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Problems encountered in urban transformation applications and solution suggestions: A case study of Osmaniye Province

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Abstract

In this study, urban transformation practices were discussed within the scope of renewal, arrangement and development activities of existing buildings under natural disasters and the risks that come with them, and the problems and deficiencies experienced in practice were examined specifically in Osmaniye city center. It is known that urban transformation has significant benefits in terms of public interest and public health, and increases the comfort levels of city dwellers through urban planning and infrastructure improvements. Despite its many positive effects on disaster-resistant city planning and the priority of life and property safety, it is sometimes possible to encounter very bad examples as a result of incorrect or incomplete applications. When the applications carried out in Osmaniye city center are examined, it is generally seen that island-based large-scale transformations are more accurate in terms of time, cost and environmental order compared to partially smaller and parcel-based on-site transformations.

1. Introduction

Increasing population rates over the years, needs in line with today's demands, renewal of cities, meeting social and cultural needs, earthquake and natural disaster risks, economic situations, etc. Due to these factors, urban transformation practices have become a necessity rather than a desire. We see that in Türkiye, especially in recent years, practices have been implemented without sufficient planning. Defining urban transformation as merely demolishing old buildings that have completed their service life and replacing them with new ones means omitting many other parameters, which will bring about many negativities in the medium and long term. For this reason, urban transformation applications are based on social, cultural, history, belief, architecture, engineering, aesthetics, safe structures, legal and financial requirements, etc. It needs to be addressed with a multi-disciplinary approach covering many areas and implemented meticulously. With urban transformation, the areas at risk of disaster and the plots and lands where risky structures outside these areas are located are eliminated and renovated to prevent illegal construction that spoils the appearance and texture of cities, and to prevent the loss of life and death that may occur as a result of possible natural disasters by reconstructing buildings that are not earthquake resistant and have completed their economic life. It is aimed to create healthy and safe living spaces in order to minimize property loss [1]. The city is the living unit of people and shapes social life [2]. Cities have a dynamic structure and are in constant change and transformation due to physical, social, economic and ideological reasons [3]. Especially after industrialization, migration from villages to urban centers has led to rapid population growth in cities, resulting in unplanned and uncontrolled growth. In addition, natural disasters also shape cities physically [4]. Cities cannot show a correct development due to their fragility and this situation leads to the emergence of the concept of urban transformation. The studies conducted within the scope of urban regeneration are a current issue and are becoming more widespread and shaped [5].

Urban transformation applications should be carried out in the form of On-Site Transformation applications in order not to tear people away from the social living spaces they are used to and the environment they live in, and

to continue their lives in a peaceful and calm environment. Because people may face psychological and sociological depression when they have to leave the area, they are used to living in. This should be considered as a matter worthy of attention. However, if the risks inherent in the ground conditions in existing settlements (fault, ground liquefaction, insufficient bearing capacity of the ground, etc.) are not suitable for construction, the success of the project implementations will be increased by providing space firstly from the reserve areas close to this area. According to [6], urban regeneration is a practice that gives importance to historical, cultural and natural values, aiming to create safe and qualified environments. In another definition, urban regeneration is defined as "the transformation, renewal and revitalization of unhealthy urban parts within both physical and legal conditions" [7]. The objectives of urban regeneration efforts are to stop physical collapse and ensure the sustainability of the historical area, to increase the quality of life in cities, and to ensure the participation of relevant actors at all scales in the transformation process [8].

Urban transformation is the process of systematically determining the risk values of the existing building stocks, the soil ground and the structure on it against possible earthquakes, within the scope of the project of a part or a significantly large part of the city, including the possibility of their collapse in a possible earthquake and damaging other structures in the surrounding area while collapsing. It is one of the public works carried out to remove risky buildings from use and replace them with structures with foundations suitable for the structure of the soil, thus minimizing the loss of life and property that may occur in possible earthquakes [9].

