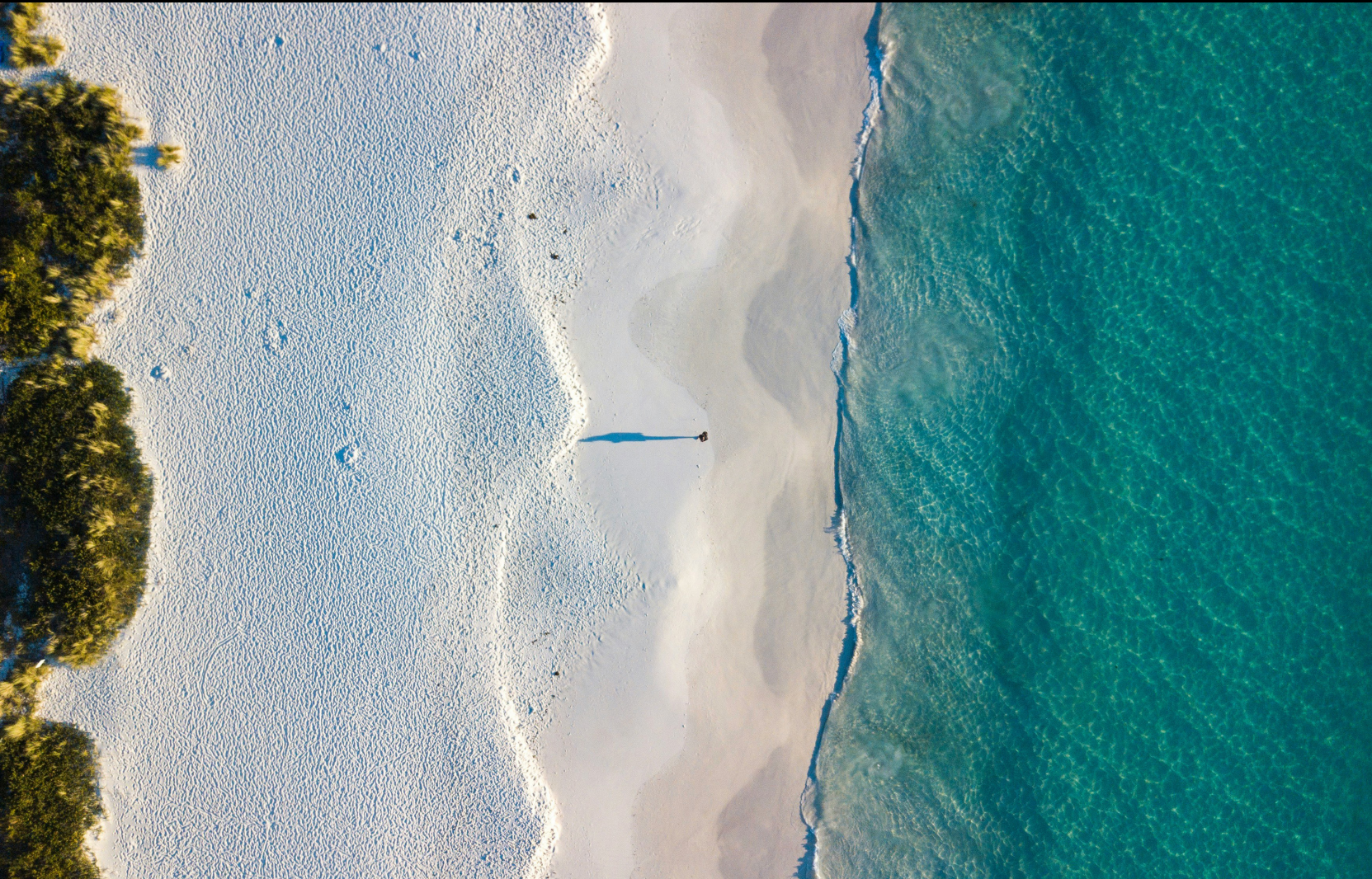


URBANI

2025

CITIES DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS



FROM ISTANBUL TO LJUBLJANA: HOW DO LONELY PIONEERS OF CHANGE BECOME A COLLECTIVE FORCE?

The transformation of steps that begin
alone and grow into an encounter

"ON THE SHORE OF ALL POSSIBILITIES"

Tracing the multiplied experiences and
perspectives of MARUF25

ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA IN INCLUSIVE LOCAL PLANNING PROCESSES

The story of demographic cycles shaping
local planning



FROM THE EDITOR

While a city is often perceived merely as the lines visible on a map, it is in fact a living structure composed of intertwining stories, intersecting times, and shared intentions. The content presented in this publication moves through the very flow of this organism, offering a powerful perspective on how justice, resilience, equality, care, and a culture of co-living are being rebuilt in cities.

Inspired by MARUF25's conceptual framework, this volume, *On the Shore of All Possibilities*, begins by exploring the city from a completely different perspective: the often invisible, sometimes unthinkable shore of the concept of rights.

Marc Martorell Escofet positions "time" as a right, making visible the silent yet decisive starting point of urban justice. Savaş Zafer Şahin reminds us that in our crisis-ridden age, cities are not confined to concrete structures, but are vibrant stages at the heart of legitimacy, resilience, and re-construction. Focusing on water, Akgün İlhan sheds new light on the lifelines of urban resilience. Emre Eren Korkmaz describes digital inequality as the city's new invisible borderline and powerfully argues that artificial intelligence can only become a public asset with the leadership of local governments. Gamze Sofuoğlu redefines accessibility as a founding principle that should be embedded at the very core of urban life, not an extraneous addition. Mehmet Doğu Karakaya, on the other hand, abstracts demographics from mere numbers and considers them as a transformative field shaping people's expectations and sensitivities about the city.

These lines of thought find their counterparts in the field through examples of good practice; because a co-liveable city often reveals itself not in large-scale projects, but in the small yet powerful experiences of communities encountering one another in the flow of everyday life.

This publication also focuses on the invisible labour of caregivers. It examines the place of care in the fabric of urban life across a wide spectrum—from children and the elderly to people with disabilities and care professionals—and demonstrates, through examples from Türkiye and around the world, how making care a public responsibility can render cities more humane and sustainable.

The review sections of this volume are at least as rich as its main thematic framework. Zeynep Aslı Gürel's study on *Quotidian, Quality of Life, and Locality* brings together İlhan Tekeli's intellectual legacy with today's urban debates. The film review *Manguel's Journey in Türkiye: In the Footsteps of Tanpınar* opens a new narrative path for tracing urban memory. The report review examining global trends in the real estate sector points to spatial and economic dynamics extending to 2026, while a book review on MMU's 50-year journey reminds us how institutional memory and transformation are shaped together. The *Urban Sketcher* selection, meanwhile, provides a visual window—opened through lines—into all these reflections.

Interviews featured in this publication with mayors Abdurrahman Tutdere, Ayşe Ünlüce, Oktay Yılmaz, Zinnur Büyükgöz, and NALAS Chair Dubravko Bilić reveal the intentions, experiences, and hopes behind their decision-making processes, highlighting that governing the city is not only a technical task but also an ethical practice

The section shaped by the contributions of the Urban Future team adds a different dimension to togetherness. The journey of change pioneers transforming individual efforts into collective power resonates with the spirit of this volume, along a line stretching from Istanbul to Ljubljana. All these contents, when taken together, lead us to a single sentence:

Taken together, all these contributions lead us to a single statement:
The city is composed of interconnected stories.

And this publication offers a shared space for reflection where justice, resilience, care, accessibility, locality, culture, and collective hope intersect. As we pause and look toward the shore of all possibilities, the city once again asks:

What kind of future do we want to build?

The answer is hidden in every line, every idea, and every theme brought together in this volume.

Emrehan Furkan Düzgiden

URBANI

CITIES DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

2025

ISBN: 978-625-8164-33-6

PUBLISHER

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in the name of Marmara
Municipalities Union

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URBANI is published by
Marmara Municipalities Union



Certificate No: 15668

Marmara Municipalities Union
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www.mbbkulturyayinlari.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Manuma Studio

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* The opinions expressed in the signed articles belong to the authors.

** Urban is a publication that brings together selected content originally published in *Kent*, a Turkish-language magazine of Marmara Municipalities Union.

2025



10

MARMARA URBAN FORUM (MARUF):
THE GATHERING PLACE FOR CITIES



22

FROM ISTANBUL TO
LJUBLJANA:
HOW DO LONELY PIONEERS
OF CHANGE BECOME A
COLLECTIVE FORCE?



36

BEING ABLE TO
ESTABLISH RESILIENT
CITIES IN A
VULNERABLE WORLD

8

EMA FORUM
WILL BE HELD
IN BURSA IN 2026

14

MARUF25: VOLUNTEER
EXPERIENCE

18 EMERGING TRENDS IN REAL ESTATE

26 GOVERNING CITIES IN AN AGE OF
POLYCRISIS: INSIGHTS FROM MAYORS

32 PUBLICNESS EMERGING FROM
THE SHADOW: NEW OPPORTUNITIES
OF PARTICIPATION IN CITIES

42 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GAP:
A NEW ERA OF INEQUALITY IN OUR
CITIES

46 HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A
CITY THAT EMBRACES DIFFERENCES
AND ENABLES CO-LIVING?

50 IT'S ABOUT TIME: IMPLEMENTING
THE RIGHT TO TIME IN THE
MARMARA REGION

54 BEYOND NUMBERS, TOWARDS
PEOPLE: ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC
DATA IN INCLUSIVE LOCAL PLANNING
PROCESSES



76

FROM CRISIS TO SOLUTION:
BEST PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING RESILIENCE
IN THE CITIES

64

CITY UNDER THE LENS
OF CARE POLICIES

60 FAIR CITIES AND THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GOVERNANCE: THE BARCELONA METROPOLITAN SOCIAL FORUM EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTIONS FROM MARUF25

72 CO-LIVEABLE CITIES: INSPIRING PRACTICE

94 ON İLHAN TEKELİ'S BOOK THE QUOTIDIAN, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND LOCALITY

98 MANGUEL'S JOURNEY IN TÜRKİYE: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TANPINAR

109 HALF CENTURY IN THE UNION: AN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

114 İNŞA: IS IT POSSIBLE TO CREATE A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL CITY ON THE SHORE OF ALL POSSIBILITIES?

120 ON THE TRACK OF MARMARA: COASTLINES, TRANSITIONS AND STORIES



86

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT OF
NALAS, PRESIDENT & MAYOR OF
LUDBREG DUBRAVKO BILIĆ



102

50 YEARS IN THE 'UNION':
MARMARA MUNICIPALITIES UNION
INSTITUTIONAL AND ORAL HISTORY

THE THREE-YEAR JOURNEY OF ORTAKLAŞA CONCLUDED WITH THE CLOSING EVENT



“Ortaklaşa: Culture, Dialogue and Support Programme”, implemented by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV), with the support of the European Union and in partnership with Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), completed its three-year journey with an extensive closing event, in Istanbul, “We call it Ortaklaşa” in Istanbul on 6 November 2025. The event included a rich programme with panels, conversations, film screening and musical performances.

During the gathering, which brought together representatives of the European Union Delegation to Türkiye, mayors, civil society organisations and professionals from fields of culture and arts, the outcomes of the programme and its future projections were shared. Ortaklaşa community is announced to be extended at the European scale with collaboration of the Culture Action Europe.

During the opening speeches, İKSV General Director Grgn Taner emphasised the unifying power of culture, while MMU Secretary General M. Cemil Arslan noted that the programme developed trust-based collaboration between the municipalities and civil society based on trust. Jurgis Vilcinskas, Chair to the EU Delegation to Trkiye, stated that Ortaklaşa has evolved into a long-term cultural solidarity network.

A total of 1.3 million euros was granted to 13 projects under the programme; cultural spaces were transformed and nearly 50, 000 people came together at cultural and artistic events. The second phase of Ortaklaşa (2026–2028) will start in January 2026, in partnership of the Culture Action Europe, one of Europe’s important networks in the field of cultural policies.

THREE STRATEGIC MOVES FROM MMU TO EXTEND ITS GLOBAL INFLUENCE



Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), becoming the member of European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA), Local and Regional Governments Time Network, and Global Urban Observatory Network (GUO-Net), supporting the reliable data production for the cities, enhanced its international network of collaboration. MMU will take an active role in sharing solutions and good practices in metropolis governance together with the Barcelona-based EMA.

The 11th EMA Forum will be held in Bursa in 2026, organized by MMU. Furthermore MMU, through its membership in Time Network, aims to diminish time poverty, and develop just and inclusive time policies prioritising work-life balance and care labour. GUO-Net, founded by UN-Habitat, with its headquarters in Nairobi, supports data-based urban governance by coordinating the activities of 374 urban observatories worldwide.

EMA FORUM WILL BE HELD IN BURSA IN 2026

EMA Forum, organised annually by the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) in a different European metropolis, will be organized in 2026 by Marmara Municipalities Union, hosted by Bursa Metropolitan Municipality.

 2 MINUTES

Founded in 2015 by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and headquartered in Barcelona, European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) aims to foster the sharing of knowledge, experience, and good practices among European metropolitan areas. EMA, whose members include Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), works to develop solutions to common metropolitan problems, foster collaborations, and strengthen policy dialogue. It also advocates for the metropolitan agenda with the European Union and various international organizations.

Metropolises are not only centers of innovation, productivity, and opportunity, but also areas where challenges such as unemployment,

poverty, housing shortages, transportation, and air pollution are concentrated. EMA supports both the sharing of solutions to these challenges and the development of common metropolitan policies. To this end, EMA Forum, held annually in a different European metropolis, serves as a key meeting point where experiences in metropolitan governance are shared, solutions are discussed, and joint declarations are adopted.

The 10th EMA Forum was held in Barcelona from October 14–17, 2025, as part of the World Metropolitan Summit (WMS). The summit addressed topics such as metropolitan-level cooperation, sustainability, housing policies, and digital transformation to address

the increasing urban challenges of recent years. At a high-level political meeting held as part of EMA Forum, it was unanimously approved, at the proposal of the President of MMU and Mayor of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Mustafa Bozbey, that MMU hold the forum next year, hosted by Bursa Metropolitan Municipality.

In his opening speech at the WMS, Bozbey said, “Joint action is no longer a choice; it is a necessity. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make our problems, strategic policy proposals, and call for solidarity visible to national and international institutions.” Emphasizing the strategic importance of Bursa and the Marmara Region, home to six metropolitan cities and a popu-



lation of over 26 million, he officially announced the decision to hold the 2026 EMA Forum in Bursa. He then signed, together with metropolitan mayors and representatives from the world, the Barcelona Metropolitan Declaration, which focuses on the critical role metropolitan cities will play in advancing and implementing global goals in the future, following the 2030 Global Agenda.



By hosting EMA Forum, MMU aims to develop stronger collaborations with metropolitan governments in Europe, addressing the challenges faced by metropolitan governments in Marmara Region and globally, offering solutions, and addressing how to increase metropolitan governance capacity to develop inclusive and sustainable urban policies. 🇹🇷

MARMARA URBAN FORUM (MARUF): THE GATHERING PLACE FOR CITIES

The fourth edition of Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF), organized biannually at an international level by Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), was held at Haliç Congress Center from October 1-3, 2025. Under the conceptual framework of 'On the Shore of All Possibilities', this year MARUF hosted over 500 speakers and thousands of participants from 50 countries.

 7 MINUTES

Since 2019, under the motto of 'Cities Developing Solutions', MARUF has a gathering place for thousands of urban thinkers, dreamers, and out-of-the-box people, with over 200 different events to tackle the problems and needs of cities and explore solutions from various perspectives, once again this year.

MARUF25's opening session began with an introduction by MMU Secretary General M. Cemil Arslan and General Coordinator of MARUF. The session continued with opening remarks from Mustafa Bozbey, President of MMU and Mayor of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality; Nuri Arslan, Deputy Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality; Turan Konak, Director General of Local Administra-

tions at Republic of Türkiye of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change; and Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

Following these remarks, an opening panel titled "On the Shore of All Possibilities" was held. The session was moderated by Assoc. Prof. Antonella Contin from Politecnico di Milano, and featured distinguished speakers including Bernd Vöhringer, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; Prof. Inés Sánchez De Madariaga, UNESCO Chair and UN-Habitat Group Chair from the Polytechnic University of Madrid; Dr. Remy Sietchiping, Chief of Policy, Legislation and Governance at

UN-Habitat; and Madhusree Dutta, curator and filmmaker.

The opening concluded with a remarkable performance by the internationally acclaimed polyphonic choir Chromas, conducted by Başak Doğan.

MARUF25 OFFERED MUCH MORE THAN SESSIONS

Following the opening session, MARUF25 embarked on its inspiring journey with 22 simultaneous events designed across 4 different streams and 3 different modes of participation. Curated by Firat Neziroğlu in collaboration with Mind Your Waste Foundation, "Weaving the New with Waste" was a notable collective effort that incorporated both waste brought by MARUF25 partici-



pants and materials provided by the artist. One of the first closed meetings of the day, titled "The Role of Municipalities in National Climate Targets," aimed to inform municipalities about Türkiye's new "Nationally Determined Contribution" (NDC) and discuss the steps municipalities can take to implement this directive. The afternoon sessions focused on local governments in war-torn regions, including Ukraine and Palestine. Participants had also opportunities to visit various exhibitions, such as "In the Footsteps of Two Little Urbanites: New Stories," "Local Governments and Urbanism in the 100-Year Journey of the Republic of Türkiye," and "Reclaiming Streets".

In addition, participants not only attended author appearances but

also enjoyed a rich cultural experience by taking part in film and documentary screenings as part of the culture and arts program of the forum. One highlight was 'Urban Library X Urban Cinema Special Screening & Director's Talk: Manguel's Journey to Türkiye: In the Footsteps of Tanpınar' in cooperation with Yapı Kredi Culture Arts and Publishing. The first day of MARUF25 concluded at Shore Stage with a live performance by Kreşendo Orchestra, part of the Urban Rhythm events.

MARUF25 PAVED THE WAY FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

President Bozbey signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Norliza Hashim of the Urbanice Malaysia Forum to strengthen the

cooperation between MARUF and Urbanice Malaysia Forum. He also discussed collaborative projects regarding the future of cities with representatives from the Croatian Union of Municipalities and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.

MARUF25 CONCLUDED ITS SECOND DAY WITH A WELL-ATTENDED SESSION

On the second day of MARUF25, sessions, workshops, and collective work focused on various rights, including housing, animals, water, and children, as well as disasters, began simultaneously. In the workshop titled "Animal Cruelty: Rethinking Intersectionality Together," organized in partnership with Four-Legged City, participants explored the structural similarities between violence against women and animals, the concept



of vulnerability, and possibilities for solidarity. Another workshop, "Cities that Shed Light on Children's Imaginaires," discussed creating spaces for children's dreams amidst the chaos of city life.

One notable session, held simultaneously in different halls, was "Reimagining Local Governance: Social Justice and Public Politics," organized in collaboration with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) and moderated by UMT Deputy Secretary General Dr. Şengül Altan Arslan. This session focused on redesigning local governance models to strengthen social justice and implement inclusive public policies. The session "Digital Future: From Global Agenda to Local Action," supported by

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), highlighted the crucial role of local development in shaping sustainable and resilient cities. The session titled "Alternative Pathways in Urban Transformation: Housing Cooperatives," organized with contributions from the Center for Spatial Justice, discussed alternatives to current urban transformation practices in Türkiye.

During the lunch break, the Bird Collective shared its album "Heritage," which brings together the sounds of endangered birds and nearly forgotten traditional instruments, uniting nature and art. MARUF25 participants were invited to join the rhythm and connect their own steps to Urban Rhythm with the performance

of "Half Break: Solo Jazz Dance" workshop.

The important issue of the right to water was addressed in the session "Urban Basics: Right to Water," featuring Dr. Akgün İlhan from Boğaziçi University. Following this, the session "A Tale of Two Inland Seas: Marmara and the Baltic" discussed inland marine ecosystems using examples from Marmara and Baltic Seas.

Participants continued to explore examples of the exhibitions: "Woodlife Sweden," organized in collaboration with the Swedish Consulate in Istanbul; "Natural Buildings for Healthy Living Spaces," with contributions from Doğal Yapı Malzemeleri ve Yöntemleri Derneği; and "Reclaiming Streets," organized in partnership with Superpool and Global Designing Cities Initiative.

Furthermore, various collective projects, including "Seeing. Hearing. Narrating," "Would You Like to Talk About the City? Collective City," and "Caught in MARUF's Net" garnered significant attention across the event.

In collaboration with Altyazı, the recent and distant history of film culture in Türkiye was discussed through examples from Adana,



Diyarbakır, and Ankara; the movie "Komm mit mir in das Cinema – Die Gregors" was screened, and a discussion was held on Lior Steinberg's book "The Car That Wanted to Be a Bike" with the support of Humankind.

The second day of MARUF25 concluded with Peradi Ensemble, which performs folk melodies in approximately 25 languages.

MARUF25 WRAPS UP A THREE-DAY JOURNEY FILLED WITH INSPIRATION AND HOPE

"Library Talks: 'The Quotidian, Quality of Life, and Locality' with İlhan Tekeli," and "Creative Reading Workshop with Çiğdem Odabaşı: On Yaşar Kemal's Novel The Sea-Crossed Fisherman" the latter organized by Yapı Kredi

Culture and Arts Publishing, took place as one of the final-day events at MARUF25.

The forum's closing session featured speeches from Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Deputy Secretary General Mehmet Yıldız, Remy Sietchiping from UN-Habitat, as well as members of the MARUF25 Advisory Network, NALAS Executive Director Kelmend Zajazi, and Prof. İlhan Tekeli. MARUF25's closing remarks were delivered by MMU Secretary General and MARUF General Coordinator M. Cemil Arslan. In his speech, Arslan emphasized the existence of hope and concluded by thanking everyone who strives to keep this hope alive, including MARUF's creative team, volunteers, and all the teams involved.

Furthermore, MARUF25 Coordinators Burcuhan Şener, Ezgi Küçük Çalışkan, and Görsev Argın Uz energized the participants with an engaging presentation. The day concluded with MARUF25, which focused on different periods and textures of Istanbul, with guided tours of 19 city routes, including Galata-Pera-Beyoğlu, Galata Greek School, the Grand Bazaar Roof and Inns, the Istanbul Drapers' Market, and more.

Lastly, we sincerely thank all our partners for enriching the MARUF25 experience. İSTON provided comfortable street furniture for participants, while Yapı Kredi Publications provided workshops, talks, and film screenings. Fellas distributed healthy snacks to participants. Supporters like Accessible Everything and WeWalk made MARUF25 more inclusive, while ALL Smart Waste Solutions and Mind Your Waste Foundation made it more sustainable. Book publishers such as Ayrıntı, Bilim Akademi, Günışığı Kitaplığı, İdealKent, İletişim, Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, Metis, Sel, and YEM contributed to the enrichment of MARUF25 Urban Library and made their publications available to participants. 📖

MARUF25: VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

MARUF25 was a collective learning space that invited participants to think, create, and experience cities together. Through connections with professionals from different cities, volunteers and students addressed urban issues not only from a technical perspective but also from an ethical and social perspective. Curiosity, excitement, and a sense of co-creation were felt throughout the event; the conceptual framework of "On the Shore of All Possibilities" was experienced as an inspiring way to explore urban possibilities through solidarity and creativity.

 4 MINUTES

Irmak Paksoy

Student,
Istanbul Technical University

MARUF25 wasn't just a forum for me; it was a collective learning space that invited me to rethink cities. The conceptual framework, "On the shore of all possibilities," allowed me to revisit hope and resilience in the face of the crises that have deepened in recent years. Before the event, I was filled with curiosity and excitement; what I discovered while there was this curiosity transformed into a collective effort, a shared production. During my time as a Forum volunteer, I became part of not only the organizational process but also a productive space where ideas were shared and relationships were built.

As a student of Urban and Region-

al Planning, I witnessed sessions addressing not only technical but also ethical and political issues, from local governance and social inequalities to accessibility and gender equality. Hearing the experiences of women professionals from different cities and countries made me re-evaluate the question of for and with whom we plan the cities. This diversity and inclusivity were one of the most special aspects of MARUF for me.

Throughout the forum, a sense of collective production was palpable everywhere. Every volunteer, every participant was an invisible yet indispensable part of this process. MARUF showed me how transformative solidarity, labour, and generating hope can be.

When the event ended, I was left with not just notes, but a fresh

perspective on the future. What distinguished MARUF from other events was its pursuit of ways to live together rather than "manage" cities. I believe that in the future, MARUF will create even more pluralistic, accessible spaces that foster youth's voice on issues like resilience, climate justice, participation, and gender equality. Because on the shore of all possibilities, there remains hope and it is possible to build that hope together.

Eren Can Sarıkaya

Student,
Gebze Technical University

I believe MARUF's structure, which is open to the diversity of the undefined interests of us, of the students, which is nurturing and which blends the generic ed-



education we receive at school with real-life issues and current issues, significantly contributed to our vision.

When I had the opportunity to lead the Creative Hub at MARUF25, I was thrilled to have the opportunity, as an urban planning student, to observe this programme, whose planning is managed in such an inspiring way, from the inside. Not only being a participant, but also being a staff member, made me feel much more included.

The connections we made here make post-graduation work life, which felt distant and cold during our education, accessible, welcoming, and motivating. Furthermore, during the time I worked, I've seen

many municipalities and civil society organisations—which I think normally would be very difficult to contact with each other—engage with each other and examine each other's work. I believe that "all things possible", as the conceptual framework of MARUF25 suggests, can only be achieved through such unity and by listening to each other.

I had previously participated in MARUF23, and comparing its growth over the past two years, I can say it has grown two to threefold. Both at my internship locations and at my school, I saw everyone marking MARUF days on their schedules, leaving them blank. Now, my school's approach has shifted from allowing me to attend MARUF to teaching me how

to pursue the MARUF programme based on my own interests. This demonstrates both the impact MARUF has had and the genuine enthusiasm with which everyone participates.

Nilsu Omrak
Architect

MARUF25 was the largest and most international city-related event I've ever been involved in, from its conception to its execution. From participants to volunteers and facilitators, everyone experienced the city's possibilities while learning and discovering their own. It emphasised the need not to create solutions for the city, but to create cities that create solutions. Bringing a breath of



fresh air to all perspectives on the city, MARUF provided a framework for every possibility waiting to be explored and discussed.

Sometimes we role-played to solve an urban problem, sometimes we danced to attract attention, sometimes we played games to understand our place in the city. Most of all, we encountered each other, we met, we talked, we searched, we discussed for cities that brought

us all together, we found—or maybe we didn't, but we tried.

MARUF25, divided into four "hubs," allowed us to participate in the city with our minds, senses, and experiences. Both international and interpersonal relationships were established. Everyone engaged with the city came to MARUF25 to look at it again. MARUF25 opened up a space for numerous encounters and opportunities. Innovative

theses and startup projects were featured in the "Showcase" events. Networking events focused on the cities of tomorrow and their sustainability, and the interactions brought us together. The "workshops," part of the Urban Route programme at the closing event, allowed me to explore the city consciously and became a walk to absorb everything I saw and learned. Dozens of routes spread from Halıç Congress Center to Istanbul.

MARUF25 was not a chosen route, but rather an experience of encounters. With over 200 events over three days, MARUF showed me that the city does not have a single problem, nor are its possibilities unique. I would love to see the ideas generated at MARUF to be spread throughout the city in the future. Perhaps at the next MARUF, your idea will spark a solution, a solution for many cities. 📍



MARUF
MARMARİS
URBAN
FORUM
CÖZÜM
ÜRETEN
KENTLER

MARUF
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REPORT REVIEW: EMERGING TRENDS IN REAL ESTATE

Real Estate Reports prepared by Urban Land Institute and PwC are among the most influential publications tracking the global pulse of the real estate market. In this assessment, Ali Emre Soner examines the dynamics driving the sector towards 2026 from a comparative perspective, analysing both the US-Canada and European editions of the reports. Accompanied by multi-layered topics ranging from geopolitical tensions to macroeconomic fluctuations, artificial intelligence investments to the affordable housing crisis, it offers a comprehensive framework for how the real estate world navigates through uncertainty.

