in the district: Fatih's image, the land and building prices in the area, and the accessible tenants found by the original residents. Therefore, I don't know how the life will be but the project has been built with a gated community logic. In fact, the area is in a good location, it is central so it has the characteristics of being suitable and appealing to high-income group. But even if it's a gated community, I don't think Fatih is a place this certain group would want to live though. We had an economic analysis done at the start of the project just so we could get an idea on what the outcomes is like but I'm guessing we won't be close to those estimates because the housing supply grows in Istanbul. Therefore, more people are facing more choices. It might be possible to convert this type of areas into gated communities but Sulukule like lifestyle will continue and remain in the adjacent neighborhoods. So perhaps the new comers will want to keep this in mind when they make their decisions. Several urban conflicts may be waiting down the road. I haven't thought much about what would these be but it's not my job anyway. The municipality needs to worry about that. After all these, I don't suppose we can rebuild Sulukule the way how we imagined it to be anymore, it's too late for that.

According to D. N. Ozer, the people said that those who were invested in this project for monetary gains would lose money:

The municipality’s project erased all the details about the old neighborhood—not only houses but also street fabric, culture, people,
everything…. Only 19 families from the Sulukule transitioned to have a house here. But I am not sure about them also because of the monthly payments. In the contract, the municipality had not said anything on payments and did not explain how much they would pay when the people entered the houses. Now they (Sulukule people) saw the payments are really so much for Sulukule people. It is impossible to pay for these 19 Sulukule families. We were thinking about some speculators who bought houses in this project; we do not know what they are doing now. There are lots of for sale and rent flyers on the windows and doors. Many of the properties are for sale. People advertise about 50,000 TL for a house. This is not huge money in Fatih District. I think the Sulukule Platform and news on the media affected the house prices in this site. This is an effect of bad image. Therefore the quality of construction is also not very good. Finally, the people who bought these houses to make money: they’re going to lose it. From the most recent news, we know that some Arabic families had moved in this area. You know the latest news about Syria and Iran and Iraq; families who have money from these countries, they come to Istanbul and buy houses here. I do not know how the municipality will sell these houses; I do not know who will live there finally, but I know that Sulukule people watch all that happens there.

P. Demireli, who still works with the community in the Women’s Studio in the area, mentioned that the area would be a renters’ kingdom:

I can see the project’s results on the Sulukule people from our furniture solidarity program. This solidarity link helps people who do not have money to get new furniture and also people who want to give their old furniture to someone. We take old furniture and give it to the people who need it. After the project, people who knew me started to call me more to have furniture. I do not remember how many times we brought furniture around to the old
Sulukule area. We could see that this whole area was in risk. The municipality will come with a new project for the old Sulukule area too.

Ninety percent of the proprietors won’t be able to stay in the new housing area in the old Sulukule. The new buildings will be surrounded with razor wires. People who are afraid of being out in their street will live there. They will probably turn Sulukule into a touristic attraction that is unsuitable for lower class and lower-middle class people, or it will be placed under high security policies, with settlements, which still are going to have low incomes, without local people. It may be a place which is full of renters because of the universities around it, students can rent apartments! The area may turn it into a renters’ kingdom.

Y. Adanali mentioned some legal ambiguities that still exist:

Now, there is still a kind of legal ambiguity there, you know the last court cased that declaring the project to be not within line of the public interest and cancelation of the project which is strength because the project has already been finalized. I guess they will overcome this problem somehow you know, they will have some legal change or go to another higher court. It will be solved but for the future of the community, I don’t know we can argue a Sulukule community any more. People came back; they are around the old neighborhood but I think it is going to be a new different community. So we see some attempts, but you know how the Platform changed in the last stage. It is not unified any more in a way. Some people from the Platform are doing different kind of things today. I think this whole experience added different impacts on the different members of the community. Now we have some different experiences like the production with the women of Sulukule. We don’t know how it will involve but it could be a way quite positive example for people beyond Sulukule. So overall it could be something positive but that is building upon the past experience good and bad and then tries to go
somewhere else. We have a new music studio; you know there are new artists. Sulukule Romani orchestra and children orchestra, both of them is a really nice impacts of this experience. I guess it was a rich experience for the members of Sulukule in some parts who could actually move on but then for many it could be, I guess their life is not going to be easier and overall it is not a better experience. But it also, maybe for overall, for Istanbul movement, it was a learning experience, learning from the mistake. I guess, we should not think all negative that the neighborhood full gone and the people are not there but somehow the life continues and this struggle of the people had open new paths for some of them.