Considering the unplanned and irregular construction throughout Türkiye as well as the abundance of buildings exposed to disasters, it is inevitable that urban transformation practices will take many years. Therefore, the issue must be approached with care and patience. Urban transformation includes different application forms such as renewal, rehabilitation, regulation, protection, revitalization and redevelopment [10]. Urban transformation practices support sustainable development by protecting and developing urban values and including interventions to ensure socio-economic and socio-cultural developments [11]. It has been observed that there are many factors that negatively affect the sustainable development expected from the urban transformation practices carried out in Türkiye to date [12]. As a solution to the problems experienced in practice, it is of great importance to first define the legal infrastructure and the duties and powers of practitioners. The recently enacted disaster law in Türkiye covers the procedures and principles regarding the improvement, liquidation and renewal of lands and lands where disaster risk areas and risky structures outside these areas are located, in order to create healthy and safe living spaces in accordance with science and art norms and standards. The implementation phase of this law is very important because it is far from the goal of generating surplus income in areas at risk of disaster and not only in the physical sense, but also in terms of sustainable planning of the urban space [13].

Nowadays, spatial risks produced by natural disasters or human impacts have become even more threatening to the rapidly increasing world population. Unplanned construction and humanity's unconscious use of the earth lead to increased losses in disaster situations. Human beings are experiencing a new phase of modernity, called the "Risk Society", where risks and dangers predominate [14]. This situation has revealed the need to make more effective decisions in the pre- and post-risk planning and management stages. In disaster management, not only physical factors but also the socioeconomic and demographic structure of the society should be taken into consideration. In this context, vulnerability is associated with poorer human development outcomes. It poses a threat to sustainable development, especially in fragile contexts that are home to a quarter of the world's population but three-quarters of the world's extreme poor.

Within the scope of damage assessment studies carried out by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change in the regions affected by the February 6, 2023 earthquakes, damage assessment studies were carried out in 387 thousand 346 buildings and 1 million 856 thousand 864 independent units, and 224 thousand 923 independent units in 50 thousand 576 buildings. It was determined that the unit was heavily damaged and ruined, requiring urgent demolition. It was shared that 71 thousand 174 independent units in 11 thousand 114 buildings were found to be moderately damaged, 640 thousand 131 independent units in 99 thousand 300 buildings were found to be slightly damaged, and 762 thousand 627 independent units in 180 thousand 355 buildings were found to be undamaged [15, 16].

2. Material and Method

Since each region may have its own characteristics and problems in urban transformation practices, it would not be right to develop and implement a single model for urban transformation. However, if a general framework is created regarding what needs to be addressed, a model can be created according to the area where urban transformation will be implemented. Instead of implementing ¬projects that are copied from another place and have no connection with the application area, all the examined factors can be considered together and urban transformation projects specific to that location can be developed and implemented with the necessary data. Although proceeding in this way requires more dedication and a longer process, it is what is necessary to achieve successful results [17].

In Osmaniye city center, it is seen that large-scale island-based transformations are more accurate in terms of time, cost and environmental order compared to smaller and parcel-based on-site transformations. In the visual

in Figure 1, it is aimed to demolish a building that has completed its service life in Ümraniye district of Istanbul province and replace it with a new building within the scope of urban transformation. Just like in this example, in many of our cities, urban transformation practices are seen as negative examples where the implementation is not evaluated on a large scale, but on a parcel basis, and the application is inadequately evaluated.

Because, in parcel-based on-site transformations, only a limited number of structures will be intervened and the remaining structures in a large area will continue to exist. In this case, the security risk of existing buildings, their incompatibility with new zoning plans, visual pollution, etc. It will appear as an example of incomplete application with its effects. Of course, they contribute to the renewal and improvement processes in their transformation on a parcel basis and in terms of the human psychology and sociological impact mentioned before. However, when the residential areas are considered as a whole, it is an example of incomplete and inadequate implementation. In general, one of the most important reasons why parcel-based conversions are common is the flat owners and rights holders who are included in the Civil Code, the Law on the Transformation of Areas at Disaster Risk, the Law on Condominium Ownership and related legislation and regulations, which cause difficulties in practice.

Parcel-based conversions have become more common due to the factors where disputes between them are frequently encountered. However, the issue of urban transformation, which is directly related to many areas, will help expand the field of application, especially by fulfilling some legal requirements. Finally, the Ministry of Justice 's announcement that the 2/3 requirement between flat owners will be regulated as 50+1 percent and come into force will contribute to making the application easier and broader [9].

In this direction, it is aimed to progress the transformation processes more quickly and effectively with the Urban Transformation Directorate, which was announced by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and published in the official gazette [15].

Figure 1. Urban Transformation Application Demolition Study [18].

