Social, Cultural And Spatial Complexity Of Squatter Settlements In Istanbul: Armutlu District

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Abstract   The migration from rural areas to Istanbul Metropolitan Area has been started on 1945's and gained momentum after 1950's. The impact of in-migration from countryside which has brought large numbers of people who could neither be absorbed into the urban economy nor into the formal housing sector was that the occupation of undeveloped vacant land and self-built housing.

Armutlu squatter area has been developed on the site allocated to Istanbul Technical University (ITU). Illegal occupation on ITU site in addition to Municipal Land resulted with a settlement about 30,000 inhabitants. The settlement is located nearby Istanbul Bosphorus within its the protection zone. Due to its specific location the settlement is legally bounded to Bosphorus Law in addition to existing legal framework.

In this study the main findings of the survey carried out in Armutlu district related to social, cultural and spatial complexity of a squatter settlement will be summarised and possible upgrading and rehabilitation policies will be opened to discussion.

Introduction Squatter districts began to appear in Turkey after Second World War. The impact of in-migration process from rural areas to big cities, which has brought large numbers of people who could neither be absorbed into the urban economy nor into the formal housing sector has resulted the occupation of undeveloped vacant land and self-built housing called "gecekondu". Squatter settlements grew out of the migration of rural populations to the city in an effort to find work. Because they did not have the financial means to afford housing, they began to squat in areas that are adjacent to their places of work, generally industrial districts.

In 1948 there were some 25-30,000 squatter houses in large cities like Istanbul and Ankara. In 1953 the number had reached 80,000, in 1960, 240,000, in 1970, 600,000, in 1983, 1,500,000, and in 1995 it was 2,000,000 (Keleş,1996)

Up until the 1960s the construction was either carried out entirely by the family that was to inhabit the house or by close friends or relatives. During the years spanning 1960-1970 squatter housing began to assume a commercial element (Gülersoy, Tezer, Yiğiter, 1998). Former squatters who had settled in the city either expanded their squatter homes or rebuilt them so they could rent them out. The phenomenon of rental squatter houses was thus born. During the years 1970-1980 all squatter houses had been transformed into commercial entities; then "organized groups" appeared and commandeered land belonging to the treasury, the municipality, or to other government bodies - and sometimes land belonging to private individuals-and then built squatter houses on these lands that they then "sold" to those who needed them.

The development-improvement plan concept came together with "squatter house amnesty laws" of the 1980s, allowed squatter owners in old squatter neighborhoods to construct four stories buildings on the land they held. The former one-story dwellings were thus transformed into apartment buildings. Squatter "cities" developed in relation to improvements in public transportation and industrial developments.

The migration from rural areas to Istanbul Metropolitan Area has been started on 1945's and gained momentum after 1950's. Istanbul has been experiencing a process of fast and haphazard spatial development and social change since then. By the end of the 1990s, 55% of settlement areas in Istanbul were squatter districts. When areas of haphazard construction are taken into account that ratio reaches 75% (I.B.S.B., 1995). In 1995, the number of licensed houses in Istanbul was 850,000, the number of houses licensed under amnesty laws was 750,000, and the number of illegal houses was 400,000 (Sönmez, 1994). In other words, the number of houses constructed in accordance with existing plans and laws is 42% of all the houses in Istanbul. The number of house described as squatter houses in Turkey is 2 000 000, a significant percentage of which is in Istanbul (Kongar, 1998).

Aims and Objectives of the Study

Armutlu Squatter Settlement has been studied by a group of academicians from Urban and Regional Planning Department and Architecture Department of Istanbul Technical University in the years between 1998-1999 (Gülersoy, Özsoy, Erkut, Genli, Eyüboğlu, 1999).

Illegal occupation of migrants on land allocated to Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and Istanbul Municipal Authority has been resulted with a settlement about 30.000 inhabitants called "Armutlu District". The district is located nearby Istanbul Bosphorus within its protection zone. Due to its specific location, the settlement is legally bounded to "Bosphorus Protection Law" in addition to rules and regulations of building construction and development framework.