 ALI EMRE SONER*

 7 MINUTES

The Report, Emerging Trends in Real Estate, prepared by collaboration of Urban Land Institute and PwC, is one of the most widely known publications in the sector. In this article, I will attempt to provide a synthesised overview by examining the US-Canada and European reports together, from among the publications produced at four different scales: the US-Canada, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Global Outlook.

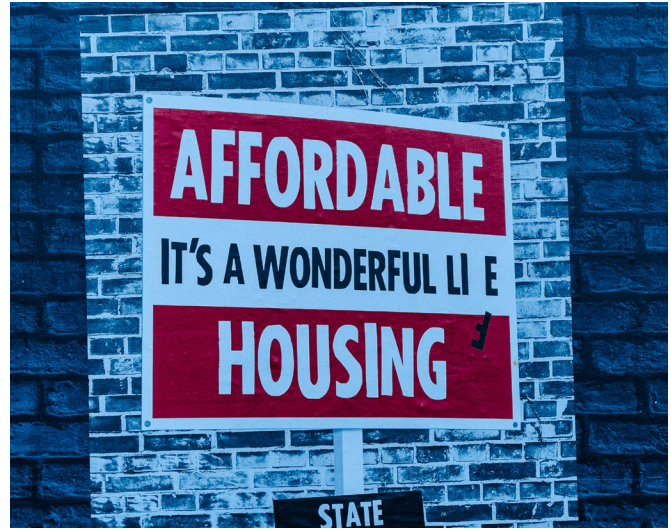
In both reports containing fore-sights about 2026, it is strongly

reflected that the common theme is “navigating through uncertainties”. While the cautious optimism that prevailed last year in Europe evolves to a rather pragmatic approach, especially as the geopolitical disagreements in the relations with the US are reinducing investments, investors have different expectations about the course of this uncertain atmosphere on the part of the US. According to the survey results which have a mixed participant profile such as the commercial developers, contractors, banks, investment partnerships and staff of the construction companies at

various ranks, there are some who expect the decrease in the interest rates to have positive impact over the capital markets, while there are also others who think the changes in trade and migration policies will have long-term impact on the demand for the sector.

The primary sources of uncertainty include the geopolitical instability and trade conflicts. While on the part of Europe, the war ongoing in Ukraine and the crises in the Middle East are seen as the primary factors, it is told that the course of “deglobalisation” with the US is

*Urban Policies Expert, MMU



found worrying. Also, the political instability for 2026 within Europe emerge as the most prominent source of consideration. And on the part of the US, the consequent impact of the changing immigration policies over the working population is observed to emerge as the primary reason for the decrease in the real estate demand. It is estimated that reconfiguration of trade together with the political crises, and especially the increase in the customs taxes will raise the construction and operation costs. Even though the inflation values are in decrease, high inflation risk finds a place in the surveys, while on the part of Europe, considerations about the risk of stagflation gained a new rise this year. And on the part of the US, there is reservation that the policies of immigration and customs taxes may slow down the process of the

lowering of the interest rates. As a result of all these factors, concerns about rising costs are commonly emphasised in both regions. In Europe, it is said that the extension of bureaucratic processes because of measures taken against environmental problems and climate change has affected costs, while the US is more focused on the impact of immigration restrictions on the labour force.

Rise of some trends in the sector continue under the shadow of political and macroeconomic developments. Investments in data centres established to provide the computing power required by rapidly developing artificial intelligence technologies, and infrastructure investments made to supply energy to these centres, top the list of trends. While student housing solutions in Europe main-

tain their place on the list, demand for housing designed to meet the living standards of elderly individuals is also increasing in the US, partly because of the ageing population. Reports have highlighted the significant impact of technological adaptation on how companies operate. While digitalisation and the adaptation of artificial intelligence to business processes are among the factors influencing investment decisions, the automation of asset management tools in the United States under an umbrella of integrated artificial intelligence systems, digital twins, and data management within the scope of 'propOS' is also seen as one of the trends that will be effective in 2026.

The unstoppable rise of artificial intelligence is increasing its impact on both the operational and

“
For Europe, the housing problem is seen not only as a social issue but also as a macroeconomic threat to the region's economic competitiveness. While it is a high priority and a focus of concrete targets on the part of the policies, the investors see it as an area where there is high demand but increasingly difficult to generate capital.
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investment sides of the real estate sector every year. It has been noted that artificial intelligence models integrated into business processes, especially when fed with good data, increase efficiency. While in Europe it is mentioned that it is used more in companies' strategic planning and administrative transformation, in the US and Canada the focus is on 'Agentic AI' in solving operational excellence problems and asset management. It is reported that, particularly in residential property management, 'PropOS' technology offers cost-effective solutions when combined with good data and property rights management. On the investment side, the sector's growth is increasing the appeal of data centres. The energy source required by data centres is identified as a bottleneck in the face of hyperbolically increasing demand for processing capacity. While great importance is attached to the interconnectedness of data centres in Europe, the continent is also seeking unique solutions to be developed within its borders to combine advancing technological benefits with production to reduce dependency amid increasing political polarisation.

While artificial intelligence is triggering new developments in the sector, one of the key areas it is

impacting is the workforce. A significant decline in recruitment, particularly of recent graduates, has been observed in both regions, while the possibility of automation processes taking more jobs away from people is seen as a potential crisis in terms of economic balance. In addition, while concerns about the protection of personal data with the use of artificial intelligence are increasing, attention is being drawn to the importance of regulating the use of artificial intelligence with specific definitions in some regions, such as Quebec.

While artificial intelligence and political stalemates continue, behavioural differences that could almost be described as a crossroads are being observed in the adaptation processes to environmental issues and climate change. Although commitment to decarbonisation in Europe still retains its critical importance, views that some regulations complicate bureaucratic processes are also finding traction. There are also views that asset managers still need to link sustainability goals to value creation and investment performance. Additionally, although there has been a decline compared to previous years, half of the survey participants believe in the tangible impact of sustainability commitments on asset values. The US, on the other hand, is pro-

gressing differently from Europe in the field of sustainability with changes in federal government policies. There are reports that some companies are placing sustainability-related content further in the background in their communications compared to previous years. Although the two regions have chosen to pursue different policies, the concrete effects of climate change are felt equally. In the US, the rise in insurance premiums due to disasters, particularly in coastal areas, is a factor causing concern for many investors in terms of declining net income. Furthermore, the increase in extremely hot days in warm regions is triggering internal migration. This is also seen as a factor increasing expenses in asset management. Europe, as one of the most rapidly warming continents takes its share in the rise of the insurance premiums. It is also included in the report that frequent floods and forest fires increase the risk factor for the insurance sector and in some regions, this ended their business.

AFFORDABLE HOUSES?

The issue of affordable housing compared to resources remains a significant problem for both regions. However, the regions' approaches to this issue differ in terms of the extent of state intervention, incentive mechanisms

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While digitalisation and the adaptation of artificial intelligence to business processes are among the factors influencing investment decisions, the automation of asset management tools in the United States under an umbrella of integrated artificial intelligence systems, digital twins, and data management within the scope of ‘propOS’ is also seen as one of the trends that will be effective in 2026.
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and classifications in investment strategies. For Europe, the housing problem is seen not only as a social issue but also as a macroeconomic threat to the region's economic competitiveness. While it is a high priority and a focus of concrete targets on the part of the policies, the investors see it as an area where there is high demand but increasingly difficult to generate capital. For this reason, it mentioned by the sources that steps will be taken to develop public-private partnerships, and the European Investment Bank has committed approximately €6 trillion to this area. In the US and Canada, the housing crisis continues to be seen as a critical social and political issue by more than half of the sector's leading players. Housing production for middle-income households ranks high among next year's expectations, it is emerging as an attractive sub-sector as limited development in this area has reduced occupancy rates. Meanwhile, rising housing prices and rents are triggering migration from major metropolitan areas, and leading to demographic changes in the region. While the federal government is increasing subsidies for low-income housing production, it is observed that efforts are also being made to open public land for the development of such projects and for redevelopment projects. 🏠

FROM ISTANBUL TO LJUBLJANA: HOW DO LONELY PIONEERS OF CHANGE BECOME A COLLECTIVE FORCE?

Transforming the cities is often like walking alone among the crowd – but as Gerald Babel reminds, change never happens alone. Solidarity that blossomed in MARUF25, extends to Urban Future 2026, uniting cities for a greener, more just, and hopeful future.

 URBAN FUTURE TEAM

 5 MINUTES

Being a pioneer of change in the urban world may sometimes feel like walking along in a crowded square – like someone surrounded by people but going from a different road. However, the truth is: you are not alone.

In all corners of the world, passionate people redesign the ways to make the cities greener, more just and more liveable.

This feeling of a common goal was also felt during Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF25), organised with the motto of “Cities Developing Solutions”. More than 500 speakers and participants from more than 50 countries came together;

local administrations, academics, NGOs and urban innovators explored together how the cities may function better for people and the planet.

From time to time, the energy in the hall was noticeably high – as if there was an atmosphere seemed to vibrate with change.

Among these names was Gerald Babel-Sutter, co-founder and CEO of Urban Future. As the leader of one of Europe's most beloved urban conferences, he took the stage at MARUF's "How To-ol " series, sharing "ways to overcome the loneliness of change and transform into collective action."

FINDING A COMMON GROUND IN ISTANBUL

For Gerald, Istanbul is not only an inspiring city but at the same time a significant opportunity to meet with the urban actors coming from all corners of Türkiye. “The energy at MARUF25 was incredible,” comments Gerald: “It was full of people who didn’t speak of change, they turned it into reality!”

The Urban Future community has long brought together urban innovators from Europe and beyond. Gerald found the same spark of creativity and determination in Istanbul: from municipalities working on sustainable transportation and waste systems to young pro-



professionals building more inclusive public spaces.

Gerald's session focused on this fundamental question: "How can those striving for change—sometimes hitting a wall of resistance—break free from this feeling of isolation and set their ideas in motion?"

FOUR LESSONS FOR URBAN CHANGERS

In his talk, Gerald shared four powerful lessons that apply to anyone looking to transform their city:

1. Set big goals—but take them one step at a time.

Breaking big goals into smaller pieces creates minor victories to cele-

brate. This builds confidence and motivation. "Every success, no matter how small, proves that change is possible."

2. Choose your words carefully.

The language we use about cities determines how others react. Focus on solutions, not problems. "Words shape discussions, and discussions shape outcomes."

3. Try different perspectives.

Actual change requires looking with empathy at the world of those we want to collaborate with. According to Gerald, empathy is not a "soft" skill, but a "strategic" one. "Understanding how people live, work, and act makes transformation real."

4. Don't remain a lone "unicorn".

No one can transform a city alone. Actual change is possible when decision-makers, citizens, businesses, artists, activists, and politicians come together.

"A unicorn is at its strongest when it joins the herd." True impact is born through collaboration.

LEARNING FROM OTHER CITIES

Throughout his speech, Gerald shared examples of cities that have transformed their visions into collective action. Oslo's clean transportation transformation succeeded not just as a government policy but as a community project. Citizen-initiated greening initiatives in

Paris redefined people's commitment to their neighbourhoods.

These stories resonated also with Turkish local government representatives participating in MARUF25. Some described projects that improved public spaces in small municipalities, while others integrating the digital tools into planning. The common belief that united them all was this: 'The story we tell determines the transformation we create.'

FROM MARUF25 TO URBAN FUTURE 2026

Gerald's experience in Istanbul sparked an inspiring dialogue and opened doors to new collaborations. Following the forum, he invited Turkish cities to attend Urban Future 2026 (UF26), to be held in Ljubljana, one of Slovenia's greenest capitals, from March 24–27, 2026.

Urban Future is one of Europe's most important platforms for urban leaders, innovators, and experts working on sustainable urban transformation. It brings together thousands of people every year, providing a meeting place where real-world experiences are shared across a wide range of topics, from climate action and governance to mobility and community engagement. But

unlike other conferences, its core is personal stories and real-world experiences.

WHY CITIES FROM TÜRKİYE SHOULD ALSO PARTICIPATE?

Türkiye's cities are laboratories for innovation. From Istanbul's mobility solutions to Izmir's circular economy experiences, many municipalities are developing local solutions to global challenges. Participating in UF26 offers a unique opportunity to share these experiences, gain new perspectives, and strengthen ties with international networks.

The Turkish Cities Delegation will bring together mayors, city teams, planners, urban designers, and community innovators. Participants will have the opportunity to share projects from Türkiye with an international audience at dedicated networking events, thematic workshops, and presentation spaces. A preparatory meeting will be held before the event to define common goals and exchange ideas. The goal is not just to participate—it is to represent Türkiye's diverse urban potential with a collective voice.

AN INVITATION TO COLLABORATION

At MARUF25, it became clear: urban transformation is not a solo

performance, but a collective journey. A path woven with trust, courage, and imagination. The sessions at MARUF25 proved that even in times of uncertainty, cities remain centres of hope and recovery.

In Gerald's words: "Urban transformation happens when people cross borders and draw courage from one another. No one should be alone in this mission, because cities are built on collaboration."

This story, stretching from the shores of Istanbul to the green boulevards of Ljubljana, is one of shared optimism.

If you represent a municipality, an institution, or a community initiative and would like to join the Urban Future 2026 Turkish Delegation, now is the time.

Urban transformation begins when we stop walking alone.

Let's become a unicorn together. 🦄

Urban Future 2026 | 24–27 March 2026, Ljubljana, Slovenia
<https://urban-future.org>

To receive information about the Turkish Cities Delegation or to request participation:
mayors@urban-future.org



GOVERNING CITIES IN AN AGE OF POLYCRISIS: INSIGHTS FROM MAYORS

From disasters to the climate crisis, from economic turbulence to social inequalities... At a time when the resilience of cities is being tested on multiple fronts, we asked the same three questions to several mayors and explored how urban resilience, inclusivity, and a culture of care can truly be achieved.

 12 MINUTES



**MAYOR OF ESKİŞEHİR
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY,
AYŞE ÜNLÜCE**

1. What are your top three strategies for making your city resilient to disaster, climate, and economic shocks? How do you measure their impact?

As Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality, one of our top priorities is to make Eskişehir resilient to disasters, climate change, and economic fluctuations. We are advancing this goal in line with our vision of a "Balanced, Developing, Sustainable, and Liveable Eskişehir." As part of our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, we are increasing both our environmental and economic resilience through renewable energy investments, sustainable waste management, and green space projects.

We actively implement protocols that ensure the participation of civil society organisations and citizens in disaster management processes. This approach is directly related to the "Resilient City" theme of the Civic Participation Action Plan. We systematically implement

awareness-raising programs, participation mechanisms in resilient city policies, and monitoring and evaluation processes. We continuously strengthen our capacity for crisis preparedness, particularly through micro zoning studies and the Climate Change and Energy Management Working Committee. Our goal is to build a resilient and liveable city not only for today but also for the future.

2. Which innovative approaches can the local governments develop to build a caring, safe and inclusive urban life that reduces inequalities?

An inclusive city governance that strengthens social justice is one of the foundations of our vision. As part of the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, we are increasing the partic-

ipation of disadvantaged groups in the city life through investments in social services and education, and strengthening awareness of gender equality.

We have embodied this approach with the "Participatory Budgeting Practice." This allows citizens to prioritise projects that affect their living spaces, and we see it as an important tool for assessing the impact of investments. Another step we have taken is the Civic Participation Action Plan. Specifically, in line with the plan's theme of "Accessible and Inclusive City," we increase the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes, support volunteering, and we effectively use monitoring and assessment mechanisms. Furthermore, the satisfaction surveys we conduct regularly contribute significantly to measuring the effectiveness of social services and projects and improving our practices.

Our goal is to build together a city that leaves no one behind, where everyone feels themselves valuable, safe, and equal. We know that a resilient city is only possible when it is equitable and inclusive.

3. For cities to be truly resilient to polycrises (disasters, climate, conflict, economic fluctuations),

what social, institutional and governance capacity should be invested in beyond physical infrastructure, and with what concrete steps are you advancing this transformation in your own municipality?

Eskişehir's resilience to polycrises is built not only by strengthening its physical infrastructure but also by developing its social, institutional, and governance capacity. Urban and rural development projects implemented under our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan enhance our capacity to prepare for and respond to crises.

In line with the theme of the Civic Participation Action Plan, "Locally Developing City," we are strengthening civic participation in local and rural development processes and establishing collaboration mechanisms with communities and stakeholders.

All these efforts are carried out within the framework of our culture of good governance, ensuring that transparent, accountable, and participatory management principles are upheld from project design to implementation. Thus, investments, projects, strategic planning, and civic engagement mechanisms are integrated to transform Eskişehir into a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable city model in terms

of physical, social, and governance aspects.



MAYOR OF YILDIRIM MUNICIPALITY, OKTAY YILMAZ

1. What are your top three strategies for making your city resilient to disaster, climate, and economic shocks? How do you measure their impact?

As Yildirim Municipality, we consider transforming the seismically vulnerable building stock into modern, safe, and liveable urban areas our top priority. We aim to renovate a total of 30,000 houses through the urban transformation projects we carry out in different parts of our district.

Our core strategy is to implement urban transformation in a rap-

id and well-planned manner. We are implementing transformation projects that focus on disaster safety, aiming to renovate 30,000 houses in our district. We also enhance neighbourhood response capacity by requiring disaster and emergency containers for newly constructed buildings with 50 or more independent units. We monitor the measurement processes through updating the building stock, identifying at-risk buildings, transformation progress percentages, and disaster response times.

Our second strategy is aimed at raising public awareness. We empowered 15,000 students with disaster awareness training and distributed radios and crisis communication equipment to our neighbourhood representatives. We are monitoring effectiveness through volunteer training, exercise numbers, and participation rates.

Our third strategy is to strengthen our resilient infrastructure and service network. We are expanding social support mechanisms to respond to economic shocks and developing neighbourhood-level coordination networks. We measure success through social impact metrics, access data, and satisfaction indicators. Our goal is to build

a resilient Yıldırım district with safe buildings, prepared individuals, and rapid response capacity.

2. Which innovative approaches can the local governments develop to build a caring, safe and inclusive urban life that reduces inequalities?

Building an inclusive social infrastructure, along with disaster preparedness is one of the essential components of resilient cities. In this regard, local administrations must develop innovative approaches that reach disadvantaged groups, increase social solidarity, and strengthen on-site service delivery.

In Yıldırım, we put this understanding into practice through a neighbourhood-centred, participatory, and inclusive disaster resilience approach. With the Neighbourhood-Based Support AFAD Volunteers Project, we strengthen local solidarity networks and provide volunteers with first aid, search-and-rescue, and disaster awareness training. Thus, we build neighbourhood-based capacity to support professional teams in the event of a disaster.

The programme started as a pilot in the Akçağlayan neighbourhood, continued in Zümrütevler and Mevlana, and has rapidly evolved

into a model expanding to five further neighbourhoods. We measure the project's success by the number of volunteers trained, neighbourhood preparedness, feedback from the exercises, and local coordination capacity.

We also provide disaster awareness training by regularly visiting households where people with disabilities live, ensuring accessibility to information for everyone. These studies contribute to reducing social inequalities while strengthening an inclusive culture of resilience.

3. In order to make the cities truly resilient against polycrises (disasters, climate, conflicts, economic fluctuations), beyond the physical infrastructure, in which social, institutional and governance capacities should the investments be directed; and in your municipality with which concrete steps you take this transformation forward?

Building resilient cities cannot be achieved solely through safe buildings; strong social solidarity, institutional coordination, and governance capacity are also essential. Critical to managing polycrises (disasters, climate change, conflict, economic turmoil) are trust-based collaboration among local stakeholders, well-planned engagement

processes, and a preparedness ecosystem that encompasses all segments of the society.

In this regard, as Yıldırım Municipality, we prioritise a multi-stakeholder management model. We collaborate with Bursa Technical University, the Yıldırım District Governor's Office, and the Bursa AFAD Provincial Directorate to conduct neighbourhood-level disaster risk analyses and develop data-based disaster plans. These plans are dynamically updated and implemented in the field through regular exercises.

To increase institutional capacity, we increased our search and rescue team to 65 within the Disaster Affairs Directorate and conducted communications and crisis management training. We strengthened local communication networks by distributing radio devices to neighbourhood mukhtars.

We conduct one-to-one awareness programmes for disadvantaged groups and increase the level of social preparedness by organising customised training for shopkeepers, teachers, and volunteers. At the heart of all these processes lies a governance structure based on participation, transparency and solidarity.



**MAYOR OF
ADİYAMAN MUNICIPALITY,
ABDURRAHMAN TUTDERE**

1. What are your top three strategies for making your city resilient to disaster, climate, and economic shocks? How do you measure their impact?

In order to make our city resilient against the earthquakes, we established additional rules for strong buildings besides requirements of the Earthquake Regulation, 2018. Our approach is grounded in comprehensive geotechnical survey reports, which form the basis of our planning and construction decisions. In addition, we introduce enhanced technical specifications throughout the construction process to ensure that buildings

achieve higher structural integrity. As a result, buildings constructed under this framework become significantly safer and more resilient in terms of their ground conditions, load-bearing systems, and overall construction quality.

All these measures are implemented meticulously in the field; and the processes are regularly and strictly controlled by building inspection firms and our building licence units.

2. Which innovative approaches can the local administrations develop in order to build a caring, safe and inclusive urban life mitigating the inequalities?

The local administrations share important tasks in this field. It is of great importance to establish parks, streets and avenues where residents can feel comfortable, as well as living spaces where people can feel safe. With this perspective, we construct new parks that can serve both as recovery areas during potential disasters and as social spaces where our citizens can spend time and socialise. We will continue our services with determination to provide Adiyaman with the modern and safe living spaces environment it deserves.

3. In order to make the cities truly resilient against polycrises (disasters, climate, conflicts, economic fluctuations), beyond the physical infrastructure, in which social, institutional and governance capacities should the investments be directed? Additionally, what concrete steps are you taking to advance this transformation?

First of all, the measures taken by the municipalities are insufficient to address disasters of this scale; all institutions must act in strong collaboration. Starting from the fact that Türkiye is a disaster-prone country, we believe that establishing a Ministry of Disasters, where all relevant budget and personnel would be gathered under a single roof, would be a more rational and efficient approach. As Adıyaman Municipality, we established our Disaster and Emergency Directorate within this framework, and we continue our personnel training. Our Public Bread Factory and Public Foodbank have reached the point of completion to prevent our citizens from being vulnerable during a potential disaster. Also, we implement our mukhtar houses (mukhtar: the elected head of a neighbourhood) project in all neighbourhoods; and we place emergency containers next to these mukhtar houses containing materials that may be

needed during the moments of disaster. Until now, we have completed our mukhtar houses in 11 neighbourhoods, and we will continue this project gradually in 22 neighbourhoods.

Yet, when the magnitude of the February 6 Earthquakes (2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquakes) is taken into account, it is crystal clear that no local administration can manage such an immense burden on its own, and the state must carry a coordinated effort with all its institutions. Minimizing the disaster risks and potential grievances is only possible with such integrated coordination. We must accept that our country is a disaster-prone country. For that reason, all municipalities and state institutions must be fully prepared for this reality, and the existing building stock must be overhauled urgently. It is obligatory that the government make disaster the first item on its agenda, and implement renovation, especially urban transformation, urgently. Otherwise, we will remain vulnerable to future disasters. As a mayor and a former member of parliament, I would like to state that the proposals put forward in the Earthquake Investigation Commission Report prepared after the February

6 disaster, particularly those that should be enacted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Also, all cities must prepare themselves accordingly. Otherwise, it is probable that we will once again face the devastating scene we witnessed on February 6 Earthquakes. Apart from the destroyed buildings or roads, it is so difficult for a country to compensate for the trained human resources. In order to prevent our country's economic resources and accumulations from being wasted most definitely, and urgently we should become a country well-prepared and resilient against the disasters.



**MAYOR OF GEBZE
MUNICIPALITY,
ZİNNUR BÜYÜKGÖZ**

1. What are your top three strategies for making your city resilient to disaster, climate, and economic shocks? How do you measure their impact?

We can regard the issues underlined in the question as shocks that can occur independently or trigger a chain of problems. Alongside local public services, the local administrations like us have a separate agenda today, seeking answers to the question, ‘How can we make our cities resilient to potential shocks?’ and undertaking serious effort in this regard. I would also like to remind you that the global issues such as war, migration, the climate crisis and economic uncertainty represent a huge cost to the world. Looking at the issue specifically in Gebze, we are talking about a town with global influence due to its characteristics and potential. Of course, this naturally brings with it the risk of facing global shocks. As Gebze Municipality, we are working diligently to protect our city from possible crises and make it more resilient to potential shocks within this framework of awareness.

2. Which innovative approaches can the local administrations develop in order to build a caring, safe and inclu-

sive urban life mitigating the inequalities?

There is an ancient bond between the city and its people. There is a shared destiny, a companionship. I am not referring solely to infrastructure or physical production here. I am also referring to a social, emotional and spiritual bond. Cities are not sustained only by buildings or roads; people, the social groups they form and the atmosphere they create also increase the city’s resilience. Therefore, as local administrations, we see it as our primary task to ensure that every individual living in the city feels valued and safe. We are working resolutely to be a municipality that keeps the city alive and makes it a place worth living in. We attach great importance to strengthening social solidarity, raising safety and accessibility standards in public spaces, and spreading equal opportunities to all areas of life.

3. In order to make the cities truly resilient against poly-crises (disasters, climate, conflicts, economic fluctuations), beyond the physical infrastructure, in which social, institutional and governance capacities should the investments be directed? Additionally, what concrete steps are

you taking to advance this transformation?

Today, cities face not only physical risks but also multi-layered threats such as economic fluctuations, migration flows, climate-related crises and social change. Therefore, resilience now requires a holistic management approach that goes beyond merely strengthening infrastructure. Cities can only become truly resilient to such crises through strategies that encompass social, institutional and governance dimensions.

As Gebze Municipality, we are building this approach on three fundamental axes: social awareness, institutional capacity and collaboration with the stakeholders. When the society is prepared for the crises, this enables the city residents to act in a conscious and cooperative manner. Enhancing institutional capacity speeds up decision-making processes during crises and increases the effectiveness of interventions. Collaboration with stakeholders enriches decision-making processes by involving different actors in a framework of collective wisdom. This holistic approach provides us with the opportunity to make our city truly resilient to multiple crises. 🗣️

PUBLICNESS EMERGING FROM THE SHADOW: NEW OPPORTUNITIES OF PARTICIPATION IN CITIES

📌 SAVAŞ ZAFER ŞAHİN*

🕒 7 MINUTES

Cities today are at the centre of a reshaping public life in a period characterised by intertwined economic, social, and environmental crises. Rising inequalities, a fragile social balance, climate-related disasters, accelerating migration currents, and the increasing complexity of spatial organisation are transforming the urban space not only into a living space but also a ground for the re-establishment of political legitimacy, social resilience, and the pursuit of justice. In this context, the phrase "on the shore of all possibilities," proposed by Urban for this issue, suggests that the cities stand at both a threshold of uncertainty and a crossroads where new public possibilities can emerge. The key to exploring this new outlet is not to rely on conventional political tendencies and question leadership perspectives or the structure of the state, but rather to examine examples closer to the experienc-

es of the ordinary people and daily life practices.

In this new era, democracy requires a governance approach that goes far beyond representation. The quality of public life in cities is no longer determined solely by elected administrative actors, but by civic initiatives, specialist communities, neighbourhood-level organisations, digital networks, and voluntary solidarity structures. In other words, the traditional contradiction or interaction between representation and participation is being replaced by a new situation in which the scope of participatory experiences is gradually expanding and creating a space for itself within life with new demands. Interestingly, many examples of this situation are occurring amidst the pessimistic political shifts known as democratic regression. At unexpected times and places, at moments that can be called the

lowest points, cities can emerge with surprising examples.

