Facing Gentrification?
Investigating social consequences of infrastructural changes in Yali Mahallesi, Istanbul

Kathrin Nordlöf
PREFACE

I would like to express my gratitude to Ayşegül Alayat who has supported me throughout the project. Thank you for your ideas, understanding of urban planning and talent in finding the right people.

My supervisor Jakob Nobuoka, you have helped me a lot by always being positive and motivating. I am thankful for your guidance and support, helping me to understand what an essay really is.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Do you know the samba? That’s what you need for getting along here!” my friend tells me when crossing the street on dancing feet and without problem she manages her way around the honking cars in Istanbul.

A characteristic that often comes to my mind when I think of this metropolis is the immense traffic that never seems to stop. We are in Istanbul, Turkey, a city with a growing number of citizens and, with that, a growing need for good infrastructure. The idea of building a railway tunnel, crossing the Bosphorus Strait, came up to discussion as early as the year 1860. The decision of actually constructing the tunnel Marmaray was, however, made in 2006.

Major infrastructural projects have consequences for its surroundings. Economic growth, reduction of carbon emissions, improved health conditions and reduced travel time are all thinkable outcomes of a better transport communication. On a neighbourhood’s level it is interesting to explore the social consequences of an improved access to public transportation. The effects it may have on an areas’ social structure is however hard to predict and can be described differently depending on which stakeholder and perspective that is in focus.

Gentrification is a type of transformation where the residents in neighbourhoods with low property values are substituted by people from a higher socio-economic group due to renovation and an increase in land value. This phenomenon is not new – not in Istanbul or in the world as a whole. The process and its consequences are well documented in the academic world but many studies approach the occurrence of gentrification when the result is at hand. This study will try to see if indications of a gentrification can be detected in advance. The future of Yalı Mahallesi, a small neighbourhood in Istanbul, is in focus – an area facing big infrastructural changes and perhaps a new social setting.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

This essay will explore social consequences of an infrastructural project and changed access to public transportation. This will be done by examining various stakeholders’ perception of Yalı Mahallesi, Istanbul, in relation to the transportation changes and renewal program within its close surroundings and future. The stakeholders are representatives of authorities, inhabitants, real-estate and science, chosen because of their difference in perspective and interest. The purpose of the essay is to see if their ideas of the district’s future are compatible with a gentrification process described in theory.

By examining how different stakeholders look upon Yalı Mahallesi and its future the research questions are the following:

1. Does Yalı Mahallesi have the characteristics of a gentrifiable area? If yes, in which ways?
2. Do the stakeholders’ descriptions indicate an ongoing gentrification process?

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1.2 Limitation
The essay is limited to only investigate the neighbourhood of Yalı Mahallesi in the Yenikapı district, Istanbul. There is also a limitation in time since the essay, including the research in Istanbul, is completed within a 10 week course. Due to the restriction in time the number of interviews carried out was limited. The aim of the essay is not to cover the consequences of a possible gentrification.

1.3 Methodology
A humanistic theoretical framework is used in this essay. Within the humanistic approach it is of interest to capture attitudes and subjective impressions of a phenomenon. Knowledge is always subjective and therefore it is relevant to look upon individuals’ interpretation. This study aims to understand relevant stakeholders’ perception of the area today as well as the future it is facing.

Choice of subject
The changes addressed previously are today at a planning stage. The Marmaray tunnel is not yet built and the renewal program is right now in its initial phase. The early stage does however make it interesting to do this study, even though the described outcomes may seem speculative. The ideas shared by the stakeholders offer an insight into a complex ongoing process with possibly far-reaching consequences for the physical environment and its current inhabitants. The reason why Yalı Mahallesi is of a particular interest is because it has historical characteristics that distinguish it from other areas. Another reason is that Marmaray is a very big infrastructural project, given a lot of attention, which is expected to facilitate displacement in Istanbul.

The results and conclusions of this essay do not aim to offer a complete certainty that would make them generalizable and applicable on all other situations in time and space. It should be seen as a contribution to the theoretical debate on the concept of gentrification and the future of Yalı Mahallesi. It should also be said that the study is giving the view of a couple of chosen stakeholders in the society of Istanbul which means that the conclusions can not be claimed to offer a general truth.

Gathering information
The research questions stated above give an idea of which type of method that is appropriate. The answers that are of a qualitative character would be found if using interviews as a method. In comparison to surveys, interviews offer the opportunity to follow up the answers with further questions which secures the supply of relevant information. To be sure that the interviews would give the needed information an interview manual was prepared and the character of the interviews was thus semi-structured. The manual was complemented with questions adapted to the profession and the role of the informant. One third of the interviews were performed completely in English and a translator was used when the informant only

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spoke Turkish or very little English. The procedure for each interview differed somewhat: sometimes the informant’s words were translated directly and sometimes in a summary, depending on the character of the situation.

The informants were chosen by a systematic selection, identifying relevant stakeholders according to literature on the topic of gentrification. Those stakeholders were planners, inhabitants, real-estate agents and professors. During the interviews the informants were also asked what stakeholders they think will be important for the future process. That made it possible to contact new informants, thereby using a type of snowball method.