The aim here is to summarize the findings of comprehensive study examining the Armutlu Squatter Settlement, which has peculiar physical, and social characteristics, and to discuss the possible development and planning approaches for the land especially for the future use of Istanbul Technical University

Research Methodology

The phases completed by a pilot study are as follows:

• The data related to process of acquisition of site, planning decisions, construction of the buildings, ownership pattern are obtained from the ITU Planning and Construction Office and Greater İstanbul Planning Office.

• The observations and survey on physical environment such as topography, land use, building quality, building construction style, building height are carried out in the area and presented on 1/2000-scaled map.

• The origins and socio-economical status of the inhabitants are determined by a questionnaire applied on 212 residents.

• The migrant's perception and evaluation of the environment, and future plans and attitudes of the local people towards their house and environment are obtained by means of questionnaire and interview.

• Existence of rental market and building construction process are examined by means of interview carried out with local administrations and local real estate agencies. (Gulersoy, Ozsoy, Erkut, Genli, Eyüboğlu, 1999).

Physical Structure of the Area

The findings of the survey on physical environment such as land ownership pattern, topography, land use, building quality, construction style, building height are summarized below:

Land Ownership Pattern

Armutlu squatter area has been developed on the site allocated to Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and Greater Istanbul Municipality. The survey on ownership pattern of ITU land shows that in relation to ownership there are different types of land such as:

i-   the land allotments that ITU has the title ownership

ii-   the land allotments that are under the procedure of having title ownership

iii- the site allocated to ITU

The boundaries of the site allocated to ITU have been changed four times up to now. The first great loss was as a result of the area given to Military Academy, then to the Congress Center (at present Istanbul Stock Exchange Office), then to the Highway (for the Trans European Motorway-TEM), and to the Military (Table 13.1).

	HECTARES	%
The land allotments with the title of ITU	247	27.43
Military Academy	175	19.44
Academic Area	172	19.07
Squatter area	79	8.76
Left outside of the boundary	73	8.06
Squatter area to be transformed to housing	48	5.36
Left to Highway Authority	41	4.55
Left to ISKI (Water and Sewage)	29	3.24
Military area	13	1.47
Left for road construction	9	1.00
Left to Congress Center	9	1.00
Park	4	0.40
Health facility	2	0.22
TOTAL	901	100.00

Table 13.1: Land Ownership Pattern (ITU Planning and Construction Office)

Within the boundaries of so-called area, there are also land allotments belonging to Treasury; shared ownership with Istanbul Municipality and real persons, and private ownership belonging to real person.

Topography

Considering the topographic structure of the area, the land is very sloping. 52% of the area has over 25% slope, 9% has 0-5% slope, 10% has 6-10 slope, and 11% has 16-20 slope.

Land Use 4,719 buildings are determined as a result of survey in Armutlu Squatter Settlement developed on ITU site. In 4,719 building, 5,642 different uses are identified. The 4,421 (78.36%) of those buildings are housing. 201 (3.56%) buildings are used together as housing and commercial purposes. The ground floors are used for commercial or other purposes whereas upper floors are used as housing. In addition, there are 11 (0.19%) religious buildings, 7 (0.12%) educational establishments, 59 (1.3%) commercial and service buildings, 1 workshop and 875 (15.5%) warehouses and the rest are on building process.

Building Quality The observations and survey in the area considering the evaluation of the building quality; present the results that most of the buildings are medium-level. There are so many buildings in very bad condition located in between the south of the region and TEM (Trans European Motorway). Presentation of the data in numbers and percentage are that: 2864 (59.6%) of the buildings are medium-level, 770 (16.3%) of the buildings are very bad condition and 1135 (24%) of the buildings are in good condition.

Building Construction Style Evaluation of 4719 buildings within the site considering building construction style indicates that 2064 (43.7%) of them are reinforced concrete, 2636 (55.9%) are built of brick, 10 (0.21%) are wooden construction and 9 (0.19%) are prefabricated.

Building Height Observation of 4719 buildings within the site indicates that 2868 (60.7%) of the buildings are single-story, 1099 are two-story, 482 (10.21%) are three-story, 35 (0.74) are five-story and 12 (0.25%) are six-story buildings. Most of the buildings are less then tree-story.

Social Structure of the Families Social structure analysis was carried out in the area in the form of questionnaires. Total number of questionnaire is 212. Among them, 54 % of the sample is women and 46 % are men.

