

A Model Study on Sustainable and Integrated Urban Governance Istanbul Esenler Şehir Düşünce Merkezi / Center of Urban Intelligence (Cui)

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Abstract

Cities are common grounds which provide living environments for everyone. A sustainable living environment can exist by means of social diversity, accessibility, high spatial quality and multifunctional utilization. Istanbul is a major global city which hosts a large variety of cultures, religions, and societies because of its historical heritage. This important element is one of the main factors which contributed to the current chaotic structure of the city. Esenler district in Istanbul has rapidly gone under a serious transformation mainly caused by changes in the social structure as a result of heavy inflow of migrants and the production of a building stock of questionable quality caused by unplanned urbanization. Besides all these issues, earthquakes are another major risk factor for most of the settlements in Istanbul. Within this context, Esenler region has been chosen as an important urban transformation area in Istanbul. To achieve sustainable urbanization, an organized urban transformation emerges as a great opportunity for this part of the city. Esenler Şehir Düşünce Merkezi (Center of Urban Intelligence - CUI) is a think-tank platform for conducting urban studies bringing together academic knowledge and governmental practice with the support of Esenler Municipality. The purpose of this study is to discuss and evaluate the contribution of the center to urban sustainability in terms of structure, workflow, and functionality. Through interdisciplinary events and publications, the CUI focuses on establishing a livable and sustainable urban texture in Esenler where uncontrolled urban transformation might have unrecoverable and destructive impacts. "Spatial Sociology and Sociological Master Plan", "Urban and Social Policies", "Creating a Sustainable Habitat", "Friendly Cities Workshops" can be listed among the studies conducted by the Center. Within this context, the study aims to present guidelines for urban transformation in Esenler with the help of implementing distinct innovative studies by applying scientific and academic studies into urban practice.

Keywords: Sustainability, integration, academic knowledge, governmental practice.

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Entegre ve Sürdürülebilir Şehir Yönetişimi Üzerine Bir Model Çalışma İstanbul Esenler Şehir Düşünce Merkezi

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Öz

Şehirler, herkes için yaşam ortamı sağlayan ortak zeminlerdir. Sürdürülebilir bir yaşam ortamı sosyal çeşitlilik, erişilebilirlik, yüksek mekansal kalite ve çok işlevli kullanım yoluyla var olabilir. İstanbul, tarihi mirası ile çok çeşitli medeniyetlere ev sahipliği yapmış büyük bir küresel şehirdir. İstanbul'daki Esenler ilçesi, yoğun göç hareketi ve plansız kentleşmenin neden olduğu kalitesiz yapı stoğu üretilmesi sonucunda toplumsal yapıdaki değişikliklerin neden olduğu ciddi bir dönüşüm geçirdi. Tüm bu sorunların yanı sıra, depremler İstanbul'daki yerleşimlerin çoğu için bir başka önemli risk faktörüdür. Bu bağlamda, Esenler bölgesi İstanbul'da önemli bir kentsel dönüşüm alanı olarak seçilmiştir. Sürdürülebilir kentleşmeye ulaşmak için, organize bir kentsel dönüşüm kentin bu bölgesi için büyük bir fırsat olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Esenler Şehir Düşünce Merkezi, Esenler Belediyesi'nin desteğiyle akademik bilgi ve devlet uygulamalarını bir araya getiren kentsel çalışmaları yürütmek için bir düşünce kuruluşudur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, merkezin kentsel sürdürülebilirliğe katkısını örgüt yapısı, iş akışı ve işlevsellik açısından değerlendirmek ve tartışmaktır. Disiplinlerarası çalışmalar ve yayınlar yoluyla, CUI, Esenler'de yaşanabilir ve sürdürülebilir bir kentsel doku oluşturulmasına odaklanmaktadır. Merkez tarafından yürütülen çalışmalar arasında “Mekânsal Sosyoloji ve Sosyolojik Master Planı”, “Kentsel ve Sosyal Politikalar”, “Sürdürülebilir Bir Yaşam Alanı Yaratma”, “Dost Kentler Çalıştayları” listelenebilir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, bilimsel ve akademik çalışmaları kentsel pratiğe uygulayarak yenilikçi çalışmaları hayata geçirmek amacıyla Esenler'deki kentsel dönüşüm için kılavuz ilkeler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Urban, rural, population density, urban functions.