Interviews performed with authorities in charge of the planning of Yalı Mahallesi, had the aim of understanding how the plan for the area is designed. The inhabitants of Yalı Mahallesi, as well as the neighbourhood association Yalı-Der, were another important group of people to talk to. Eight of them were interviewed, both landlords and tenants. In order to get an idea of how investors look upon Yalı Mahallesi today, as well as the future changes, two real-estate agents were also interviewed. Scholars within the field of gentrification and urban transformation were contacted to obtain their well founded arguments and contextual understanding.

The interviews were complemented with a literature study where the main topics looked upon were gentrification, urban development and information specific to urban planning in Turkey.

**Criticism of sources**
This is a cross-culture study which means that the researcher might lack some understanding of the Turkish context. Context is also problematic in the literature since many scholars of gentrification study Anglo-American examples. However, Turkish cases were also looked upon in order to get a nuanced understanding.

**1.4 Disposition**
In the next chapter the area in focus is introduced and a general background is given to help further reading. Chapter 3 includes a theoretical background, ending with an operationalization for later analysis. In chapter 4 the empirical material is presented, giving the views of the informants, together with a brief analysis. A more elaborated analysis takes place in chapter 5, relating the empirical outcome to theory. Chapter 6 concludes the essay with a discussion regarding the findings of the study.

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2. BACKGROUND

In this chapter a short background is given to the study area, Yalı Mahallesi, in order to see the condition and the situation of the site today. This is followed by an identification of future changes affecting the neighbourhood. However, the chapter starts with a short introduction to renewal programs in a Turkish context.

2.1 Renewal programs

Law no. 5366, *Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalising of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties* was passed in 2005 in order to facilitate the renewal of decayed urban sites and to give local municipalities the mandate to expropriate without the approval of property owners. The law has however received heavy criticism from both national and international organisations, such as UNESCO, because it enables an area to be taken outside the normal planning system and makes it possible for local authorities to propose potentially drastic development schemes. Furthermore, the renewal proposals appear to prioritise land development over conservation.

Sulukule Urban Renewal Area, Istanbul, is an example of a declared renewal site due to this law. The site is situated by the Theodosian Land Walls and was, before the implementation of the renewal plans, special for its Romany inhabitants. The buildings on the site are today demolished and are substituted by new houses. The former landlords were offered to live in the new buildings if paying the difference in value between their former housing and the cost of construction. The tenants were offered a living in the periphery of Istanbul for which they would pay a monthly instalment.

2.2 Yalı Mahallesi today

Yalı Mahallesi is a neighbourhood on the historic peninsula of Istanbul. It is located within the district of Yenikapı and Fatih municipality, comprising 4.7 hectares in total. Considering the architecture and the construction materials of the houses, the area is seen as a typical historical urban quarter of old Istanbul. Historically, the settlement in Yenikapı was first established in the 4th century, during the Byzantine time, when it was used as a harbour. Throughout the years the area has been populated by people with various nationalities, such as Jews, Greeks and Armenians.

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Image showing Istanbul’s European and Asian sides as well as the localisation of Marmaray, the coming metro lines, Yenikapı Renewal Area and Yali Mahallesi. Source: Google Earth, edited by the author.

Physical aspects
The architecture of the historical houses within the neighbourhood of Yali Mahallesi is traditional with characteristics such as the outward bulging type of balcony on the second floor, called “cumba”. According to an investigation of the socio-economic situation and the physical conditions of the houses, conducted on behalf of UNESCO and published in 2008, 70% of the houses were rated as being in an average condition or better. The timber houses were in the worst state and the ones built in concrete were mostly in average or better condition. The original urban fabric is said to be preserved since 80.7% of the lots have the original listed buildings. The high percentage is believed to be a result of the residential function of the area.

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Social aspects
According to the survey made on behalf of UNESCO, Yalı Mahallesi has a population of 1400 people. A major part of the families living in the area come from the east of Turkey, southeast Anatolia or the Black Sea region, which can be compared with the average size of households in Istanbul that was 3.9 according to the demographic census made in 2000. In the UNESCO survey it was also shown that 92.6% of the mothers, in the participating households, were housewives and therefore did not have an income. Half of the mothers had graduated from elementary school but more than 30% claimed not to have any education. Looking at the fathers the statistics reveal that the percentage with graduation from elementary school corresponded with the women but only 7.8% did not claim to have any education. The fathers mostly work in marginal jobs, for example as street vendors. The unemployment in the households participating in the study was quite low compared to statistics of the total population of Istanbul at the time of the survey. Looking at the property ownership, a third owned their own property, while the rest were tenants or lived free of charge.

2.3 Changes in transportation and development of renewal program
Yalı Mahallesi is facing many future changes, both concerning the infrastructure and the planned environment. Here follows a brief presentation of these changes.

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**Transportation**

The construction of a big infrastructural project started in 2004 with the aim of building a railway tunnel crossing the Bosphorus Strait. When completed, the tunnel connects the European and Asian side of Istanbul and improves the communication and transportation access within the city. The project is called Marmaray and will have one of its European train stations close by Yenikapi. A metro station will also be constructed in connection to the Yenikapi train station. The metro route will for example connect the district of Yenikapi with the commercial business districts Taksim and Levent. Another Light Rail Transport System will connect Yenikapi to for example Atatürk Airport.

While digging for the tunnel, archaeological remains from no less than thirty two Byzantine ships (dating from the 7th – 11th centuries) were found. An architectural museum, situated close by Yenikapi, is planned to open in order to display the historic harbour.