Demographical Structure of the Families The family size in Armutlu squatter area is found as follows: Most of the families (43%) consist of 3-4 people. The following group is made of 5-6 persons (38%).

Those who have been migrated before 1980's were 21%, whereas 80% of the site has been developed after 1980's. After 1980, in each five-year 25% were moved to the area; but after 1995 it has been only 8%.

Socio-Economic Status and Housing Process

Considering the employment figures, 33% of the head of the households are employed in service sector, 25% are workers and 19% have their own business. 10% are small entrepreneurs, 8% are drivers and 5% are civil servants.

The outcome of the case study indicates that 70% of the inhabitants are owners of the house, and 30% are tenants. Among the people interviewed, 41% have bought their house. 11% of the houses are constructed by some other person and 48% are self-help construction. Half of those owners mentioned that they bought the land of the house from previous owners, 15% bought it from real estate agent, 22% bought it from other person, 9% bought it from the relatives.

38% of them bought the land in the period of 1980-1984. 21% in 1985-1989, 18% in 1970-1979 and 16% in 1990-1994 bought their land. These findings indicate that a real estate market has been formed in the region and the owner of the housing started to change.

More than half of the self-help construction has got help of the family members and relatives whereas neighbors helped to the 12% of the people. 26% of the people interviewed owned their houses by making it built to a master builder and 5% to a constructor. The existence of 41% of people that bought their houses indicates that the use value of squatter started to lose its meaning and market value began to dominate.

Another indicator of this process is the finding that 22% mentioned they have another house of their own and a private car. For the self-help constructors, the procedure of acquisition of the land is another indicator of the existence of informal organized real-estate land market depending on partially relatives.

Conclusion

Policies developed to solve the squatter housing problem in Turkey advance along three lines: improvement, elimination, and forming prevention areas. However, these policies, aimed at legalizing existing squatter houses by way of amnesty laws, fail to address the vital issues of balancing migration to cities by creating more job opportunities both in rural areas and in the cities themselves, boosting social housing supply, and prevention of construction of squatter houses by passing laws. Within the framework of these policies, the procedure deemed most effective, and the one most keenly implemented, is the legalization of existing squatter houses by way of amnesty laws. Yet these procedures gave adverse results and only led to the intensification of squatter house construction.

As it can be seen from the above-mentioned framework the specific characteristics of the site demands a specific policy other than convenience squatter upgrading and rehabilitation policies. Fragmented ownership pattern of the site created various problems in solving the ownership issue. A comprehensive model should be formed integrating differentiated characteristics of the site and including various

strategies in accordance with those different characteristics. All related actors and residents of the settlement should participate to the formation of the model.

General Approach, Planning Process, Goals, Objectives and Total Strategy of Development Model of Armutlu can be summarized as follows.

DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF ARMUTLU SQUATTER DISTRICT

General Approach/Planning Process

Goals

• to provide the necessary social and cultural facilities for the land allocated to Istanbul Technical University

• to provide healthy and livable environment for the inhabitants of the area

Objectives

• effective use of urban land

• conservation of the Bosphorus Protected Zone

• upgrading the quality of environment

• participatory planning process including the goals of Habitat II' principles

Total Strategy Development

• strategy for creating social and cultural facilities of ITU

• strategy for housing requirements of local people

• strategy for participation of different interest groups (ITU, public institutions, private sector, international institutions, non governmental organizations, local people)

Action Planning and Programming

• financial support

• action plans/ programs

Implementation Approach

• improvement /upgrading

• reconstruction

• area clearance/relocation of people off site/ construction necessary social and cultural facilities for the Istanbul Technical University

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SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND SPATIAL COMPLEXITY OF SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS IN ISTANBUL : ARMUTLU DISTRICT

