

## Housing Conflict in Turkey and Manual for Survival

The drawings of Survival Manual for TOKİ dwellers inspired by French architect/urbanist Yona Friedman's approach of the manual of drawings for dwellings and settlements. As Yona introduced defending self-built housing and concepts of self-organized settlement in his most of his drawings; he always inspired me about how to think and contemplate on dwelling and housing issues as an architect. The text and drawings is about the government run centralized housing administrative department of Turkey that how this department managed and directed policies of housing in the last 10 years. The affect of its housing management resulted with new urban and housing policies, eviction and forced migration, as well a state run housing market speculation in Turkey. These had impacts both in architectural practice and lower middle class families dwelling. The manual is the outcome of our conducted interviews and site-research of a gated housing structure Bezirganbahçe in Ayazma/Istanbul.

TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) (1) is an institution founded in 1984 due to rapid population growth and urbanisation. It is designated to meet the rapidly growing demand for housing in a planned manner by promoting the housing production sector in Turkey. From the date of 20.06.2001, after the revocation of the public housing fund, its income is met by real estate sales and rental incomes, loan returns, interest incomes and budget allocations. Public housing law No. 2995: It provides the housing development administration the opportunity to act autonomously and flexibly: The housing development administration has obtained a continuous and sufficient resource apart from the overall budget for residential applications. According to the information of Turkish Republic – Housing Development Administration Between 1984 and 2002, the institution, which provided financial support for 950.000 residential units, carried out more than 45.000 housing constructions on its own lands.

Since 2010, TOKİ's number of housing reached to 450.000. Especially from 2003, additional arrangements were made in law No. 4966. With this arrangement, new articles were added such as establishing companies related to the housing sector, participating in the already established companies, developing and carrying out projects aimed at ensuring source income for the administration. With this regulation, the administration in question was authorised to take over the lands belonging to the treasury without a cost with the approval of the prime minister. (2). The total amount of land transferred to the TOKİ is 233.869.000 m<sup>2</sup>. One out of 50 people living in Turkey lives in TOKİ council housing. (3)

## **TOKI: Typology**

One of the most obvious characteristics of TOKI housing is constructional and structural standardization and homogenized housing typology. We can explain the components of this repetitive typology which ignore the city, climate, terrain or culture in the following way:

### **1. The tunnel formwork as a construction system:**

The tunnel formwork is a construction method, which enables the contractor to complete the wall and the floor in a one-day period in a single operation. Within the repetitive floors, all the walls are used as load-bearing walls and this system turns the floors into cells made of concrete. This cellular structure, which eliminates in-house flexibility necessitates the description of the uses beforehand. It necessitates the pre-planning of so many details and infrastructure, sound insulation being of primary concern.

### **2. Plan Typology**

For its plan typologies, mostly defined as 2 + 1 and 3 + 1, TOKI prefers the typical flat formula produced by contractors; it uses the familiarity of this generally accepted formula as a means of legitimacy. When you enter, the hall is on the right hand side, the corridor is on the left hand side leading to 2 or 3 rooms and the kitchen is across the hall. This is a plan typology, which everybody in Turkey knows by heart.

This plan, which ignores climate, terrain, region, culture, family structure, number of family members, living habits and relationship patterns, becomes the core of a general typology implemented everywhere.

3 or 4 of these plans are brought together – they are turned into a floor plan around the staircase-lift-hall. They are turned into 15 or 20 storey point blocks. (4)

### **3. Understanding of general layout**

These point blocks are defined by their standard garden and setback distance and they are turned into city blocks. These blocks are placed in a mathematical order without considering their relationship with the land and each other. They are turned into areas with the mentality of zoning/city block, which reduces people's relationships to the parking lot, road and pedestrian path, builds children's playground, school and marketplace at the margins and does not allow the communication and the interaction of different age groups. As voiced by the residents of the TOKI, these apartment blocks located in areas detached from city life turn into blocks of dormitories.

## **TOKI: Life in Ayazma\_Bezirganbahçe**

Site management in TOKI social dwellings is carried out through private companies.(5) The companies that are in charge of management in connection with the TOKI regulate and supervise the rules of social dwellings, from hanging laundry on the balcony to the decisions of public gatherings and recreations. The company consists of building complex management, manager, secretary and the janitor. The janitor is the eyes of every block. Residents choose an apartment manager who will be in contact with their spokesmen and site management. Every block has a separate janitor and manager.

