

THE SOCIOSPATIAL TRANSFORMATION IN YENI SAHRA SQUATTER SETTLEMENT: 1969-2009

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It keeps getting better!

Turkey met squatters, *gecekondu*s in early 50s. The socioeconomic conditions engendered this illegal initiative for affordable housing:

- After the **World War II** people **lost** their **jobs**
- The **tractors** sent by US government within the framework of **Marshall Plan** were started to be used in rural areas. **Villagers lost their jobs.**
- With the **new roads** it became **easier to go to big cities.**
- **Industrial development** created new **opportunities for employment.**
- The **cities** had **better education, health care** systems.
- The **population increased.**
- There **were not adequate number of affordable houses.**

The squatter houses were legalized by the law about “the buildings erected without getting permission” in 1953.

The new Constitution (1961) brought the principle, the government has to build houses for the low income people.

At the beginning the squatter houses were built at peripheries, on the steep hills, difficult to make buildings. The settlements became pathologically dense and had no infrastructure.

The squatters, migrated from different parts of Turkey and Balkans and settled around their relatives and fellow townsmen. In years their attitudes changed, anyhow they were the “new citizens”.

After 80s, the squatters were **assumed as “vote potential”** and the governments **registered their lands**, they **received title deeds**. The inhabitants **added new rooms and stories**. The buildings **enlarged** both **vertically** and **horizontally**.

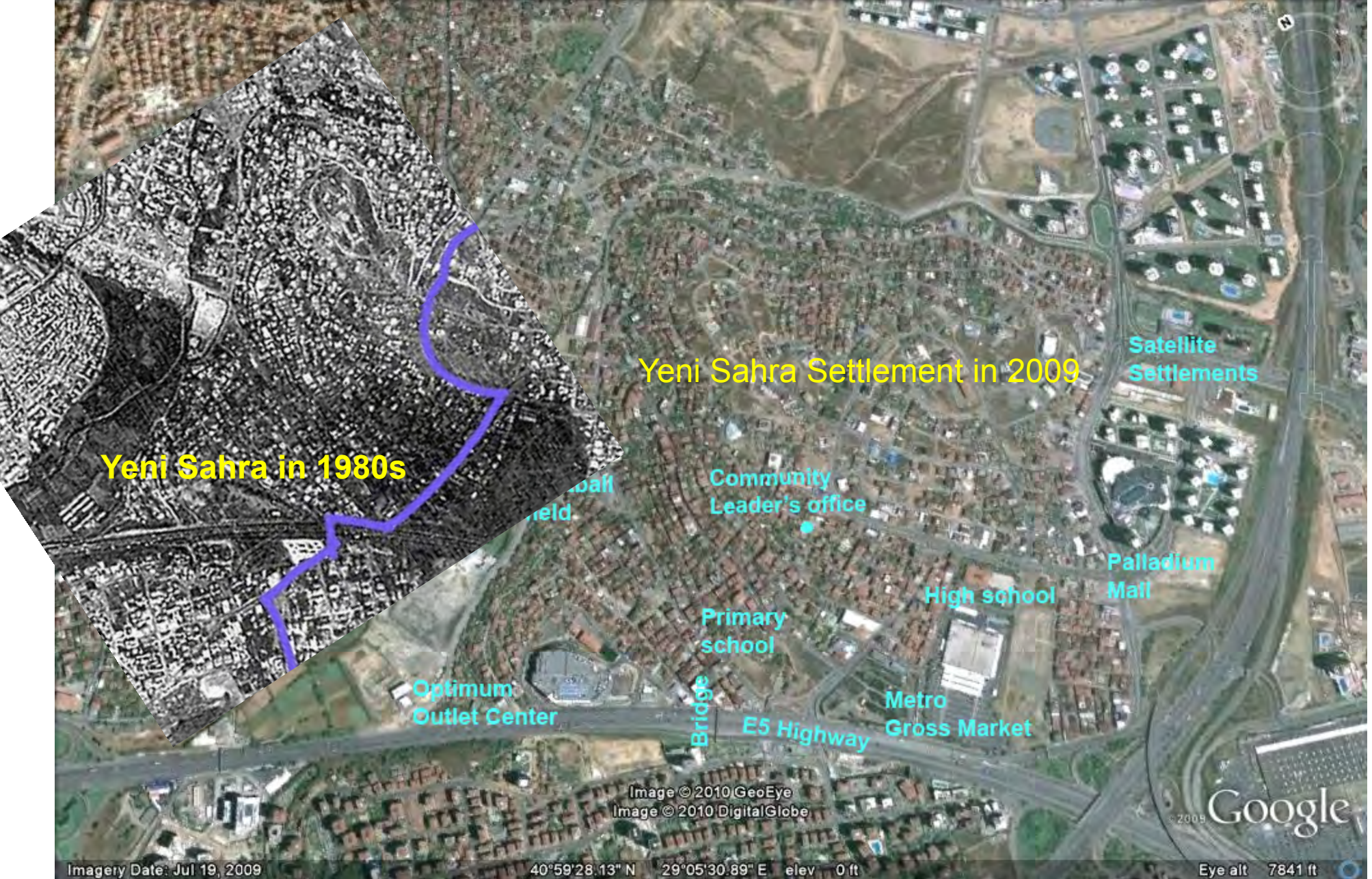
The communities were categorized. The squatters who had more than one house or apartments **rented their properties** and upgraded their income level on the shoulders of the new comers. But before, the ones who invaded lands, erected houses and used them were same persons. **The squatter houses lost their characteristics** and the environmental quality diminished.