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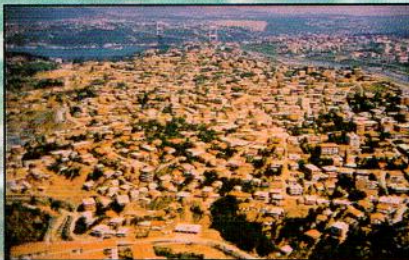
The migration process from rural areas to Istanbul Metropolitan Area started from 1945 onwards and gained momentum after 1950's.
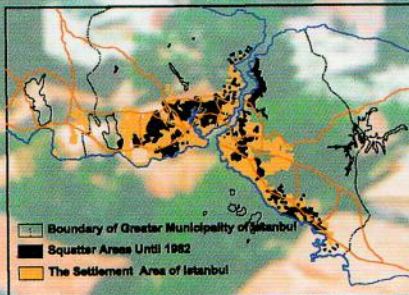
The impact of internal migration from countryside which has brought large numbers of people who could neither be absorbed into the urban economy nor into the formal housing sector has resulted the occupation of undeveloped vacant land and self-built housing called "GECEKONDU".

Increasing Rate of Population in Turkey and Istanbul
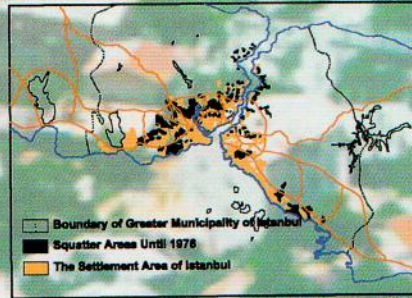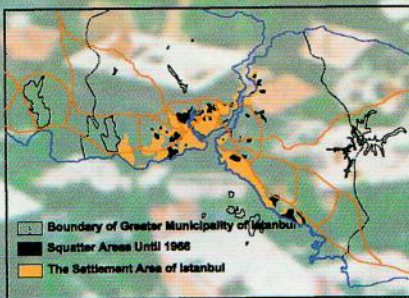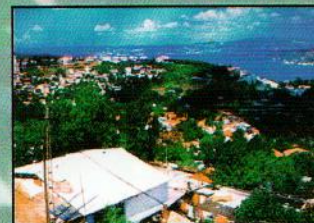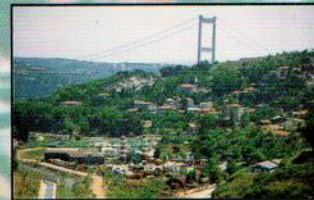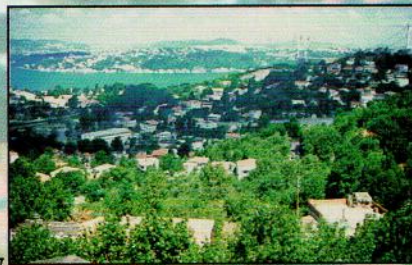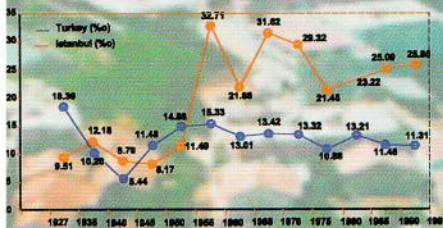
1966

1976

1982

1995

Spatial Expansion of Squatter Areas in Istanbul

Aerial Photo of Armutlu in Bosphorus

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF THE AREA

Aerial Photo of Armutlu and its Surroundings

Illegal occupatıon of migrants on lands allocated to ITU and İstanbul Municipal Authority has resulted with a settlement called ARMUTLU with about 30.000 inhabitants.

The settlement is located nearby Istanbul Bosphorus within the protection zone.

Survey on physical environment such as land ownership pattern, land use, topography, building quality, construction style, building height is studied and presented on 1/2000-scaled map.

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERN

Armutlu squatter area has been developed on site allocated to İstanbul Technical University (ITU) and Greater Istanbul municipality. The Survey on ownership pattern of ITU land shows that in relation to ownership there are different types of land such as;
* The land allotments that ITU has the title ownership
*The land allotments that are under the procedure of having title ownership
*The site allocated to ITU

LAND USE

4719 buildings are determined as aresult of survey. 4421 (78.36%) of those buildings are housing. The ground floors are used for commercial or other purposes. There are 11 (0.19 %) religious buildings, 7 (0.12 %) educational establishments, 59(1.3%) commercial or service buildings and 875 (15.51%) warehouses.