The common characteristic of these examples is that they bear traces of urban life outside of a cycle of daily politics that has become stagnant and reduced to the language of communication and public relations. Urban residents are now striving to leave their mark on the places they live, demonstrating a much greater interest in structural problems while abandoning to see the political as the alternative. This new ethical stance and state of activism, represented by figures like New York's new mayor, Mamdani, points to a new political sphere, and this sphere points out a set of possibilities where participation can have more legitimate characteristics than representation. Therefore, participation has become not merely a political right but a constituent element of the ideal of the fair city. The concept

* Prof. Dr., Head of the Department of Land Registry and Cadastre, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University

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Rising inequalities, a fragile social balance, climate-related disasters, accelerating migration currents, and the increasing complexity of spatial organisation are transforming the urban space not only into a living space but also a ground for the re-establishment of political legitimacy, social resilience, and the pursuit of justice.
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of a "fair city" goes beyond an understanding that prioritises equal access to services, encompassing a broader area from spatial distribution to forms of social encounter, from access to information to a culture of negotiation. A fair city is only possible through the existence of a public order that reduces discrimination in both administrative processes and daily life, makes the voices of different social segments heard, and supports co-production.

In this context, openness, transparency, accountability, data-based thinking, and pluralism are not merely technical principles but the cornerstones of the imagination of a fair city. Every new crisis emerging in the cities reminds us of the vitality of these

principles. The increasing number of natural disasters in recent years, especially the digital solidarity networks that emerged after the earthquake, herald a new form of participation in which the citizens emerge not only as demanding actors but also as solution-producing actors. Such examples clearly demonstrate that shadowy areas of public life can become visible and that social capacity can generate extraordinary creative energy in times of crisis. In fact, as urban problems have begun to express an ever-increasing complexity far beyond the one-dimensional and causal procedures of conventional administrative methods, it becomes crucial in a fair city not to standardize existing services or limit representation, but rather to con-



stantly reconsider and transform them, legitimizing them through representative participation.

City councils are one of the institutions most significantly affected by this transformation in Türkiye. Essentially a remnant of the global understanding of participation from nearly two decades ago, and having failed to catch up with processes like ordinary participation and digital participation globally, the city councils have created and sustained a crucial opportunity for Türkiye by creating a neutral space outside of politics. These structures, which have sometimes been ineffective and sometimes overshadowed by the political climate in Türkiye, have demonstrated, especially in recent years, that they can create a powerful space for negotiation

and encounter when the right conditions arise. City councils offer a public ground where diverse civic actors, as well as broad representation, can come together to discuss common issues, rebuild trust, and make social energy visible. For example, the expanding component structure of the Ankara City Council stands out as an exceptional case in Türkiye. The experience emerging here demonstrates that participation is not merely an administrative process but a cultural and political way of doing things.

New participation practices in cities where city councils are partially engaged are now transcending the boundaries of face-to-face meetings; new interaction models are emerging through digital platforms, open data ecosystems,

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The increasing number of natural disasters in recent years, especially the digital solidarity networks that emerged after the earthquake, herald a new form of participation in which the citizens emerge not only as demanding actors but also as solution-producing actors.
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crowdsourcing applications, and networks that bring together diverse areas of expertise. These models can be effective both in times of crisis and in solving daily urban problems where classical bureaucratic mechanisms fall short. Expanding participation also makes cities' demands for justice visible through different

channels. Thus, the fair city is becoming not just a spatial goal but a political medium powered by deepening participation. However, it cannot be ignored that this medium is constantly threatened by the existing political sphere.


Therefore, the "on the shore of all possibilities" signifies the shore of a new public imagination rather than a state of fragility for the cities. This imagination points to an order that transcends crises of legitimacy, openly addresses social inequalities, and includes diverse segments of society in the say, authority, and decision-making processes surrounding urban life. The steps toward this order, some based on scientific research and some based on participatory experiences, that have emerged in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir in recent years, have yielded concrete counterparts. These examples, which prioritise transparency, strengthen collective wisdom, and bring diverse components of urban life together around the same table, demonstrate that the ideal of a fair city is not merely a theoretical debate but it is also practically possible.

Today, the cities in Türkiye are being tested by institutional

challenges, while simultaneously harbouring a vast potential that allows for a new democratic beginning. To make his potential visible depends on strengthening overshadowed public spaces, ensuring the continuity of solidarity practices, and transforming participation from an instrumental technique into a lasting governance culture. Strengthening mechanisms such as the city councils, supporting collective production, and empowering diverse segments of society to have a say will all be the steps that materialise the ideal of a fair city.

In conclusion, "publicness emerging from the shadow" describes a new opportunity for the future of the cities in Türkiye today. This opportunity will become a reality to the extent that all components of the city can establish inclusive and transformative relationships based on mutual trust. However, both the representation of social interests, the redesign of urban administrative mechanics, the continuous transformation of services, and the linking of all these to the new dimension of participation have become an indispensable requirement. A fair city is only possible through the sustainability of the integrity of

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Essentially a remnant of the global understanding of participation from nearly two decades ago, and having failed to catch up with processes like ordinary participation and digital participation globally, the city councils have created and sustained a crucial opportunity for Türkiye by creating a neutral space outside of politics.

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these relationships. The future of the cities depends entirely on the quality, breadth, and continuity of these encounters. 

BEING ABLE TO ESTABLISH RESILIENT CITIES IN A VULNARABLE WORLD

 AKGÜN ILHAN*

 6 MINUTES

The cities witness a polycrisis of a scale unprecedented in the history. These crises emerge as climate change, ecologic collapse, natural disasters, challenges related to energy, water and food, social-economic inequalities and conflicts, and they increase the vulnerability of the cities. The environmental, social and economic dimensions of this vulnerability also force resilience to determine an existence strategy in the similar areas. Today, resilient cities are no longer only defined as entities capable of surviving the natural disasters, but also as systems that learn from the crises and transform themselves. This requires urban systems to develop adaptable capacities both against shocks and long-term tensions. Resilient cities should be considered as one whole, where the physical infrastructure, social networks, economic structure, ecosystem services and governance systems operate in

harmony with each other. Starting from here, in the transition from vulnerability to flexibility, the cities must take action in areas such as increasing physical resilience against natural disasters, climate change mitigation and adaptation, strengthening the economy with local and circular production, strengthening social resilience, establishing learning systems and diversifying participation in governance.

INCREASING PHYSICAL RESILIENCE AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS

In Türkiye, the post-disaster urban transformation projects often focus on building reinforcements while disregarding site selection and density. However, genuine resilience starts with the right location and the right density of development. The physical resilience of the cities can only be ensured through the holistic implementation of planning, en-

gineering, governance, and ecological strategies. Urban planning must take into consideration the spatial distribution of the risks such as earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis; and the ground surveys, microzoning studies, disaster risk maps and current building inventories should be integrated with the master plans. Post-disaster evacuation routes and assembly areas should be planned, and the principle of redundancy should be applied in energy, water and transport infrastructure. Also, early warning systems must be established, and tested regularly. Urban resilience action plans should be prepared and responsibilities for implementation must be clearly defined at both local and national levels. For this goal, resilience governance units at the central and local scales should be established, data sharing among the organisations should be maintained and a separate, monitorable

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Image 1. A multi-purpose public space, designed according to the 15-Minute City model in Copenhagen, Nordhavn (Photo: Valdemar Ren)

budget should be allocated for all these processes.

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Cities are responsible for nearly 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time being among the areas most affected by climate change. For this reason, the cities must implement both adaptation and mitigation policies in a holistic manner. In greenhouse gas mitigation, within the framework of pedes-

trian-focused planning in the transport sector, pedestrian and cycle paths, electric vehicle and public transport infrastructure should be developed within the '15-Minute City' model. In the field of energy, increasing renewable and low-carbon energy resources such as solar and wind energy, and energy diversity should be prioritised.

In the adaptation process to climate change, in order to increase the resilience of the cities against climate disasters such as

drought, heatwave and floods, nature-based solutions should be prioritised. This approach requires development of green infrastructural systems (green roofs, rain gardens, drainage ditches, permeable surfaces, etc.) which imitates the functioning of the nature itself, and their functioning in integration with the current grey infrastructure. Thus, the disasters would be prevented thanks to the ecosystem services before happening, or their impacts would be diminished. These practices increase



Image 2. Sponge City implementation in the city of Wuhan, China (Photo: Archdaily)

the urban biodiversity, beside maintaining flood control, decreasing the heat and creating carbon sink areas, and they restore the water cycle, and constitute healthy recreative areas for the urban citizens. China's "Sponge City" model is one of the most successful examples of this holistic and nature-based approach (Image 2).

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY WITH LOCAL AND CIRCULAR PRODUCTION

Cities that dependent on a single sector or the global supply chain are highly vulnerable and can easily collapse during periods of crises. A resilient economy is based on the principles of diversity and flexibility. Formations such as urban agriculture and food co-

operatives, small-producer networks, urban logistics centres, and social enterprises strengthen the economy from below by supporting the local production. With circular systems that do not produce waste and reintroduce the resources into circulation it is also possible to maintain economic and environmental sustainability. Waste material recovery in

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Also, a just life is a condition for resilience. Participatory equality of vulnerable groups that are unproportionally affected by the disasters, such as the women, immigrants, elderly and poor, in urban planning, and just access to post-disaster resource distribution and housing and health services must be maintained.
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the construction sector, reusing cycles in the textile and food sectors, and the successful reusing of grey and waste water after on-site treatment are examples of this approach. For instance, Singapore uses every drop of water with a circular water management model which integrates rainwater collection, advanced wastewater treatment and seawater desalination (Image 3).

Foreign dependency is another reason for economic vulnerability. Local energy production and urban agriculture, the closed water cycle approach based on using local water sources have critical importance during times of crisis. The concept of “self-sufficient city” should be considered not only as an economic but also as a strategic issue of security.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL RESILIENCE

The feelings of trust, solidarity and identity, which holds the society together, become important as much as a resilient infrastructure during the moments of crisis. The post-disaster cities which recover fastest are generally those with the strongest social bonds. Like in the examples of Kobe in Japan and Valdivia in Chile, local

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Resilient cities are no longer defined as entities that can survive against natural disasters, but also entities that can learn from the crises and transform. This requires urban systems to develop adaptable capacities both against shocks and long-term tensions.
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community organisations have a determining place in crisis management. In the planning processes, neighbourhood-based meetings, local participation mechanisms and establishing

Image 3. Marina Dam, Singapore, uses water as a circular resource (Photo: Shutterstock).



disaster volunteering networks strengthen social resilience. Also, a just life is a condition for resilience. Participatory equality of vulnerable groups that are unproportionally affected by the disasters, such as the women, immigrants, elderly and poor, in urban planning, and just access to post-disaster resource distribution and housing and health services must be maintained.

ESTABLISHING LEARNING SYSTEMS

The cities are systems that are constantly learning just like the living organisms. And resilience is not a static state, but a constant cycle of learning and restructuring. Technology provides indispensable tools for governing the complexity of the cities. Possible disaster scenarios might be tested by having the visual copy of the physical city by the digital twin

applications. These systems provide dynamic simulations against events such as floods, earthquakes or energy cuts. These diminish the impacts of disasters to a major extend in connection with early warning systems supported by real-time sensor networks, meteorological data and social media analytics. However, technology is not sufficient alone; the system should be adaptable, i.e. should learn from the post-crisis feedbacks. Organi-



sations and communities that can learn lessons from disasters, mistakes and crises continue their road stronger each time.

DIVERSIFYING PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE


Urban resilience is about governance as well as technology. The vulnerability profile of the cities might be understood with correct data. Data-based decision-making mechanisms should be devel-

oped and realised together with open data platforms, digital risk maps, sensor networks and CBS-based monitoring systems. A multi-level governance approach should be adopted to clearly define the division of responsibilities between central and local authorities, ensure the integration of disaster management with urban planning, and establish regional resilience networks. To build a resilient city, the participation of stakeholders such as the public, universities, NGOs, and the private sector should be ensured throughout the planning process, from planning to implementation.

CONCLUSION: FROM VULNERABILITY TO FLEXIBILITY

Even though it is not possible to make the cities entirely secure, it is possible to transform their vulnerability. This transformation means not only a physical but an environmental, social and economic restructuring. Resilience should be considered not as the strength of the concrete and technology, but as the integrity of the system. The true resilience of a city depends on its harmony with nature and climate, equal participation of the citi-

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A multi-level governance approach should be adopted to clearly define the division of responsibilities between central and local authorities, ensure the integration of disaster management with urban planning, and establish regional resilience networks.
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zens at all stages from planning to implementation, and its capacity to learn from risks and disasters, and to change and adapt. Building resilient cities in a vulnerable world indeed means building resilient societies and systems. 

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GAP: A NEW ERA OF INEQUALITY IN OUR CITIES

📍 EMRE EREN KORKMAZ*

🕒 7 MINUTES

INTRODUCTION: THOSE WHO FLY AT FIBRE SPEED AND THOSE WHO WAIT FOR A SIGNAL

Internet access opportunities in Türkiye now reaches almost everyone. This achievement indicates that the years-long battle over infrastructure has been largely secured. However, while this high level of access is a cause for celebration, the global technological momentum has radically redefined the concept of digital inequality. Today, the issue is not accessing the Internet but the capacity to integrate with the global economic system and to create productivity by using it.

Dazzling developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its sub-heading, the Large Language Models (LLM) (and also in the related fields of robotics and digital domains), create a new and deep gap in our

cities. On one side, there is a professional, who makes instant complex analyses, takes part in global business meetings without experiencing any translation problems and doubles their productivity with the AI-powered phone in their pocket. On the other hand, there is the local shopkeeper or worker who lives in the poor areas of the same city, works in low-skilled jobs and confronts the risk of losing their job security under AI-based automation pressure. Here, on the one hand, we have the issue of access to such opportunities, and on the other hand, there is a serious discrepancy between the aims and capacities of using it even if such opportunities are accessed. We live in an unequal society, and digital inequalities magnify existing inequalities.

The local administrations must consider this new generation of

inequality (Digital Inequality 3.0) as a primary urban issue.

1. AI Momentum and Depth of Inequality

This new stage of digital inequality has gone beyond the problems related to the lack of physical access (1.0) or basic computer-using skills (2.0). Today's problem is the discrepancy in the capacity to achieve economic and social results by using the technology. Thus, tasks such as bringing Wi-Fi to the villages or training the youth in the area of coding are not sufficient anymore, even though they are still relevant.

The speed and deregulated nature of the progress in the field of artificial intelligence is deepening this gap. The AI patents has increased 31 times since 2010, and between 2021-2022, they increased by 62.7% in a single year. A great part of this progress is

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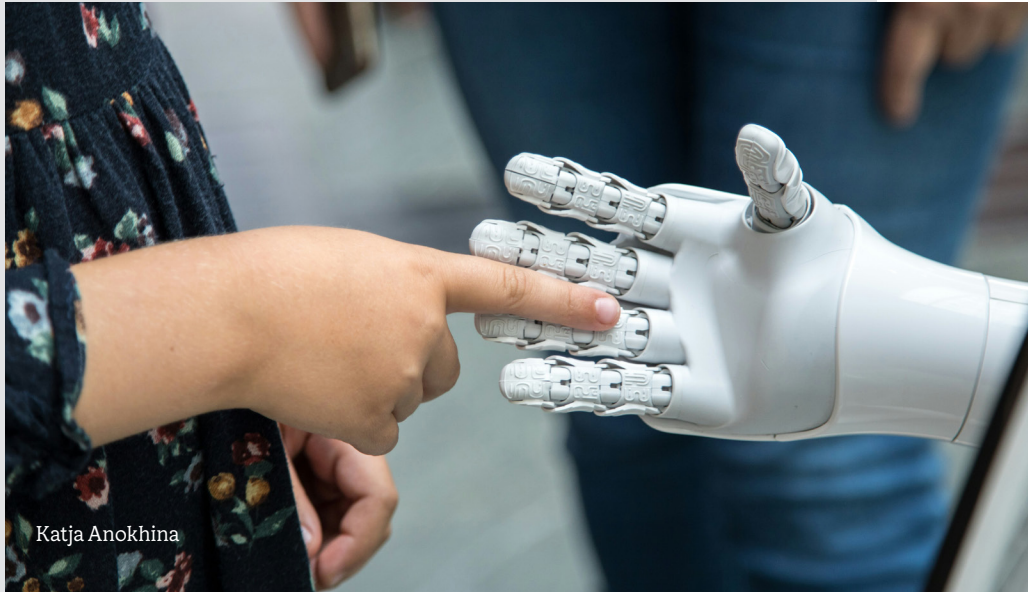
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Resilient cities are no longer defined as entities that can survive against natural disasters, but also entities that can learn from the crises and transform.

This requires urban systems to develop adaptable capacities both against shocks and long-term tensions.

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led by the private sector (51 important models in 2023) which is optimised in order to maximise profitability. Here, we are also faced with a new picture. While infrastructural investments and access to the Internet are public tasks, now the role of the public sector has been weakened, and the private companies among the actors who create and devel-



op the latest technologies have gained importance. And a big part of these companies is of foreign origin and enjoys monopolistic positions. This circumstance further complicates bargaining and collaboration with these organisations. Another reason for this is that these companies prioritise accountability to their investors and shareholders over the public.

This private sector-oriented momentum causes a technological panorama in which the AI tools further strengthen the individuals who already have resources and power, instead of social benefits. Additionally, automation and unemployment are among the issues that the social units of the local administrations should

carefully monitor. This has the potential of triggering urban poverty.

Also, barriers of local language and culture make up significant obstacles. If the AI tools are optimised in English or for high-skill business flows, this will make the adaptation of the local economic actors more difficult. On the other hand, even though the language problem has been overcome, it is difficult for a shopkeeper to enjoy such opportunities and use them for developing their job.

Certainly, this does not mean negative results will emerge all the time. For instance, there are plastic companies which, thanks to AI, examine the biodegrada-

ble products, get access to them and supply new products, as demanded by their customers. In another example, a vast number of talented young people who can create their cultural and creative production with lower budgets, thanks to AI, can supply their cultural and creative products in a more efficient way to broader segments. Thus, the local administrations have important roles in assessing and supporting these new opportunities.

2. Access opportunities and aims of use

The users in our country are at high levels in terms of using and adapting to digital technologies. However, the research shows that this is rather limited with a passive information-receiving process. For instance, using the e-government services, following the social media or uses for information receiving are significant. The main problem here is issues such as digital literacy and precautions against manipulation and fake news.

However, competency in complex problem solving, data analysis or using productive applications required by the era of artificial intelligence is not yet extent. While

the people stay in a position of passive consumers, the gap with active digital producers and innovators grows fast.

Furthermore, digital inequality is spatially deepening since urban resources are not distributed equally. While the unequal lives of the post-immigration groups who settle in the city also continue in the digital field, resource discrepancies between the central and peripheral areas prove the existence of social, economic and cultural barriers that trigger digital inequality. The opportunities presented by AI can be efficiently utilized, and efforts for closing this gap can be carried out thanks to effective interventions of the local administrations in this field.

3. Critical Intervention of Local Administrations

The local administrations cannot anymore be content with the role of mere infrastructural providers in the face of this urban problem. Intervention is obligatory for the sake of **spatial justice and economic stability**. The local administrations must turn artificial intelligence into a “means of public transport” that can be used by all, instead of being a “luxurious vehi-

cle”. And this requires a comprehensive strategy based on three pillars:

SMART INFRASTRUCTURE AND INCLUSIVE PLATFORMS (DIAGNOSIS AND TARGETING)

Instead of only estimating digital inequality, we must clearly diagnose it in spatial terms, with artificial intelligence. Conventional data might be sparse and expensive. It is possible to map poverty, infrastructural problems and urban quality by using AI algorithms and satellite images. And this will legitimise leading the resource distribution to the spots where resource inequality is the deepest. Also, e-Municipality services should adapt the principle of **“Equity by Design”** with user experience (UX) tests for disadvantaged groups.

The local administrations may use the budget and time saved over those who use e-municipality services for providing more efficient services to the disadvantaged segments.

ADVANCED COMPETENCY AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP (TRAINING AND CULTURE)

Training should focus on the principal elements of the ethical use

of LLMs, struggles with data pollution, cybersecurity and digital citizenship. For the AI to become a “public good”, the municipal libraries, youth centres and occupational high-schools should be turned into access centres open to the public where AI can be used by all. Special, culturally and linguistically sensitive programmes should be developed for individuals with low digital literacy (elders, parents).

Here, training municipal personnel especially for protecting the data collected from living individuals, taking measures against the cyber-attacks and preventing the employees who have the most vulnerable positions about the cyber-attacks from being deceived have considerable significance.

POLITICAL INTERVENTION AND EQUALITY-FOCUSED AI (LOCAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION)

The local administrations should intervene directly in order to increase the competitiveness of the small and medium-sized enterprises. AI integration programmes for the chambers of the artisans and local producers should contain AI consulting services that overcome the Turkish



language barrier, and provide local marketing and translation solutions.

Also, the big data collected by the municipality should be used, focusing on social benefits. For instance, by using AI algorithms, social service (housing or good aid) distribution may target those groups that need the most and have the least access. Advanced competency and retraining support should be provided for the labour force in the sectors under the risk of automation through municipal occupational high-schools and courses.

CONCLUSION

Digital inequality is an active crisis that threatens urban sustainability, social justice and economic diversity. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technologies has the potential to deepen

this divide. If this technological acceleration benefits only the wealthy, it will exacerbate existing injustices for the rest of society.

The leadership that is expected from the local administrations cannot be anymore restricted with providing infrastructure. It should focus on developing strategic competency, establishing inclusive platforms and carrying political interventions focusing on economic results. Considering artificial intelligence as a “public good” and making our local organisations the engine of this transformation is the only way to make our cities more just, more resilient and more inclusive. Otherwise, while some continue to fly at fibre speed, a great mass will be left behind waiting for a signal. This strategic task is a shared responsibility for all of us. 🇹🇷

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A CITY THAT EMBRACES DIFFERENCES AND ENABLES CO-LIVING?

 GAMZE SOFUOĞLU*

 5 MINUTES

Cities are among the spaces where we most intensely experience social life in all its layers, where our individual differences become most visible, and where we experience inequality most concretely. Discussing an inclusive city in fact means discussing many elements of social life simultaneously.

As a person who is blind, my relationship with the city reflects not only to the physical environment but also to the sum of decision-making processes, design habits, digital systems and social behaviours; therefore, creating an inclusive city requires a structural, political and cultural transformation.

People with disabilities can only have a more equal, active, and independent presence in society through the implementation of accessibility in all areas and the existence of inclusive policies.

WeWALK Marketing & User Experience Director

By placing the social barriers that hinder and disadvantage individuals and not the disabled themselves at the centre of the solution, then we can talk about a real inclusivity and a practiced perspective of accessibility.

So, how is it possible to have a city that embraces differences and allows for co-living?

1. REGULATIONS ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY:

Accessibility is not a "complementary component" added to any aspect of the urban life, but one of the starting parameters of urban planning, architectural production, technological design, and information management. Therefore, ensuring accessibility can only be achieved through a truly effective regulatory infrastructure.

This framework should;

- center on the principle of universal design,

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By placing the social barriers that hinder and disadvantage individuals and not the disabled themselves at the centre of the solution, then we can talk about a real inclusivity and a practiced perspective of accessibility.

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- address physical, digital, and communication accessibility at the same level,
- cover all urban components—



from buildings to pedestrian paths, from public transportation to disaster management, and

- mandate that digital services be accessible.

2. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND SANCTIONS OF REGULATIONS:

One of the biggest gaps in accessibility often stems not from a lack of legislation, but from the way it is implemented. Many of the barriers experienced by people with disabilities often stem from this lack of implementation.

Therefore, a strong implementation and monitoring process is required:

- conducting regular independent accessibility audits and ensuring transparent reporting processes,
- applying effective and deterrent sanctions in cases of non-compliance,
- establishing accessibility performance indicators for municipalities and the private sector,
- sharing accessibility violations, problem areas, and user feedback, and
- recognizing the experience

of disabled communities as a key data source in evaluating implementation.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTORS IN URBAN LIFE

One of the most important actors shaping the daily life experience of the urban residents is not only the public sector but also the private sector. From mobile banking and mapping applications to e-commerce and transportation platforms, corporate buildings and shopping malls, the private sector is one

of the most critical and influential architects of urban life.

Therefore, the private sector's responsibility for accessibility in urban life is more than a strategic choice; it is a social imperative:

- accessibility should be the default in product and service design.
- physical spaces should be planned with universal design principles.
- inclusiveness in internal policies and processes must be an integral part of institutional capacity.
- continuous collaboration should be maintained with stakeholders working in the field of disability.

4. ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY IN THE PROCESSES:

Civil society is not just organised structures; it is the entirety of the communities, users, and volunteers who share the experience. These communities, as the bodies that best define accessibility needs and produce the swiftest solutions, form the insightful infrastructure of an inclusive city.

Therefore, the community should be directly and very actively involved in:

- policy making processes,
- implementation plans,
- monitoring-evaluation mechanisms,
- design meetings and accessibility audits.

WHAT DO WE DO FOR URBAN LIFE AS WEWALK?

At WeWALK, our mission is to develop technologies that support the equal, active, and independent participation of individuals with visual disabilities in social life. To this end, we offer two core technologies:

1. WeWALK Smart Cane:

The WeWALK Smart Cane is a technologically advanced, AI-based cane designed to help visually impaired people achieve independent mobility. Its smart features, incorporated into traditional white canes, provide users with a safer and more convenient experience. Designed as thin and light as a standard cane, the WeWALK offers intuitive and easy use thanks to its physical buttons. Its built-in sensors detect obstacles at head and chest height and provide vibration or

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Daniel Ali

audio alerts. It connects to the WeWALK mobile app via Bluetooth, allowing users to get step-by-step navigation, access public transportation information, and explore surrounding areas directly from the cane. Its voice assistant allows navigation, public transportation, and explore features to be operated with voice commands. With AI integration, users can ask the cane any question they want, instantly accessing a wide range of information, from a coffee shop's menu to a description of a historical building.

2.DANIŞ Professional Video Call Service:

DANIŞ is a professional assistance service where visually impaired people can receive instant and live service through their phones' cameras by connecting to professional assistants via video via the WeWALK mobile application whenever they need visual support.

The WeWALK Smart Cane and DANIŞ Video Call Service were developed with the understanding that urban life is defined not only by physical accessibility but also by multidimensional

needs such as access to information, wayfinding, security, and social inclusion. These two technologies empower visually impaired people to move independently in urban spaces, have equal access to public and private services, and participate actively in daily life. At WeWALK, our goal is to contribute to cities becoming more inclusive, more accessible, and more liveable for everyone by combining technology with our perspective, which views disability as a consequence of social and environmental barriers rather than an individual's limitations. 

IT'S ABOUT TIME: IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO TIME IN THE MARMARA REGION

 MARC MARTORELL ESCOFET*

 5 MINUTES

Worldwide, there is a rising challenge related to a scarce commodity central to daily life: time. We have a collective problem with time, and major cities and metropolises around the world, such as Barcelona (Spain), Milan (Italy), Bogotá (Colombia) or Buenos Aires (Argentina) are already working towards how to better face such a challenge.

The truth is that, no matter where one lives, we often find ourselves with insufficient hours in our day to accomplish everything. Such an issue, while felt individually, is related to how our schedules are organised, and can lead to experiencing the increasing phenomenon of time poverty: 37% of urban households in urban Türkiye suffer from a lack of sufficient time after paid work, unpaid care, studies, and personal needs.

WHY TIME MATTERS TO CITIES AND CITIZENS?

Time poverty increases when various daily life activities are constrained by time: the more time one spends commuting, the more care work one needs to undertake, the longer one works, the less time one has available. It is a good indicator of urban well-being, as it can demonstrate where inequalities arise beyond material poverty: 34% of employed men and 59% of employed women in Türkiye are time poor.

The way time is organised depends on a social contract. For over two centuries, that contract was the “eight-hour triangle” — an ideal division of the day into eight hours for work, sleep, and rest. However, such an outdated distribution of time does not encompass daily life realities: in Türkiye, women spend 19% of their time doing

unpaid care and domestic work (as compared to 3.7% of men’s time), and the rising sleep deprivation — which not only has a direct effect on health, but in the overall economy (with losses up to 1 to 2% of GDP).