Figure 2 shows the current status of a large-scale area in Kocaeli Province, which has completely entered the urban transformation area in 2022 and is ongoing. It is seen that urban transformation practices are still continuing in the province of Kocaeli, which was exposed to great destruction and damage in the 1999 Gölcük earthquake. Here, on-site but island-based large-scale transformations, which have more effective and accurate results compared to parcel-based on-site transformation, and the social, cultural, infrastructure opportunities, economic, human psychology, etc. of the settlements located in a wide area. Considering its effects, it seems to be a more accurate example of transformation.

Based on this example, earthquake, flood, landslide etc. It is understood that cities that have experienced disaster situations before have implemented urban transformation practices more widely with these painful experiences. As can be seen in this example, urban transformation practices continue even though many years have passed in Kocaeli province. In this regard, an urban transformation plan should be made specifically for Osmaniye province, which is among the 11 provinces affected by the latest Kahramanmaraş earthquake on February 6, and should be combined with post-disaster urban planning and transformation practices. Because in this way, taking permanent and correct steps in planning the future of the city will be an effective approach.

Figure 2. Island Based Transformation in Kocaeli Province [19].

In Figure 3, it would be appropriate to mention the example of the Istanbul Fikirtepe Urban Transformation Project, which is frequently heard and known by the public. Fikirtepe region, which is subject to urban transformation; It is a neighborhood with an increasing population density and a density of apartments as a result of Istanbul being a center of attraction and receiving rapid immigration. Moreover; It is a slum with inadequate infrastructure and superstructure services, unfavorable environmental conditions, and limited socio-economic services. With this feature, Fikirtepe region is included in the earthquake Master Plan by IMM;2003. It has been described as "one of the sub-sections that has the opportunity to produce its own value for urban transformation and does not require additional resources due to its central location" [20, 21].

Fikirtepe Region, which fits this definition, has become an overloaded neighborhood not because of the possible consequences of the earthquake, but because of the burden of being a slum within a large central district like Kadıköy. It has been suggested that illegal and unplanned urbanization has emerged as the length of regional borders has increased over time. For this reason, urban transformation works have been initiated to prevent unhealthy construction [20].

Figure 3. Structuring of Fikirtepe before the Urban Transformation Project [20].

That does not meet the needs, unhealthy living conditions and the building stock that is not resistant to disasters [20]. Before the Fikirtepe urban transformation project, the region was known as a slum area, which was a type of housing built only to meet the shelter needs of the local people and was built in a very short time.

Fikirtepe urban transformation project is carried out in cooperation with the private sector and Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change (MEUCC). However, the construction of the Fikirtepe Urban Transformation Project, which has been going on for 15 years, is still continuing, and TOKİ's subsidiary Emlak Konut GYO has undertaken the construction of the constructions that were left unfinished or never started (Figure 4). While 1299 buildings and 5,500 independent units were demolished in Fikirtepe in 2021, tenders were also held for construction [22]. Considering situations such as financial support, project size, property rights disputes, physical structure difficulties due to being located in the metropolitan center, and environmental impact, it has affected the process to spread over many years.

Figure 4. Fikirtepe Urban Transformation Project Area Image [23].

2.1. Characteristics of the study area

Earthquakes in Türkiye have shown us that if residential areas are built close to fault lines, the possibility of structural collapse and severe damage increases significantly in the event of an earthquake (e.g. 6-February-2023 earthquakes, Samos earthquake of 2020, Izmir, etc.). As a result of the rapid urban transformation activities carried out in Türkiye in recent years, many buildings with high damage levels are being demolished and new buildings are being built in the same place or in newly opened settlements. In addition to parameters such as the structural features of the building and the number of floors, the main issue to be taken into consideration is location selection. This process is mostly neglected by today's city administrations because it requires a multidisciplinary study, multiple data sets need to be handled in a multi-scale manner, and its basic elements are not yet clear. All considered urbanization features will be evaluated with different geotechnical parameter layers and it will be shown comprehensively how the city's geotechnical parameter information can be used. Today, since geotechnical parameters and features are generally available to the public, the required information can be easily accessed through institutions and organizations such as municipalities and building inspection offices. It is extremely important for urban planning to create a more resilient urban system by ensuring the environmental sustainability of urban areas, revealing the impact of comprehensive geotechnical parameters on urban fragility, and using more information.