And finally N. Ozan highlighted the urban tension between new residents in Sulukule and former residents in adjoining communities:

The municipality created the perfect site of urban tension for both sides involved: Sulukule people and outsiders. I can say that there will be high tension every day because people were living there before, and now someone will come and stay on their old land against their desires. Also the other people who lived around Sulukule; they are at risk. They know this. They are waiting for another project to knock on their doors. The municipality did not say this, but they can understand that the municipality will not stop with this project. They will gentrify the whole area. This is the big picture. Between the new construction and old houses, there is only Sarmasik Street. Can you image that this will last forever? Of course not! And people know this very well. Also, I can see that there will be a tension between Sulukule children and the new comers’ children because the children saw how the municipality destroyed their houses. I hope this is my personal nightmare and that it will never happen. Let’s see together.
Conclusion

I focused on five themes in this chapter. According to these themes, I asked four groups of questions in seventeen interviews, most participants were the Sulukule Platform members. The informant interviews revisited in this chapter were meant to elucidate my findings and questions from the existing literature and my observation of the Platform. I interviewed individuals with sincere experience in the Platform, and old inhabitants of Sulukule with their sad experiences in the Sulukule urban renewal process. From the interviews I tried to analyze the Sulukule Platform and its efforts as the first advocacy planning experience. Five key findings resulted from the interview process.

The first key finding is “there was not any former relationship between the Platform members and the Sulukule area, and this relationship was built for only justice in an urban renewal process.” All of the Platform members, whom I interviewed, did not have any relationship with the Sulukule inhabitants before the urban renewal process; they knew the area from some historical incidents, through friends or relatives or because of the entertainment houses in the area in the early 1990s. Most of them had not been in the area before the urban renewal project’s announcement but they all visited and saw the area before demolition; and they understand the old spatial and socio-economic characteristics of Sulukule very well.

I can say that all the Platform member informants had enough time with the old Sulukule inhabitants to share their objective views on the area and the urban renewal process. Today still most of the informants have strong relations with the Sulukule people. From all of this information, the members of the Sulukule Platform were positioned in the
Platform voluntarily without any consideration of benefits. Although they did not know anyone from the area personally, they attended the Platform because of the unjust governmental action against a marginalized population. You can also see from the interviews that the Platform members came for justice in an urban renewal process not just for Sulukule people but also for their city and their historic and cultural values. And all of them were accepted by the Sulukule community as illustrated by the former residents’ statements; they were happy to be with the Platform members and they thought that they helped as much as possible.

Second key finding is “public participation issue arising from both the government and the community.” It was apparent from the interviews that there are some issues with public participation. This issue concerns the evaluation of the urban renewal process in Sulukule and more generally throughout Turkey. But this participation issue in the Sulukule community was understandable. At the beginning of the renewal process, there was an issue of fear; the Sulukule residents as a community who have experienced very negative interactions with the municipality before, in the form of prior demolitions, displacements, and indifference. They were thinking that if a resident in Sulukule spoke out against the municipality’s urban renewal policies, they would be punished by the municipality; but then this idea changed day-by-day through the support of outsiders and the Platform members; and people of Sulukule wanted to be a part of the process. After this situation, there should not be more blame on the Sulukule community about their limited participation in the process. There was little or no participation process during the municipality’s urban renewal process.
The participation process conducted by the Platform members, on the other hand, was comprised of four distinct parts: during announcement of the urban renewal area, while preparing the project, while getting the critiques of the project, and during the implementation phase. Some of the informants mentioned that the municipality met with people and experts who criticized the project after the project’s announcement but they also stated that there were not any revisions based on these critiques; the municipality implemented what they had planned from the start. Therefore, there was a big gap in the slow legal process, the court had a decision after the project’s implementation which could not bring demolished houses or lives back. Here two significant questions wait for answers: without the court’s legal decision how could a legal municipality implement a heavily criticized urban renewal project, and what effect can the court’s decision have after demolition?