In metropolitan contexts, such as Marmara Region, the temporal dimension of the urban environment has a direct relation to climate adaptation and mitigation. Acceleration tied to urban lifestyles creates a discordance in natural regeneration processes, such as hydrological cycles or nutrient flows. But, more importantly, mobility times are a rising concern, with a constant of approximately 1 hour, or 1 hour and 30 minutes in megacities, as the maximum commute time that individuals are willing to tolerate. The need for coordinating rush hour in highly populated regions is an emerging issue.

*Policy Officer, Time Use Initiative



WHAT CAN CITIES DO TO ENSURE THE RIGHT TO TIME?

Under such challenges, cities and regions are responding with an emerging civic right: the right to time. This is the recognition of our fundamental need for a proper balance between work, care, rest, and leisure. It reframes the old model, replacing the "eight-hour triangle" with a "life-balance diamond". By advocating for a more balanced approach, the right to time directly tackles societal issues of gender inequality, sustainability, and community well-being.

For implementing the right to time, new public policies with

time at their core need to be devised. Although different in approach, they call for innovative strategies that put forward the public provision of time. Depending on the political priorities, they focus on reducing inefficiencies, such as urban congestion; others seek to ease the burden on those balancing care and work; and there are even those exploring how to enhance well-being by recognising the fundamental role of rest and recovery in human health and productivity.

To create reliable and accountable structures, cities can deploy new institutional tools. They can establish a Time Office, a techni-

cal department responsible for gathering evidence, led by a Time Chief Officer, a high-level coordinator ensuring time policies are implemented across all government sectors. By using data and indicators, such as time-use surveys, they can devise a powerful, data-driven tool for participatory governance, diagnosing needs segmented by gender, age, and social dimension.

When cities use time as a basis for public policy, they aim to strategically harmonise the rhythms of work, care, public and private services, and urban schedules with individual, family, or community needs to create more efficient, equitable, and human-cen-



tred urban environments. Let's see some examples:

– **Rush hour alleviation:** Implementing graduated scheduling and incentive systems to distribute peak-hour demand enhances quality of life, reduces stress, and supports environmental sustainability. Good practices: Rennes (“Hyper-Point”), Dubai (“Traffic Flow Plan”).

– **Care time visualisation:** This policy directly supports social equity by valuing unpaid care work and integrating it into economic policies. Good practices: Bogotá (“Care Blocks”), Montevideo (“Communal Laundry”).

– **Proximity urbanism:** Developing urban areas with es-

sential services within short distances promotes community cohesion, reduces stress from long commutes, and enhances local economies. Good practices: Paris (“15-Minute City”), Ciudad de México (“Utopías”).

– **Urban lighting adaptation:** Optimising urban lighting improves safety and resource efficiency, fostering inclusivity and security in public spaces. Some approaches may include as well respect for natural life forms living in urban green areas, as well as their rhythms. Good practice: Strasbourg (“Dark Sections”).

– **Circadian wellness policy:** By promoting policies that respect circadian rhythms in

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The truth is that, no matter where one lives, we often find ourselves with insufficient hours in our day to accomplish everything. Such an issue, while felt individually, is related to how our schedules are organised, and can lead to experiencing the increasing phenomenon of time poverty.

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work, education, and healthcare settings, this approach improves public health outcomes and reduces stress-related illnesses. Good practice: Bad Kissingen (“ChronoCity”)



– **Chronobiological education:** Adjusting school schedules to match students' biological rhythms promotes equity in education by accommodating diverse chronotypes. Good practices: New Orleans, Baltimore (“Expanded Schools”).

– **Night Mayor:** This policy ensures access to essential services during non-standard hours, supporting workers on night shifts and promoting safety. Good practices: London (“Night Czar”), Amsterdam (“Night Mayor”).

– **Time-use plan:** Comprehensive time-use legislation and multi-stakeholder agreements create a balanced, efficient, and equitable time framework for society. Good practice: Barcelona (“Time Agreement”).

In July, the Time Academy demonstrated a great interest among Turkish policymakers and civil servants to assess whether they already had policies affecting the social organisation of time. And, with the Local and Regional Time Network participating in MARUF last September, municipalities within Marmara can pioneer the implementation of time policies in Türkiye. By embracing the right to time, the Marmara region can leverage new, evidence-based institutional infrastructures to design services that are more equitable, sustainable, and aligned with human well-being – and be recognised as one of the most innovative regions in the World. 

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This is the recognition of our fundamental need for a proper balance between work, care, rest, and leisure. It reframes the old model, replacing the "eighthour triangle" with a "life-balance diamond". By advocating for a more balanced approach, the right to time directly tackles societal issues of gender inequality, sustainability, and community well-being.
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BEYOND NUMBERS, TOWARDS PEOPLE: ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA IN INCLUSIVE LOCAL PLANNING PROCESSES

 MEHMET DOĞU KARAKAYA*^{1,2}

 10 MINUTES

AT FIRST GLANCE

When addressing the issues about population³, three fundamental components should be taken into consideration: *birth, death and migration*.

We are all born only once, at the very beginning of life; most often beyond our control, at an uncertain moment, we meet death only once, “just as every soul tasted death”. However, migration is an extremely dynamic and decisive factor that can be undertaken multiple times throughout one's life, at any age, either voluntarily or involuntarily and under non-controlled and compulsory

circumstances, to multiple destinations, often irreversible and relatively more difficult to measure and define. Humanity and the human population as part of nature will continue to respond to all developments in the future, as it has in the past, in line with the different aspects of these three components.

Historically, gradual advances from high fertility and high death conditions to low death conditions and then, low fertility conditions are called “*demographic transition*”⁴. Modernisation, urbanisation, and positive developments in health and hygiene

conditions, resulted in serious decline in the rate of death and increase in life expectancy at birth. For this reason, since we stay alive much longer compared to the past, we may say that there is an obvious acceleration in population increase. However, the preferences of people for low fertility levels that they developed as a response to such feasible life conditions show a much slower transformation. There is a rapid population increase, then a slowing increase and then, depending on the developments, the processes of a decreasing population size. This situation leads to significant differences among the

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² The views expressed in this text reflect the author's personal and academic assessments and in no way bind the institutions or organisations where the author works or has worked.

³ It should be noted here that the term ‘issue’ has been deliberately and consciously chosen over ‘problem’ when naming the subject. Finding a direct and neutral equivalent for the English term ‘issue’ in Turkish can sometimes lead to inadequate translation, potentially framing demographic issues in a negative light from the outset.

⁴ It is also called “Demographic transformation”.



countries and continents, leaving some ahead and others behind. The transformation is continuing, and it is possible to foresee that this process will be experienced in different regions at different rates and durations but similarly.

There has been a transition from generations who mostly came into this world with more siblings, where a significant pro-

portion of their siblings passed away before reaching the age of one, into generations with far fewer siblings, lower fertility rates, better mortality conditions, and longer, more prosperous lives. On the other hand, we have reached a population structure continues to increase because of *population momentum*⁵.

In addition, it is obvious that the phenomenon of migration, as

the fastest and effective demographic reaction, will continue to change our world.

Today, when the world's population passed 8 billion, the past and future of the demographic transformations must be reevaluated. Increasing diversity and aging populations, the extent that the social policies influence demographic behaviour, the lowest limit that fertility may drop and the

⁵ *Total fertility rate:* This refers to the average number of children a woman gives birth to during her reproductive years, defined as ages 15–49. *Replacement level:* This is the level of total fertility (the number of births per woman aged 15–49) generally accepted as 2.10. At this level, it is assumed that each woman leaves approximately one daughter behind in the next generation.

Population momentum: Even when the total fertility rate declines to the replacement level, the population may continue to grow for a period of time due to the large cohort of young people created by previously high fertility rates and the births produced by this cohort. When this younger generation enters reproductive age, the number of births continues to exceed the number of deaths for some time. As the population gradually ages, birth and death levels converge, and the effect of momentum diminishes. In technical demography, it is possible to calculate and project population momentum at the national and sub-national levels.

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How the possible negative impact of population increase on sustainable development might be differentiated, how the inter-generational support systems would be restructured and to what extent the societies and cities become individual-friendly come to the fore as critical questions.
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impact of age structure on the population increase constitute the primary subjects of debate. How the possible negative impact of population increase on sustainable development might be differentiated, how the inter-generational support systems would be restructured and to what extent the societies and cities become individual-friendly come to the fore as critical questions. It is not possible to cover such a broad topic in a single text. The priority here is for the reader to gain greater literacy and awareness.

SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

While you are reading this text with an average reading time of 5-10 minutes, the world doesn't stop and time continues to flow. All of us continue our life journeys, advancing over 45-degree lines, at different generations of ages and genders, over the two-dimensional *Lexis diagram*⁶, where time is the x-axis and age is the y-axis. In these few minutes, newborns are added to the world's population, and some individuals have lost their lives and

have left us, and of course there are some who have changed their locations. We, as the survivors, are now aged few more minutes.

Maybe today is the birthday of some of us. At the same time, according to the life tables, one of the basic demographic and actuarial tools, we are celebrating the fact that we completed the current year by surviving and being in the numerator of the survival ratio. We blow out the candles with the hope of having the same celebration next year.

CUI BONO?⁷

When looked at the global angle, as an increasingly growing crowded world society, we must be together in the context of equality and sustainability and advance to more common goals. Within this framework, there is the possibility to make the invisible visible, to transform the process into an advantage. It is up to us to materialise this potential. It is important to read the demographic data well in terms of not misleading demographic dis-

⁶ For a clear articulation of the *Lexis diagram*:

Wilmoth, John & Andreev, K. & Jdanov, Dmitri & Gleij, D. & Boe, Carl & Bubenheim, Michael & Philipov, D. & Shkolnikov, V. & Vachon, Pierre. *Methods Protocol for the Human Mortality Database*.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Example-of-a-Lexis-Diagram_fig1_241173442

⁷ Latince bir deyiş olan "cui bono" (kimin yararına), kökeni Roma hukukuna dayanan ve Cicero'nun *Pro Roscio Amerino*'da kullandığı ifadedir.

course and public perceptions and highlighting inclusiveness as much as possible. In terms of well understanding the population dynamics regarding the technical and social-economic interactions and meet them with social and local policies, and for whose sake and how the current findings will be used, local administrations have great responsibilities, like all individuals.

In other words, the increase in population should be seen not as a cause but as a result, and the future should be planned collectively for everyone. It is important to address all common problems and issues altogether by focusing more on development, rather than comparing the countries or places of settlement only according to their income levels. All areas of services from waste management to access to health services, from gender equality to better housing and shelter opportunities to all, from sustainable cities to rural areas, from preservation of ecologic life to safe food, from clean energy to high-quality education and transport, are in interaction with each other. Topics such as inter-generational support systems and aging populations are



increasingly coming to the forefront clearly.

Since development, especially development at the local level, is not a concept that can be materialised with a “copy-paste” method, it is crucial to consider the fact that every region and society has its specific dynamics, powerful and vulnerable sides. To give an example, reading well the migration movement of the people who spent a long part of their lives in Istanbul’s dense urban environment and when aged, returned to their birthplaces in the rural regions of the Eastern Black Sea and identify themselves as the People of Black Sea

by both of the local administrations will pave the way for improvements in the life qualities of such people.

As another example, although the proportion of the elderly population in Türkiye has remained low for many years, the fact that the discussions on this issue have always focused on proportional expressions has overlooked the fact that, in terms of numerical population size, Türkiye’s elderly population is larger than the total population of many countries in the world. And this situation may cause the awareness of the required social policies to be delayed.

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ON THE SHORE OF WHICH POSSIBILITIES?⁸

As it is seen, addressing the issue of population requires presenting multi-directional perspectives and consider it from an analytical manner. Demography is the compass of inclusive urban policies and depends on well understanding who lives where and in which conditions and making an efficient service plan. At the same time, this will enhance participatory and data-based planning.

The fact that people are living longer and having fewer children are the two fundamental reasons for the aforementioned demographic transformation is a social achievement as the indicator of an improvement of the healthy living conditions. In order to make this achievement as productive as possible, the current values should be redefined. In this sense, the local policymakers should very well analyse and read the demographic structure of the population that they serve. Demography is a strategic guide in the local planning processes.

It encompasses a wide spectrum, from the amount of the drinking and utility water we use to traffic services, the construction industry, public transportation, health centres, the justice system, ethnic issues, the width of the sewer pipes, the type of fuel used in cars, the construction of dams, mineral reserves, violence against women, local administration policies, political elections, and the percentage of women represented in the parliament. Restrictions in one region can be presented as incentives in another. Perceptions in one society can be vastly different from those in another. All these differences are influenced by the transformations the world is undergoing.

To combat the risk of a poorer and more deprived old age, well-planned eldercare services, prioritising health and accessibility-based investments, for instance, encouraging elevator-equipped or ground-floor housing for the elderly, have become increasingly important. Prioritising infrastructure investments focused on accessible transportation, childcare

⁸ The framework for Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF25), organised annually by Marmara Municipalities Union for the fourth time in 2025, has been defined as "On the Shore of All Possibilities." This subheading was chosen as a reference to the agenda from a demographic perspective.

services, employment opportunities for young people, sports, education, and technology centres, is crucial. To define and understand the migrant population effectively, and to alleviate language and social integration barriers must be aimed.

The use of population and household projections, now indispensable and routine tools for every local administration, will enable budget planning and investment priorities for urban infrastructure projects to be set on a scientific basis. This will contribute to the development of long-term sustainability, resilience, and climate adaptation policies. For example, the need for new schools, parks, or public transportation lines can be determined based on the average population growth rate and its age and gender distribution. This will allow for a more equitable distribution of resources based on need.

The fact that women biologically are living an average of five years longer than men, coupled with the fact that the average age of marriage is 4-5 years higher for men, means that in the future, there will be more elderly women living alone than men, and on average, they will spend 10 years alone. Planning for

elderly services should prioritise the poverty and vulnerability of single elderly women. Furthermore, there is undoubtedly a significant population group that is 80-85 years old and whose children are in the 60-65 age group. Local service planning can be informed by these and dozens of other indicators.

A good assessment of the relationship between technological innovations and production capacity and population growth, the efficient use of artificial intelligence tools to produce solutions compatible with demographic transformation, a good understanding of their impact on the labour market, and productivity planning will bring us the best of what is currently possible.

Population growth changes identity as we go down to the sub-regions, and as especially the young working-age population leaves their location through migration, the issue of a decrease in population ("depopulation") may come to the fore. In this sense, carefully examining local population decline processes and taking measures to improve quality of life should become important agenda items soon.

Increasing the activities of "urban observatories", improving access to data and activating data ecosystems, and carrying out capacity building activities for the effective use of spatial analysis and geographic information systems should be put on the agenda.

THOSE WHO CANNOT DIE IN THEIR BIRTHPLACES

During a recent travel break, I had seen two separate buses of a metropolitan municipality carrying corpses in coffins in their trunks and relatives of the deceased in their seats, to two different provinces in Türkiye. This was a municipal service that usually involved burying the deceased in their hometowns upon request.

Of course, the world was not just composed of those who, like in Ömer Zülfü Livaneli's poem "Those Who Died Where They Were Born," do not know the weariness of the road and closed their eyes where they began life. Life, a cycle that begins in the earth and ends in the earth. Meanwhile, humanity migrates...

One of the buses in question was going to Trabzon, the other to Batman... 🇹🇷

FAIR CITIES AND THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GOVERNANCE: THE BARCELONA METROPOLITAN SOCIAL FORUM EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTIONS FROM MARUF25

In the age of polycrisis, the search for fair cities requires more than spatial equality; it also depends on the quality of the decision-making processes, common production and new models of governance involving plural actors. The article explores how the understanding presented by the Barcelona Metropolitan Social Forum is reflected during MARUF25, and how metropolitan-scale collaborations and social cohesion targets reshape the imagination of a just city.

 AYŞE GÜMEÇ KARAMUK*

 6 MINUTES

Although the imagination of a fair city is often discussed within a framework restricted by spatial justice, namely equal distribution of the resources and services throughout the city, in fact, it points out a deeper question: who has a say in the design of the urban life and the decision-making processes? As it is underlined in A Manifesto for the

Just City, a product of the “Urban Thinkers’ Campus” event held by the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment and Global Urban Lab in 2020, justice is not only about the results but at the same time it is a process. The characteristics of participation, recognition of differences, transparency in decision-making processes, organising the common rationality,

and as Henry Lefebvre points out, appropriation of the urban space all together, constitute the existential conditions of a fair city.

However, today, it is harder than ever to realise all these ideals. The age that we are living in is called as the age of a polycrisis: climate, energy, housing, economy, migration, precarious work... In an environ-

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ment of deep inequalities, sustaining the ideal of justice requires not only producing new policies, but at the same time, imagining new kinds of governance.

For this reason, MARUF25's conceptual framework of "On the Shore of All Possibilities" represents an important call: without surrendering the uncertainties created by the crises, rethinking the cities where justice is possible. Many of the sessions in MARUF25 remind that a fair city is not only an ideal, but a governance practice requiring common efforts. For instance, the session, "Governing the City Together Beyond Bureaucracy" discussed, how rigid proce-

dures restrict collaboration among plural actors and in contrast, what kinds of possibilities present new types of relationships. Similarly, the sessions, "How to Build a Common Ground in a Polarized World?" and "Reimagining Local Governance: Social Justice and Public Policies", emphasised why the capacity of thinking together and acting together are determining for achieving fair cities.

THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF "PREDATORY CAPITALISM"

Metropolitan Commitment 2030, written by the association, *Pla Estratègic Metropolità de Barcelona* (Barcelona Strategic Metropol-

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In an environment of deep inequalities, sustaining the ideal of justice requires not only producing new policies, but at the same time, imagining new types of governance.
”

tan Plan), describes these crises today's cities are going through in a very clear language. The document recognises how the current economic model makes the urban life vulnerable, erodes the public resources and deepens the social inequalities, by using the concept, "**predatory capitalism**". It is important to use this definition, since it invites us to discuss justice not only over the distribution of the urban services, but at the same time, over the structural dynamics that produce inequality.

In this context, a fair city points out a governance model reconstituted not only on "a more equal distribution", but at the same time, by the principles of regional cohe-



sion, access to social rights, inclusive decision-making and common responsibility.

BARCELONA METROPOLITAN SOCIAL FORUM: MATERIALISING CO-GOVERNANCE

During the *Good Practices Showcase: Just Cities* session in MARUF25, we heard a comprehensive evaluation from Oriol Estela Barnet, General Coordinator of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona, on the **Metropolitan Social Forum (Fòrum Social Metropolità, FSM)**, founded in 2022 and presenting a unique governance model for the region. FSM is a horizontal platform that unites regional organisations such as 19 municipalities, more than 30 social organisations, trade unions, universities and Àrea Metropolitana

de Barcelona (Barcelona Metropolitan Region, AMB), around the same table. What makes it valuable is not only its inclusiveness but that it proposes a working perspective that is based on the principle of co-production.

The fundamental principles of FSM – recognition, connection, sharing, co-production and establishing communication – are directly related to the process-centred nature of the fair city. The fourth encounter of the Forum in 2025, under the heading, “Governance of Social Action in a City of Five Million”, clearly demonstrated that the issues which the local administrations struggle to resolve on their own, are related to the whole metropolitan area. The depth of the housing crisis, the fragmented

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”
 structure of child-care services, the data insufficiencies in the social services, and the need for a quality-oriented model in public procurements appeared as common problems.

As is it emphasised in FSM’s declaration, a fair city is only possible in a collaboration model where the municipalities and social organisations co-produce, co-evaluate and co-implement the policies. This model is materialised with targets such as public procurement in social services, just working

conditions, better identification of needs, flexible service design, and co-funding. The practical reflection of this perspective is a stronger territorial cohesion, i.e. spatial and social cohesion. For this reason, it is critical to assess the inequalities within the city not just at the neighbourhood scale but across the entire metropolitan area.

MARUF25 SESSIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A FAIR CITY

MARUF25 programme contains various sessions opening the idea of a fair city into theoretical and practical debate.

The session, “*Urban Wellbeing: Right or Privilege?*”, while emphasising that life quality in the city should be seen as a basic right, argued that the thresholds could be redesigned not as inequality-producing mechanisms but possibilities that strengthen a common life. “*Rights on Sale: Housing*” session, focusing on the housing crisis, revealed how multi-layered governance is critical for the right to housing; and how the collaborations established among the local administrations, civil society and central government strengthen accountability and justice.

“*Urban Basics: Right to Energy*” series, focusing on the basic rights

such as energy, water and clean air, reminded that a fair city should be considered not only from a spatial perspective but also within an ecological justice perspective.

All these sessions demonstrated that the governance model that Barcelona tries to establish at the metropolitan scale is reflected at MARUF25 in distinct ways: fair city is an issue not only about what we do, but *how we do*.

CONCLUSION: THE POSSIBILITY OF A FAIR CITY IS HIDDEN IN CO-PRODUCTION

Barcelona’s Metropolitan Social Forum experience reminds that the most critical element for the search of a fair city is the capacity to co-act. This capacity includes not only the broadness of participation, but also the characteristics of participation, recognition, mutual trust and transparency of the decisions. As it is discussed in the social-legal literature, justice is not only about the results, but also whether or not the people find the process just. For this reason, a fair city is a relationship form, as well as it is a political goal (Chevalier, 2024).

MARUF25 presents a powerful ground for rethinking this relationship form. If justice is possible in the age of crisis, it is only

so not by building more walls, but growing the common denominators, stretching the boundaries among the organisations, and making all social actors to be part of the process. Barcelona’s perspective shows us that a fair city is a process built not with the effort of a single organisation, but with the common labour of plural actors. 🗣️

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CITY UNDER THE LENS OF CARE POLICIES

Care work is silently flowing through the invisible veins of the cities. The lives of the children, elders, handicapped and their care-givers often lay outside of the urban plans. However, care policies that make this invisible labor a public responsibility can make the cities more just, human and sustainable. The article examines how care-oriented urban practices from Türkiye and around the world are transforming urban life, drawing on diverse examples.

📌 AYŞE GÖÇ YALÇINKAYA*

🕒 12 MINUTES

Care work is a vital activity for sustaining of life and reproduction of the next generations. However, we see that care responsibilities are unequally distributed and primarily burdened over the shoulders of women and girls. This disproportionate burden, while creating a serious time-poverty for women, limits their participation in the labor force, access to education and general life quality.

At the global scale, every day **16.4 billion hours** are spent on unpaid care work. And this corresponds to 2 billion people who work full time without payment (ILO, 2018). While **708 million women** stay outside of the labor force because of their care responsibilities, this number is only **40 million for men** (ILO,

2024). Thus, 45% of the women who cannot participate in the labor force are distanced from employment because of their care responsibilities. Furthermore, 80% of the domestic service employees, who reach out 75.6 million in the world, are informally employed and more than seventy-five percent of this number is constituted by women (ILO, 2021).

At this point, **care municipalism and care-centred planning** approaches that increasingly stand out, point out the responding potential of the cities against the care crisis. How care activities are organised have direct impacts over the urban policies in a wide range, from spatial planning to collective transport, from green area design

to social service infrastructure. In addition to the needs of elderly people, children, disabled or sick individuals, urban arrangements that simplify the living conditions of the care-givers are so important in terms of diminishing the inequalities. In this essay, we examine together how care-centred policies and practices affect urban life, with examples from different cities of the world.

BEST PRACTICE: BOGOTÁ CARE BLOCKS

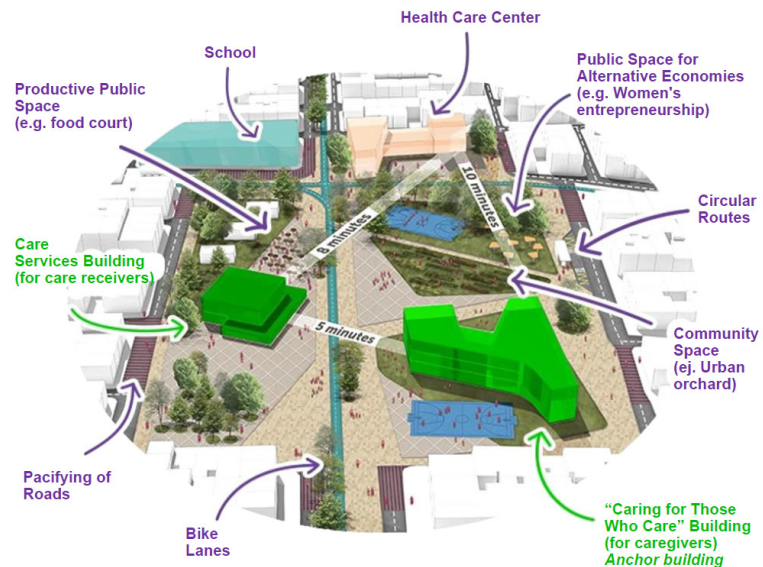
Country: Colombia

Implementing Organisation: City of Bogotá, District Secretariat of Women - Secretaría Distrital de la Mujer

Start: 2020

*Expert of International Affairs and Projects, MMU

“
The Bogotá model, based on the fundamental principle of proximity, gathers all needs of the caregivers in a single block.
 ”



In Bogotá, nearly one third of the women spend a daily average of 10 hours on unpaid care work. This invisible labor is the most concrete example not only of individual tiredness but also of gender inequality. Time poverty of women directly limits their economic participation, access to education and presence in social life. By 2021, the unpaid care work of women constitutes about 13% of Colombia's and 20% of Bogotá's GDP.

The City of Bogotá, after the deepening effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on this inequality, designed the Care Blocks (Manzanas del Cuidado) that is the first care system in Latin America at the city level in order to support the welfare

of women, decrease their care burden and ease their access to the services. The Care Blocks enable diminishing the care burden, personal development of women, and spending time on education, income-earning and self-care activities.

The pilot implementation was first implemented in 2020 in Ciudad Bolívar region. The model that had success in a short while is now implemented with 25 active Care Blocks throughout the city. Until 2035, this number is aimed to reach 45.

What are Care Blocks?

The fundamental principle of the model is “**proximity**”. Each block is planned where care-giving wom-

en can access the services only with 15–20 minutes of walking. So, transportation costs and time-loss are minimised. The Care Blocks gather:

- care areas for **children, elderly and disabled people**,
- education, health and psychological-social support services for **women**,
- workshops for developing domestic care skills for **men and families**.

Care Buses are introduced for women who live far away from the centre. These mobile services go to remote neighbourhoods and deliver essential services to women on-site. Also, for women who cannot leave their houses and full-time care-giving, “Care House Pro-



gramme” is implemented.

Spatial Dynamics and Design

Each Care Block serves to publicise care with its spatial design. When the appropriate locations are determined, regions with high care demand and intense women populations, social infrastructural

deficiencies and physical obstacles in access to public services are taken into consideration. As Architect Daniela García states, the spaces are designed around three major user groups: caregivers, care receivers and families. For instance, the children’s areas

are arranged in a way that is designed to be visible from the inside but not from the outside, thus observing both safety and transparency principles.

The City of Bogotá often prefers to transform the existing buildings instead of building new constructions in order to decrease the costs and use the existing resources efficiently. Within the context of such transformations, violence counselling offices, training halls, reading rooms for women, safe playing areas for children and equipment that facilitates the time and effort of the caregivers, such as laundry and kitchen, are brought together.

Safety and Accessibility

Safe mobility of women and care-receiving individuals in the city is one of the primary priorities of the Care Blocks project. Bogotá accepts the approach of Safe Cities for Women and Girls in this con-





text and highlights elements such as constant visibility, adequate night lighting, wide sidewalks, barrier-free passages, green areas and outdoor seating areas.

Also, clear and understandable directional signs strengthen accessibility. Thanks to these spatial arrangements, care services are not restricted only by the domestic spaces but become visible, accessible and safe in the general fabric of the city.

Services Supported by Data

The City of Bogotá works in collaboration with the innovation laboratories in the city to enhance the management of the services and facilitate access. Data about service usage, demographic profiles



and spatial needs are regularly analysed, and this contributes both to improving planning and implementation processes. This system enables women to enjoy the care services without any problems and bases its decision-making processes on a strong data infrastructure.

An Inspiring Example

Bogotá's experience became a source of inspiration also for other cities in a short time. Freetown Municipality, capital of Sierra Leone, is preparing to implement its first Care Block inspired by the Bogotá model.