2.2. General geographical characteristics of the study area

Osmaniye Province is located in the east of the Mediterranean Region and Çukurova. It is surrounded by the provinces of Gaziantep in the east, Hatay in the south, Adana in the west, and Kahramanmaraş in the north (Figure 5). In the western parts of Osmaniye Province, the plains of the Adana plain extend to the east. It is surrounded by the Amanos Mountains extending from the Iskenderun Gulf to the east in the south of Osmaniye, the Toros Mountains extending to the northwest and northeast, and the Dumanlı, Duldul and Tırtıl Mountains to the east. The province, with the fertile Çukurova lands in the west, is one of the cutest provinces of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Osmaniye, which was made a district and connected to Adana in 1933, gained its new administrative structure as the 80th province of Türkiye in 1996. Osmaniye, located in the east of the Mediterranean Region and Çukurova; It is located between 35 52'-36 42' Eastern Meridians (longitudes) and 36 57'-37 45' Northern Parallels (latitudes) [24]. The administrative area of Osmaniye Municipality is surrounded by village administrative units [16].

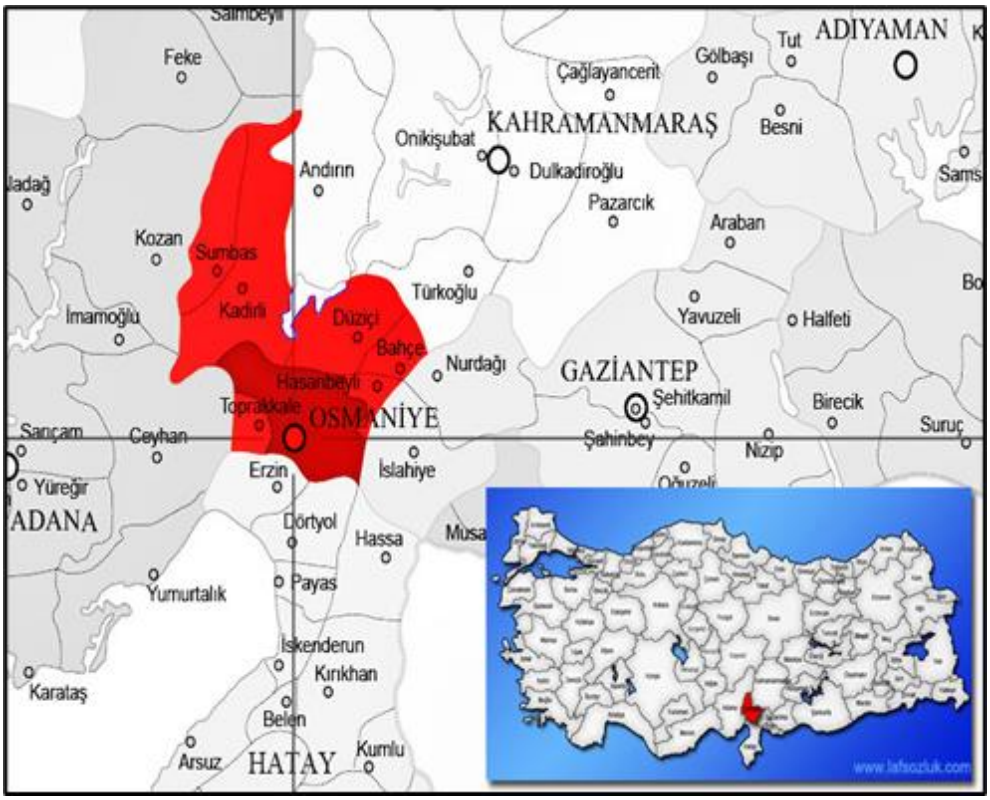

Figure 5. Location of Osmaniye Province.

The surface area of the province is 3222 km² and it is 121 m above sea level. altitude and 20 km from the Mediterranean Sea. Osmaniye is the 67th largest province of Türkiye in terms of geographical area. The distance between the southernmost and northernmost parts of Osmaniye Province as the crow flies is 88 km, and the distance between the easternmost and westernmost parts of Osmaniye Province is 74 km. Osmaniye is in a convenient location in terms of transportation and is on the transit route of the highways connecting the Mediterranean Region to the Eastern and Southeastern Regions. With the increasing population in Osmaniye province, housing, energy, communication, transportation, etc. The needs in these areas are also increasing. The negative effects of rapid population growth, urbanization and industrialization on the environment are too important to be ignored [24]. Today, residences, which are the result of the "build-sell" system based on marketing and constitute the majority of our cities; It is designed unconsciously and emerges as airless, treeless and flowerless. In addition, as "demolish-build" waste has become widespread in cities with some speculative approaches, many buildings with historical features have been demolished and destroyed (Figure 6). Osmaniye is one of our unlucky provinces experiencing this situation [25].