TOPOGRAPHY
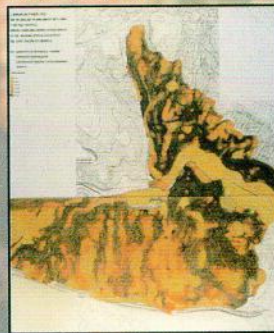
Considering the topographic structure, 52 % of the area has over 25% slope, 9% has 0-5% slope, 10% has 6-10% slope, 11% has 16-20% slope.

CONSTRUCTION STYLE

Evaluation of building construction style 2064(43.74%) of the buildings are cement, 2636 (55.86%) are built of brick, 10 (0.21%)are of wooden construction and 9 (0.19%) are prefabricated.

BUILDING QUALITY

Considering the evaluation of building quality, most of them are medium quality, 2814 (59.63%). There are 770 (16.32%) buildings in very bad condition located between south of the region and TEM (Trans European Motorway). 1135 (24.05%)buildings are in good condition.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Considering the evaluation of building height 2868 (60.73%) of the buildings are single-storey, 1099 (23.29%) are two-storey, 482 (10.21%) are three-storey, 223 (4.13 %) are four-storey, 35 (0.74%) are five-storey and 12 (0.25%) are six-storey buildings.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILIES

Social structure analysis was carried out in the area in the form of questionnaires. Total number of questionnaires is 212.

Cosidering family size in Armutlu squatter area most of the families (43%) consist of 3-4 people. The following group are made of 5-6 person (38%).

Those who migrated before 1980's are 21%, whereas 80% of the site was developed after 1980's.

After 1980, in each five-year 25% were moved to the site; but after 1995's only 8% were moved to the area.

Considering the employment figures 33% of the head of the households are employed in service sector, 25% are workers and 19% have their own business. 10 % are small entrepreneurs, 8% are drivers and 5% are civil servants.


The existence of 41% of people that bought their houses indicates that squatter started to lose its meaning and market value began to dominate.

Another indicator of this process is the finding that 22% mentioned have another house of their own and a private car.

The outcome of the case study indicates that 70% of the inhabitants are owners of the house, and 30% are tenants. Among the people interviewed 41% have bought their house, 11% of the houses are constructed by some other person and 48% are selfhelp construction.

Half of those families mentioned that they bought the land of the house from previous owners, 15% bought it from real estate agent, 22% bought it from other person, 9 %bought it from the relatives.

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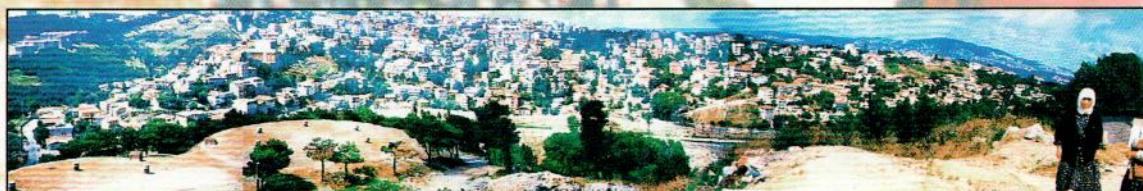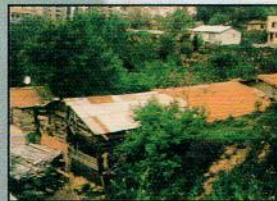
DISCUSSION