**BEST PRACTICE:
İSTANBUL METROPOLITAN
MUNICIPALITY CARE
ECOSYSTEM**

Country: Türkiye

Implementing Organisation:
İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality,
Department of Social Services

Start: 2019

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) conducts a series of studies redefining care services as a public responsibility instead of an individual burden since 2019. The aim of the projects conducted by the Department of Social Services is to deal with care, not as social supports for fulfilling the needs of the individual, but as a whole of policies that enable an equal, just and solidarity-based urban life. This ecosystem is based on three key principles: **a service approach based on rights, service models**

sensitive to the life cycles and neighbourhood-based participation. So, it includes all stages of life from infancy to old age.

**Early Childhood:
Starting Point of Equality**

IMM's Yuvam Istanbul Child Activity Centres provide free or low-cost care and education services to children at the ages of 3-6 in more than 100 centres. This model, which sees the early childhood stage as a "springboard for equality", supports women to stay in employment, decreases child poverty and enhances equality of opportunities. In the centres, while the children learn with game-based activities, the parents are informed about children's rights, development and positive parenting. Thanks to this care is not only supported for the child but also at the scale of the family and neighbourhood.

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This model, which sees the early childhood stage as a “springboard for equality”, supports women to stay in employment, decreases child poverty and enhances equality of opportunities.

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Although the kindergarten applications are open to all families in Istanbul, disadvantaged groups are given priority. With the project, where the education programme is shaped by Boğaziçi University and Mother Child Education Foundation (Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı-AÇEV), all children living in Istanbul are aimed to be provided equality of opportunities.

**Breathing Space for Caregivers:
Short Break Centres**

The Short Break Centres that are started to be implemented in 2024 allow the caregivers to rest for a short time, enhance their social relations and receive psycho-

logical-social support. Playgroups for two hours for children at the ages of 4-6, who cannot access to Yuvam Istanbul Child Activity Centre or the kindergarten services from any organisations, are held. In this way, caregivers can leave their children in free play groups organised by the centre for short periods of time. These centres observe not only the physical dimension of parenting and care but also the emotional dimensions. **Parent-Child Play Groups and Parenting Training Programmes** are also organised in these centres with the aim of enhancing intrafamily communication. This provides childcare services to caregivers who wish to participate in educational programmes. The programme, which has already begun in six centers, is planned to be expanded.

Collective Care in the Neighbourhood: Neighbourhood Houses

The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's **Neighbourhood Houses** model socialises care beyond the confines of the house, extending it to the neighbourhood level. These centres serve as public spaces where residents come together, children participate in activities, and women strengthen their solidarity networks. Neighbourhood Houses reduce the invisible care



burden on women, while also contributing to strengthening social ties and access to education and professional development. This approach embodies the principle of "the nearest public unit" within the IMM's care ecosystem.

Inclusive Services: Support for the Disabled and the Elderly

In this context, IMM offers services not only for children and women, but also for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Programmes such as ÖZGEM Special Education Centres and Accessible Camp Services strengthen the participation of individuals with disabilities in social life. For older individuals, **Healthy Aging Centres** and the **Market Support Programme for the Retired** aim to promote active and healthy ag-

ing. These programmes approach aging not as an individual responsibility placed on families, but as a social process that municipalities should support.

Women's Empowerment

IMM implements policies that reduce women's caregiving burdens while strengthening their economic independence. Programmes like the **Women's Laundry House and Toy Library** allow women to save time and pursue educational or employment opportunities. Furthermore, **Post-Shelter Cash Support Programme** provides support for women survivors of violence to rebuild their lives. This holistic approach transforms care policies from mere service delivery to a transformative tool aimed at women's social, economic, and psychological empowerment.

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Another function of the application is showing educational and professional development opportunities for those who want to work in the care sector. So, the map not only makes the existing services visible but also functions as a tool for enhancing employment opportunities in the care economy.
 ”

BEST PRACTICE:

Care Maps in Latin America: Mexican and Argentinean Experience

Country: Mexico

Implementing Organisation:

Institute of the Women of Mexico City and UN Women

Start: 2023

In Mexico, Mexican Care Map (**Mapa de Cuidados de México**), conducted by INMUJERES (National Institute for Women of the United Mexican States) and UN Women, gathers the care centres of all public, private and civil society organisations in the country in a single platform.

The platform has two basic objectives of use: first, it shows the locations of the care centres of public, private and civil society organisations for children, elders and disabled to people looking for care facilities (child-care centres, day care centres, schools, etc.). Second, it presents statistics, indicators and thematic maps about the care services in the country and helps the local administrations in developing appropriate care policies for their regions. The map brings three main data sources together: National Sta-

tistical Directory of Economic Units (DENUE), 2020 Population and Housing Census-Censo de Población y Vivienda and 2020 Urban Environmental Characteristics. These data are provided by Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). In this way, open data are provided for quantitative analysis of care infrastructure, and deficiencies in service provision and geographic inequalities can be determined. **Mexican Care Map**, by supporting where the local administrations should invest in new care centres in which regions with visual and spatial data, enhances decision-taking processes. At the same time, as a product of a broad institutional collaboration, it is regularly updated and continued to be developed according to the user's feedback.

Argentina Federal Care Map

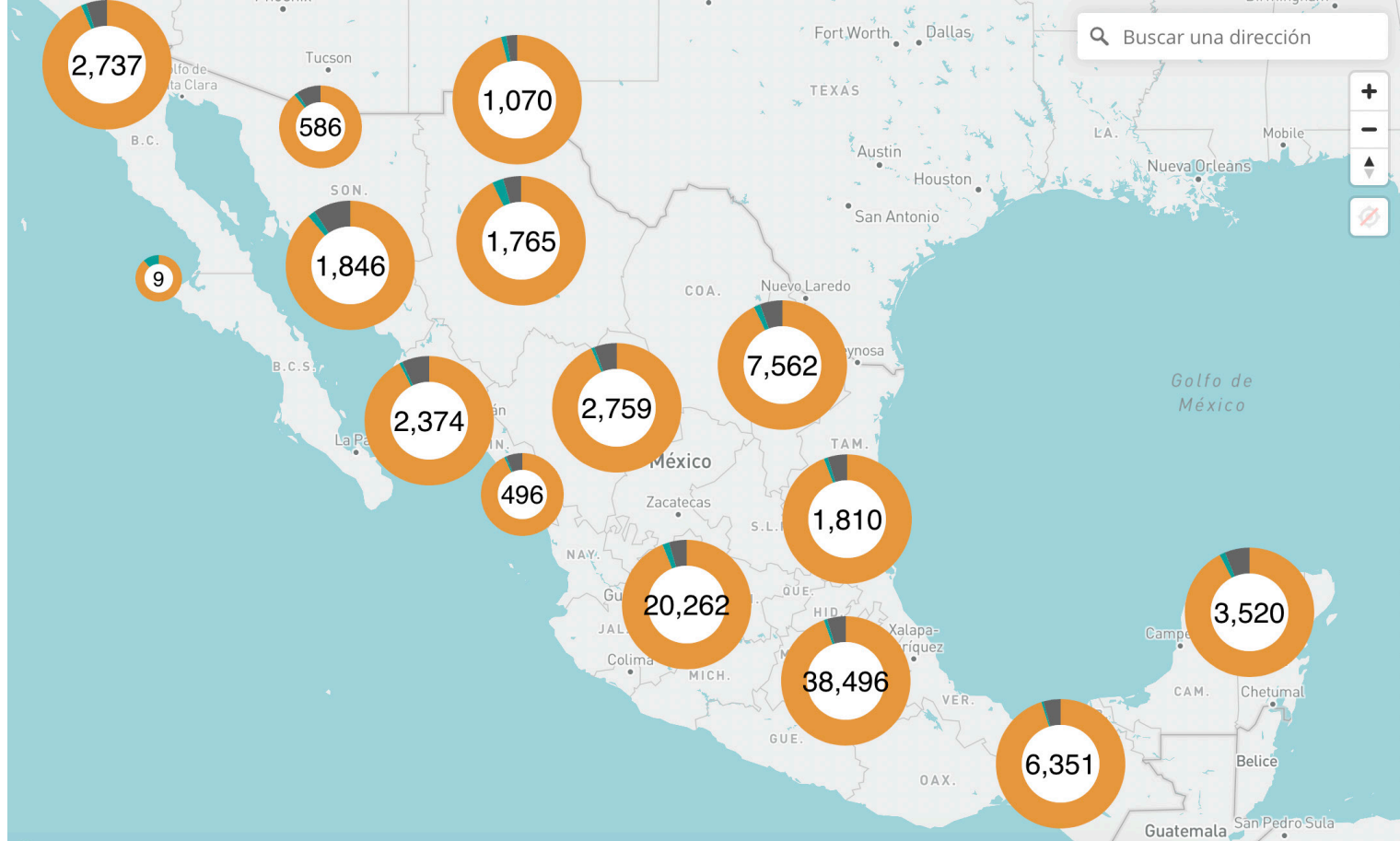
Country: Argentina

Implementing Organisation:

Argentina Republic Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity


Start: 2021

The Federal Care Map (Mapa Federal del Cuidado) in Argentina stands out as an innovative platform developed for making the care services visible



at the country level and facilitates access to them. Federal Care Map functions as an interactive digital tool enabling the users to find early childhood, elder adults. The map contains support centres, caregiving services and social-educational areas for childcare centres, elder care facilities and services for the disabled. The users can view the services around their houses or workplaces by using filters; in this way, planning daily care arrangements, determining the most suitable options in terms of time and transportation becomes easy. Another function of the application is showing educational and professional development opportunities for those who want to work in the care sector. So, the map not only

makes the existing services visible but also functions as a tool for enhancing employment opportunities in the care economy.

As of today, more than 32.000 organisations, service points and educational areas are recorded on the platform; information is regularly updated and developed over the feedback coming from the citizens. The map is being carried out in collaboration with many public institutions, including the Ministries of Social Development, Education, Public Works, Health and Labor, the National Disability Agency, the National Institute of Cooperatives and Social Economy, PAMI (Comprehensive Medical Care Program) and the National Social Policies Coordination Council. 

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CO-LIVEABLE CITIES: INSPIRING PRACTICE

The real power that makes the future of the cities possible lies in approaches that go beyond physical transformations and focus on social connections, shared learning, and solidarity. MARUF25's stream on "How is it possible to have a city that enables co-living in solidarity and embraces social diversity?", drawing on this perspective, brings together innovative projects developed in diverse contexts to offer concrete examples of how urban life can be made more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Through a selection of inspiring initiatives shared within the context of Showcases, this article invites us to rethink cities not just as spaces but as social ecosystems.

 BÜŞRA YILMAZ*

 6 MINUTES

Reimagining the future of cities, accurately analysing current urban dynamics, and paving the way for solution-focused, innovative ideas are more critical than ever in today's context. Cities are not merely physical spaces and concrete structures; they are also living organisms born from the confluence of human life, collective hopes, and practices of solidarity. One of the four fundamental streams focused on by MARUF25 addresses

this life practice: "How is it possible to have a city that enables co-living in solidarity and embraces social diversity?" Within this approach, good practices derived from the experiences of different cities were compiled and presented on an epistemic platform to be shared with participants.

One of the areas where this methodological approach materialised was the Showcases, a critical component of MARUF. This plat-

form fostered multi-stakeholder interaction, fostering knowledge transfer, collective learning, and solution-focused collaboration mechanisms. Sessions held under the title "Co-Liveable Cities" allowed participants to share both theoretical perspectives and field-based projects, creating a multi-layered network of interactions.

Proceeding with the core motto of "Cities Developing Solutions", MARUF structured its content

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SHORE: Empower Students as the Agents of Change

this year around the conceptual framework of "On the Shore of All Possibilities," paving the way for new scenarios in urban sustainability and social innovation. This approach is reinforced with examples demonstrating that the vision of "Co-Liveable Cities" can transcend mere ideals and become a practical and experiential reality. In this context, we aim to raise awareness and inspire similar initiatives by sharing a selection of projects from the Showcases framework with Urban readers.

SHORE: EMPOWER STUDENTS AS THE AGENTS OF CHANGE

The SHORE Project, a collaboration between Yıldız Technical University and Teknopark, aimed to increase ocean literacy. Funded by Horizon Europe, the project mobilised students and teachers to develop blue projects in schools.

Participating schools covered topics within the blue curriculum, including sustainable fishing, renewable energy sources, biodiversity, the carbon cycle, natural resources, marine ecosystems, plastic and microplastic pollution, wind energy, water quality, sustainable production, natural heritage, and the impacts of climate change. Students developed and implemented projects within this framework. Over three semesters, each school that successfully implemented its blue programme received a grant of up to 10,000 euros. The project funded at least 100 schools and aimed to empower them to develop and implement their projects together.

Awareness of sustainability and blue education was raised through exhibitions, workshops, and community events, along

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SHORE not only educated students, but also laid the foundation for a lasting Ocean Literacy Centre by bringing together research, community, and schools. Like a legacy left for future generations, it contributed to raising generations who learn the language of the sea and nature.

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 with educational materials and capacity-building programmes for teachers. All materials developed throughout the project were made publicly available and accessible through the platform. At the end of each school term, the “Ocean Ambassador/Literate of the Year Award” was award-

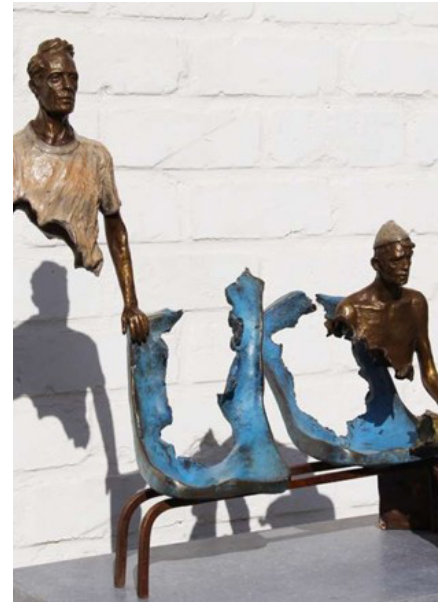
ed to the most successful school projects through an international public vote.

The SHORE Project not only educated students but also laid the foundation for a lasting Ocean Literacy Centre by bringing together research, community, and schools. Like a legacy left for future generations, it contributed to raising generations who learn the language of the sea and nature.

DEVELOPING A PREVENTION MODEL AGAINST ADDICTION FOR MIGRANT YOUTH

This project, coordinated by the Turkish Green Crescent Society and supported by Erasmus+, targeted the holistic social, mental, and physical well-being of immigrant youth aged 13–18. A training module specifically designed to prevent addiction in immigrant-dense regions was designed to be delivered through virtual training on a digital platform.

The project included digitising educational content, creating an online educational platform, organising international meetings to share good practices, and preparing a special journal issue on the theme of migration and addiction. The module was customised to the socio-cultural needs of young people and



offered an innovative approach to addiction prevention. The English-language content was applicable and adaptable to different contexts, ensuring international dissemination and sustainability.

Beyond protecting immigrant youth from addiction, the project increased the capacity of field specialists, implementing institutions and policy makers, and strengthened international impact by contributing to academic literature.

CULTURAL CENTRE FOR THE RETIREES

The Cultural Centre for the Retirees implemented by the Çekmeköy Municipality, was designed as a living space offering social, cultural, and healthcare support under one roof. Separate social areas for men and women, reading and recreation areas, a library, and spacious terraces provide a place where elderly can socialise and stay active throughout the day.

Free eye examinations offered at certain hours during the week and eyeglass support provided to those in need enable retirees to have easy and regular access to healthcare services.

In addition, the cultural centre supports personal development with activities such as nature walks, health counselling, music concerts, painting and handicraft workshops, and helps retirees both strengthen their social ties and lead an active life.

CONCLUSION

The selected projects stand out as examples that penetrate the social fabric of cities, transform quality of life, and remind us of the nuances of coexistence. They demonstrate concrete manifestations of innovative and inclusive



approaches that are sensitive to different age groups, socio-cultural contexts, and societal needs. Spatial and educational initiatives such as the SHORE Project, the addiction prevention module developed for immigrant youth, and the Cultural Centre for the Retiree demonstrate that cities are not just physical structures; they are also vibrant ecosystems that nurture social capital and foster solidarity and empathy.

These projects transform MARUF's "Co-Liveable Cities" vision from a purely theoretical framework into concrete, measurable, and replicable practices. By bringing together diverse stakeholders—community leaders, educators, and public and

private sector actors—they catalyse the exchange of knowledge, the transfer of experience, and collective problem-solving. The examples presented not only serve as inspiring models for urban planning, social innovation, and public policy, but also make a compelling case for the possibility of human-centred, sustainable, and solidarity-based lifestyles.

Each project shines like a light penetrating the cultural and social fabric of cities, enriching living spaces, strengthening social bonds, and evoking the aesthetics of coexistence. Through these projects, cities become not merely spatial places but dynamic organisms that build a continuum of hope and interaction. 🌟

FROM CRISIS TO SOLUTION: BEST PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN THE CITIES

Projects that produce innovative solutions for the social, economic and environmental problems of the cities play an important role in enhancing the resilience capacities of the cities. In this essay, examples such as the artificial intelligence and augmented reality-supported crisis management presented by TeamAware to the emergency response teams, NEUTRALPATH's climate-neutral neighbourhood experience and Malaysian Cities Programme's multi-stakeholder sustainability studies stand out as concrete best practices that are reshaping how cities respond to crisis, climate change, and sustainable development goals.

 HAYRÜNNISA AKPINAR*

 15 MINUTES

The Best Practice—Resilient Cities approach focuses on sharing innovative practices that address the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by the cities. Within this framework, projects developed under the leadership of the local administrations and stakeholder organizations facilitate the knowledge exchange, increase the visibility of successful practices and strengthen the collaborative networks among organizations by presenting scalable, sustainable and effective solu-

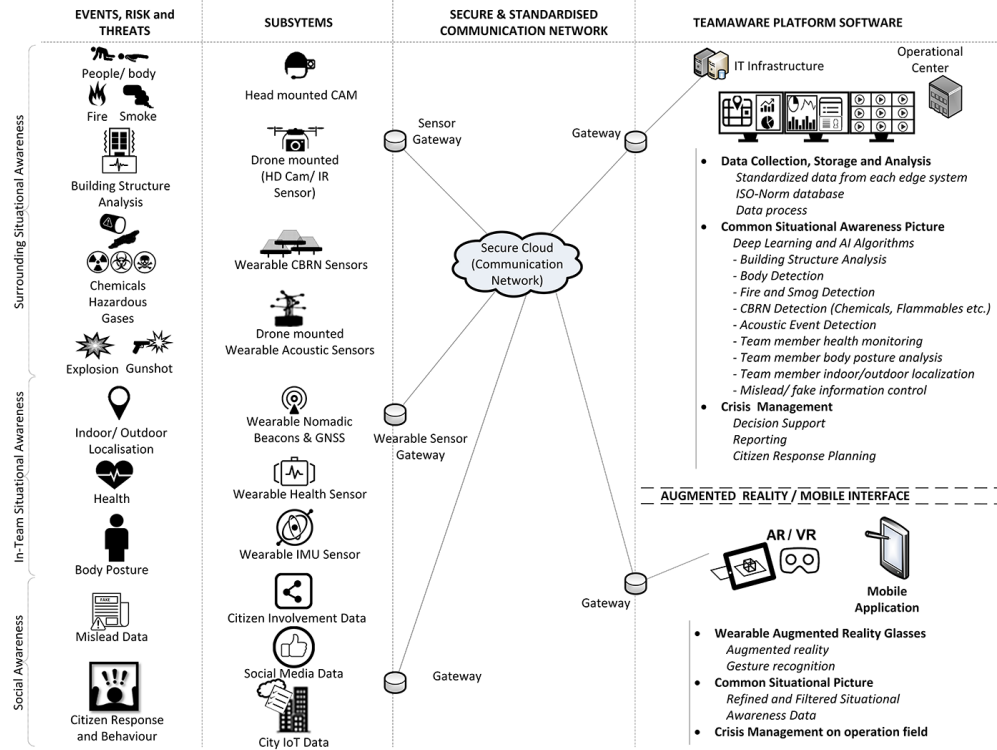
tions. In this context, TeamAware (Team Awareness Enhanced with Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality), NEUTRALPATH (Pathway towards Climate-Neutrality through low-risk and fully replicable Positive Clean Energy Districts) and Malaysian SKA Cities Programme stand out as national and international examples of good practice that contribute to the goals of resilient, inclusive and smart cities. While TeamAware aims to enhance crisis management and respond capacity by using advanced technology in disas-

ter and emergency management, NEUTRALPATH develops Positive and Clean Energy Zones supporting transition of climate neutrality at an urban scale, and Malaysian SKA Cities Programme makes the cities active actors of the transformation process by enabling local implication of Sustainable Development Goals.

TEAMAWARE

TeamAware Project, under the leadership of Türkiye, within European Union's Research and Innovation Action, is coordinated by

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HAVELSAN and in partnered with Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and supported by Horizon Europe Programme. It is carried out by the consortium of 24 public and private sector organizations from 13 countries. The project that was started in 2018 and started to be supported for the goal of “safe societies” as of May 2021, aims to enhance the decision-making and operational productivity of the emergency response teams by using advanced technologies such as AI, augmented reality and wearable sensor systems. TeamAware, which contributes to the harmonization of scientific and technological poli-

cies, and development of institutional capacities across Europe, ranked first among 92 projects in the Horizon 2020 Security category, giving Türkiye its first award in this field. The project stands out as a good practice example in terms of digitalization in response management and data-based approaches.

The technical and administrative coordination of the project is conducted by HAVELSAN which stands out with its software-based systems in the Turkish defence industry. Modelling and Sensor Technologies Team Leader Çağlar Akman assumes technical coor-

dination. The consortium is constituted by private sector organizations, research institutions and universities from Türkiye, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Romania and Ireland. Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Fire Department contributes to improving emergency management processes at an urban scale as a direct implementing partner under the project. While the target group consists of fire department personnel, the municipal units and relevant public organizations are included in the project as stakeholders.

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Although teams provide security for the communities; often outdated or insufficient technologies are used during the operations. Their major shortcomings include inability to localise the team members in real time, to identify environmental threats and risks in the emergency area, and to simultaneously integrate information and data from different sources in reliable, understandable, and user-friendly interfaces.

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Emergency response teams are constituted by trained personnel, services and organizations with specialized expertise who carry out search and rescue operations, reach emergency areas and provide crisis-management during natural or human-made disasters. Although these teams provide security for the communities, often outdated or insufficient technologies are used during the operations. Major shortcomings include inability to localize team members in real time, to identify environmental threats and risks in the emergency area, and to simultaneously integrate information and data from different sources in reliable, understandable, and user-friendly interfaces. The TeamAware Project aims to develop a heterogeneous and interoperable cost-effective situational awareness system that integrates drone-mounted, wearable and external sensor systems with existing emergency response services and operations centres. The system enhances crisis management, flexibility and responsiveness of first-responders from different sectors by providing real-time, fused, filtered and manageable information through augmented reality and mobile human-machine interfaces. In intervention scenarios, remote monitoring and analysis of teams and their situation, and directing

the operation according to current conditions constitute the main output of the project.

The system developed within the scope of the project integrates chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) sensors, acoustic receptors and unmanned aerial vehicles, detects and classifies environmental threats and anomalies with artificial intelligence-based analysis. This significantly increases the effectiveness of emergency response processes. Localization technology determines the real-time indoors and outdoors positions of the teams while wearable health and motion monitoring systems monitor team members' orientation and vital signs. This provides a detailed and manageable situational awareness picture of data obtained from the field sensors to dispatchers in the Incident Management Centre.

The TeamAware project aims to develop a large-scale system comprising software and hardware components for remote monitoring and data collection in firefighting scenarios. Specific objectives of the project include detecting, identifying, and tracking hazards and potential risks surrounding first responders, including victims, fire and smoke, chemical hazards, infrastructure damage, and explosions and gunfire that may occur

during operations. It also monitors first responders' location, vital status, and posture. This data is collected via a cloud-based platform and presented as a clear, manageable, and understandable "Common Situational Awareness Picture" via the operations centre, mobile app, and augmented/virtual reality (AR)-supported mixed reality headsets.

The final demonstrations of the TeamAware project were held in Bursa from February 5-8, 2024. Led by the HAVELSAN team, 20 research institutions, including over 80 specialists from 13 countries, as well as teams from the National Medical Rescue Team (UMKE), the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Fire Department and Smart Urbanism Departments, and Burulaş, participated in the exercises with more than 200 personnel for post-earthquake building damage assessment, chemical field, fire,

and subway accident scenarios.

The first exercise of the final demonstrations was held on February 7, 2024, at BUSKİ Headquarters. The exercise tested the operational status of a hospital building after a hypothetical earthquake, citizen disaster notifications, and the detection of earthquake posts on social media. Second exercise, conducted at the Fire Department Küçükbalıklı Group Command, covered the location and situation observations of emergency teams in response to a chemical storage explosion scenario, as well as social media and acoustic-chemical-visual detection systems. The third exercise, conducted at midnight, involved a scenario involving a metro train derailment between Nilüfer Station and Odunluk Station. Teams used unmanned aerial vehicles and wearable technologies to assess the scene and the accident, direct walking passengers to safe exit points, and provide

first aid to the injured with UMKE teams. The approximately three-hour exercise was completed successfully.

The second exercise, held at the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Fire Department Küçükbalıklı Group Command, included the successful demonstration of systems for citizens to report their situation and receive information during disasters, to detect earthquakes and explosions on social media, to detect acoustic-chemical-visual events, and to monitor the location and status of emergency teams, following a chemical storage explosion caused by an earthquake.

The third exercise, which began at midnight, simulated a subway train derailment between Nilüfer Station and Odunluk Station due to an earthquake, causing serious injuries to some passengers. Response teams equipped with state-



of-the-art equipment and wearable technologies initially used unmanned aerial vehicles for field and accident assessments. Following this assessment, passengers who were able to work were guided to the exit point on the rails, while the response teams entered the train car and assessed the condition of the injured inside. This detection was also monitored in real-time from the crisis center thanks to the teams' special glasses. Based on these observations and detections, the UMKE teams were activated. The teams provided first aid to the injured inside the train car and, after wrapping them in thermal blankets, carried them on stretchers along the rails to the station. The approximately three-hour exercise was successfully completed.

Muhammed Emin Tarım, Head of the Bursa Metropolitan Municipal-

ity Fire Department, stated that they successfully completed the final program exercises of the European Union TeamAware project, in which they are a partner, coordinated by HAVELSAN. Tarım noted that the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality attaches great importance to increasing institutional capacity, developing technology, and developing innovative projects in disaster and emergency management. He also stated that chemical field, fire, and train accident exercises were conducted with foreign experts from 13 countries and nearly 200 personnel.

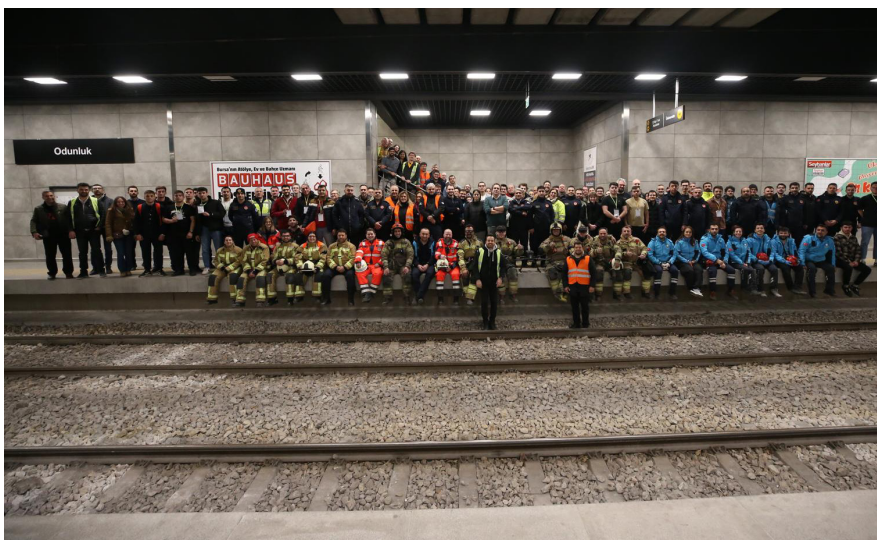
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The TeamAware project, a pioneering example of technological transformation in emergency response teams, ushers in a new era in dis-

aster and emergency management with advanced sensor systems, artificial intelligence algorithms, and augmented reality interfaces. The project's international collaboration model and successful outcomes of its exercises serve as a valuable reference for the future expansion of similar initiatives, representing a significant step toward enhancing the crisis management, resilience, and responsiveness of emergency response teams. The advanced technology-based intervention experiences gained through the TeamAware project in disaster and emergency management inform the development of comprehensive strategies to enhance urban resilience. Similarly, the NEUTRALPATH Project aims to strengthen urban resilience within the context of climate action through its Positive and Clean Energy Zones model, implemented at the Hasanpaşa Gasworks in Istanbul. Both projects share a common approach, focusing on participatory design and stakeholder collaboration mechanisms, to enhance technical capacity and develop locally applicable solutions.