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History, Structure and Purpose

Cities are multi-dimensional management units which produce continuous problems with unique settlement patterns. Istanbul produces a large quantity of spatial and management problems especially due to its continuously increasing population as a result of internal migration. Esenler district developed within past 25 years due to internal migration. After the devastating earthquake of 1999, the city went through changes in terms of its spatial organization. Urban regeneration started at Esenler's three neighborhoods with the purpose of producing earthquake-proof housing. Esenler CUI had been constituted within the body of Esenler Municipality in 2012 to produce solutions for problems which appear at the interface of urbanization, space, and community. Esenler City Thought Center boasts a multi-disciplinary scientific board which brings academics from a wide range of expertises.

The Center, which is Esenler Municipality's own initiative, brought people from diverse disciplines, such as politics, academy, municipality unions, urban management, and research, together every three weeks. Buildings that include libraries, meeting rooms and management offices were made available for the use of this institution in Esenler. The institution has been a pioneering application with its own unique characteristics.

The goals of the center are: (1) Producing sustainable concepts and solutions for the city; forging a solid link between the accumulation of tradition and the future while approaching to the problems of the city; (2) finding solutions to problems by benefiting this legal acquit and accepting this as a case without biasing all values and accumulations which have been produced until today. At the same time, Esenler CUI develops approaches and attitudes by taking the social processes into account by approaching to the urban life based on human being; making studies in order to carry out these produced thoughts and ideas into practice, and establishing Esenler's urban identity by preparing a social urban transformation project for Esenler and putting this into practice.

Center of Urban Intelligence will be working strictly to achieve the specific goals within the frame of a previously defined program while taking scientific approaches as guidelines. First, achievable goals will be determined within a framework of scientifically configured methodology and then an adequate, well-planned and equipped team will be working to accomplish these goals. Around these tasks, City Thought Center Science Board Members will determine the goals.

The main goal of this institute is to find permanent solutions which provides philosophical, social and cultural basis to the pathological problems of the city and

to create knowledge and wisdom based on alternative and innovative ways for city managers to carry out routine works within the city.

Scope and Activities

Works and activities with different content and size in Esenler CUI is planned annually and is conducted accordingly. Those activities are: (1) publishing results of workshops that are defined by the science board of the institute as books, panels, symposia, memorial programs, conference,



seminar, organizing scientific activities (2) arranging technical trips to the cities with experience of urban regeneration, bringing city authors and academics together to establish a common platform, (3) publication of other books about the specialized areas, (4) hosting guest speakers, promotion of scientific researches specifically about Esenler and (5) providing support to the science board members in international scientific activities. The institute publishes “City and Thought” journal four times a year. Moreover, the institute organizes unique activities to integrate Esenler residents to disseminate knowledge. Mother University, Children University, Academy Esenler, Esenler Children Street are some examples of these activities.

All these activities take place with the collaboration of Universities like Yıldız Technical University which is located within the boundaries of Esenler as well as other universities. The following sections will highlight those activities.

Workshops 2012-2015

Workshops which have been carried out so far;

Human and Place, Urban Management and Integrated Approach, Migration and Urbanization, Modernity and Architecture, Urban Regeneration, Future City, Sociological Master Plan, Friendly Cities for Everyone, Urban Life and Sustainability in Esenler. Every workshop is defined briefly below.

While Esenler Municipality is responsible for taking on; noise pollution, cleaning, green city and human happiness and also aims at organizing events like; strengthening bonds between residents and culture to satisfy the intellectual needs of its citizens.

In this context “Human and Place” workshop was held by Esenler City Thought Center in 2012. The results of this workshop were published in the book “The Place Between Theory and Practice”.

