



## TARLABASI

*Tolga İslam*, Research Associate on Architecture, Mimarlık Fakültesi, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, İstanbul.

Tarlabası is a mixed-use neighbourhood located a few hundred metres from İstiklal Street, the cultural hub of the city. The area is mostly composed of four- and five-storey historic buildings dating back to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Tarlabası was originally inhabited by non-Muslim minorities (Greeks and Armenians) who moved out of the neighbourhood after the changed political framework of the 1940s that excluded minorities. They were replaced by rural migrants from central and northern parts of the country in the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation era of the post 1950s. The area attracted another wave of migrants in the 1990s: this time from the Kurds escaping civil war in the south-eastern parts of the country. Tarlabası has also become host to African migrants, Romans and transsexuals.

The construction of a large boulevard in the late 1980s cut the connection and increased the disparity between Tarlabası and its immediate surroundings, especially with İstiklal Street, the cultural centre. Today, dilapidated after years of neglect, Tarlabası is a highly stigmatised neighbourhood, deemed 'dangerous' by the general public. Despite its close proximity to the cultural centre, the area has managed to miss the wave of gentrification and investment that has been taking place since the 1990s around İstiklal Street (i.e. Galata, Cihangir, Asmalimescit).

Around 20,000 square metres, consisting of 9 blocks and 278 plots, in Tarlabası were declared a regeneration area by the Council of Ministers in February 2006 following a petition from the local municipality. The recently released renewal law, Law 5366, LAW for the Protection of Deteriorated Historic and Cultural Heritage through Renewal and Re-use, forms the basis of the renewal process in Tarlabası as well as in many other neighbourhoods within the historic city. The law makes the renewal of dilapidated areas

in historic neighbourhoods possible through new expropriation powers given to the local authorities to implement renewal projects for several blocks without the consent of the property owners.

The renewal process in Tarlabası formally started when a private development company, GAP İnşaat, won the bid for the preparation and implementation of the area's redevelopment in April 2007. GAP İnşaat's offer represented the largest, leaving 42 per cent of the current floor area for the existing owners after renewal. Seven local architectural firms, some of the leading offices in the city, have been subcontracted by GAP İnşaat to prepare projects according to the proposed plan to transform the area into a mixed-use development with luxury residential units, shopping centres, cafes and hotels.

The proposed plan, however, has met with resistance from the majority of residents. In 2008 the owners, landlords and renters came together and established an association to oppose renewal. They claim that the current offer of the development company is not fair and demand better conditions. So far they have managed to freeze the process for now.

Contact:

Cities Programme  
London School of Economics  
Houghton Street  
London WC2A 2AE

+44 (0)20 7955 7706  
urban.age@lse.ac.uk  
www.urban-age.net

Alfred Herrhausen Society  
Deutsche Bank  
Unter den Linden 13/15  
10117 Berlin  
Germany

T +49 (0)30 3407 4201  
ute.weiland@db.com  
www.alfred-herrhausen-gesellschaft.de



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