NEUTRALPATH

The NEUTRALPATH Project, implemented by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, is an international urban transformation initiative supporting city-wide



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 practices.

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climate neutrality under the European Union's Horizon Europe Programme. Launched on April 27, 2022, the project is set to continue for 60 months, is being implemented at the Hasanpaşa Gasworks site in Istanbul. It is led by the Energy Management and Lighting Branch Directorate of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Areas, along with an international



consortium of 30 institutions. The project aims to develop feasible and scalable transformation models by creating participatory and people-centred Positive and Clean Energy Districts that support the transition to climate neutrality in cities.

NEUTRALPATH aims to develop Positive and Clean Energy Districts, which play a critical transformative role in cities' transition to climate neutrality. These districts are neighbourhood-scaled urban developments that aim to achieve annual net-zero energy im-

ports and net-zero CO₂ emissions, generate surplus renewable energy, and integrate into regional energy systems. The project's core approach is to accelerate cities' carbon neutrality transformation by combining participatory design processes with the coordination of public authorities, local stakeholders, and citizens.

NEUTRALPATH is a model developed in line with Istanbul's goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2030, one of 112 mission cities designated by the European Commission. Within the scope of the

project, while Dresden (Germany) and Zaragoza (Spain) take on leading roles as "lighthouse cities," Istanbul, Vantaa (Finland), and Ghent (Belgium) are participating as "sister cities" learning from these experiences. The Hasanpaşa Gasworks, an industrial heritage structure built in 1892 and has a significant place in the city's energy production history, was selected as the application site in Istanbul. The gasworks is positioned as a "Climate-Neutral Laboratory" (CN-Lab) with the aim of reducing energy poverty, disseminating renewable energy solutions, and experimenting with urban climate neutrality.

The Climate Neutral Laboratory model is based on the active participation of local governments, universities, energy cooperatives, technical clusters, civil society organizations, and citizens. This participatory approach serves both to strengthen institutional capacity and to increase public

awareness and ownership of energy transition and climate policies. The Positive and Clean Energy District (PCED) model developed at Gasworks includes components for improving energy efficiency in buildings, integrating renewable energy systems, implementing e-mobility solutions, and supporting green infrastructure transformation. Furthermore, toolkits such as "StreetOasis" enable the scalable transfer of knowledge and technological outputs obtained at Gasworks to diverse urban contexts.

Stakeholder groups established at the Istanbul Climate Neutral Laboratory include local governments, energy providers, research institutions, energy service companies, transportation users, and citizens. This multi-stakeholder structure aims to foster collaboration around a shared climate vision and accelerate citywide climate action. NEUTRALPATH offers an innovative, inclusive, and scalable

transformation model for achieving the sustainability goals.

The implementation at the Hasanpaşa Gasworks combines industrial heritage protection with energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and low-carbon living practices, demonstrating a viable example of climate neutrality at the urban scale. The resulting methods and governance processes are adaptable to different urban contexts and aim to strengthen local climate action from institutional, technical, and societal perspectives. Thus, NEUTRALPATH stands out as a holistic reference model that not only enhances technical capacity but also supports the widespread implementation of participatory, inclusive, and cost-effective climate policy practices.

NEUTRALPATH's experience demonstrates the transferability of sustainable and energy-efficient urban solutions to diverse con-





texts. This approach parallels the Malaysian SDG Cities Program's implementation of Sustainable Development Goals through concrete projects at the local level. Both initiatives aim to accelerate sustainable transformation through multi-stakeholder processes and transparent reporting mechanisms, led by local governments. This demonstrates a significant body of knowledge and practice for integrating climate-focused urban transformation and sustainable development goals at both the national and local levels.

MALAYSIA SDG CITIES

The Malaysia SDG Cities Programme is a sustainable development initiative coordinated by

Urbanice Malaysia, a division of the Ministry of Local Government Development, and implemented since 2021 with the participation of more than 90 local governments. The programme aims to empower cities to become active actors in sustainable transformation processes and accelerate the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in both urban and rural settings through a hybrid financing model and multi-level governance approach.

The program's origins stem from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations' 193 member states at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in September 2015.

The SDGs established within this framework provide a roadmap for achieving economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Malaysia has committed to supporting efforts to promote sustainable development and address national challenges by aligning with this global compact through international cooperation. The country submitted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in 2017 and 2021 to monitor and report on the SDGs at the national level, with the next report planned for 2025.

Complementing national efforts, local governments in Malaysia are implementing the SDGs through concrete projects. Cities such as

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Through multi-actor collaboration, strong local capacity building, and transparent reporting mechanisms, the programme has achieved a framework that aligns with Malaysia's long-term development goals and serves as an international model. This experience serves as a strong benchmark for resilient cities in rapidly urbanizing developing countries.
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Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Bandar Melaka, Subang Jaya, Bandar Pulau Pinang, Shah Alam, and Alor Gajah document their progress by publishing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Selangor State has taken a leading role by developing a Voluntary Sub-National Review (VSR). This multi-layered reporting system ensures that the SDGs are systematically monitored from national policies to local implementation.

The Malaysia SDG Cities Programme is built on a hybrid financing model, combining federal development funds with financial contributions from local governments to strengthen project financial sustainability and local ownership. Local governments assess their SDG status, develop

local strategies, implement transformational projects, and report transparently through the VLR mechanism.

The programme adopts a multi-level governance approach that establishes shared learning and implementation spaces with international organizations such as ASEAN, UN-Habitat, and UCLG ASPAC. This approach strengthens the integration of national and local strategies and is based on the principle of "leaving no one and no place behind." The Malaysia SDG Cities Network, established under the programme, serves as a platform to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among local governments, communities, and civil society organisations.

The Malaysia SDG Cities Programme offers an inclusive, applicable, and replicable model that ensures the global sustainability agenda achieves tangible local impact. Through multi-actor collaboration, strong local capacity building, and transparent reporting mechanisms, the programme has achieved a framework that aligns with Malaysia's long-term development goals and serves as an international model. This experience serves as a strong benchmark for resilient cities in rapidly urbanizing developing countries.

TeamAware, NEUTRALPATH, and the Malaysian SDG Cities Programme are examples of innovative solutions across scales and areas within the resilient cities approach. These projects enhance cities' capacity to respond to crises, climate change, and sustainable development goals through advanced technology, participatory design, multi-stakeholder governance, and transparent reporting mechanisms. These best practices at national and international levels offer applicable and replicable models that guide cities in achieving their resilience and inclusiveness goals, contributing to the construction of resilient, sustainable, and smart cities through intercity experience sharing and collaboration. 

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INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT OF NALAS PRESIDENT & MAYOR OF LUDBREG DUBRAVKO BILIĆ

Within the scope of MARUF25, we spoke with Dubravko Bilić, Mayor of Ludbreg and President of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS). Bilić outlined the efforts to increase the visibility of women mayors and discussed how gender equality and resilience are being redefined in local governments. He also highlighted how women’s leadership strengthens local democracy and how the NALAS network supports regional solidarity and local diplomacy.

📌 BURCUHAN ŞENER*

🕒 20 MINUTES

At MARUF25—held this year under the conceptual framework of “On the Shore of All Possibilities”—you convened the **Forum of Women Mayors in South-East Europe** in collaboration with **UN Women** and hosted a session on **social mapping** within your ongoing projects with **The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**. Building on those conversations, we would like to delve deeper into NALAS’s perspective on leadership, resilience, and cross-border cooperation in South-East Europe.

What are the most common structural barriers faced by women leaders in local governments, and how can these barriers be overcome?

That is such an important question and honestly, it is one we need to keep raising until the system changes. The barriers women face in local government are not about capability or ambition, they are structural, and many of them are baked into the way our political institutions and parties operate.

For example, political parties are still the main gatekeepers of leadership. The recruitment

and selection processes often means men are more likely to be nominated or placed in the seats that are winnable, while women get positions that do not come with real decision-making power, things like deputy or vice roles, or symbolic posts that look inclusive but do not influence core policy.

Then there is the question of support. Women candidates still receive less financial backing and fewer networking opportunities. When you combine that with the high cost of running a campaign and the gender pay gap, it becomes a real obstacle, not a lack of will, but a lack of access.

*Director of International Affairs, MMU



We cannot ignore work-life balance. Politics does not stop at 5 PM, there are late-night meetings, weekend events, and long council sessions. For women who are also primary caregivers, this creates a 'second shift', juggling family responsibilities on top of political duties. Unfortunately, our institutions have not adapted: there's often no maternity leave policy for elected officials, and very few councils have proper childcare facilities.

What I find especially challenging is how women who do make it are sometimes treated as tokens, given certain 'soft' portfolios like culture or social welfare, while men dominate finance or infrastructure. It is a subtle form of exclusion, but it matters because it limits whose perspectives shape the most powerful decisions.

That is why I am proud of what we have built in Ludbreg. Here, women are not just present, they are leading. Two of our key administrative departments are headed by women, as well as two local institutions, one municipal company, the Tourism Board, and the City Red Cross. 18 out of 23 employees in city administration are women. In the City Council, 7 of 13 councilors are women. That kind of representation changes everything, it means women are not limited to symbolic posts; they are shaping budgets, strategies, and the City's future.

What kind of strategic initiatives does NALAS implement to increase the representation of women in local politics?

NALAS, as an ambassador and promoter of the European Charter for

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Studies repeatedly show that governments with higher female participation are associated with lower corruption and higher public trust. Women often bring a citizen-first mindset, staying closely connected to communities and more responsive to their concerns.
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Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, has in the past decades really taken a leadership role when it comes to advancing women's representation in local politics. Our approach is not just about counting or ticking boxes, it is about changing systems and mindsets, voicing, and empowering through education, evidence-based advocacy, and regional cooperation.

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Ultimately, once women reach a critical mass in governance, not just one or two symbolic figures, but a real presence, you see transformation on two fronts: in the content of policies and in the culture of decision-making itself.
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I will share a few examples on this. Within NALAS e-Academy, we are offering the course on Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at the Local Level, teaching local officials how to integrate gender equality into budgeting, planning, and everyday governance. We are also promoting Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), which I find especially valuable, as that is where change becomes tangible, when you can see equality reflected in how resources are allocat-

ed. NALAS is currently collecting best practices in GRB that will be harnessing the power of storytelling to make complex and technical budgeting processes more relatable and impactful.

Local public services should be also shaped in a gender sensitive way, as often women and man have different needs, challenges and wants. NALAS' methodology on engendering solid waste management, piloted in Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, offers new insights on how to plan and manage this important service, with gender lenses, while in Moldova we will soon adapt this methodology to public space arrangements. This process involves assessing local services through gender lenses, identifying gaps, and implementing targeted measures to improve inclusivity.

NALAS also creates spaces for women leaders to connect and support each other. The South-East Europe Women Mayors' Forum is one of my favourite examples. It brings together women mayors and council presidents from across the region to share experiences, challenges, and ideas. Those conversations are energising and empowering, they remind you that even though the contexts may differ, many of us are facing

similar struggles and finding creative ways to overcome them.

And of course, data is key. NALAS regularly publishes gender-disaggregated data on the number of women mayors and councillors across the region. Having that information in black and white helps track progress and shows us where we still have work to do.

What unique values do women mayors bring to local governance in South-East Europe?

Women mayors across South-East Europe bring something quite distinctive to local governance, not because leadership has a gender, but because experience does. The way women navigate life, balancing work, family, and community, often translates into a very people-centered approach to public service. You can feel that difference in how policies are shaped and how communities respond.

One of the biggest contributions women leaders make is a stronger focus on citizens, social and needs-based policies. They tend to look at how decisions affect people's everyday lives, families, children, the elderly, those living on the margins. You see this reflected in initiatives around childcare, elderly care, and social support systems. Many women mayors are also lead-

ing the way on Gender Responsive Budgeting, making sure that local budgets actually reflect the needs of both women and men, and do not unintentionally reinforce inequalities.

I have also noticed that women in leadership often bring a more inclusive and participatory style to decision-making. They listen more, they consult more widely, and they involve citizens directly in shaping priorities. That creates a stronger sense of trust, people feel that their voices matter. And in a region where, frankly, only around eight percent of mayors are women, every one of those leaders becomes a role model. Young girls in their communities see that leadership is not a male domain; it is open to them too.

There is also something to be said for the collaborative and ethical leadership style many women bring. Studies, and my own experience, show that women leaders often focus on practical solutions and cooperation rather than confrontation. They tend to run cleaner, more transparent administrations, and that integrity filters through the entire institution.

In Ludbreg, we have seen firsthand how this plays out, in the Council, departments, institutions and

companies I have mentioned, helping prioritize equitable services and strengthens public trust.

How can strengthening women's representation in multilevel governance transform decision-making processes?

When women have a seat at every level of governance, local, regional, national, and even international, decision-making itself begins to change. It is not just about adding more chairs around the table, or changing those around the table, it is about broadening the conversation, reshaping priorities, and rethinking how power is exercised.

The first big shift happens in the policy agenda. Women bring lived experiences that expand what governments consider 'core issues.' When women are part of the pro-

cess, topics like childcare, healthcare, social protection, education, and gender-based violence stop being seen as secondary they become essential pillars of development. You also start to see stronger pushes for laws that address systemic inequalities, from equal pay to protection against harassment. In multilevel systems, that means local voices, often women's voices, are driving national attention toward the needs of real families and communities.

But representation also transforms the style of governance. Women leaders tend to favour collaboration over competition, empathy over ego. That is incredibly important in multilevel systems, where coordination between different tiers of government is key. Building consensus between a



city, a region, and the national level is not easy, but leaders who prioritise dialogue and inclusivity make that process more effective. I have seen it firsthand: when the tone shifts from rivalry to partnership, policies simply work better.

There is another dimension, accountability and transparency. Studies repeatedly show that governments with higher female participation are associated with lower corruption and higher public trust. Women often bring a citizen-first mindset, staying closely connected to communities and more responsive to their concerns. That accessibility strengthens democratic legitimacy at every level.

Representation also makes governance more effective. Multilevel systems are complex, and they can sometimes create blind spots, for example, when responsibility for an issue like domestic violence is split between local services and national legislation. Women's networks across different levels help identify those gaps and push for coordinated, gender-sensitive policies.

Ultimately, once women reach a critical mass in governance, not just one or two symbolic figures, but a real presence, you see trans-

formation on two fronts: in the content of policies and in the culture of decision-making itself.

Here in Ludbreg, we try to live that principle. We have built continuity into our own system, for example, by ensuring that when a deputy is needed, a female councillor is appointed. It is a small step, but it sends a big message: representation is not temporary or symbolic; it is structural. And that is what real change looks like.

For cities to become truly resilient to multiple crises—including disasters, climate change, conflicts, and economic fluctuations—beyond physical infrastructure, what kinds of social, institutional, and governance capacities should be prioritized?

That is such a vital question, because when we talk about resilience, people often picture infrastructure, stronger bridges, flood barriers, new technology. But real resilience starts with people and institutions, not just concrete. Crises do not just expose weak buildings; they expose weak systems, social, institutional, and political. So, if we want our cities to truly withstand and recover from shocks, we also must invest in what I like to call the 'soft infrastructure', trust, inclusion, adaptability, and collaboration.

On the social side, the most powerful asset a city has is its people and the connections between them. Communities with strong social cohesion bounce back faster because people trust each other and act collectively. That is why it is so important to strengthen both bonding networks, like neighbours looking out for each other and bridging networks that connect different groups across neighbourhoods, ethnicities, or income levels. Resilience also depends on equality. A city cannot be resilient if only some of its residents are protected. Crises hit the most vulnerable hardest, so our strategies must address those disparities timely and directly. And, crucially, local knowledge matters: community organisations, networks and volunteers are often the first responders. Empowering them, giving them training, resources, and a voice in planning, can make all the difference.

Then, there is the institutional capacity side. City administrations need flexibility, especially financial flexibility. Having contingency funds or quick-access financing mechanisms means we can act immediately instead of waiting for external aid. Just as important is investing in people, building teams with diverse, specialised skills in areas like emergency management, climate adaptation, and data

analysis. Cities have to become learning organisations, constantly evaluating what worked, what did not, and adjusting plans accordingly. Resilience is not a one-time plan; it is an ongoing process of adaptation.

Finally, we cannot ignore governance. The way decisions are made can either enable or cripple a crisis response. Rigid hierarchies and silos do not work when disasters overlap and evolve quickly. What does work is polycentric and collaborative governance, bringing together local, regional, and national authorities, alongside businesses, civil society, and citizens. Transparency and crisis communication are also essential. During crisis, people need to timely know what is happening and trust the information they are receiving.

What steps is NALAS taking to support this transformation within local governments?

NALAS has been instrumental in helping local governments across South-East Europe not just modernise, but truly transform to become more inclusive, more resilient, and more effective. What is powerful about NALAS's approach is that it does not treat local governance as something technical or administrative, it sees it as a living system, one that

thrives on knowledge, equality, and cooperation.

NALAS focuses heavily on strengthening institutional and technical capacities. It acts as the knowledge hub on local governments issues, identifying needs, collecting knowledge, transforming it, and making it accessible to all local governments, in key local government areas such as fiscal decentralisation, energy and climate, solid waste and water management, social inclusion, digitalisation and more. With the support of task forces, composed of municipal experts, NALAS develops common policy positions and models that can be adapted by local governments across the region. Our Quick Response Service, which I think is brilliant, gives members immediate access to policy expertise when negotiating with national authorities or tackling emerging challenges. And the peer-review and shadowing programs allow our members learn directly from one another, a kind of hands-on mentorship that is rare but deeply effective.

NALAS also champions good governance and decentralisation. We consistently advocate for local government autonomy, not just financial, but functional, because real resilience and responsiveness

start locally. We work closely with European institutions to make sure the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are respected and implemented. That is how, way before it happens, you empower cities to handle crises effectively, whether it a flood, an energy shock, or a migration surge.

And I would highlight one more thing, social inclusion. NALAS supports local governments how to make their services more inclusive, gender-transformative and responsive to vulnerable groups. These initiatives demonstrate that social inclusion and resilience go hand in hand, when every group in the community is seen, asked, given opportunities, activated, supported, and empowered, the entire system becomes stronger.

How do the solidarity networks established among municipalities in South-East Europe through NALAS enhance the international visibility of local governments?

The solidarity networks created through NALAS have been a real game changer for local governments in our region. On their own, municipalities, especially small and mid-sized ones can have a hard time being heard on the international stage. But when nearly



9,000 municipalities come together through NALAS, representing more than 80 million citizens, that collective voice suddenly carries real weight. Instead of fragmented national interests, we present ourselves as a united, respected regional entity and that is powerful.

NALAS essentially acts as both a super-advocate and a knowledge broker. Through NALAS, local concerns from South-East Europe reach the major European and international forums, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Union institutions, and others. That means issues like decentralisation, fiscal autonomy, gender equality, or local climate resilience are now part of serious, high-level conversations about Europe's future.

What makes NALAS so effective is that it does not just speak, it speaks with one voice. The network consults all its members and develops unified regional positions on key policy matters. When NALAS presents those positions, they represent the experience and priorities of a diverse region, which makes them much more persuasive than any single national lobbying effort could ever be.

We have also seen how this solidarity becomes visible in times of crisis. Whether it was the refugee movements a few years ago or the COVID-19 pandemic, NALAS was the go-to regional contact point, coordinating information, assessing needs, and helping municipalities respond collectively. Those moments proved to international organisations and donors just how

central local governments are to managing complex, cross-border challenges.

But solidarity through NALAS is not only about advocacy, it is also about knowledge leadership. The network has evolved into a real centre of excellence for local governance. It collects and shares best practices on everything from inclusion, digitalisation, to waste management and energy efficiency. That positions our cities not just as beneficiaries of aid, but as producers of knowledge and innovation that other regions can learn from.

There is also a practical benefit: being part of NALAS makes municipalities much more attractive to international partners and donors. When they see regional cooperation and technical capacity already in place, they are more willing to invest and that opens doors to funding and large-scale projects that would be out of reach for smaller cities acting alone.

How does NALAS define the concept of local diplomacy?

Actually, more than 20 years ago, NALAS was created exactly as an attempt to use city diplomacy for peace building and reconciliation of the region after the wars on the Balkans.

For NALAS, local diplomacy is really about cities and municipalities stepping confidently onto the international stage, not as spectators, but as actors in shaping regional cooperation, peace, and global progress. It is diplomacy from the ground up.

NALAS puts a special emphasis on soft power using collaboration, trust-building, and knowledge exchange instead of competition or coercion. It is diplomacy that happens through networks, joint projects, and peer learning rather than through formal negotiations.

Another key aspect is how local diplomacy supports European integration. Municipalities are often the first level of government to adopt and apply EU standards whether in public service delivery, good governance, or environmental policy. By forming partnerships and participating in EU programs, local authorities demonstrate that the path to Europe is not just a top-down process; it's also built from below, through cooperation between cities.

Of course, local diplomacy also connects us to global agendas. Cities are on the front lines of issues like climate change, migration, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through

NALAS, municipalities speak with one voice on these challenges and show that local action is central to solving global problems.

Finally, local diplomacy is about advocacy and representation. NALAS helps local governments represent their collective interests to national and international institutions ensuring that the perspective of local self-government is not just heard but respected.

In your view, how can cross-border solidarity—especially in times of crisis such as migration, climate challenges, or disasters—be made more institutionalized and sustainable?

Cross-border solidarity cannot rely solely on goodwill or ad-hoc measures; it needs institutionalisation and predictability to be truly effective. For local governments, this means embedding cooperation into our everyday administrative, legal, and financial systems, so that when a crisis hits the response is immediate and coordinated.

First, we need formal legal and administrative frameworks. This could include creating permanent regional bodies, standardised operating procedures, and harmonised protocols for emergencies, to help remove delays caused by

national legal or administrative differences. And finally, cross-border cooperation should be explicitly included in national resilience strategies or disaster risk reduction plans, ensuring it receives both recognition and funding priority.

Second, financial sustainability is critical. Municipalities need dedicated and predictable resources, not just sporadic grants. This could mean establishing a regional solidarity fund contributed to by local governments, donors, and development banks to provide immediate aid during crises. EU and international donor funding should prioritise projects with a cross-border solidarity dimension, and flexibility should be built into funding mechanisms so resources can quickly pivot from development projects to urgent humanitarian or disaster response.

Third, we must invest in human and political capital. Solidarity depends on trust built over time. Programs for regular staff exchanges, joint trainings, and simulation exercises between municipalities help build familiarity and operational fluency. Political networks, such as NALAS forums and task forces, formalise dialogue and ensure local efforts are recognised at national and international levels. 🗣️

ON İLHAN TEKELİ'S BOOK THE QUOTIDIAN, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND LOCALITY

A line of thought extending from the rhythm of the daily life to the multi-dimensionality of the quality of life, from the transformative power of the locality to the horizon of urban politics... bringing together Professor İlhan Tekeli's intellectual production over the years, serves as a practical guide for those who seek to understand the city and envision a more just future.

📌 Z. ASLI GÜREL*

🕒 5 MINUTES

Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) republished Professor İlhan Tekeli's book collecting his essays on topics of daily life, quality of life and locality as an advanced version in 2025. The book was first published by Tarih Vakfı as the 12nd book of İlhan Tekeli Collected Works series in 2009. The book consists in Tekeli's essays on three fundamental subjects: primarily influenced by theoretical/practical developments and professional experiences around the world, urban life analyses that emerged in the late 1990s/early 2000s, explaining the city through the uni-

ty of time and space; life quality framework shaped by Habitat II and the concept of liveability; and theoretical debates on locality where considered within the context of study topics such as regional planning, regional inequality and local administration.

Tekeli sees daily life not only as the totality of the individual habits but also as a holistic field where physical, social, economic, cultural and political processes intertwine. For this reason, daily life is discussed at the social-spatial plane, as a social reality shaped by spatial regulations. In the life-quality approach,

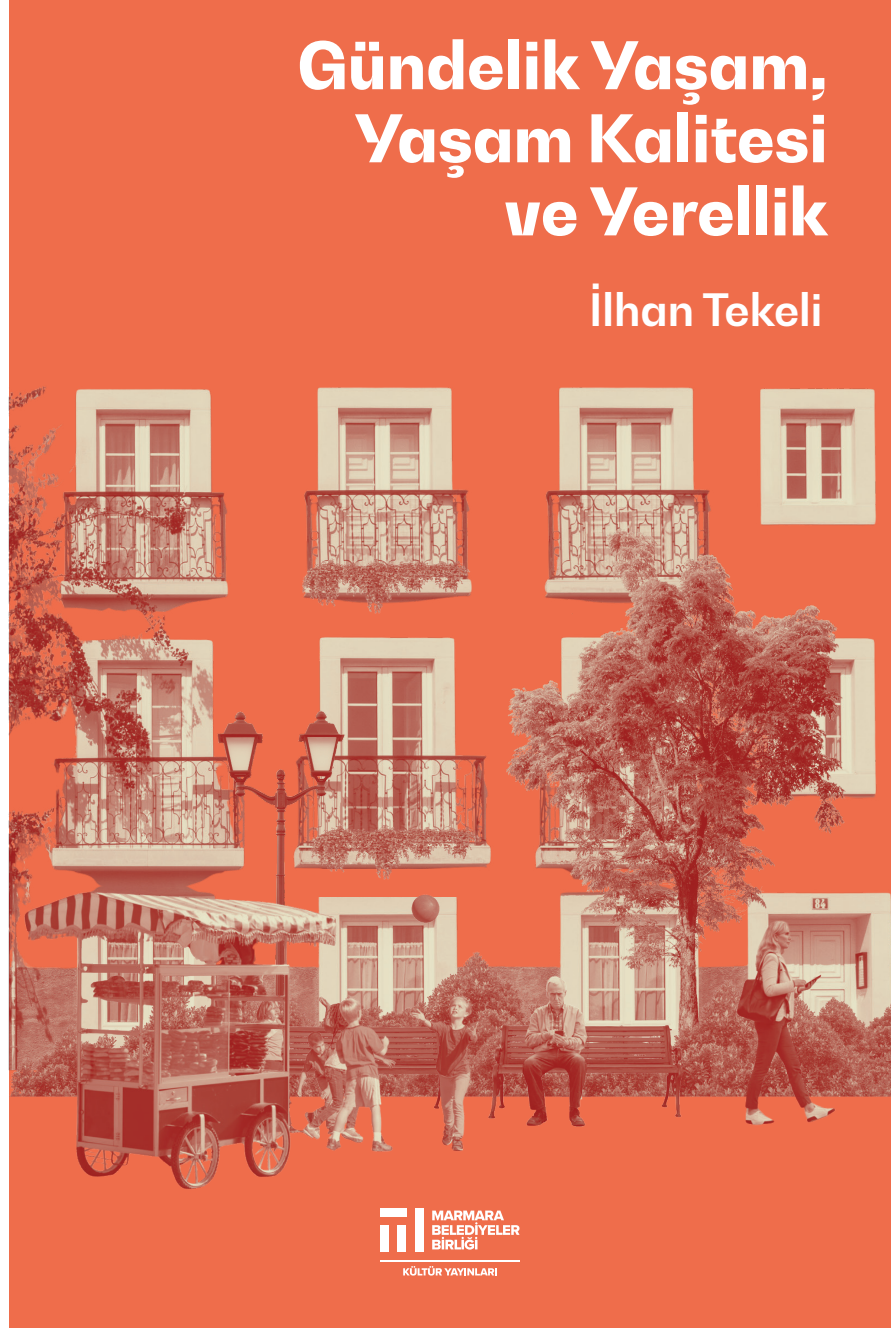
Tekeli deepens his evaluations of the quality of daily life by assuming a human and relational perspective. Thus, he defines a framework for urban studies, for reading life quality over the relationship of the individual to the space, measuring and assessing it, and relating it to the policies. When understood as the concrete expression of the right to a decent life, quality of life gains critical importance in urban planning and governance.