Third key finding is “there is a need to an advocacy mechanism for underrepresented groups in the urban renewal process.” The interviewees believe that the municipality chose this area because of the location’s value and implemented a renewal project not for the inhabitants but for more affluent residents. They stated that the municipality implemented this project to take advantage of the urban economics, and to transform the area from a low income community to a high-middle class. The informants felt that this was an eviction and displaced all the Sulukule inhabitants without their needs being addressed. The informants mentioned that there was only one benefit from this project: that hopefully history will not repeat itself. There was an injustice and the court’s decision vouched. But also there was an answer, in the process, for my first question; in a kind of project such as the Sulukule one,
there should have been an advocacy mechanism which the Platform created; because people, planners, and experts who were silent would also be responsible for this project; and the Platform members did their responsibility as the dwellers of Istanbul or as scientists and planners.

Because of this, the fourth key finding was “the Sulukule alternative proposal was the first exploration of the advocacy planning approach in Turkey.” There was not any other advocacy planning experience before. I explained this approach’s effects in the process with the Sulukule Platform. The Platform created an alternative proposal for the municipality to show that there was another way of urban renewal, which could be better for the Sulukule people and for the entire city. Though, the municipality did not use this as they should have. Volunteers of the Platform worked on this project without any income or benefits; they spent their time to save the neighborhood; most likely losing their energy though the process but they never stopped hoping until the last house was demolished. Some of the Platform member interviewees still have hope after the court’s decision.

There are some benefits from the alternative project such as the Women’s Studio or the Children Studio in the district around Sulukule today although the alternative project was not implemented. These places still help to maintain the relationships between the community members and the Platform members. In the Platform’s alternative project, there were many planners, architects, and people from other disciplines working voluntarily. According to informants, they not only respected the Sulukule people and their rights but also operated on a high order of professionalism.
The fifth key finding was “there will be a social polarization in Sulukule, in the future.” Many of the interviewees mentioned that the new area might be referred to as a gated community where the inhabitants of Istanbul cannot enter easily as they could in the times before Sulukule's demolition. One of the interviewees mentioned that the new housing was not consistent with the look of the housing from the Historical Peninsula area, which is the district where the project was to be located. All the interviews defined the new project as unsuccessful; they stated that if the alternative project was implemented it would be better, and the alternative project was acceptable and implementable. All the interviewees from the Platform felt they had done everything within their power to advocate for saving the Sulukule neighborhood; but in the end the municipality was determined to implement the project despite the resistance.

The Sulukule urban renewal experience was a very instructive process for the community and for other communities going through similar situations, for the municipality and other municipalities, and for the Platform and planners everywhere.

First for the community, the most important lesson was to have clear knowledge or retain a lawyer prior to signing any legal documents. Also the Sulukule people learned of their community’s importance more during the process; and they understood that outsider help could assist them as well. They broke out of their persistent segregation with the outside, in part by the help of the Platform. Other urban renewal areas saw this as an example of how they can fight for their rights, and what they should do or not do. From this many people in the city learned that this is not about the transformation of a neighborhood, this is a process to change the landlords of the urban property and there is a big picture behind the
Sulukule project. Therefore people of the other urban renewal areas worried about their areas after the Sulukule project, feeling at risk themselves.