**Yenikapi Renewal program**

Yenikapi was selected as a renewable area in 2006 because of the infrastructural investments concerning the area. The aims of the program are to protect the historical pattern and architecture, to develop the local economy and to prevent physical, social and economic damage. According to the responsible municipality’s research of other examples worldwide it is likely that the area will have business functions and receive more tourists. A meeting was arranged for the inhabitants of the area and a letter was sent by the municipality to the land owners, giving them the following options:

1. Sell the property to the municipality.
2. Give the property to the municipality but still receive ~ 45% profit of the later usage.
3. Let the municipality renovate the house for the [X] price and in addition pay a fee of [Y] for entering the program.
4. Renovate the house by yourself, a fee of [Z] should be paid to the municipality and in addition the owner should cover the renovation costs.
5. If none of the options above is chosen, the property will be taken by the municipality according to Law no. 5366.

This chapter has highlighted the physical and social characteristics of Yali Mahallesli. The coming infrastructural changes as well as the renewal program directed towards the site were also introduced. This background will be used in the later analysis, understanding if Yali Mahallesli has got the character of a gentrifiable area.

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24 “Options of Participation in Urban Renewal Area Project” (Yenileme Alanı Projesine Katılım Secenekleri), from T.C. Istanbul Ili Fatih Belediye Başkanlığı to Landlords in Yalli Mahallesli
3. EXAMINING GENTRIFICATION

The chapter gives a theoretical background to gentrification. The information is later structured in a table which functions both as a summary and a tool for later analysis.

3.1 What is gentrification?

Ruth Glass was a British sociologist concerned with studies about housing problems in London. Glass was the first to coin the term gentrification, which she did in “London: Aspects of change”, published in 1964.25 The term comes from the word “gentry” which addresses the lower aristocracy.26 It is important to underline that Glass’ findings was the starting point of gentrification as a research field and it should therefore not be seen as a phenomenon that started in London during the 1960s. Many researchers state that there were processes like gentrification occurring as early as the mid-1800s, if not earlier.27

Many scholars try to define gentrification. Attempts have made it clear that it is problematic to talk about gentrification as something fixed since it is a developing phenomenon in which many processes and concepts are included. Eric Clark gives this definition: “Gentrification is a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital.”28 With this definition Clark indicates that factors such as “where” and “when” are not important – if the development is similar to what the definition recalls then it should be seen as gentrification.29

Some researchers make a distinction between gentrification and forced gentrification. The former is used for describing a spontaneous process while the later addresses a process triggered by external interventions either from a public or private sector.30 The distinction above can also be related to the separation of gentrification into waves, where the mentioned external intervention can be seen in the third wave. The basic element of the third wave gentrification is that it occurs as a strategy of urban planning. In these cases the official term is not gentrification but rather redevelopment, renewal or revitalization.31 Hackworth and Smith agree and state that gentrification during this wave is more related to large-scale capital than the earlier ones and that there are entire neighbourhoods affected.32

26 Hedin, Karin (2010). Gentrifiering, socialgeografisk polarisering och bostadspolitiskt skifte, Lund: Lunds universitet, p. 9
29 ibid
can encourage a gentrification process for example by promoting the area’s potential, giving tax abatements for rehabilitation, improving the public services, forcing landlords or homeowners to either rehabilitate or sell etcetera.\textsuperscript{33}

In the case of Istanbul, Tolga Islam has pointed out three different waves of gentrification. The first ones occurred during the 1980s and 1990s while the third one is defined as post-2000 forced gentrification. The forcing elements that Islam has seen in his investigations were: the investments of institutions bringing a new attraction; big real-estate investors systematically buying buildings from a specific area and renovating them according to the lifestyles of upper classes; an entrepreneur who bought all the buildings along a street in order to create a certain type of atmosphere with bars and restaurants; urban transformation projects in order to develop blocks through partnerships between public authorities or public and private stakeholders. The last mentioned, urban transformation projects, are executed according to Law no. 5366.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{3.2 What difference does it make?}

Positive outcomes from a gentrification process could for example be increased urban renovation and higher property values. Other outcomes are reduction of suburban sprawl, reduced vacancy rates, stabilisation of declining areas and encouragement of further development. Scholars have also tried to focus on the possible negative factors such as difficulties for the displaced former residents due to the loss of affordable housing but also problems on a higher level such as loss of social diversity and community resentment.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{3.3 Categories describing gentrification}

In this study, the processes that the term gentrification contains are looked upon from the perspectives of \textit{land value}, \textit{physical aspect}, \textit{social aspect} and \textit{function}. The categories will later be used as a base of comparison in the empirical and analytical chapters.