Today the **cities expanded** and the settlements, once occupying fringes now **partake within the context of cities**.

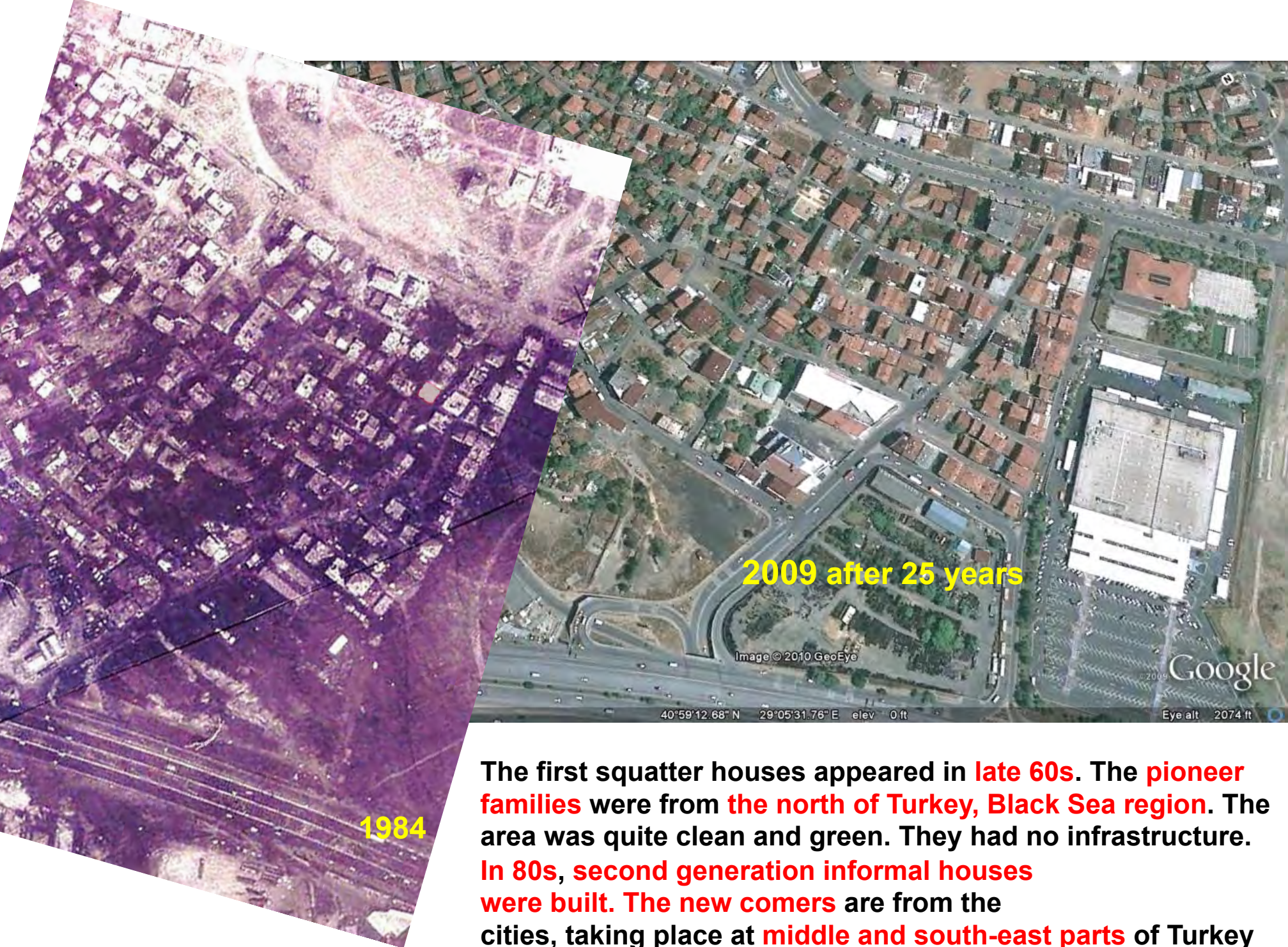
They **stand side by side** with the luxurious high rise buildings and satellite settlements as well as the newly established hyper markets and chic malls. The **contradicting life qualities** between them **increase the crime rates** and **become the base of identity crisis, injustice and cultural gaps**.