The most important lesson for the Fatih Municipality is about how the imperative public participation is successful for an urban renewal process. Some of the municipalities said that they would not prepare a project such as the project in Sulukule once they saw the consequences of Sulukule. For the Platform, there were many lessons to be learned, but the most important one was, as N. Ozan and E. Yucak said, to stand together against urban renewal when it is done without peoples’ consent, act with the community but let them organize themselves, and build capacity. The community should act together and stand for the common good during the urban renewal process this will result in a stronger front against the authority; to break strong social capital is impossible if they stand together but very simple if they do not! Informants argued that the municipality used poverty in the area to break their strong community relations by using their economic situation; because Sulukule people would not have that much money which the municipality offered them.

The planner informants stated that this process was really important to see and show how the public participation should take an important role in the urban renewal process; and the whole city-planning field in Turkey took away many lessons from this bad experience. Some of the planners criticized the alternative project process because they felt that preparing projects is the job of the authority, or it should have happened with the request of the authority. E. Cavusoglu explained why they created an alternative project since there was a need and his profession should have answered that need, although this was not requested of them. But he added this was a very important experience and now the
authorities have accepted this concept and have requested a revision of the alternative project.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

“In the city, remote forces and influences intermingle with the local: their conflicts are no less significant than their harmonies” (Mumford, 1940, p. 4)

A strong relationship between urban renewal process and advocacy planning method has been reported in the literature review section. As mentioned in the literature, currently, urban renewal implementations affect underrepresented groups more than others in the cities of the developing world because of their socio-economic situation. Advocacy planning could play a significant role for these groups in the urban renewal process because it provides technical support to them and protects their rights.

The results of this study indicate this importance by summarizing the Sulukule urban renewal process from Istanbul, Turkey. Five key themes emerged from the interview process and the theoretical framework in this study. In this chapter, I will explain these themes while answering the research questions, borrowing several thoughts from the literature review section. The following table shows which research question helped clarifying which key theme, and helps to highlight my answers to the key themes.

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<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
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<td>Why did the government choose Sulukule Neighborhood as a renewal area?</td>
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<td>Was there a distinct unified view among residents about what needed to be done, or were there diverse views?</td>
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<td>Becoming a symbol for social movements</td>
<td>What were the characteristics of the Sulukule Platform’s works?</td>
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<td>Did the Platform produce a plan that met professional standards, and how widely was it disseminated?</td>
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Can we see the Sulukule Platform as an example of advocacy planning?

Why was the advice of the Platform ultimately rejected?

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<th>Deconstructing the stigmatization of urban renewal in Turkey</th>
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<td>Why does public participation play a significant role in urban renewal processes, and how it can be implemented?</td>
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| Understanding the importance of advocacy planning | Why is the advocacy planning method useful in these kinds of urban renewal projects? |

What Sulukule Represents Beyond Romani Culture

To explain what Sulukule represents beyond Romani culture, we should look at why the Fatih Municipality chose Sulukule Neighborhood as a renewal area. Throughout the research process and particularly through informant interviews, I found that there was a basic reason to choose Sulukule as a renewal area by the Municipality. This was obviously not about the Romani culture or the community’s background although cultural difference could be explained as a reason. The Municipality had seen some urban problems in the area. According to the several informants the problems were no far worse than in other neighborhoods around Sulukule. The Municipality wanted to solve these problems, such as poor living conditions in the area. However, the renewal project’s main goal was to increase the Municipality’s tax base income rather than to raise the income level of residents. This was the most important point, which attracted attention from the Platform and some parts of public.
But, was there a distinct unified view among residents about what needed to be done, or were there diverse views? Most of the residents in the neighborhood were tenants and for them there was no choice to stay in the neighborhood after the project. Therefore most of the landlordships (i.e. ownership opportunities) passed into other hands at the beginning of the renewal process, after the Municipality’s announcement about the project. This caused the landlords to lose their chance to stay in the neighborhood. Many of the landlords were also scared about the monthly payments for the new housing site and sold their rights for this reason. Thus, many of the tenants also sold their rights to have a new house from the mass housing project in Tasoluk because of higher monthly rental payments. In summary, I can say that most of the former residents would have liked to live in the same area, as the informants mentioned in interviews. We can see this from their current location; all the Sulukule residents including Romani owners and renters moved to locations near to their old neighborhood, and still live all together. This is a clue to understand what Sulukule represents beyond Romani culture: a strong culture leading residents to want to live together with their solidarity links and strong levels of social capital. These two factors had helped former Sulukule residents to hold on the city, and to survive in Istanbul for years.