\textit{Land value}

Beauregard refers to Neil Smith and the uneven development of the city as a cause of gentrification. Low investments in specific parts of the city combined with higher investments in the suburb lead to ground rent being lower than its potential ground rent (with a higher and better use). When the rent-gap is big enough, the undervalued locations will be found by real-estate agents and investors who undertake actions that give the location its proper ground value.\textsuperscript{36} In some cases landlords have decreased the maintenance of the houses in order to increase the rent-gap. The process is called “filtering” if it is happening at the same time as affluent people are moving from the area and poor people are moving in. Karin Hedin states

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that this can both be seen as the contradiction of gentrification as well as its predecessor, since the rent-gap will motivate a change of land use.\(^{37}\)

The rent-gap theory has been criticised for not being a reliable predictor of gentrification since many districts with even bigger rent-gaps are not being gentrified. The rent-gap theory addresses the supply side as an explanation but many critics claim that the demand side and politics are as important for understanding gentrification.\(^{38}\)

**Physical aspect**

The gentrified areas often have attributes that characterise them and make them special in comparison to other neighbourhoods in the city. The characteristics can for example be a special type of architecture, a good socio-economic status, a unique spatial attribute such as a park or waterfront. They can be close to the central business district or leisure activities, have good access to transportation communication etcetera.\(^{39}\)

The existence of inexpensive housing that is possible to “invade” in urban areas, called gentrifiable areas, can have many causes. Beauregard writes that in some cases the houses have been abandoned by families, in favour of the suburbs, which are followed by an immigration of households with lower income and without the possibility to maintain the houses. This can be a beginning of housing deterioration which later results in an area with inexpensive housing. However, it is not necessary that the area is falling into pieces for being subject to gentrification, neither does a decayed neighbourhood automatically guarantee a gentrification.\(^{40}\)

Tolga Islam gives his view of how dilapidated housing was developed in presently gentrified areas in Istanbul. He claims that the creation of gentrifiable housing and easily displaced inhabitants are closely linked to each other and can be traced back to the shift between the 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) century. At that time, the later gentrified areas were inhabited by different ethnic and religious groups such as Greeks, Jews and Armenians who were a part of the middle- and upper-income classes. Because of poor economic conditions around the 1940s, as well as strong political pressure towards these minority groups, the inner-city neighbourhoods were abandoned. At the same time, the urban immigration of low-income groups from rural parts of Turkey increased rapidly along with industrialisation and urbanisation. Some of the newcomers settled in the emptied neighbourhoods and due to the lack of economic possibilities they were unable to maintain the houses.\(^{41}\)


According to the definition, the physical outcome of a gentrification is however an improvement in condition due to renovation or redevelopment of the neighbourhood.  

**Social aspect**

Beauregard describes gentrified people as living in inexpensive areas, which still are architecturally attractive, nearby the central business district. Many of the inhabitants are outside the labour market or having marginalised jobs. In relation to the potential gentrifiers they have a weak consumption potential and are more in need of public services because of their often numerous amount of children. Beauregard therefore sees a hypothetical gap between the services they demand and the tax they pay which, together with their low consumption, makes them possibly undesirable to the local authorities. The gentrified people can in short be described as missing both economic security and political power. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation and could make it hard to counteract gentrification supported by authorities.

While defining the potential gentrifiers the stereotype of the “yuppie” (young urban professional) is often used. The characteristics for this group are unmarried, childless households from the middleclass. Beauregard claims that it is the postponement of marriage and biological reproduction that, among other reasons, results in a group of people who wish to live in the centre, having consumption habits that are strongly connected to their lifestyle. He further suggests that when this group of people is looking for housing they prefer an urban area that is relatively inexpensive, because of their lack of savings, but where prices are likely to rise with renovation investments. Beauregard says that they want the housing to be a statement of taste and therefore look for areas with interesting architecture. The cliché of the yuppie is empirically founded but the image of the potential gentrifiers can also include working and retired “empty nest” households, households with children and also the “marginal gentrifiers” such as single parents in need of an affordable housing.

**Function**

There is an ongoing discussion about the definition of gentrification and its limits as an analytical term. It covers for example whether the process necessarily has to take place in the inner-city, regard historical buildings or exploit low income groups. The debate also refers to the function of an area; if the term should only address residential usage as in the classic definition of gentrification or if it can also include other types of functions. David Ley is one of the advocates for the latter opinion and claims that both redevelopment and renovation of

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sites that are either residential or non-residential from the beginning should be included in the definition. A further contribution to the debate on the functions of gentrified areas is Kevin Fox Gotham’s “tourism gentrification”, often coupled together with his study of the process that has taken place at Vieux Carre in New Orleans. According to him does the term refer to “the transformation of a middle-class neighbourhood into a relatively affluent and exclusive enclave marked by a proliferation of corporate entertainment and tourism venues”. The cause that Gotham addresses is that tourism has increased consumption activities in residential areas, which in the long run have enhanced gentrification together with a strengthened real-estate business.

### 3.4 Analysis tool
Table 1 summarises the theoretical outcome of gentrification presented in this chapter, according to the categories used. The land value alters from being undervalued to having an increased value. Before a gentrification takes place, the area has got a decayed physical aspect but with renovation the area becomes more aesthetically appealing where eventual historical values are more exposed and preserved. Concerning social changes, the gentrified people are from low income classes and have low education level meanwhile the gentrifiers are from higher socio-economic groups. The function of the area is either the same or changed after the gentrification. Depending on what definition is used, a change in function can be accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CHANGES DUE TO GENTRIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land value</td>
<td>undervalued $\rightarrow$ increased value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical aspect</td>
<td>decayed $\rightarrow$ improved physical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social aspect</td>
<td>low socio-economic groups $\rightarrow$ higher socio-economic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>classic view: a kept residential function after gentrification alternative: the function is not important for the term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Changes due to gentrification.