Locality constitutes the dynamic social and spatial context where these processes materialise. Tekeli considers locality as it makes sense

*Associated Professor, Urban Planner, Gazi University

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with daily life and forms a ground for understanding quality of life. Thinking together these three concepts by presenting a multi-dimensional framework that extends from the apparently ordinary routines of daily life to the transformative power of locality, puts forward



the need to analyse the city with its social-spatial, political, cultural etc. dimensions, rather than as a physical environment lived in. These analyses put life at the centre of

planning, governance and politics... Tekeli, as a social scientist, looking from the distinct windows opened by the social sciences, defines the concepts and processes by put-



ting the human at the centre, and build them step by step without rupturing from the historical context... However, he connects and relates the concepts and processes to each other, thus enriches them by loading new meanings. Tekeli, in the book starting from three fundamental concepts articulates the concepts such as time-space, change/transformation, celebration, festive, city museum, human rights, decent life, sustainability, employment, novelty, democracy,

capacity, governance, participation, urban management and urban politics, that are directly or indirectly seem related to them.

Although the book does not sufficiently address the effects of the new crises, problems and quests for solutions that emerged in the 2000s on daily life, quality of life and locality, the process of change and transformation it created, and the empirical studies, Tekeli prepares a powerful infrastructure

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The book addressing the quality of daily life, multidimensionality of the quality of life and the place of the concept of locality in the modern city with a theoretical and systematic debate, is a reference guide for all who live in the city, be present in the city, think the city, have a word to say about the city.
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for reading these impacts, and presents a broad framework for those to study and discuss these topics. Tekeli continues to think, produce, write and share on these topics. The three new essays that are added to the republished version, and even the essay written and shared at Academia, “The Quotidian, Qual-



ity of Life, and Locality,” after the book is published, are the products of Tekeli’s process of thinking, producing, writing and sharing on the subject... Tekeli with his latest article this time relates the concepts of daily life and quality of life to place and local and contributes new awareness in the areas of urban planning, city management and urban politics.

MMU organised a library talk titled “The Quotidian, Quality of Life, and Locality”, with İlhan Tekeli, under Marmara Urban Forum, on October 1-3, 2025, within the

conceptual framework, “On the Shore of All Possibilities”. In this event, Tekeli brought participants to the very shore of achieving quality of life by drawing on the city, the locality and daily life, which are shaped by the culture of people living together, in line with the main framework, to explore the opportunities and possibilities for cities that produce solutions.

I was delighted and excited to receive calls from MMU to participate in this event and to prepare a review for the book. As a student of urban and regional planning in the

early 1990s, I became acquainted with Professor İlhan through his books, given the limited number of works written in Turkish on urban planning in Türkiye at the time... At the very beginning of the 2000s, I became his doctoral student at the Middle East Technical University. The discussions in that course led me to focus on quality of life, making it not just a course I took, but also a turning point in my academic life. Through the İlhan Tekeli Foundation for Urbanism Culture established in 2018, I had the opportunity to write a review for a book compiling article I had benefited from years ago as an urban planner and academic, having the chance to be in different environments with Professor İlhan in recent years, discuss scientific topics, and share my views.

The book addressing the quality of daily life, multi-dimensionality of the quality of life and the place of the concept of locality in the modern city with a theoretical and systematic debate, is a reference guide for all who live in the city, be present in the city, think the city, have a word to say about the city. Tekeli continues to deepen the concepts, discuss the theories, enlighten the road, and inspire. Enjoyable reading for all who continue to search for enabling a better urban life... 🙏

MANGUEL'S JOURNEY IN TÜRKİYE: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TANPINAR

Manguel's *Journey in Türkiye: In the Footsteps of Tanpınar* is an attempt at exploration following the search for the traces of the Five Cities in today's cities, of an author with a strong reader's memory; an attempt of exploration where literature and space, memory and time intertwine. The documentary, while questioning the possibilities of approaching both to Tanpınar and to the cities along the walking routes opening with Manguel's curiosity, invites the audience to rethink together with the text, with its swings between image and idea, strangeness and closeness, intuition and conceptual depth.

📌 BÜŞRA BAŞ*

🕒 4 MINUTES

Manguel's *Journey in Türkiye: In the Footsteps of Tanpınar*, intersecting the strong reader's identity of Argentine-born writer Alberto Manguel with his interest in Turkish literature and culture, is a documentary crafted both as a literary and spatial exploration. Manguel tries to reproduce the text of Tanpınar's *Five Cities* over his own personal reading experience, accompanying his walk starting from Istanbul to Erzurum, Konya, Ankara and Bursa, through

his lens, with the themes of temporality of space and space-memory relationship. In this sense, the documentary claims to take the audience on both a mental and spatial walk route over the text.

The camera sometimes, by subjectifying Manguel, highlights his emotional encounters with the space; in most scenes as the camera shows the impression which the space leaves on him instead of the place Manguel looks at, makes the documentary to build an in-

ternal reading atmosphere and produce an emotional tone. Even though it creates a controversial intellectual fullness at some points because of its nature of being satisfied with what is shown, curiosity and appetite for the unknown, as the driving forces of Manguel's journey, are felt throughout the documentary.

Although the documentary's choice of the pieces of space—the twists and turns of the streets, the rhythm of the crowd, the flow

*Student, Istanbul Technical University

of everyday life, building surfaces that resist time- at first look, seems in harmony with Tanpınar's city perception, such images do not always talk sufficiently to Manguel's simultaneous monologues. At such moments, two planes -image and idea- instead of integrating, remain side by side without articulating. However, for Tanpınar, the city is an experienced time section rather than being an object looked at; this difference is clearly felt in some parts of the documentary.

The tone variations created by black and white filming, light-shadow plays and sometimes shaky camera movements, make the emotional architecture of the spaces visible. Glass surfaces, reflections and "moments within moments" present a visual counterpart for Tanpınar's lines: "I am neither in time/Nor entirely out of it". Issues of "smoothness of reality" and "illusion", which Manguel also refers to, enhance with these visual layers. These aesthetic preferences enhance the sensational nature of the visual narrative, as well as opening an emotional and abstract area of reading.

The audio design of the documentary, with its non-intervention, and non-dominating nature of its background music, opens an area for the audience for "hearing and



exploring the city". This choice enables to continue to "read" the layers of the city in Manguel's analogy.

The documentary's unhurried structure, which allows for transitions between locations and permits lingering between the images; aligns with the nature of Manguel's reader, observer, and narrator identities, slow and deliberate in their questioning and observation, rather than quick and sharp in their conclusions, within his approach to the cities. However, this very slow flow, combined with Manguel's impressions that skim the surface rather than critically

examining Tanpınar's texts, leads to a point where it becomes somewhat dull at times. Moments that should be opened to depth do not establish a sufficiently theoretical framework, and the reading often remains affective.

The monologue sequences where Manguel opens his mind about his acquaintance both to Tanpınar and to the city over Tanpınar's Five Cities, enhances the literary theme of the narrative, but as the motivation behind some dialogues with official personalities stay ambiguous, this results in ruptures in the integrity of the narrative, and creates the impact

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However, for Tanpınar, the city is an experienced time section rather than being an object looked at; this difference is clearly felt in some parts of the documentary.

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of pushing the audience out of the documentary.

The documentary consciously avoids using language to transform Manguel into Tanpınar's guide. With this preference, the narrative shifts to an axis highlighting Manguel's position as an “outside observer”, in which he also assumes the adjective of a “stranger” and questions how he himself would pursue this exploration. This look of the stranger, while containing an enriching possibility over the uniqueness of the ways of “reading” the cities, Manguel's perspective remains valuable but distant, while the documentary, failing to fully explore

this potential, remains limited to a more superficial exploration.

Weakness of contextual and theoretical knowledge about Tanpınar's Five Cities makes it difficult to arouse a grounded curiosity about the route where Manguel walks and involve with the narrative for the audience. Reconstruction of the spaces in Manguel's eye, despite the success of the camera to catch the daily states of the cities, their ways of life, routines and interactions of human-culture-environment, sits on an intellectually unfounded ground.

In the documentary, a sensitivity about the sense of loss, one of Tanpınar's fundamental issues, and the relationship of time and memory to the city is occasionally felt- especially in the shootings of empty spaces, street details, old house surfaces and buildings that bear the accumulated emotions of a historical process. Although such moments contain traces of Tanpınar, they struggle to fit into a conceptual framework within the narrative.

The screen fades to black, permeated by the scent of Tanpınar's presence, yet one cannot quite grasp its full flavour. The documentary, in conclusion, creates a valuable area of exploration

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The documentary consciously avoids using language to transform Manguel into Tanpınar's guide. With this preference, the narrative shifts to an axis highlighting Manguel's position as an “outside observer”, in which he also assumes the adjective of a “stranger” and questions how he himself would pursue this exploration.

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where we stay at the edge of a cultural heritage as it raises a desire to return to the texts and spaces, to reread them through our own sensory and emotional memory, even though it cannot penetrate fully to Tanpınar's world. 🗣️



50 YEARS IN THE ‘UNION’: MARMARA MUNICIPALITIES UNION INSTITUTIONAL AND ORAL HISTORY

This study, which interprets Marmara Municipalities Union's (MMU) half-century journey not merely as an institutional history but as a repository of memory that reveals the turning points, transformation trajectories, and quest for resilience in local governance in Türkiye, offers a comprehensive narrative that meticulously traces the continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present. Bringing together fifty years, a region, and an institution's transformation under the same lens, the book positions Marmara as a city system beyond a mere geography, offering a new interpretation of the history of local governance.

📌 BURAK ARLI*

🕒 7 MINUTES

Fifty years... Especially in a geography such as Marmara Region that is complex, vulnerable and frequently tested by crises, is a long time that cannot be underestimated for the life cycle of an organisation. 50 Years in the “*Union: Marmara Municipalities Union Institutional and Oral History*” is just settling in the mid of the tension created by this long period of time, over the fine line between memory and forgetting. In this work, the narrative focuses on “into what it transformed”, not only “what it did”. Memory is con-

sidered not as an inventory to be put on the dusty shelves but as an area of political experience which is well-thought and debated that puts light over today.

The book carrying an organisation of fifty-years beyond the questions of “why it is established, what it did?”, establishes an analytical framework reading Marmara together with MMU, by going forward with questions “into what it transformed, what it conserved while going through which turning points, what it changed or what it

could not change?” In this sense, the institutional memory is built not as a passive archive, but as a stage, where the local governance is reconstructed at the threshold of crisis and resilience.

READING MARMARA NOT AS A REGION BUT AS AN URBAN SYSTEM

Perhaps, the most important contribution of the book is the fact that it positions Marmara Region not as an administrative geography, but as a giant system of cities that is connected to each other with so-

*Corporate Communications Expert, MMU



cial-economic relations. The region emerges in front of us as a spatial network “that leans on each other, produces each other, feeds from the crisis of each other”. Establishment of MMU is not reduced to a romantic story of inter-municipalities solidarity; in contrast, framed as a necessity at the regional scale. The obvious crises of the 1970s, —rapid urbanisation, infrastructural deficiencies, uncontrolled industrialisation, housing and transportation problems— were now beyond the limits that could be carried by a single municipality. For this reason, MMU emerges as a

tool of public policy, a kind of “collective reflex” that the region spontaneously produced.

We see the book is analysing this process in five major periods: the work reading the 1970s as social municipalism and the founding ideal period, examines the 1980s as the struggle to survive under the shadow of the coup, 1990s as HABITAT II and global opening, 2000s as EU adaptation process and institutional restructuring and the post-2010 as the period of thematic centres, MARUF and Marmara Sea-centred ecological transformation.

It is understood that this periodisation is preferred not only for providing chorological convenience but also for making visible the turning points within the history of local administrations in Türkiye. Thus, MMU is portrayed as a dynamic structure shaping as an actor constantly looking for a new position in the face of the changing political regimes and new social needs.

TRACES OF SOCIAL MUNICIPALISM: ANATOMY OF A FOUNDING PHILOSOPHY

In the work, 1970s are framed not only as a period of beginnings in the

BİRLİK ÜYESİ BELEDİYELERLE BİRLİK MECLİSİ ÜYELERİ

| Üye Belediyenin Adı | Doğal Üye Bl. Başk. Adı - Soyadı | Seçilmiş Üyelerin Adı, Soyadı |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bandırma (Balıkesir) | Hasan SUR | Ş. ARAN — Recep MUTRİ |
| Erdek | A. Haydar SARI | Hasan BAYKUŞ — Salih AKYILDIZ |
| Edincik | Ali ÖZÇAKIR | Nâzım ECEBAŞ — Hasan GÜR |
| Gönen | Turhan TURHAN | Zekeriya NEKE — Ali İLHAN |
| Marmara Adası | Ahmet ENÖN | Emin TOKSÖZ — Şevki ERDOĞDU |
| Armutlu (Bursa) | Ş. Yaşar AYDINER | Halil ÖZER — Kâni MANDIRACI |
| Gemlik | İbrahim AKIT | Sait AYDIN — Mehmet TURGUT |
| Karacabey | Şükran YEMİŞÇİOĞLU | Saim ÇALI — Cemil SEVER |
| Zeytinbaşı | Turan KOCA | Nuri GÜRSOY — Yusuf ŞAMATA |
| Merkez (Çanakkale) | Reşat TABAK | İşık İŞGÖDEN — Saim DOĞU |
| Biga | Fethi USUMİ | İker AKSOY — İlhami AKINCI |
| Bolayır | Cezayir ARLI | Mustafa ÜNAL — Recep ÇİFTÇİ |
| Çardak | Mustafa SÖNMEZLER | İsmail SAĞLAM — Naci TABAKLAR |
| Eceabat | Cahit APAYDIN | Hilmi VARLIK — Ömer GÜNDÜZ |
| Gelibolu | V. Namık URAZ | Tahir ERSOY — Kâmil ULUBAY |
| Karabiga | Fahrettin ULUTAŞ | Faik SOYDAN — Mehmet AKBAŞ |
| Lâpseki | Halil TEOMAN | T. ACAR — H. UYANIK |
| Umurbey | Halil ALANLIOĞLU | H. ŞAHİNKAYA — Orhan ERDOĞAN |
| Merkez (İstanbul) | Ahmet İSVAN | (Meclis gündeminde) |
| Avcılar | Ahmet DİCLE | Faruk ERDOĞAN — Ahmet BAYRAK |
| Büyükkömece | İbrahim ARI | Benöz ÖZKAN — Osman SARIKAYA |
| Çatalca | Çağlayan EGE | Nihat ERDEM — Nihat DOĞRUEL |
| Çınarcık | Metin ASLAN | Ahmet GÜREL — Zeki SOYER |
| Değirmenköy | Abdullah AKGÜN | Salih BÜYÜK — Kılıç ÖREK |
| Küçükömece | H. Hilmi ÖZGÜN | M. EMİROL — N. DERBEDER |
| Pendik | Yusuf BİLSEL | F. KUNTEROĞLU — Burhan TOPRAK |
| Silivri | Şaban DEMİRAY | Savaş HASEKİ — Nihat UYKUSUZ |
| Tuzla | Ahmet KILIÇ | Ahmet ÇİFTÇİ — Kenan GÜLBAHAR |
| Yakaçık | Kadri EVSEN | Yılmaz GÜRSOY — Hakkı GÜLER |
| Yalova | Mehmet DURMAM | Mesut ÖZCAN — Zeki UTKU |
| İzmit (Kocaeli) | Erol KÖSE | Süleyman AYHAN — Bedri GÜNGÖR |
| Bahçeçik | Kâzım CANDANER | Osman KARAYEL — Yusuf ACAR |
| Darica | Ecmel SÜNEAR | V. ACARTEKİN — I. KOLCUOĞLU |
| Değirmendere | Çetinkaya İNCE | Yılmaz İŞİK — Mehmet CURA |
| Gebze | Ziya FIRAT | Ayhan ERGÜN — H. APAYDIN |
| Gölcük | Süleyman SOLAK | Celâl ÇELİK — Talip KAHRAMAN |
| Hereke | Hüseyin TETİK | Abdullah ÇOLAK — Ramazan AKSEN |
| İhsaniye | Nail AYDIN | Sabri ÖZLER — Sedat ZORLU |
| Karamürsel | İhan ÇINAR | Osman AKYILDIZ — O. DİKDEMİR |
| Yarımca (Kocaeli) | H. Avni ŞİRİN | Rıfkı ŞAHİN - Fikri YILDIZ |
| Yuvacık (Kocaeli) | Hamdi TAŞDEMİR | Hidayet ÖZLÜ - Ömer KAZANBAŞ |
| Merkez (Tekirdağ) | Osman ALYANAK | Cemil ATACAN — Fahri TANRIÖVER |
| Hoşköy | Kemal CANBULAT | Hüseyin GÜNEŞ — Mehmet SEVER |
| Marmara Ereğlisi | Rahmi ÖZCAN | İsmail ERSOY — Mehmet İNCE |
| Mürefte | Nusret KOÇER | Salih ESEN — Rasim ARIKAN |

history of MMU, but also as a stage when a certain framework of thinking has been built. The vision of social municipalism and practices of Erol Köse and Ahmet İsvan appear in front of us as the fundamental elements that shaped the founding codes of MMU.

The authors, instead of passing by this period with a schematic list,

open their narrative by wandering around the five fundamental principles: Democratic municipalism that prioritise popular participation and forces the limits of central guardianship; productive municipalism that enabled public production models such as Public Bread Factory (Halk Ekmek); consumption-regulating municipalism that touches the economy of the

“

The obvious crises of the 1970s, — rapid urbanisation, infrastructural deficiencies, uncontrolled industrialisation, housing and transportation problems— were now beyond the limits that could be carried by a single municipality. For this reason, MMU emerges as a tool of public policy, a kind of 'collective reflex' that the region spontaneously produced.

”

daily life with practices of price controls and direct sales; pro-union-holistic municipalism that tries

to establish a common horizon of problems overcoming partisan differences; and resource-creating municipalism searching for new financial sources at the local level instead of surrendering to restricted budgets.

The power of the book seems to stem from the fact that it does not leave these principles as a collection of concepts. When the archive documents and the oral history narratives are brought together, Public Bread Factory, TANSA, joint machine parks or industrial waste controls start to appear as political attempts that intervene in the power relations of the city, suddenly ceasing to be 'technical project's. We see that these narratives clearly demonstrate why the social municipalism is not just about service issues, but at the same time it is about the issues of power relations.

INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE COUP: 1980S

The impact of September 12, 1980, over MMU is neither dramatized nor underestimated. This period is considered as an example how an institution could survive under the conditions of oppression is meticulously crafted. Expulsion from institutional premises, military-based appointments, restrictions on activities... Despite this



overall picture, we see that the authors highlight two particular lines of argument. The first is the issue of financial autonomy: the insurance agency model developed during Bedrettin Dalan's term enabled the Union to create its own financial manoeuvring area. This step is interpreted as an early example of institutional innovation that broke established perceptions about the capacity of municipal unions in Türkiye. The second is the intellectual preparation for the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 3030: it is revealed that the metropolitan governance discussions that began within MMU in the 1970s formed the intellectual basis for the process leading to the 1984 law. Thus, it is emphasised that MMU is not only an implementing body but also a designing one. This points to one of the book's strongest arguments: it clearly demonstrates that MMU also served a function of intel-

lectual leadership during certain periods.

THE DOOR OPENING WITH HABITAT II: LOCAL BECOMING GLOBAL

In the book, 1996 HABITAT II Conference is considered as the threshold of the internationalisation of MMU. This process is read not only as the management of a large organisation, but also as "the entrance gate of the local administrations into global politics". According to the authors, HABITAT II, enabled the knowledge and experience accumulated at the local into the global debates, while deepening the link that MMU established with international networks. Thus, MMU transforms into a mediator organisation both telling the problems of Marmara to the world and also recarrying the experiences of the world into Marmara.

“
It is revealed that the metropolitan governance discussions that began within MMU in the 1970s formed the intellectual basis for the process leading to the 1984 law. Thus, it is emphasised that MMU is not only an implementing body but also a designing one. This points to one of the book's strongest arguments: it clearly demonstrates that MMU also served a function of intellectual leadership during certain periods.
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POST-2010: A THEMATIC AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

The most interesting aspect of the book is the fact that it is not telling the last fifteen years of MMU as a mere story of “modernisation”. The narrative does not surrender to the discourse of “institution adapting to the age”; it does not glorify today as a rupture from the past. Instead, it proposes a line of evolution that shows that the mental seeds that are thrown during the 1970s re-blossomed in distinct political and ecological conditions and return sometimes by changing their shapes.

This transformation is elaborated over three axes: thematic centres, Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF) and Marmara Sea. These might be read as different faces of the fact that MMU is increasingly becoming a local governance laboratory ceasing to be “a union”.

Thematization also transforms the story of Marmara: Migration is now not only a question of social aid, but become the set of intersection of inclusiveness, democracy, employment and daily life politics. Data and technology leaving the showcase of the smart city, becomes an infrastructure that determine the transparency and traceability of local decisions. And climate and sustainability evolve into existential questions about the entirety of the city, spilling out of the narrow file shelves of the environmental directorates.

It is also striking that MARUF is positioned in the book more than an “event”. It is sensed that this stage, set up every two years, is a medium that makes MMU's mental map visible. MARUF is neither polished as a mere showcase nor dismissed as an ordinary conference; on the contrary, it is read as an information backbone that

reveals how MMU positions itself and the municipalities in the region.

NOT A MERE RECORD OF THE PAST, AN INTERPRETATION FOR THE FUTURE

The 50-year history of Marmara Municipalities Union does much more than simply recording the history of a single institution. Between the lines, we read how local government in Türkiye has been a battleground: a journey going through the coups, tested by crises, sometimes retreating but always forced to invent new paths, new alliances, and new tools.

The three fundamental questions that the book distills are very striking for this reason: In Marmara, solidarity is not a choice, but a requirement; because the problems facing this region—from earthquakes to climate crisis, migration to industrial pressure—are now too heavy for individual municipalities to bear alone. And creativity is not only a luxury, but a necessity; for where authority and resources are limited, crises inevitably become the birthplace of new institutional tools and unexpected solutions. And finally, continuity is not a habit but a capacity; even amid shocks, political swings,

BİLDİRİ

TÜRK KAMUOYUNA

«Marmara ve Boğazları Belediyeler Birliği» Genel Kurulu, birlik organlarını oluşturmak amacıyla son kez 25/Nisan/1975 günü İzmit'te yaptığı toplantıda saptadığı ilkelerinin Türk kamuoyuna duyurulmasını oybirliği ile kararlaştırmıştır.

1 — Marmara Denizi ile Boğazlarının kirlenmesini önlemek, denizaltı dokusunu bozmamak için endüstriyel kuruluş atıklarının, gemi sıntine sularının, belde çöp ve molozlarının denize atılması ile akıtılması kesinlikle önlenmeli, yasalara bu konuda açıklık getirilmelidir.

2 — Marmara Denizi ile Boğazlarına kıyısı bulunan İl Özel İdaresi, Belediye ve köylerin pis su (Kanalizasyon) projeleri makro düzeyde koordine edilerek birlik denetiminde yapımının uygulanması için Devlet Plânlama Teşkilâtı aracılığı ile Dünya Bankasından olanak sağlanmalıdır.

3 — Marmara Denizi ile Boğazlarındaki batık gemilerin yasalara aykırı çıkarma, parçalama, kıyılardan kum alma işi kesinlikle önlenmeli, denizaltı florasının bozulmamasına özen gösterilmelidir.

4 — Su Ürünleri Yasa ve Tüzüğü'nün öden vermeden noksansız uygulanabilmesi için «Su Ürünleri Genel Müdürlüğü» örgütünün yörede yaygınlaşması öncelik kazanmalı, yasa ve tüzüğe kararnameler ve yönetmeliklerle zorlayıcı, kısıtlayıcı, sorumlulukları artırıcı yeni yetkiler, açıklıklar getirilmelidir.

5 — 45 yıl önce yürürlüğe giren 1580 sayılı Belediyeler Yasasının hızla değişen yurt ve dünya sorunlarına çözüm getiremediği, belediyelerin kamusal görevlerini yerine getirmesine engel olduğu, Türkiye'nin geri kalmışlığını kamçılar nitelikte, giderek çoğu hükümlerinin antidemokratik olduğu bir gerçektir. Özlener çağdaş ve uygar ülkeler düzeyine biran önce ulaşabilmemiz için Belediyeler Yasası ivedilikle değiştirilmeli, birliklere denetim ve yetki genişliği sağlanmalıdır.

6 — Çevre sorunlarının halka dönük ve halk yararına çözümlenmesine katkıda bulunacak «Marmara ve Boğazları Belediyeler Birliği» girişiminin —Tüm belediyelere örnek olacak düzeyde— başarıya ulaşması için hükümetlerce gerekli yardım yapılmalıdır.

Atılım ve girişimimizin başta Cumhurbaşkanımız Sayın Fahri KORUTÜRK olmak üzere parlamento ve hükümetlerimizce destekleneceğine olan güvencemizi belirtir, durumu Türk Kamuoyunun bilgilerine sunarız.

Saygılarımızla...

«MARMARA VE BOĞAZLARI BELEDİYELER BİRLİĞİ» A. YÖNETİCİLER KURULU.

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Birlik Başkanı : | Erol KÖSE | İzmit Belediye Başkanı» |
| Birlik Başkan V. : | Reşat TABAK | «Çanakkale Belediye Bşk.» |
| Encümen Üyesi : | H. Avni ŞİRİN | «Yarımca Belediye Bşk.» |
| Encümen Üyesi : | Ahmet ENÖN | «Marmara Adası Bl. Bşk.» |
| Encümen Üyesi : | Hasan SUR | «Bandırma Belediye Bşk.» |
| Encümen Üyesi : | Halil ALANLIOĞLU | «Umrubey - Ç. Kale Bl. Bşk.» |
| Encümen Üyesi : | Avni ÖZTÜRE | «Birlik Genel Sekreteri» |

and changes of governments, it is seen that institutional memory is not entirely erased; it continues its path, albeit in an altered form.

Just for this reason the book is not merely looking retrospec-

tively when telling the past of MMU, it also lays the groundwork for future discussions on local governance. It invites the reader to ask questions at the scale of Marmara but also about the entire Türkiye. 📌

Together for **-50 YEARS-**

**Marmara Municipalities Union's
50-Year Journey That Began with
a Letter**



HALF CENTURY IN THE UNION: AN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Founded around the ideas of environmental awareness and local solidarity, spearheaded by a few determined mayors, Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), over the past 50 years has become more than just an administrative umbrella; it has evolved into a permanent institution for regional cooperation, transformation and shared vision. This section recounts the Union's journey from its founding to the present day, drawing on selections from oral history records collected from mayors and general secretaries who witnessed the era.

📌 BURAK ARLI

🕒 9 MINUTES

FROM AN IDEA TO A UNION: THE MODEL BORN IN TURBULENT 1970S

1970s was an era in Türkiye when accelerating urbanisation intertwined with economic and social crises. While the considerations about pollution in Marmara Sea gathered mayors from distinct political tendencies around the same table, "Marmara and Bosphorus Municipalities Union" was founded as the product of this exceptional settlement; this partnership which is today continued under the name of MMU, became the first proof that an environment-centred collaboration would not be a short-term attempt, but transform into an institutional model leading the region:

"When establishing the union, we practically forced the mayors to join. Because of my highly successful tenure as a mayor until 1973 – sending bulldozers to Marmara Island, paving the roads in Mudanya, paving the roads in Yalova – we compelled the municipalities to join the union."