Migration, which is defined as the fluctuation of people who are in continuous movement between two places, have become one of the most important problems of cities together with the Industrial Revolution. The agricultural societies who wish to complete the industrialization process in a short period had migrated to some cities, but these cities were caught unprepared. Cities which tried to transform these immigrants into ‘citizens’ failed and cities underwent spatial changes themselves instead. Esenler CUI will work to revive the urban space that is under pressure because of the migration and the phenomenon of urbanity that begins to disappear. For this purpose, Esenler City Thought Center organized Migration and Urbanization workshop in 2012. Conclusions of this workshop were published as a book of with the title, “Understanding Esenler in the Intersection of Migration, Urbanization and Belonging”.

What is crucial for modernism is how people will be directed other than place by time.

Modernity in essence aims to formatting community to a single type from diversity.

This top-down planning approach leads the entire world to oppressive socio-spatial Urbanization

As a natural result of this approach which ignores diversity reveals the issues behind today’s urban spaces. These types of problems were questioned and solutions were suggested in a workshop that occurred in 2012. The output of this workshop was the publication of a book titled “Modernity and Architecture” by City Thought Center.

To examine every aspect of the urban regeneration phenomena, City Thought Center organized an Urban Regeneration Workshop in 2013. Turkey’s first urban regeneration site started in Esenler. Esenler City Thought Center and Environment and Urban Ministry jointly organized a symposium called “International Urban Regeneration for Sustainable Cities Symposium” in 5-6 November 2013. This symposium shed light on urban regeneration works under academic eye.

Urban regeneration works take place in Turkey and the good examples of urban regeneration works so far in other countries were compared by international speakers. Symposium had five sessions and twenty presentations in total. International Urban Regeneration Symposium Proceedings was edited by the Urban Regeneration Committee and published by the City Thought Center.

Future City Workshop took place in 2014 as planned. The workshop's topic was creating future cities without breaking traditional links. Future City workshop which took place in 20-21 December 2014 shed light on city works. Future City Symposium Book edited by the Committee and published by CUI.

While cities are physically planned, its social aspects are mostly ignored. Social works done by local governments has a limited method, techniques and has no specific vision and goals, they also far from integrated approach.

For this reason, even local governments which have done many social works are not necessarily efficient at it. So, it is important to listen to the city's heart beats by identifying new issues and global trends along with the current situations in the city and then we can create social, sustainable and integrated plans.

The main goal of this workshop was to study the social master plan for Esenler. The discussions in the workshop was focused on the analysis of the urbanization processes around Esenler and its neighborhoods. The need for a sociological master plan was obvious as a result of this workshop.

“Friendly Cities for Everyone” Workshop held by Esenler City Thought Center in 2015

These are the topics of workshop:

- Esenler with Espect of Childrens
- Esenler, Universal Design and Children Street
- Kids Friendly Esenler and Local Government Relation
- Pedestrian Friendly Cities Street Detectives
- Woman and Environment; Application of Ecofeminism to the Environmental Consumption
- Effect of Urban Design on Joining of Elders to the Urban Life; Esenler Example
- Esenler and Street Animals; Street Animals in Urban Culture were discussed.

After editing process “Friendly Esenler for Everyone” handbook published by Esenler City Thought Center.

Urban Life and Sustainability

Urban Life and Sustainability workshop held by Esenler City Thought Center as it planned in 2015.

This workshop aimed at discussing urban life in terms of sustainability in particularly Esenler. In this context, the principals and values that make urban life are identified and questioned. Relationships between gender and place were discussed along with the social pattern analysis and usage of public space were evaluated. Also, by

establishing city and tree relation, direction and content of city beautification works were determined.

After completion of scientific debates about urban design form, value and public space, then findings will be published as an issue.



Scientific Activities:

- Mosque Architectural Panel
 - Mosque Sociology and Women Panel
- Sabahattin Zaim Islam and Economics Symposium
- Urban Regeneration Symposium
- City of the Future Symposium

Projects

Mother University

Mother university program consist of an 8-week program. Basic education, especially for mothers and their children are provided according to their interests and hobbies in the program.