**Becoming A Symbol For Social Movements**

To understand why the Sulukule Platform became a symbol for the social movement, first I should explain what the characteristics of the Platform’s efforts were. The Sulukule Platform was the first advocacy experience in Turkish urban planning history. This experience was entirely spontaneous and there was no aim to establish a platform at
the beginning of the process. The idea of a platform had moved forward into the process right after the “40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule” events, at the beginning of the struggle. The Platform was based on protecting the Romani culture in the area; but the goals changed day to day due to the process, the final goal was based on saving this community for long-time residents.

The volunteers in the Platform were from different backgrounds and disciplines; and the tasks they performed were based on their professions. For example, architects collected data on city-owned buildings in the area and examined the houses that shared common yards. The journalists involved in the Platform helped to mold public opinion while the planners worked on alternative projects. This was a volunteer driven approach based on the time and knowledge that the volunteers had.

The volunteers varied in terms of their relationship to the organization. Some of them knew someone from the Platform, others had heard about the Platform from the news, and the others learned about it from various professors at local universities. There was an incredible social link between the people involved. All these linkages made the Platform a very unique experience. The Platform had collected different kinds of support from a variety of non-governmental organizations, academicians, and activists, causing the Platform to operate as a cohesive unit. Although the volunteers were unable to save the old Sulukule they succeeded in changing many people’s lives in Sulukule. There was an outright effort from the Platform side, and the Sulukule people saw this. The Platform members were not there to personally benefit from this process. They (the volunteers) learned about the urban renewal and connected with new people from the Platform. Some
of the members in the Platform wrote their theses (as I did) or articles/papers on Sulukule after this process was concluded so hopefully this scholarly work will improve planning efforts in the future.

The residents of Sulukule also benefited from the Platform’s activities both during the struggle and afterwards. Some of the Platform members tried to minimize the negative effects of the urban renewal process on the community especially impacts on children. Other Platform volunteers created an alternative project to show to the Municipality how urban renewal should have been carried out in Sulukule. Others monitored the judicial process. Some of volunteers continued to stay in the Sulukule area. Today the Women’s and Children’s studios still remain standing with the Platform volunteers helping former Sulukule families. The preceding shows that there were many ways to participate in the struggle besides protesting. This is why the Sulukule struggle has become a symbol for other renewal areas in Istanbul and in Turkey as well.

There was another long-term benefit for the tenants of Sulukule. Some of the tenants gained their rights to have a house (with monthly payments) from the mass housing project in Tasoluk after the Platform engaged lawyers. Although they had sold their rights mostly due to the high rental payments, this was one of the most important gains from the Platform. Those former Sulukule tenants could have held onto the new life in another neighborhood, with the help of those moneys which they earned from the selling.
The weakest aspect of the Platform was having no financial resources to implement its alternative proposal. Besides this, the Platform had made a mistake. At the beginning of the process, all the efforts of the Platform were based on the preservation of Romani culture, as well as the historic values of the neighborhood. Instead, the Platform should have become involved itself in public participation, public welfare, and the right to the city movement beyond the Romani subgroup. The Court’s decision also supports this point. Even though it was too late to stop the project and because new residents were already beginning to move into the new housing) the Court decision highlighted the fact that the Municipality's plan was not in the public interest.