Erol Köse

(First President of MMU; 1974-1977)

The first period Köse refers to was one, in which the municipalities progressed through solidarity despite financial constraints; contributions came mainly from the Izmit Municipality, and personnel were provided by the existing municipalities. Over time, the union moved to Istanbul:

"Now the union had been established, we held a meeting on Marmara Island. There were twenty to thirty mayors. We were coming by ferry. I said to Ahmet İsvan, 'Brother, this won't work in İzmit. It's too small a town. Its centre should be in Istanbul.' Ahmet İsvan didn't accept it at first. In fact, on the back of my book, Ahmet İsvan wrote something: 'My municipal administration mentor is Erol Köse.' I practically forced him to accept it. After that, he agreed."

Erol Köse

ACHIEVING SUCCESS THROUGH HARD ECONOMIC CONDITIONS: MMU'S YEARS OF SOLIDARITY

Every crisis was not only a test but also a harbinger of a new form of

solidarity. MMU's years of solidarity became a visible indicator of this reality:

"There was a shortage of money. We were having contributions from the Izmit Municipality. The staff were already the staff of the municipality. Then, when it moved to Istanbul, Ahmet İsvan and Dalan provided support. Later, a portion of the share of the municipalities, the participating municipalities, began to be collected through the Provincial Bank as source-funding. The Union's financial resources were established."

Erol Köse

**FOLLOWING IN THE
FOOTSTEPS OF SOCIAL
MUNICIPALISM:
PUBLIC BREAD FACTORIES AND
REGULATED SALES**

In its early years, the Union strengthened its environmental focus and, as a pioneer of economic solidarity, developed new models in response to crises. In the complex and challenging environment of the 1970s, faced with disruptions in bread logistics and inflationary conditions, MMU led the way in finding solutions through regulated sales outlets and the Public Bread Factory (Halk Ekmek) initiative:

"Now the bakers went to strike in Adapazarı. I sent bread from İzmit by trucks. Then, they went to strike in İzmit. We brought bread from İzmit and İstanbul by trucks. When I saw this, these bakers creating trouble for these municipalities, pressure them together with their workers... [I said] This doesn't work. I thought the municipalities should start an organisation that would not victimise those bakers, also including them. But since we gone through a strike before then, I went to Italy myself, went to a Moulinex firm in Milan. I made a bargaining for 100.000 bread capacity for İzmit. The friend next to me said I was the chair of the union. At that time, it stopped in İzmit, started in Kartal, I included it into Marmara Municipalities Union, and I founded Kartal. The engines and machinery that were to come to İzmit were first established as the Kartal Public Bread Factory. Erdem Hançer, whom I recruited to the team along with Mr. Selahattin, became the first general manager. We made Erdem Hançer the general manager. Then, after Ahmet İsvan became [chairman], he established public bread on that side. But the first establishment was there. Then, on the other side, it was not Kartal, but Istanbul Public Bread Factory. These two merged and became Istanbul Public Bread Factory."

Erol Köse

"We were coordinating it. And partially financing. The first TANSAS stores in the Marmara Region, the discount stores, originated here. Then, as you know, it became a private company in the Aegean region. It became a supermarket, which is not relevant to us. Then, when the Ministry of Local Government was established, that is, in Ecevit's second government, when the Ministry of Local Government was established, we said, 'Put a fund here.' And this was on a large city scale; it wasn't such a problem in small towns anyway. A fund was put there, but they couldn't manage it very well. It was only a one-year government, you know, a strange structure that was pulled in all directions. But a friend of ours, who has also passed away, Bülent Yardımcı, went to all the producers in the Marmara Region and made arrangements about when, how and where to get it. These centres were opened in municipalities, which municipalities? The surrounding municipalities, let's call them that, more like shanty town areas. It was fun though."

Selahattin Yıldırım

(Second Secretary General of MMU; founding years)

"...this bread issue is one of the key points of the social municipalism. Marmara Municipalities Union has also become involved in this issue as part of the social municipalism."

İlhan Tekeli

(Advisor of MMU; founding years)

THE UNION OF TURKISH MUNICIPALITIES AND THE ROAD GOING TO OTHER REGIONAL UNIONS

In the 1980s, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (TBB) was established under the leadership of MMU. While MMU carried out the secretarial and preparatory work for the process, this historic step became an institutional symbol of the will of local governments in Türkiye to act collectively:

"Especially in 1980 again there was a very important development. We should state it. A very important development in the history of Turkish municipalism. Marmara Municipalities Union started the attempt to establish the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. In the organs of Marmara Municipalities Union, a decision was taken to establish Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. It was decided that Marmara Municipalities Union would establish the secretariat. And we sent letters to all municipalities across Tür-

kiye. Preliminary preparations had to be made, because the municipal councils had to elect two members to the union, with the mayors being ex officio members. For these efforts to be formalised, the governor had to issue a call. We wrote the call letter; Mr. Selahattin was the Secretary General, Nevzat Ayaz was the Governor of Istanbul. We went to Nevzat Ayaz, we went to the governor's office, Nevzat Ayaz signed the letter. A letter was sent to all municipalities across Türkiye, stating the date of the council meeting and asking them to elect members for the council for the establishment of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. What happened next was very important because the meeting was to be held in Istanbul, in the city theatres' building, if I remember correctly. Mayors came from all over Türkiye. We were, of course, in charge of the secretarial work; we were on stage, on the theatre stage..."

Halil Ünlü

(Third Secretary General of MMU)

"Then, establishing regional unions was something like a taboo. Marmara Municipalities Union became its pioneer. Of course it broke it in one way or another. Since this was in Marmara, it didn't cause much of a problem, but when you established the GAP Region Municipalities Union, it

did create a problem. Certain circles, well-known circles, began to harbour certain concerns about this. But interestingly, despite so many military coups, I don't know what happened, it wasn't closed. It continued to exist."

"This ministry, which began in 1978, lasted two years. One of the most important things we did during those two years was to establish municipal unions. For example, during that period, at the end of 1978 and in 1979, we established the Aegean Municipalities Union in Türkiye. We transferred significant funds to these unions. We ensured that they could carry out their work"

Fikret Toksöz,

(Fifth Secretary General of MMU)

YEARS WHEN THE UNION SEARCHED FOR FUNDS AGAIN

The Union adopted a diversification strategy that went beyond membership fees to strengthen its sustainability and provide uninterrupted services to member municipalities. Alongside training programmes, it developed service-based revenue models such as environmental consultancy and insurance agency services, thereby providing solutions to municipal needs while also strengthening its institutional resilience:

"Of course, we started to search for funds. After becoming Mayor of Istanbul and then also elected as the chair of the union, Bedrettin Dalan said to me one day, 'You were looking for funds.' 'I found you a fund,' he said. 'What kind of funds, Mr Mayor?' I asked. 'Look,' he said, 'establish an insurance agency within the Union. Let's arrange fire and similar insurance policies for the member municipalities through the union.' At first, I didn't understand at all. But then I researched it and realised it was indeed possible. A limited company needed to be established for the insurance agency. As the Union, we established a limited company together with our other partner, Bakırköy Municipality. Marmara Belde Yapım Ltd. Şti. We included insurance agency services among its objectives. It was approved by the Union Council. Two partners: Marmara Municipalities Union and Bakırköy Municipality (I believe it can now be a single-member company). Of course, we wrote a very broad statement of objectives. We included planning, project development, and everything related to municipal services within the company's objectives. Then, we received offers from insurance companies. Ultimately,

we signed a Group A Insurance Agency Agreement with OYAK Insurance."

Halil Ünlü

ON THE ROAD TO THE LAW ON METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES:

THE FOUNDING ROLE OF MMU

The Law on Metropolitan Municipalities, enacted in 1984, was one of the most significant events in the history of Turkish municipalism. The Union was one of the most important institutions in the preparatory process.

"We did it in Mr Bedrettin Dalan's office. Bedrettin Dalan wants to be the Mayor of Istanbul. However, he also wants a new metropolitan system to be established [in line with the request] from the Prime Minister. And he wants to be elected as the metropolitan mayor. We can interpret it that way. Of course, I provided information about the work in the union. 'Okay,' he said, 'can we prepare a draft law?' 'We can prepare it,' I said. 'This regulation,' he said, 'will be issued as a Decree with the Force of Law.' 'Because the normal legal process takes a little longer. There is little time left for the local elections.' I said, 'We can prepare a draft.' We began preparing a "Draft" by drawing on the

work previously carried out by the Union."

"Decree-law No. 3030 was drafted in Ankara. Work then continued in Istanbul. Eymen Topbaş, Atanur Oğuz, Halil Ünlü, I, and Bedrettin Dalan were among those involved. We laid the groundwork. That is, while working on Decree Law No. 3030, Eymen Topbaş, the provincial chairman of the Motherland Party at the time, Bedrettin Dalan, the late Atanur Oğuz, who later became secretary-general, and our lawyer Halil Ünlü, who is still alive today, contributed to this. We also witnessed them. And in a way, all of us contributed to the creation of Decree Law No. 3030."

Hasan Akgün

(President of MMU; between 2002-2004)

"EITHER TOGETHER OR NOT AT ALL": A MODEL THAT TRANSCENDS POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

One of MMU's greatest strengths was its structure, which enabled it to overcome ideological differences and focus on the common good. It became a model that earned respect in the minds of many city administrators as one of the rare examples of municipalities with different views being able to work together.

"Is there any other institution that has remained standing for 50 years in a country like Türkiye despite so much turmoil, and where different political views can work together? I don't think so."

Selahattin Yıldırım

TODAY AND FUTURE: "COMMON GROUND FOR THE CITY"

Over time, MMU evolved from a Marmara-focused initiative into an institutional structure that serves as a reference point for the whole of Türkiye. Over the decades, it has become a centre that develops policy, builds networks and generates knowledge in areas such as city diplomacy, culture and the arts, migration, climate change and child-friendly cities:

"We prepare our cities for the future. We must put forward the understanding of resilient city against earthquakes, climate crisis, all disasters. The Union continues to be an organisation developing capacities in line with this vision."

Mustafa Bozbeý

(President of MMU; Current)

"New areas of tasks are defined with the regulation change such as migration, climate change, culture and arts. Wherever local authorities are involved, studies have been prepared and are ready for implementation if required."

M. Cemil Arslan

(Secretary General of MMU; Current)

"Professor Hashimoto, who has done very important work establishing environmental systems in Japan. We invited Professor Hashimoto. Because Japan has an inland sea with problems like those of Marmara Sea. We learned that an environmental management system had been established to solve the environmental problems of that inland sea. We went to Izmit Bay and toured the coastal areas of Marmara Sea. We showed him the pollution. We said, 'Professor, we need to measure this pollution. We want to set up a laboratory.' Mr Hashimoto said to me, 'Mr Halil, this laboratory business is very expensive. It is very difficult to maintain. Then, he made the following speech in assembly: I have travelled around part of Marmara Sea. There is no need for measurements or a laboratory to detect this pollution. The pollution is already visible to the naked eye. You must immediately take action to eliminate the sources of pollution. Your member municipalities must eliminate the sources of pollution entering the sea. Prof. Hashimoto's suggestion was simple and very meaningful."

Halil Ünlü

INTERNATIONAL HORIZON OPENING WITH MARUF

Emerging as a reflection of the Union's vision on the global stage, Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF) has become not just an event, but also a platform that aspires to be the voice of local governments around the world.

"I believe MARUF represents a new leap forward in terms of its relationship with the world. It closely follows global developments and is emerging as a powerful voice on Türkiye's local governance platform."

İlhan Tekeli

"MARUF also has its own ecosystem. The environment created there is a platform that provides opportunities that everyone can access and see according to their own needs."

Tahir Büyükakın

(President of MMU; between 2019-2024)

What makes MMU's 50-year institutional memory valuable is the vision and testimonies of the leaders, specialists and employees who have guided this process. This accumulation, ranging from 'social municipalism' to financial diplomacy and local democracy, has permanently influenced the course of municipalism in Türkiye. This culture, based on solidarity, justice and public good, now shoulders the future; it continues to guide the next half-century. 🇹🇷

İNŞA: IS IT POSSIBLE TO CREATE A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL CITY ON THE SHORE OF ALL POSSIBILITIES?

The combat of the cities against climate is no longer a process that they can bare alone; there is need for a common rationale, common capacities and common methods. İNŞA (Climate-Neutral Cities Network) emerges just on this point and presents a new ground of collaboration that makes the municipalities in Türkiye meet around the same goal. The structure shaped by the support of national and international actors aims to strengthen the climate capacities of the local administrations and transform the road to climate-neutrality targets into a collective process.

 HAZAN SERTKAYA*

 11 MINUTES

Can the common action of the municipalities make the vision of a climate-neutral future possible? Can a network, referred to as İNŞA (Climate-Neutral Cities Network), build such a future? İNŞA was launched in August 2025 simply by asking these questions. In this journey Which took its pioneering steps at Halıç Congress Centre on October 1-3 2025, within the context of MARUF25, not only municipalities with advanced climate capacity but also those at the initial stages of their climate efforts, together with various national

and international organizations, accompany us. As part of the *NetZeroCities Programme*, we are embarking on this journey to implement the City Expert Support Mechanism in Türkiye. As Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), we will take steps together with the European Union to strengthen the Cities Mission in Türkiye. Let us follow these steps and the key information that will guide us together.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN FROM THE CITIES MISSION

The Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, referred to sim-

ply as the Cities Mission, is one of the five fundamental missions proposed to address global-scale challenges within the framework of the EU Horizon Europe programme. The mission not only puts the municipalities on the centre of urban transformation but also positions them as the centre of experience and innovation in the vision of a climate-neutral future. In this context, it encourages a total of 112 cities to become climate-neutral until 2030, and it provides access to special support and financing in their journeys.

*Training and Projects Expert, MMU



For the Cities Mission, **Climate City Contracts** which presents the action, investment and governance model for climate neutrality goal plays a central role. These Contracts are prepared by the local administration unit jointly with participation of various stakeholders such as the universities, private sector, civil society and central governmental organisations, and acts as a fundamental compass for the cities to reach the target of climate neutrality.

The cities which accomplish to prepare their contracts are entitled to receive the EU Mission Label which is a symbol of recognition that facilitates access to public and private funds. 112 cities which are entitled to receive the Mission Label obtains the right to access to Climate City Capital Hub. The Mission Cities which receive special financial advice and obtain the opportunity to network with the investors under the collaboration of the European Investment

Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), are also supported in terms of financial access in order to develop their climate capacities. Istanbul and Izmir Metropolitan Municipalities from Türkiye are among these Mission Cities.

WHERE DOES TÜRKIYE STAND IN THE CITIES MISSION?¹

Türkiye has entered in a comprehensive climate governance transformation in recent years in

¹ The assessments in this section have been prepared using the literature review conducted as part of the CLEMM (Collaborative Learning for Evidence-Based Climate Policy in Marmara's Municipalities) Project carried out by Marmara Municipalities Union. For detailed information, please visit mbb.bb/CLEMM.



line with the net-zero emission target that it determined for 2053. “Green and digital transformation” has been determined as one of the developmental axes of the country with priority in 2024–2028 Twelfth Development Plan, with 2024–2030 Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The Climate Law, enacted in 2025, as one of the most important building blocks of this transformation process, also obliges the establishment of Provincial Climate Change Coordination Committees and preparation of Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs) at the local level. Although these developments define clearer roles to the municipalities in climate action, the need for cooperation and coordination among institutions in decision-making processes and the implementation of measures remains

a current priority for the development of climate capacity.

The municipalities in Türkiye are increasingly claiming climate action and producing local solutions at their own scales, initiating efforts for green transformation. They also benefit from national and international financing mechanisms to realize these solutions and establish strategic collaborations with organizations from different sectors. Furthermore, in order to develop the most appropriate policies and implementations about a challenge like climate change which affects every local unit and social class differently, they consult with the city residents and thus, contribute to the process of shaping the national and international policies. This trend shows that a multi-layered

governance structuring is emerging.

The Cities Mission at the heart of İNŞA is grounded precisely in this approach to transformation: it aims to strengthen learning and cooperation among different urban actors by positioning municipalities as pioneers of the climate-neutral city vision. İNŞA also adapts this approach to the national context, aiming to increase municipalities' capacity to combat climate change and contribute to practices of mutual learning among the municipalities.

CAN İNŞA BUILD A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL FUTURE?

So, let us ask the question we posed at the beginning once more: Can the joint action of the municipalities enable a vision of a climate-neutral future?

As mentioned above, the national climate ecosystem and the nature of the combat with climate change show that achievements in the climate neutrality journey depend on an efficient and multi-layered climate governance. This governance mechanism requires the active participation, coordination and collaboration primarily of the municipalities, of the central government organisations, universities, research units, civil society



INSA

CLIMATE—NEUTRAL CITIES NETWORK

organisations and international organisations that play a role in shaping the climate policies at the global scale. We launched İNŞA with the aim of establishing a basis to enhance the common learning, collaboration, and joint action capacities of actors at different levels.

As an institution that places the capacity development of local governments at its core, we first sought to identify our partners along this journey: we issued an open call to all metropolitan cities, provinces and districts across Türkiye. After a meticulous evaluation process conducted in collaboration with the NetZeroCities team, considering the municipalities' current climate actions and capacities as well as their future climate action projections, we included a total of 45 municipalities in İNŞA programme as **Accelerators**,

comprising 14 metropolitan cities, 8 provinces and 23 districts.

Alongside these Accelerators which are just taking their first steps in climate action, we have included a total of 9 municipalities in the İNŞA programme under the name of Newcomers. These include 6 metropolitan cities and 3 districts with advanced climate capacity, designated as Mission or Twin Cities by NetZeroCities. Now, let us look at the Accelerators and Newcomers with whom we will be working under the İNŞA programme:

Accelerators: İstanbul, İzmir, Antalya, Eskişehir, Gaziantep and Konya Metropolitan Municipalities and Bandırma, Menteşe and Şişli Municipalities.

Newcomers: Ankara, Adana, Balıkesir, Bursa, Denizli, Diyarbakır,

“
We launched İNŞA with the aim of establishing a basis to enhance the common learning, collaboration, and joint action capacities of actors at different levels.

”
Hatay, Kocaeli, Malatya, Manisa, Mersin, Muğla, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipalities and Amasya, Burdur, Çanakkale, Çorlu, Edirne, Gülnar, Isparta, Niğde, Nusaybin, Zonguldak, Bakırköy, Beylikdüzü, Büyükçekmece, Bornova, Çankaya, Çine, İzmit, Hopa, Kadıköy, Kartal, Karşıyaka, Kocaeli, Küçükçekmece, Merzifon, Nilüfer, Ortahisar, Salihli, Sulova, Tepebaşı, Yenişehir, Yalova Municipalities.

In this journey key research organisations work in close contact with local administration unions

and relevant ministries. Moreover, we forward the process by establishing bridges by the CapaCITIES 2.0 Project between national and local levels. And at the centre of this entire coordination, there is the partnership we conduct with *NetZeroCities*. Thus İNŞA, going beyond a mere network, becomes a strong ground where common efforts meet in the journey of climate-neutral future of Türkiye.

WHAT ROAD MAP İNŞA PROPOSE?

We developed a multi-layered methodology for İNŞA's journey which is planned to continue until August 2026. In line with this approach, we design and conduct all İNŞA activities based on three components: MMU's knowledge base spanning over 50 years, İNŞA's practical field observations and its systematic needs analyses that have been accumulating since its establishment. This knowledge base is formed by years of institutional experience in municipal management, climate action and international cooperation; we continuously enrich it with secondary sources such as national statistics, project evaluations and climate finance data. The needs analyses are shaped by insights gained from the 122 applications received dur-

ing the open call process, feedback shared during İNŞA sessions under MARUF25, and regular contacts with municipalities. These findings will be further deepened through workshops and surveys conducted with İNŞA municipalities. Thus, we aim to ensure that all İNŞA activities are adaptable, up-to-date, and tailored to the diverse needs and capacities of the municipalities.

Within this framework, İNŞA's first phase prioritises offering municipalities a comprehensive, multi-module **learning programme**. This programme, which covers everything from fundamental concepts of climate action to practical tools, aims to ensure all municipalities progress from a common knowledge base. We design these learning modules specifically for the needs of the Accelerator and Newcomer Municipalities, drawing on the expertise of the MMU and *NetZeroCities*, as well as the capabilities we have gained from our existing partnerships. In this way, we plan to deliver a multi-stakeholder, needs-based capacity development programme.

Furthermore, through our ongoing **Mentor Programme**², we facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience between municipal-

ities. In this context, we not only implement the Mentor Programme within İNŞA municipalities, but also bring together these municipalities with national and international best practices.

In addition, we aim to provide a facilitating platform for coordination with municipalities within the İNŞA framework and for collaboration opportunities with stakeholders in the climate sector within the national ecosystem. In this way, we support municipalities in establishing stronger contacts not only with stakeholders within İNŞA, but also with academia, the private sector, national institutions and international platforms.

WHAT DID WE CONTRIBUTE AT MARUF25?

We took the first steps of our journey toward İNŞA by officially launching it at MARUF25, held at **Haliç Congress Centre from 1–3 October 2025**. MARUF25 served as a critical starting point for strengthening İNŞA's community structure and gradually building the implementation community. We organised three İNŞA-themed sessions within the forum to discuss the network's vision, approach, and working framework with municipalities. In addition,

² You can access detailed information about the Mentor Programme run by MMU at mbb.bb/mbbmentor

we contributed to municipalities' transformation processes towards climate neutrality through over 25 climate-themed sessions within the forum. The contacts we established with over 150 stakeholders from various fields and sectors during the climate sessions within the scope of MARUF25 enabled us to achieve strong alignment with the multi-level climate governance ecosystem emerging in Türkiye.

We launched İNŞA with the session titled “*Launch of Climate-Neutral Cities Network*” organised within the scope of MARUF25. Here, we established a common understanding of İNŞA's purpose and scope, forged the first connections to foster learning processes between municipalities, and took the first steps towards multi-level cooperation with national and international actors. We then, convened a closed session titled *İNŞA x CapaCITIES 2.0: High-Level Roundtable for Climate-Neutral Cities*, bringing together numerous key stakeholders, from the European Commission to national institutions, and from Climate-KIC to ICLEI. We discussed a multi-level governance model in the field of climate in Türkiye and the needs of municipalities in the process of combating climate change with mission cities and invited metropolitan municipalities. We continued our İNŞA activities

with the session *Climate 101.5: Tipping Point of the Future*, conducted in collaboration with *Net-ZeroCities* and the Climate Change Directorate, where we examined the experiences of Istanbul, Izmir and Warsaw as mission cities and jointly assessed critical turning points for a climate-neutral future. We also held the first international Mentor meeting under the İNŞA programme at MARUF25.

ON THE SHORE OF ALL POSSIBILITIES: WHAT COMES NEXT?

We have embarked on the journey of İNŞA, which is still in its early stages, together with 45 Accelerator Cities and 9 Newcomer Cities at MARUF25. We must collectively strive to advance this beginning, which demonstrates that a climate-neutral city vision is achievable through joint effort and collaboration. With an approach that recognises local governments as a fundamental building block of national climate governance and of the national climate-neutrality goal at the urban level, we must jointly shape a process that responds to the needs of municipalities, strengthens their climate capacity, and deepens cooperation. In this regard, the learning programmes, mentoring applications and capacity development-based cooperation opportunities offered by İNŞA pro-

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”

vide an opportunity to take municipalities' existing climate capacities a step further and to jointly develop common solutions. Through cooperation, joint work and learning from each other, we can make the climate-neutral city possible from ceasing to be vision. So, let us get started! 🗣️

ON THE TRACK OF MARMARA: COASTLINES, TRANSITIONS AND STORIES

The Juried Illustration Exhibition "On the Shore of All Possibilities," organised in collaboration with MARUF25 and Istanbul Illustration Days, took place at the Haliç Congress Centre from October 1–3, 2025. Embracing a broad intellectual and visual spectrum, from the fauna and flora of the Marmara coastline to ancient cultural symbols, from the relationship of coastal cities with water to urban transformation, the exhibition brought together works that visualised, with unique perspectives, the hidden stories of the shorelines, borders, and passage points of the cities bordering the Marmara Sea. Aiming to explore the power of illustration in cultural transmission and to encourage participants

to creatively express their connection with the city, the exhibition made collective memory and cultural heritage visible, transforming the diverse states of being on the coastline into an elegant and enduring visual document.

The illustrations that have met with the audience at MARUF25 and have reached this page from the exhibition transcend the time and space of MARUF25, transforming the life, nature, and cultural traces of the cities bordering Marmara Sea into a visual narrative. These four works, which have reached you, redefined Marmara not merely as an inland sea, but as a field of thinking that encompasses the borders, thresholds, and all the possibles.

MARE MAGNIFICO

ERDEK: ON THE SHORE OF LIFE

CITIES WHERE YOU CAN ENTER THE SEA

BETWEEN THE CONTINENTS

Size/Material:

A3, Watercolour and ink pen on paper

Artist:

H. Emre Becer

Size/Material:

A3, Digital Illustration

Artist:

Selin Şeker

Size/Material:

A3, Digital Hand Drawing

Artist:

H. Cenk Dereli

Size/Material:

A3, 300dpi, JPEG

Artist:

Ece Çizel Girişken

This composition combines the Marmara region's unique coastal structure and rocky areas, vegetation, animal species such as the common cormorant and the now-rare red snapper, and the typical cultural symbols such as the Medusa-headed pedestal, which is located in the Hagia Sophia Museum and the Basilica Cistern and has many mystical meanings.

This work centres on five elderly women sitting on the sidewalk in front of a guesthouse in Erdek. The scene invites us to consider the coastal spaces of Marmara Sea as not only geographical but also social and temporal thresholds. Bodies in plastic chairs, through their spectator positions, carry the memory of the space. The shore is about transition, waiting, and continuity. These figures are simultaneously bearers of the social memory within the every day, and make visible the static and fragile spaces of life. The state of observation becomes a form of witnessing that does not intervene but does not forget.

The inspiration for this work stems from being by the sea, living united with the sea, and sensing the land through the sea. The work was created with the motivation to foster the belief and hope that reaching the land through the sea, rather than reaching the sea from the land, will empower the society to have living seas.

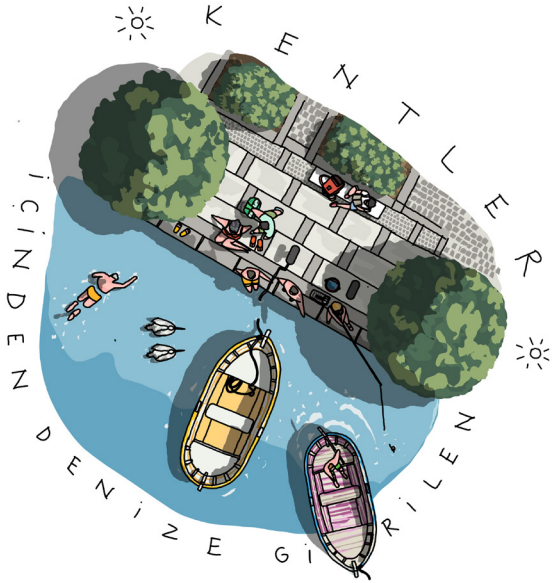
One of my biggest dreams while living in Istanbul was to forget about time and experience this city from inside a taka boat. Looking at the city where I live from the inside of a tiny, bustling yet serene boat. In this painting, a fisherman flies with his fish through this city that straddles two continents. It depicts the Marmara Sea as an inland sea, the transitions it forms between the coasts, and the thresholds it embodies.



1



2



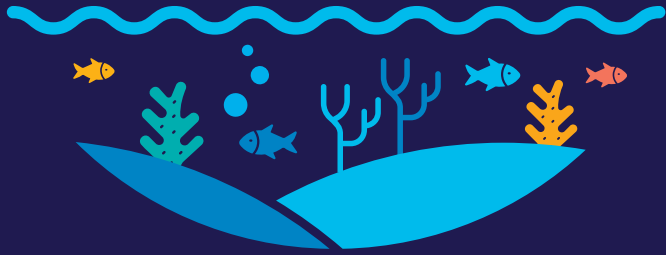
3



4

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