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50 ibid
4. VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

With the construction of the new travel centre and the renewal program as a background, the informants have given their views of the future they see for Yalı Mahallesi. Their ideas are categorised under change in value, physical change, social change and functional change.

4.1 Municipality and Local authority

The lowest level of authority is the “muhtar” to whom inhabitants first turn when they have problems in their neighbourhood. The muhtar was interviewed, as well as one of the people responsible for the planning of the renewal areas in Fatih Municipality. When the interviews took place the design of Yenikapı’s Renewal Area was not totally completed and because of that they could not say with certainty how the area would be developed.

Change in value

Informant 1, who has been the local responsible for the neighbourhood for 16 years, describes his experiences of an increased attention towards the area and says that many private investors have visited him and asked for names of house owners in Yalı Mahallesi. According to the informant the land value has increased and will continue to do so. On the other hand, the rents are still the same since no investment in renovation has been made.

Physical change

When asked about the renewal program, informant 1 states that the district’s historical buildings will be rebuilt or renovated. The rest will be either demolished or kept with the same façade but changed interior, making the apartments bigger than they are today. New houses will need building approval in order to fit the standards and the aesthetical restrictions.

Social change

The planning representative, informant 2, states that they do not want to send people away from the area, which they have seen happen in their other renewal districts. They would on the contrary like them to stay and enter the renewal program by deciding themselves which of the given options that would suit them. Residents who do not want to enter the program, or does not have money to enter, unfortunately have to move and the municipality takes hold of their property, according to law no. 5366 that makes the forced transfer in ownership possible.

Informant 1 explains that the landlords are changing and there are some investors buying numerous houses in the area. He also makes it clear that it will be impossible for the tenants to stay because of the increase in rent.

Functional change

Informant 1 seems quite certain of the future and states many times that it will be a beautiful place because of the municipality’s renewal project. When the neighbourhood is renovated, the travel centre is ready to use and the archaeology museum is opened the area will have residential, commercial and touristic function. He describes the result as somewhat similar to the Sultanahmet area which today includes hotels, restaurants and shopping centres.
Analysis
Informant 2’s wish for an integrated conservation of Yalı Mahallesi is somewhat contradicted by his statement of also aiming towards a touristic function, meaning hotels, and increased commercial activities. The details of the plan are, as stated above, not completed but the aim of a touristic or partly touristic function was repeatedly mentioned during the interviews.

It is also important to emphasize that there is a difference in approach towards landlords and tenants where the former seem to be more in focus for the authorities and perhaps possesses a more advantageous position. The landlords are therefore more likely to persist in the neighbourhood while the tenants do not receive much of the authorities’ attention. The landlords’ advantage should on the other hand not be overestimated since the demands on the owners to act according to given options are high and the threat of being evicted is even legally founded. The demands on payment also testify of a wish for keeping a set of inhabitants that are not under high economical pressure or in big need of social services.

4.2 Inhabitants and neighbourhood association in Yalı Mahallesi
Yalı-Der was founded in 2009 in order to protect the site’s historical values. The association gathers 110 landlords and tenants who want to make sure that the characteristics and the patterns of the neighbourhood will stay the same.\(^{51}\) When visiting Yalı Mahallesi and its inhabitants the reception of the author as a researcher were in some cases cold, which the inhabitants explained as stress for the future outcome of their neighbourhood as well as an uncertainty of how the information they gave would be used.

Change in value
Many inhabitants testify that the trade of houses has increased within the area, for example one person bought 20 to 30 houses in Yalı Mahallesi. The value of informant 3’s building, a three storey non-registered building, has increased from 60 000 dollar six years ago to 150 000 dollar today. He further expects Yalı Mahallesi to become a sub centre within five years and compares it to Bakırköy, a centre which also is located by the waterfront and has good means of transportation. Other residents also look positive on the future land value but see the assessment, in the letter sent from the authorities, as an underestimation of the value.\(^{52}\)

Physical change
The municipality has not given permission to construct or renovate anything within the site during the last 30 to 40 years. Because of this informant 5 thinks that the authorities have been waiting for the buildings to dilapidate and lose their historical value, which would make it possible to demolish them. Today the authorities are however focusing on the area and at least the façades of the historical houses may be preserved. The interior of a couple of houses are nevertheless likely to be merged together into one which would make the apartment’s floor surface big even though the houses still will look small from the outside.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{51}\) From Yalı-Der to Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı İstanbul Yenileme Alanları Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Bölge Kurulu Müdürlüğü), 12/07/2010

\(^{52}\) Informant 4

\(^{53}\) Informant 5
Social change
Informant 3, owner of a local market, stated that since the start of the Marmaray project six years ago, 20 to 30 rich people have bought buildings in the neighbourhood. The new owners do not live in their houses; they just wait for the renewal project to start. The informant sees this increased interest as a guarantee that the project is good and will bring welfare to the area and enlarged profit to his business.

There are also worried voices in the neighbourhood. Some of the inhabitants are scared of having to move from the site, especially tenants who do not own their house. Rumours about the results in other renewal sites have also reached Yalı Mahallesi with somewhat diverse accuracy. Informant 6, tenant, asked if her neighbourhood will turn out to be like Sulukule, another renewal area on the historic peninsula, “where poor people now live in villas”. Surprised and disappointed she received the information about the former inhabitants in Sulukule being moved to another area and replaced by people from a higher socio-economic group. She declared that she expect to be able to continue living in the same house, but renovated, and with the same rent as the last 37 years she lived there.