Currently there are **2 200 000 squatter houses in Istanbul**. 40 other cities accommodate these kind of settlements.

The total number of houses is more than the needs in Turkey today. However, **a considerable amount of them do not carry the necessary qualifications for healthy and comfortable lives**. The squatter houses constitute an important part of them.



Yeni Sahra squatter settlement takes place at Anatolian side of Istanbul. It is one of the 17 neighborhoods of Ataşehir district. **E5 Highway** borders the neighborhood at the south, **other squatter settlements** at west and the north, **satellite settlements** at the east.



The first squatter houses appeared in **late 60s**. The **pioneer families** were from **the north of Turkey, Black Sea region**. The area was quite clean and green. They had no infrastructure. **In 80s, second generation informal houses were built. The new comers** are from the cities, taking place at **middle and south-east parts** of Turkey



The Highway, E5 divided the old squatter areas. Today the south of it is crowded with **newly established high rise buildings, apartment blocks & head quarters of companies.**



The opening to the Highway that lets people pass to the "other" side.

Multi storied **Outlet Center, Gross market and chic malls** are new structure at the site.



The houses extend over a steep hill. Their **dimensions, heights and colors are all different.** Some are in row order while others are placed in small gardens.

These low quality houses were **built by their owners** with the help of construction foremen. Some of them are **single storied** but some are **elevated** with the addition of extra stories.



The new comers live in worse conditions. The neglected parts at lower levels are mostly occupied by Romans. Some people even live in broken cars





There are several **stores** at the ground floors of the buildings, along the Avenues. The small sized **readymade cloth and automobile repair workshops, craftsmen stores** take place in the settlement. There were many groceries once, but they could not compete with hyper markets.