Figure 6. Old photos of Osmaniye Province.

Geologically, Osmaniye province is located on the western foothills of the Amanos Mountain (Nur Mountain) range and on alluvial units with poor engineering properties, where large agricultural areas known as Çukurova are located [26-28]. This region is located in a geography where faults are abundant (Figure 7).

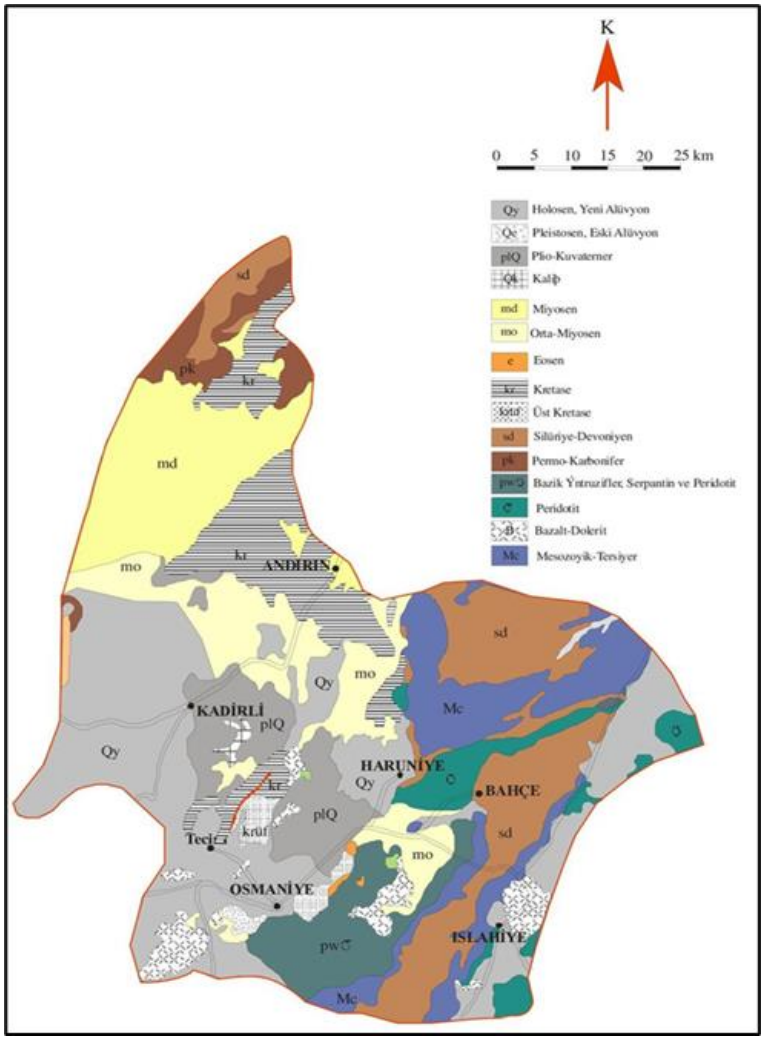

Figure 7. Geological map of Osmaniye province [27].

Demographic Structure; According to the 2012 census, Osmaniye is the 44th province of Türkiye in terms of population and its population is 492135. Our citizens, who migrated to Osmaniye from Kahramanmaraş, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Erzurum, Bitlis, Bingöl, Van, Muş and Gaziantep provinces since the 1970s, constitute 1/3 of the current central district city population. Central District is the 30th largest province in Türkiye according to population ranking [24]. Construction Industry; Since the revival of the construction sector depends on the increase in the purchasing power of the people, the increase in the income level will significantly increase the business volume in the sector. The economic dynamism observed in Osmaniye in recent years, especially the widespread use of incentive measures and the liveliness in the Organized Industrial Zone, has provided dynamism in the construction sector and sub-sectors. Osmaniye provincial center has a contiguous area of 4209 hectares and municipal borders of 3800 hectares. 47000 houses were built on 14000 parcels within the municipality and governorship borders [24]. Urban Planning Process: It is at the crossroads of Osmaniye, Adana, Gaziantep and Hatay, and since it is the gateway of the Southeast to the Mediterranean, it has constantly received immigration, and while the population of the center was 13,000 in 1950, it reached 122,400 in 1990. The area where residences are located in the province is spread over an area of 815 hectares. There is an organic housing texture in the upper neighborhoods and Karacalar and Dereobası Villages (Figure 3). In the city center and its surroundings, it constitutes a multi-storey structuring group, especially the ground floors of which are used as stores [29, 30].