As we all know, mothers are considered as sacred beings in many cultures and are respected highly in Turkey. However, family violence has started to get wide media coverage in recent years. While family violence between spouses received media coverage in previous years; children who use violence against their parents or parents who use violence against their children at young ages and against their babies started to appear more often on media in recent years.

Mother university aimed at bring back the dignity they deserve, gain self-confidence, gain knowledge, remind them that not only do they raise a child but also they have a say in the future of a nation; and to provide training between themselves and their children with a teacher responsibility.

Children University

Children University brings kids together at the ages between 11-14 from every socio-economic environment to increase self-confidence, motivation, abilities and interests. Intellectual and scientific development of kids supported by the environment based on differences such as income, awareness of other cultures and has been appreciated, tolerated, learning with a technique of face to face interaction and analytic thinking has been encouraged. We know that shaping a kid's natural interest in correct hands can lead them to success and can become kid's life journeys lifeguard. Children University was made possible with collaboration of Yıldız Technical University between the years of 2013-2014 and Istanbul University during the year of 2015.

Academy Esenler

The objective of the Project is getting into touch with masters and doctoral students living within the boundaries of Esenler, taking advantage of their academic studies, ideas and opinions, directing their interests to Esenler and supporting them in their specific needs.

Esenler will continue its rise in the light of these academic studies and the future of this place will be supported by contributions from young scientists.

City Writers and Academics Meeting

City Writers and Academics Meeting aimed at producing long lasting ideas for cities and residents, also having idea exchanging. First meeting was held in 2012 October in Esenler and the second one held in 2014 February in Esenler.

Aklı Esenler (Flashy Minds of Esenler)

Main purpose of this project is to bring people together to explore new ideas which belong to different areas and then use this knowledge in their life and business, encourage open mindedness and creativity.

Speakers of "Aklı Esenler" were chosen among people who celebrated within their environment and created unusual ideas.

There will be street interviews with the people. Their opinions will be asked about city governance and then their answers will be published through on the web. These answers will also be evaluating by municipality employees.

With the experience sharing meetings, it is hoped that young people will find a role model from speakers sharing experiences of their life. This will make young people to plan their life according to these experiences.

City Courses

It is important to know the history of our cities and their progress today for people who are candidates for managing our cities in the today and in the future.

That is why, City Courses aims at corresponding two main topics to their audiences. First one is to give information about cities' progress from past to today. Second one is putting in the middle big picture of the cities around the world and in our country.

City Courses started with contribution of ÖNDER, Marmara University, Local Governments Research and Application Center, City Thought Center to increase the awareness of living in the city for high school students in 2015 Esenler.

Site Visits/ Research Trips

Barcelona (Spain), Astana (Kazakhstan), Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Amman and Petra (Jordan), Beirut (Lebanon), also in the home country site visits made to Kayseri and Urfa. Science board members attended conferences in these cities.

Publications: City and Thoughts Journal

9 journals published so far, and their thematic names are provided below.

1. Issue: Philosophy of City
2. Issue: City Law
3. Issue: Economics of City
4. Issue: Sociology of City
5. Issue: City Management
6. Issue: City of Future
7. Issue: City Culture
8. Issue: City and Ritual
9. Issue: Water and City

Book Issues

- Space Between Theory and Practice
- Understanding Esenler in the Axis of Migration, Urbanization and Belonging
- Modernity and Architecture
- Public Space and Community
- Urban Regeneration for a Sustainable City

- Thoughts About City-1
- City Poems Ontology
- City of Future
- Friendly Esenler for Everyone
- Urban Life and Sustainability
- Horizon of City



Conclusion

This article includes Purpose, Scope, Structure and Functions of the Esenler City Thought Center along with the purpose of understanding and introducing the institute. This institute acts as an example for its counterparts along thanks to its unique features. It also stays somewhere between local government and federal government. Esenler City Thought Center puts much effort to develop solutions oriented at merging aspects of academic discourse and practice. It is hoped that the number of institutes of this type increases in the future.

Resources

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