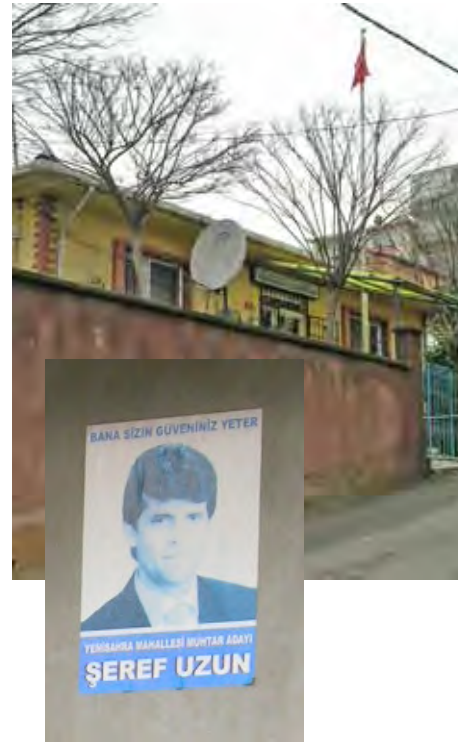


There are **mosques**, **primary schools**, a **student hostel** and a **football field** in the neighborhood. There are many **cafes** for men, *kahves* and **internet cafes** for young. The **women prefer to spend their times** with their children in **the malls**. A vocational school for them was opened but it was closed due to political reasons.





The squatters plant vegetables in their gardens.



The community leader's poster for the elections

Inhabitants in the settlement

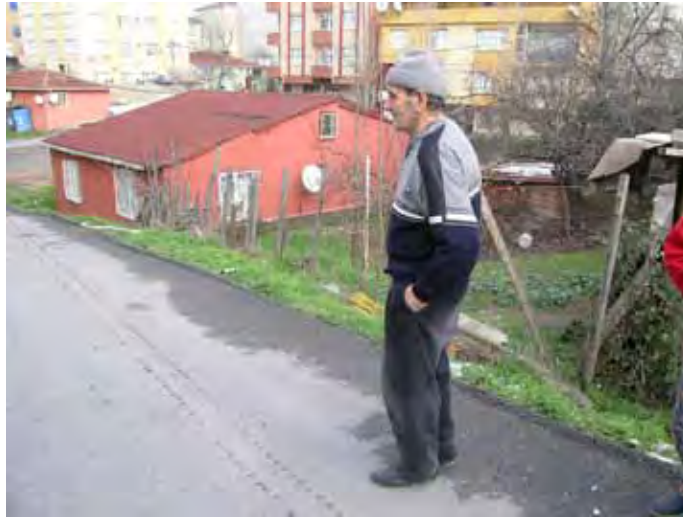


The office of the community Leader, *muhtar*



The interviewees houses in Yeni Sahra settlement

The squatters stayed in the same position or worsened.



Ergun Karahançer, 75 years old, originally from Trabzon, the city at the east, black Sea region, once a carpenter, now retired. They were living with his son before. He lives with his wife now.

They added only a room in front of their house.



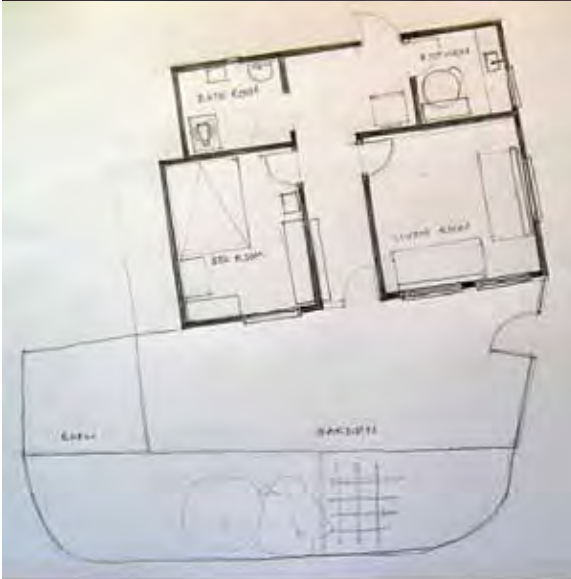


Gülşen Ekici, is 33 years old. She is married and has two children. Originally they are from Ordu, the city at the West Black Sea region.

She lives with her husband's parents and brothers in law. Her mother in law does cleaning work.

They rented the house and it stays in the same position.