The current Implementation Development Plan was approved on 09.04.2003. The city center is located just north of the D-400 State Highway, which passes through the southeast of the residential area (Figure 4). It has created dense residential areas from the settlement center towards the southeast. Due to the size of the residential area, vertical construction is less than low-rise housing. Most of the residential areas consist of 2-3 storey detached or semi-detached houses, and a small number of storey houses built adjacent to busy traffic axes. Today, more than 10% of the residential area covers the slum prevention zone [31, 32].

2.3. Examples from the field of study

The workplaces, called Shoemakers' Bazaar, which is one of the old settlements in the Central District of Osmaniye province, and also houses various tradesmen's shops, were put into transformation and restoration in line with urban planning and city silhouette in 2022. The necessary infrastructure and project work were completed and it was declared as an application area in the last period of 2022. The areas called Envar-ül Hamit (Great Mosque) and Hamamlar Street, which are located very close to this area and are historical, were considered as a whole and work was started in this context (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Area Declared for Urban Transformation in Osmaniye Province [33].

Figure 9 shows the details of the development plan published by the Osmaniye Municipality Directorate of Zoning and Urbanization in the area where transformation and restoration were declared. The fact that the workplaces, which are currently adjacent and have a maximum of 2 floors, are given as adjacent but 5-storey in the new zoning plan, raises questions about whether it is suitable for the historical, social and cultural spirit of this area. When it comes to urban transformation, the idea of simply demolishing the old building and building a new, multi-storey one in its place is generally not suitable for the needs of the region, as it brings with it some problems.

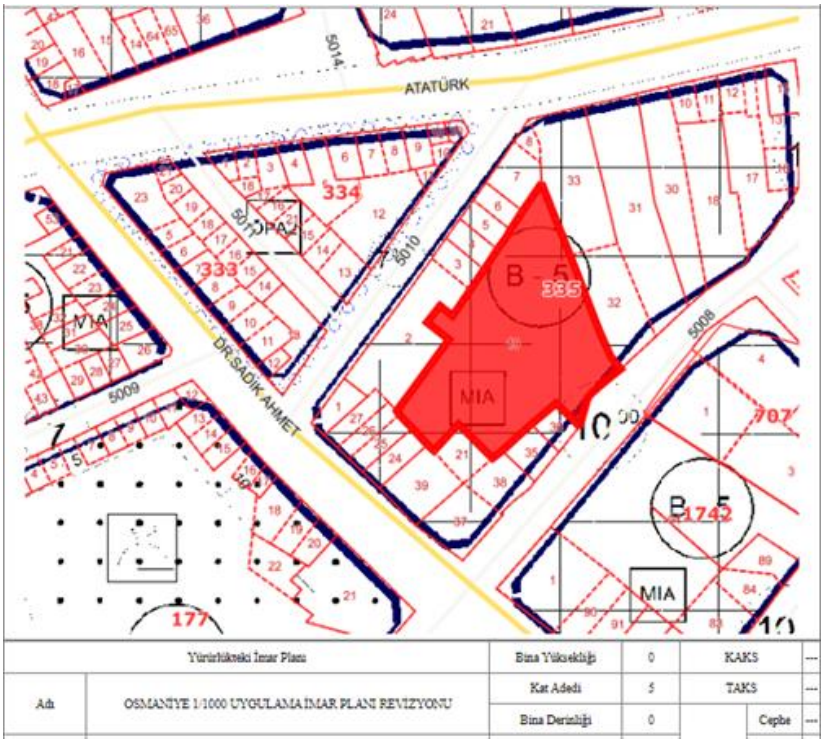

Figure 9. Current development plan of the urban transformation area [33, 34].

Figure 10 shows the pre-earthquake images of the 133-year-old historical Grand Mosque and Baths Street, which are located within the transformation and restoration areas. Again, in this area, work was started in the last period of 2022, with the necessary infrastructure works and the part declared as an urban transformation area as a whole. However, in the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes that occurred at the beginning of 2023, both the Grand Mosque and many workplaces in the area called Shoemakers' Bazaar were severely damaged. Therefore, urban transformation and restoration practices remain unclear until now.