Informant 5, active in the neighbourhood association, also compares the current situation in Yali Mahallesi with Sulukule; he claims that those inhabitants went through the same process of municipal purchase of degraded buildings for low prices. Those who sold their apartments, he says, are in worse condition today than before because they can not buy an apartment of equal standard with the money the municipality offered.

Another landlord, informant 4, tells her story of how she feels forced to leave the neighbourhood because of the renewal program. She says that she does not want to choose any of the options given by the municipality – she does not think that a renovation is needed since both the façade and the interior of her house are good enough. She further argues that it would be against the human rights to make her move.

Functional change
Concerning the future and the consequences of the renewal program informant 5 predicts the area to be used as apartments or hotels. Other residents expect it to maintain residential but with a somewhat increased commercial activity.\textsuperscript{54}

Analysis
Throughout the interviews the landlords gave an impression of being better informed about the renewal program than the tenants. It is hard to pinpoint the reason for this difference, but the municipal focus on landlords could of course be a cause. The interviewed landlords also looked quite positive upon the future with expectations of a more wealthy life.

4.3 Real-estate agents
Two real-estate agents were interviewed in order to see how they, as investors, look upon the area. They were asked to give their ideas of the area’s potential and how they think it is likely to develop.

\textsuperscript{54} Informant 3 and informant 7
Change in value
“Such a good area!” the real-estate agent, informant 8, exclaims while analysing the site’s coming infrastructural changes. Good access to communication is very important for investors and those who are looking for a place to live - therefore Yalı Mahallesi will be very attractive. Factors such as having the Atatürk airport twenty minutes away by car, a ferry station around the corner, a travel centre with access to metro and train close by are all advantageous.

Physical change
When it comes to the built environment the agent predicts that the concrete buildings facing the waterfront will be replaced by luxurious residential houses. It will be a kind of gated community with high security level. Within the site historical houses will be renovated and probably used for residence. Their façade will be kept while the interior will be totally transformed. The non-registered houses are likely to be demolished since they lack both standard and historic aesthetic. On the vacant land that the demolished houses leave, new ones will be built and function as hotels. The road pattern will probably be kept as it is, in order to create an original atmosphere. The area facing the travel centre will be of commercial usage. Informant 9, also a real-estate agent, sees the future changes in Yalı Mahallesi’s built environment as somewhat less noticeable. She explains that investors are looking for large areas to develop and in Yalı Mahallesi the parcels and total surface is quite limited. This makes involvement of bigger companies and major investments unlikely, meaning that a physical change may not be very visible in the first place.

Social change
A physical change into luxurious houses, a gated community and construction of hotels also indicate a certain type of users. These would be foreigners and Istanbul’s high income class.

Functional change
The real-estate agent, informant 8, sees a future mixed function of the area: tourism, commercial and residential. However he underlines that the development he predicts require a good municipality plan which would make these types of investments possible.

Analysis
The general idea of Yalı Mahallesi’s future is positive, according to the agents, and it is considered a prosperous area. As stated in one of the interviews it is likely that big investors will not be involved, which reduce the probability of major touristic complex or shopping malls. This could also indicate that the residential function is more probable to be maintained.

4.4 Scholars
Local scholars gave their view of Marmaray’s effects on Yalı Mahallesi. These can be seen as experts on the subject at hand and have experience of local procedures and context.
Change in value
The interviewed scholars all agree that the great focus and the major investments in Yenikapi will cause an increase in land value for Yalı Mahallesi.\(^58\)

Physical change
Informant 12 states that the planned travel routes are too many for such a small area since physical limitations of Yenikapi will be exceeded. This could result in too much construction as well as too much circulation of people to handle. Concerning the buildings, the registered historical houses are predicted to be renovated while new houses are likely to be constructed where the non-registered buildings are standing today.\(^59\)

Social change
There is a clear correspondence between increased access to transportation and gentrification, according to informant 10. There will be much more people coming to Yalı Mahallesi, even to visit. The desirability of the neighbourhood will increase and it is obvious that there will be a change in the social fabric and function. Even if the municipality would not do anything in the area it would change by itself. He further concludes that it is probable that the residents will not be able to stay, which the other scholars agree on while declaring that part of the neighbourhood’s historical values are at risk with the likely loss of its residents.\(^60\)

Functional change
As a researcher on the subject of gentrification and urban transformation, informant 11 does not think that the Yalı Mahallesi area will maintain its residential function. Like other districts entering a renovation project it will instead transform into a touristic and commercial area, for example with hotels, pensions, restaurants and cafés. Factors causing this change are the small size of the site and the big distance to other residential districts. After a removal of today’s inhabitants it would hence be difficult to keep a pure residential function.

Analysis
Two of the scholars were of contradicting views on the relationship between function and gentrification. Informant 11 claims that if an area goes through a process resulting in a different function than the former, it can not be called gentrification but rather transformation. Informant 10 on the other hand states that the change in social fabric, to a higher socio-economic level, is the most important characteristic when defining an area as gentrified. The function of the district is therefore not important and transformation from residential to commercial or touristic usage can also be called gentrification.