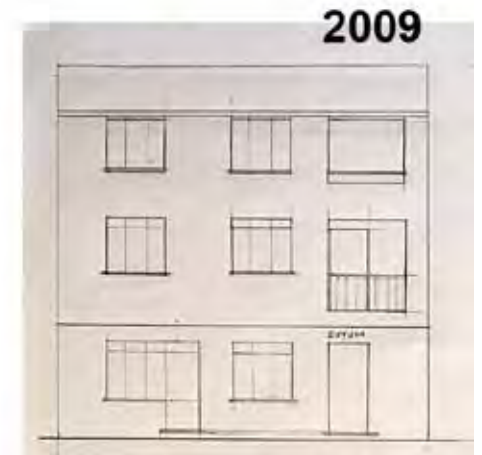
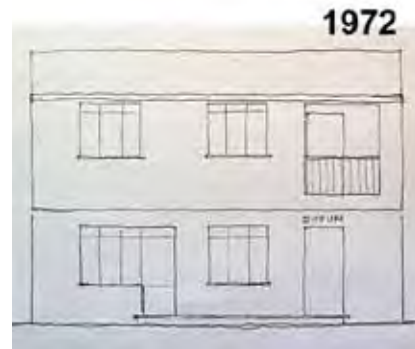
It is difficult to clean it because the house owner raise chicken in the front garden. Flies make great problem.



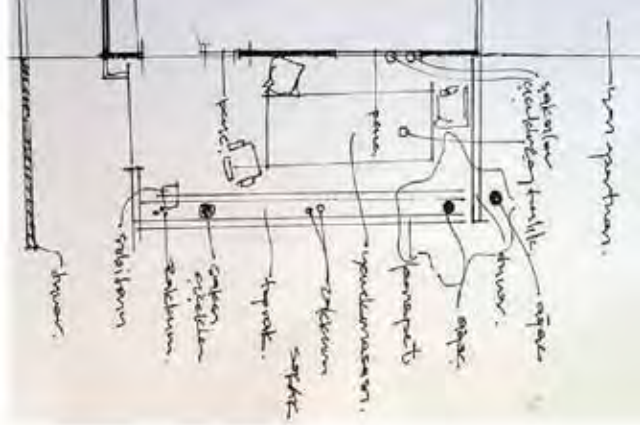


The squatter houses changed minimally.

Şerafettin Suyum was born in 1937. He built the house in 1972 after buying the land (100m²) for 700 TL. He lived with his three children. Now he lives with his wife. His two sons' houses are in the same neighborhood.



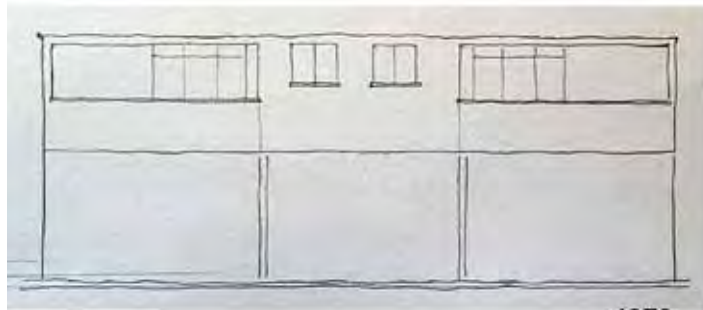
He only added an extra story to his house.