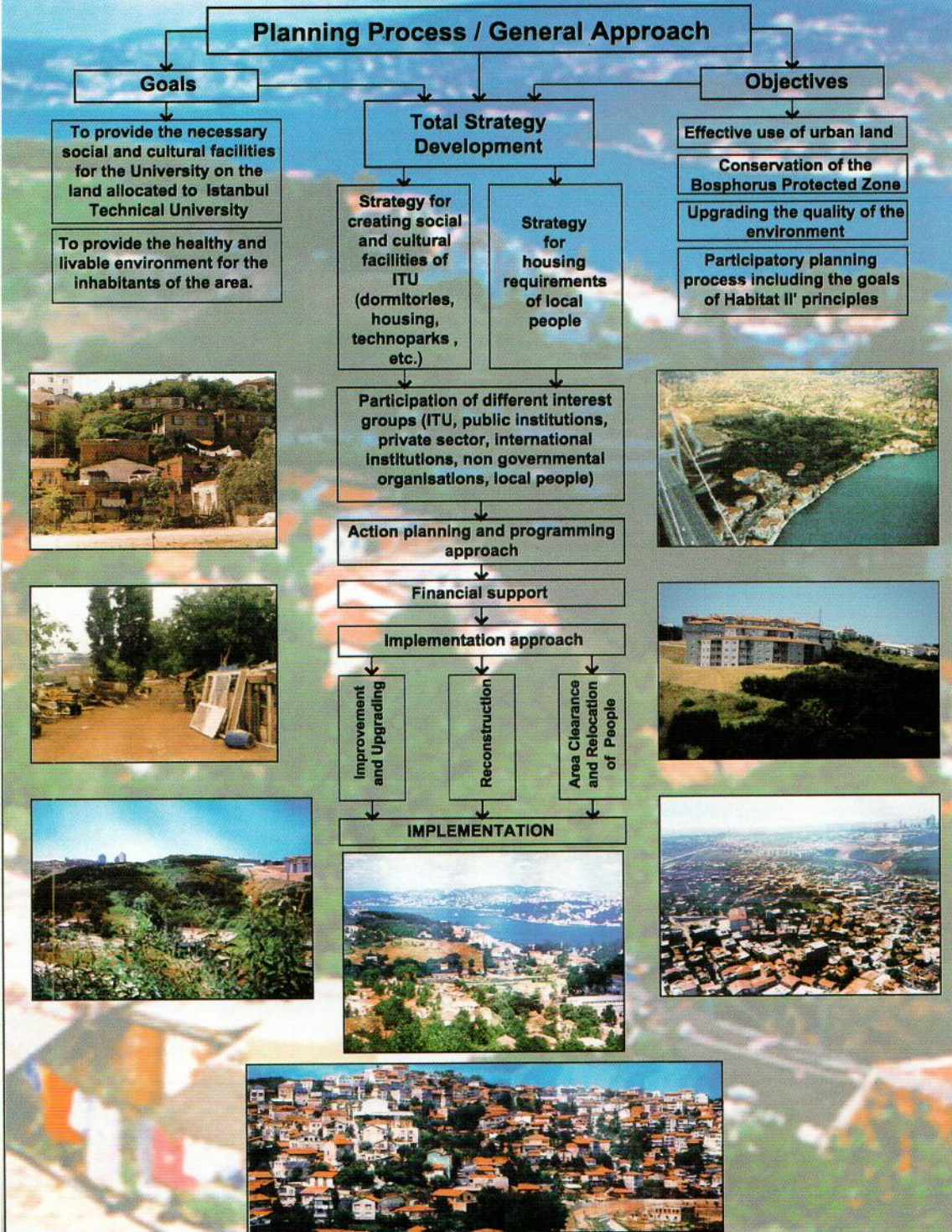As it can be seen from the above mentioned framework the specific characteristics of the site demands a specific policy other than convenience swuatter upgrading and rehabilitation policies. Fragmented ownership pattern of the site created various problems in solving the ownership issue. A comprehensive model should be formed integrating differentiated characteristics of the site and including various strategies in accordance with those different characteristics. All related actors and residents of the settlement should participate to the formation of the model.

Planning Process / General Approach

Goals

- To provide the necessary social and cultural facilities for the University on the land allocated to Istanbul Technical University
- To provide the healthy and livable environment for the inhabitants of the area.

Total Strategy Development

- Strategy for creating social and cultural facilities of ITU (dormitories, housing, technoparks, etc.)
- Strategy for housing requirements of local people

Participation of different interest groups (ITU, public institutions, private sector, international institutions, non governmental organisations, local people)

Action planning and programming approach

Financial support

Implementation approach

- Improvement and Upgrading
- Reconstruction
- Area Clearance and Relocation of People

IMPLEMENTATION

Objectives

- Effective use of urban land
- Conservation of the Bosphorus Protected Zone
- Upgrading the quality of the environment
- Participatory planning process including the goals of Habitat II' principles

Source : İTÜ Ayazağa Kampüsü Arazisinde Oluşan Armutlu Gecekondu Bölgesinin Planlanmasına Yönelik Araştırma Projesi - 1. Aşama