\(^{58}\) Informant 10, informant 11 and Informant 12
\(^{59}\) Informant 11
\(^{60}\) Informant 11 and informant 12
5. DESCRIBING GENTRIFICATION?

In this chapter the information gathered during the interviews will be analysed with help from Table 2 where different stakeholders’ perceptions of future changes are exposed according to the categories used before. The chapter starts however with an analysis of the current situation in Yalı Mahallesi to see if the area has got the characteristics of a gentrifiable area.

5.1 The current situation in Yalı Mahallesi

In the rent-gap theory the uneven development within a city is seen as a cause for the production of an undervalued land which encourage gentrification. Furthermore filtering is seen as a possible first step towards gentrification. In one of the interviews the problem of an obstruction of renovation was addressed, which favours the idea of Yalı Mahallesi being undervalued and with that, potential as a gentrifiable area in this aspect.

The report written on behalf of UNESCO, referred to in chapter 2, states that the area has got historical values but that the physical environment is in need of maintenance. The general impression while visiting the area also speaks in favour of a needed renovation since many of the houses are quite run-down. When taking other spatial attributes into account, as Ley advocate, Yalı Mahallesi distinguishes itself from other sites since it is located at the waterfront - facing the Bosporus. These physical aspects are factors that Beauregard describes when pointing out what type of place a yuppie, and a potential gentrifier, prefers.

The current social situation is, as the survey in chapter 2 indicates, similar to Beauregard’s description of a gentrified population with characteristics such as low education level, low-income, marginalised jobs and households with many children. The people participating in the interviews also support Beauregard’s picture saying that the neighbourhood is similar to a village with “bad smells”, marginalised workers and presence of drugs.

The area’s function today is mainly residential with presence of some commercial activities such as local markets, restaurants and bars.

In short the current situation in Yalı Mahallesi could be seen as similar to the state of take-off in Table 1. In order to answer research question 1, it can be said that the site has got the characteristics of a gentrifiable area with its undervalued land, decayed physical environment, residents from a low socio-economic group and a mainly residential function.

5.2 Comparing the stakeholders’ views and the theoretical gentrification

Here we move on, studying the stakeholders’ ideas of how the future will look like for Yalı Mahallesi. A comparison between their visions will be done as well as changes due to gentrification presented in Table 1.

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61 Informant 5
Table 2. Stakeholders’ perception of the future for Yalı Mahallesi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>AUTHORITY</th>
<th>INHABITANTS</th>
<th>REAL-ESTATE</th>
<th>SCHOLARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in value</td>
<td>- increased</td>
<td>- increased</td>
<td>- increased</td>
<td>- increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical buildings:</td>
<td>- renovated</td>
<td>- renovated, kept with same façade but changed interior</td>
<td>- renovated</td>
<td>- renovated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-historical buildings:</td>
<td>- demolished or kept with same façade but changed interior</td>
<td></td>
<td>- demolished</td>
<td>- demolished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New constructions:</td>
<td></td>
<td>- immigration of rich people</td>
<td>- physical environment built for high-income users</td>
<td>- unlikely that the residents can stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social change</td>
<td></td>
<td>- wish the inhabitants to stay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- unlikely that the tenants can stay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional change</td>
<td>- residential, commercial, touristic</td>
<td>- residential, commercial, touristic</td>
<td>- residential, commercial, touristic</td>
<td>- commercial, touristic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in value
There do not seem to exist any doubts about the future land value. All groups of stakeholders think that the land value will increase due to the coming travel centre and the renewal program. This also goes hand in hand with the changes due to gentrification in Table 1.

Physical change
The stakeholders seem to have a quite similar idea of what will happen to the houses in the area. According to all of them, the historical buildings will be renovated but a distinction is in some cases made between the façade and the interior. It seems certain that the façade will be kept and upgraded but the interior of the houses could be facing a major change if two or more apartments are merged into one. Concerning the non-historical buildings, many people think that they are likely to be demolished. In the interviews with the inhabitants on the other hand, no one have shown a belief that any houses will be demolished. This is not very surprising since the municipality’s renewal program only refers to renovation of houses. According to the inhabitants they have not received any detailed information about the future plans which means that they do not have any incitements to think that the houses are threatened by demolition.

In Table 1, the physical outcome of gentrification is an improved condition in the built environment. The expressed expectations and descriptions made by the stakeholders testify to a future heading in that direction as well. According to the informants, the area will acquire an improved standard where at least the façade of the historical buildings will be renovated.
Social change
As mentioned earlier, the authorities wish the current inhabitants to stay in Yalı Mahallesi which according to many stakeholders is not likely to happen. Many people emphasize an already initiated immigration of high-income social groups into the neighbourhood. Also the real-estate representative’s sees a future built environment that focus’s on needs and wishes of upper classes. The interviewed inhabitants are the only group in this research that seem optimistic about their possibility to stay in the area. They do not, on the other hand, neglect the change in the socio-economic fabric and claim that they will stay, renovate their house and profit from the arrival of their new high-income neighbours. However, there are also examples of people who feel forced to leave which draws attention to Bearegard’s description of a gentrifiable population lacking economic and political power to oppose the authorities.