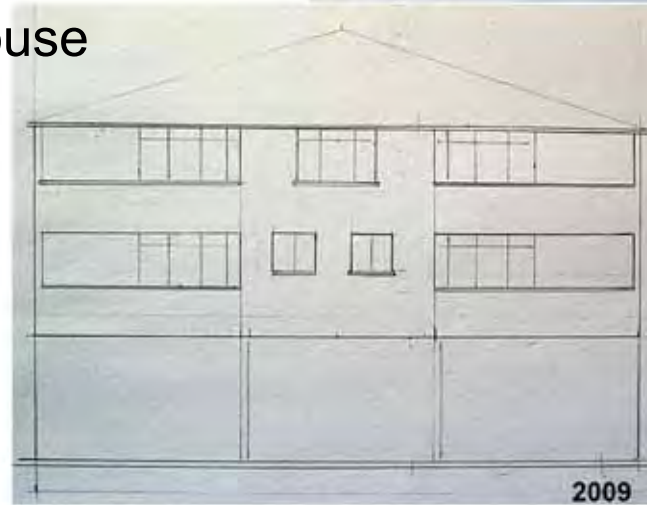
Nedim Uzun is 38 years old and was born in Istanbul. His family is originally from Trabzon. He is divorced and lives with other seven family members. He has a high school diploma. Their 120 m2 house which belongs to his family was built in 1978. Only the roof of the house was changed.

The squatter houses changed considerably

Banu Kirmizioğlu, was born in 1977 in Istanbul. Her family is originally from Ordu, the city at the West Black Sea region. She was educated in a vocational school as a technician. She is married and does not work. Her husband is a taxi driver and occasionally does house painting.



1970



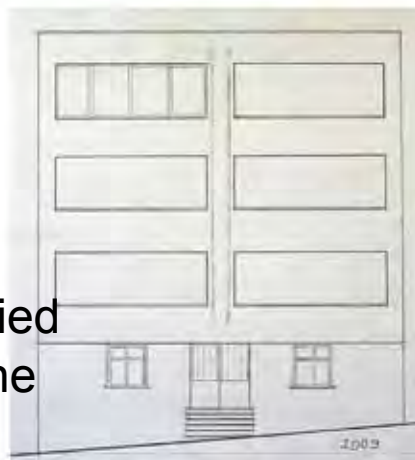
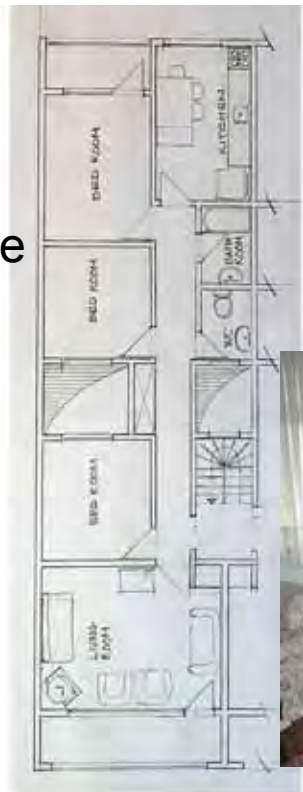
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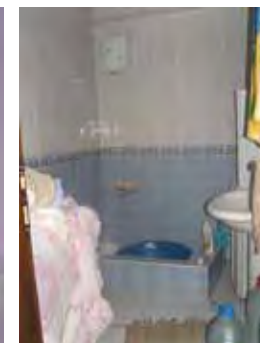
The house belongs to her mother in law. According to her, the apartment is small and she needs an extra room. The family added the third story to the building.

Şeref Uzun is the community leader, *muhtar*. His family migrated to Istanbul from Trabzon in 1969 with their seven children. At that time he was five years old.

He is married and has six children, his elder daughter married last year.



They built this four storied building in 1999 after the earthquake.



The Author

Prof. Aytanga Dener received her Ms degree in 1984 and began to work as a research assistant in Istanbul Technical University in 1985. She started to work on her doctoral thesis in 1986 at ITU and studied at University of Pennsylvania to develop the research. She received Ph. D with the thesis titled “The Interaction of Social and Spatial Change: Republican Period Houses in Istanbul” in 1993. In 1999-2000 she studied on her research project about spatial formations in houses and their environments in Kadikoy-Istanbul at MIT as a visiting scholar. Till 2008, she taught at ITU in both undergraduate and graduate courses. Currently she teaches at Cyprus International University, Department of Architecture as a visiting faculty and researches in Cyprus. Recent foci: transition in cities, hybrid structures, popular culture, everyday life and spatial formations, postmodernity, globalization and its effects on cities and architecture.
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