Resilient Urban Planning as a Component of Istanbul's Sustainable Urban Development

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Resilience means coping with, adapting to and shaping unexpected surprises to the systems while keeping the flow of ecosystem goods and services by learning and adaptive capacity (Folke, et.al. 2002). As Godschalk (2003) defines, resilient city is a sustainable network of physical systems and human communities. A city without resilient physical (ecological and built environment) and social systems will be extremely vulnerable. So, resilient cities are constructed to be strong and flexible, rather than weak and fragile. Since the goal of sustainable development is creating and maintaining prosperous social, economic, and ecological systems, it is crucial to be aware of the essential role of resilience for a prosperous development of society (Folke et.al. 2002). Likewise, since urban planning should defeat disorder, it must guide change and shape it in quest of urban resilience (Gleeson, 2008).

Istanbul, as a long history of urbanization, is the largest metropolitan city and the economic, cultural and international focal area of Turkey, covering 5512km² area with the population of 12,915,158 in 2009 and the approximate urbanization ratio of 90%. Istanbul is located in the North-west of Turkey and it serves as a bridge between Europe and Asia in ecologic, economic and cultural aspects. It accommodates almost 2000 native-vascular floristic and fern species (Akşehirli, Tezer and Doğru, 2007).

In the second part of the 20th Century, during fast industrialization and urbanization, Istanbul has been the destination of large scale rural to urban migrants that caused an average annual growth of 4.5% annually. The uncontrolled migration brought about the illegal developments on public lands with low quality housing pattern. Most of the settlements lack the basic infrastructures (sewerage, roads, drinking water facilities, etc.), and a noteworthy portion of which are on the major water resource basins (Küçükmehmetoğlu and Geymen, 2006). Therefore, the pattern of growth couldn’t be sustained ecologically and socially, thus, it was severely stressing the life-supporting capacity of the city and the ability to maintain the wellbeing of its inhabitants. Considering the unplanned urban development and consequently the degradation of the social-ecological systems, it is getting more fundamental to develop better tools and policies for enhancing urban resilience in Istanbul.

This paper aims to discuss how urban resilience can be provided in Istanbul case in order to achieve sustainable urban development and what can be the objectives and the principles to generate the resilient urban planning system.

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