**Planners as Advocates in the Sulukule Process**

The Platform had an advantage in that urban planning professors were part of the volunteer effort. This facilitated interaction with government officials. A few professors in the Platform had met with Municipal officials because the Mayor and some officials from the Fatih Municipality came to various planning programs (e.g. ITU, MSGSU) to present the project.. The Platform's first contact with academia occurred when the alternative plan was presented at Yıldız Technical University. This helped the Platform build a relationship with municipal officials. Municipal officials knew some of the Platform members earlier from the former Sulukule residents’ application for the mass housing in Tasoluk. Municipal officials had met with the residents several times. The municipality did not stop to connect with the Platform at anytime and did not turn this link into an advantage.

The relationship between the Platform and Sulukule residents was mutually beneficial. While the Platform members provided technical help, they learned new things as
well from the community. The Platform encouraged residents to experiment and explore new arenas, such as the Women’s Studio or Children Studio. In general volunteers made sure to not impose their own views on the residents. Each proposal was presented to and discussed with the residents exhaustively, before implementation.

If we examine the Platform’s alternative project as to the attainment of professional benchmarks, we can see that it was a kind of draft, simply because the aim was not to attain professional standards, but rather to prove that there was an alternative approach to urban renewal. The revised second alternative proposal did meet professional standards. As several informants said, “It included more than a professional plan. It was a very radical experience [developed by] innumerable professionals from various fields of life.” To prepare the plan, the Platform always tried to respect local residents’ aspirations, by taking into account their ideas. Taking advantage of social media and internet, the alternative project was widely disseminated, gathering national and international support although it was not accepted by the municipality. There was a conflict between the original project developed by the Municipality and the Platform’s alternative proposal. The municipality’s plan sought to attract new residents into the neighborhood there by transforming the neighborhood from mostly low-income rental to upper-middle class ownership. In contrast, the Platform’s alternative proposal was based retaining incumbent residents, and helping them to achieve socio-economic mobility. The municipality rejected the Platform’s recommendation.

The Platform’s efforts constituted the first advocacy planning effort in Turkey. Although the Platform’s proposal was rejected, it did create community benefits e.g. the
Women’s Studio where former residents earn money and the Children’s Studio where children learn new skills.

**Deconstructing the Stigmatization of Urban Renewal in Turkey**

Since the implementation of the first urban renewal project in Turkey, there has been an interminable discussion of it in the Turkish (and larger) academic world. Urban renewal not only transforms life space; but, additionally as shifts a community from blue collar to *white collar* or from low to middle income. If this transformation is carried out for indigenous residents via socio-economic programs, urban renewal can help to raise the income level of existing residents. But, this is not what happened in Sulukule—the low-income population was displaced.

‘Moving out’ should be a choice for existing residents and not a requirement of the urban renewal process. Community development for existing residents should receive higher priority than city wide economic development. Communities like Sulukule do have problems like poverty and crime and all that urban renewal does shift the problems to another part of the city.

Urban renovation should be implemented with public participation regardless of the income level of residents. In the case of a low income community like Sulukule, planners should advocate for residents’ rights. The AICP code of ethics which stresses the need to advocate for the public interest should be adopted by Turkish planners. Furthermore, an AICP type code should involve sanctions against planners who work against the public interest.
Understanding the Importance of Advocacy Planning

In general, my study emphasizes (1) the need for advocacy planning especially for low income communities affected by urban renewal, and (2) the need for public participation in urban planning. The Sulukule case study shows that planners can either play a positive role (i.e. planners who worked on the Platform) or a negative one (i.e. the Fatih municipality planners). Public participation process is a vital part of urban renewal. If local authorities include a strong public participation component in the urban renewal process, this will lead to a comprehensive assessment of the pros and cons of the project. However, without meaningful public participation urban renewal will be a failure.

I hope that this thesis will play a small but significant role in improving the implementation of advocacy planning as part of Turkey's urban renewal journey. This could lead to a brighter future for low-income central city redevelopment.
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