Figure 10. View of the Great Mosque and Baths Street [29, 35].

While the necessary arrangements in historical buildings are being considered in coordination with the region declared as an urban transformation area before the earthquake, in accordance with the transformation area, if the restoration of the damaged historical buildings is necessary after the earthquake, it would be a better decision to take a new planning step, including demolition works (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Damage Image After the February 6 Earthquakes [30, 36].

Figure 12. Yeşilyurt District Urban Transformation Project [32].

Yeşilyurt neighborhood urban transformation project will be expanded. The 2nd phase of the "Yeşilyurt Urban Transformation Project", which was initiated in Yeşilyurt neighborhood and 320 houses have been completed, will be started in a very short time. Together with TOKİ, the project of 256 houses in Yaveriye is about to be completed. In the new period, urban transformation projects that receive the support of citizens will continue (Figure 12). The principles of urban transformation are to ensure in-situ transformation, i.e. no citizen should be evicted from their homes, new income and gains from urban rent should be brought to the citizens, thus ensuring transparency and not victimizing the citizens. Another thing that cannot be given up is to ensure that citizens live in modern, healthy, ecological, disaster-resistant, affordable heating and cooling houses [32, 37].

3. Conclusion

Urban transformation practices, examples of which are frequently encountered in the world and in Türkiye, are aimed at meeting human life and demands effectively, and positive and negative examples are frequently encountered. In urban transformation activities in Türkiye, the legal infrastructure and the ownership structure resulting from previously made zoning and implementation plans significantly affect the urban transformation processes taking place in the region. It is possible to create healthy and livable cities throughout the country through urban transformation practices that will be carried out with the consensus of all stakeholders in the sector, taking into account the public interest [1]. Urban transformation requires a very serious cost in the beginning. It is necessary to allocate a large number of resources for infrastructure and superstructure services. From this perspective, it can be concluded that urban transformation is a huge financial burden. On the other hand, if urban transformation is planned and implemented correctly, the income generated may be well above the cost. For this reason, it is very important to make cost-benefit analyzes and take the right steps before starting the urban transformation project [38]. It should not be forgotten that one of the important goals of urban transformation is regional development in the city or any region of the city [39]. In order to determine which methods will be used in urban transformation applications, the demographic, social, economic and community structure of the application area should be carefully examined and a decision should be made accordingly, otherwise the application method that is correct for one region will not bring beneficial results for another region. Although there are various difficulties in urban transformation applications that involve many disciplines, it is possible to carry out transformation applications based on human health and life safety, taking into account all kinds of disaster risks, especially throughout Türkiye. In fact, taking necessary precautions with some restrictions and prohibitions, which seem simple but of which we still encounter bad examples in practice, will make very positive contributions. Stream bed of the urban transformation area, landslide and earthquake zone, etc. transformation areas located in risky areas such as;

- Despite the insistence of the local people, it should be completed elsewhere with security-first steps,
- Building structures that will provide uniform use by restricting floors in areas with earthquake risk and preventing the lower floors from being designed as workplaces and the upper floors as residences, which are examined under the civil engineering discipline and causing soft floor irregularities,
- Again, limiting or prohibiting closed projections that increase the square meters of building usage on the ground floor and upper floors,
- Informing the society about transformation practices and enabling them to be involved in the project process by conducting field studies where their ideas and opinions are collected [17, 40],
- Ensuring 'belonging' and continuity in the city by preserving historical, cultural and architectural structures [17, 41, 42],
- Encouraging and supporting island-based large-scale transformations rather than parcel-based transformations,
- If parcel-based transformation applications will be carried out, parameters such as density, social reinforcement areas, transportation and infrastructure plans should be considered holistically, taking into account upper-scale plans [17, 43, 44],
- Preventing the negativities that may arise in the process by establishing urban transformation units consisting of expert teams by involving local governments in the process, and creating an effective and accurate planning process,
- Adapting to the urban transformation process in which local people are supported with various financial incentives instead of the construction model for flats, which is frequently encountered in practice,
- To pave the way for more convenient and faster implementation of the disputes that have lasted for many years and led to disagreements between flat owners by taking legal steps,

etc. If the situations are taken into consideration, it will have great effects on public health and development.

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Author contributions

Muhammed Emin Işık: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Writing-Original draft preparation, Validation, **Nuri Erdem:** Visualization, Investigation, Writing-Reviewing and Editing.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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