The Atatürk Olympic stadium opens in 2002 in Ayazma. In 2004, this area is declared as an urban transformation area. Approximately 7800 people live in Ayazma at that time. This area, where 1800 social dwellings are located, is a shanty town 96% of which consists of single-storey houses with gardens.1,2

The majority of families are forced to evacuate this area by signing a contract and the majority of them move to the TOKI residential units in Bezirganbahçe in 2005. It is a luxurious housing project, which demolished approximately 1.800 family homes in Ayazma and forced the residents to migrate.(6) In their place, they will build 3.080 residential units in 17 130-meter high blocks and twin villas. The prices of the flats range from 400.000 to 600.000 TL and the prices of the villas exceed 1.000.000 TL. The majority of the new residents of Bezirganbahçe whose debts were growing exponentially every month had to sell their houses with the debts and move back to the shanty towns again. But this time they did not move to their own places, but moved as tenants and became more impoverished. According to the reports, 123 families could not pay their condominium fees and bank loans in the first 6 months and therefore, they were sent in the bailiffs.

### **Toki Dwellers The Survival Manual**

In the interviews with the TOKI dwellers of Bezirganbahçe and Ayazma, who were from various generations and age, explained their questions and problems about their dwelling conditions and life. These explanations consist of technical issues such as, the low quality of the construction of their houses, problems about water infrastructure, dampness and related isolation. Furthermore, the other problems were about their relation to spatial conditions and social problems.

As they live in a dense population in small strictly divided domestic spaces, they have spatial matters, needs and demands.

The spatial and physical organizations of the space does not correspond, thus it creates a lack

of communication and non-interactive spatial environment.

The lack spatial and physical conditions, tools for open or close, or common or private spaces.

There are 4 basic points about the questions and demands:

(nonconformity) Most of the TOKI inhabitants are force to live in a physical environment that they were not used to live. Their previous dwelling condition was totally opposite. For example, %96 of the residents who came from Ayazma used to grow their own vegetables in their garden at their “gecekondus”, they had more close relation with their neighborhoods within intense communal life. Now, this is totally opposite.

(adaptation) In their “gecekondu”, they used to expand step by step their spatial conditions and space through their needs in an organic way. (lack of communication) However now, the communal practices of sharing common space, collectivity and solidarity completely do not exist. Because there are no spatial conditions for it. According to that daily spatial habits disappeared. Moreover, beside the facets of the defects and (poverty) that decrease and the increasing affordability are all part of the whole picture.

The main problem that this Survival Manual for Toki Dwellers is focusing on are: The lost of social interactivity and communication that cannot be transformed from their domestic lives through their individual will or communal practices.

Both physical conditions and methodological organization segregates and prevents the activation of the TOKI dwellers. The question is: Is it possible to create emancipatory public spaces, the search for the spatial justice in such building blocks, which are segregating the urban life, erasing the social and cultural practices, and devastating the notion of “place”. “Place” gains it’s meaning and empower within the everyday life and heritage of socio-cultural accumulation. How is possible if everything related to “place” has been devastated? This is not an easy question to answer.

This manual has the provocative and triggering role in order to remind our common demand on to act and communicate in a common and collective spatial organization. Thus, the demands and needs of TOKI dwellers are very vital and important.

## Sources:

(1) [www.toki.gov.tr](http://www.toki.gov.tr)

(2) Balaban, O., 2013, Neoliberal Yeniden Yapılanmanın Türkiye Kentleşmesine Bir Diğer Armağanı: Kentsel Dönüşümde Güncelin Gerisinde Kalmak, p.51- , İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali, Edt.A.Çavdar&P.Tan, Sel Yayıncılık, 2013, İstanbul.

(3) Turan, İ., 2010, İ.T.Ü., T.C. Başbakanlık Toplu Konut İdaresi(TOKİ) Sosyal Konut Uygulamalarının (2003-2010) Sürdürülebilir Mimarlık Çerçevesinde Değerlendirilmesi:Bezirganbahçe Örneği

(4) TOKİ plan schemas can be easily found on WEB by using a search engine.

(5) <http://www.bogaziciyonetim.com/bezirganbahce>

(6) [ayazmamagdurlari.wordpress.com](http://ayazmamagdurlari.wordpress.com)

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