Functional change
A difference in expectation of future function is the inhabitants’ expressed vision of a continued residential function while the authorities seem to focus on the possibilities of attracting tourists. Real-estate agents think that the function can be mixed but with a much more increased commercial and touristic activity than today. Scholars were also sceptical about the possibility of keeping the residential function, at least in its pure form.

In order to answer research question 2, if the stakeholders’ descriptions indicate an ongoing gentrification process, the comparison is here summarised. It can be said that the stakeholders’ general perception and expectations are quite similar regarding land value and physical change. Their answers, in these categories, also follow the idea of how a gentrified area would look. In general the descriptions of change in social setting are like the change in Table 1, except the inhabitants which have several different ideas about what will happen. Also in the case of function the opinions differ. Whether their ideas of future function are compatible with gentrification depends on the theoretical debate, see the next chapter.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION
The research questions that were answered in the previous chapter will here be followed by a concluding discussion concerning the study and future research.

6.1 A gentrified future?
As concluded in chapter 5, Yalı Mahallesi has got the characteristics of a gentrifiable area. The interviewed stakeholders can also be said to share an overall idea of a change in land value, social fabric, physical condition and function similar to a gentrification. Even though there are factors indicating a gentrification process it is not certain to take place. There are two different ways of responding negatively to the question heading this section. The first would be to state that the definition of gentrification does not fit with the future described by the stakeholders in this study. The other is by saying that there are factors of importance that are still not analysed.
As mentioned before, the discussion whether a change of function can be accepted within the term of gentrification came up in the interviews with the scholars: one saying that it can while the other saying that it can not. Tourism gentrification was in chapter 3 presented as an example of the width of the term. Even though Yalı Mahallesi may not turn out to be a touristic centre as big as New Orleans’ French quarters the example speaks in favour of theoretically accepting the future of Yalı Mahallesi, with or without a residential function, as a potentially gentrified area.

Scholars claim that gentrification is a complex concept involving many different processes. The term’s core is however neither hard to understand nor hard to point out. What it all comes down to is a shift in an area’s social setting, changing from a low socio-economic group to a higher, as a result of an improvement in physical condition. If such a change is noticed the concept of gentrification can be addressed.

Moving on to the second way of arguing against gentrification in Yalı Mahallesi, looking for factors that need to be analysed. Once again, the conditions in Yalı Mahallesi seem to have the characteristics of a gentrifiable area. This represent the supply side of gentrification but as stated in chapter 3 is it also important to look at the demand side: what is the actual demand for housing in Yalı Mahallesi? Who would be the investor in the area? These questions would be interesting to answer in order to look in a more holistic way on Yalı Mahallesi’s potential and future. The second research question does however attempt to explore a proposal of future outcome by comparing stakeholders’ ideas to the theoretical outcomes of a gentrification. Looking back at the study, the second question would have been even further answered if inhabitants that newly moved in were interviewed in order to see their expectations and their reasons for choosing Yalı Mahallesi. It could also be interesting to complement the essay with a quantitative study on change in land value, number of renovation permits given, socio-economic changes over time and change in trade of houses.

6.2 Forced gentrification?
Since the interviewed stakeholders repeatedly refer to Yalı Mahallesi as being a part of a renewal program, led by the municipality, the question whether to call eventual gentrification as “forced” occurs. The involvement of the municipality is quite evident, recalling the letter sent from the municipality to the landlords in Yalı Mahallesi, and does therefore favour a forced gentrification. Regardless of the terminology, the authorities have a major role in the future outcome since they both have the mandate to design the physical environment and the legal power to expropriate the inhabitants. They can probably also influence the future function of the area – whether it will have a touristic, commercial or maintained residential usage.

6.3 Reliability and validity
Reliability concerns the quality of information and how the study and the measurements are carried out.62 In this study interviews were used as a method and what is important to bear in mind is that they were mostly conducted with the help of a translator. There is a certain risk

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that information has been misunderstood in the process. Attempts for reducing these shortcomings were made by recording the interviews as well as letting the translator read the empirical chapter. The analysis tool, Table 1, was created by the researcher based solely on this study and may therefore not be valid for universal use.

Another way of looking at the reliability is by analysing the informant’s interests in giving information. Inhabitants may have been interested in giving selected information about the municipal procedure depending on their level of trust towards the municipality. The authorities may as well have liked to hold back some information in order to keep plans confidential until they set them into action. This ambition was made evident by their wish for the researcher to sign a paper stating that the information given would not reach media.

Validity refers to the question if we are really measuring what we are supposed to measure. What the essay aims to investigate, stated in chapter 1, is to *explore social consequences of an infrastructural project and changed access to public transportation*. This is done with the help of gentrification theories and hence does not give information about *all* types of social consequences due to infrastructural changes. The validity in relation to the research questions has to be seen in accordance with the number of stakeholders looked upon. A more extensive study should perhaps involve more stakeholders, as well as more people representing each group.

### 6.4 Threats and opportunities

The aim of this study has not been to learn what positive or negative consequences a gentrification can cause in an area. However, it can be important to be aware of eventual effects so that the negative ones can be avoided and the positive can be enhanced. In the case of Yalı Mahallesi, a crucial factor to look upon could be the risk of losing historical values due to changes in physical and social setting. Many of the informants pointed out this fear either as a result of a careless renovation process or because of today’s inhabitants leaving the area.

The opportunities for the area are many since the main reason for the future changes is the arrival of a more developed transportation network. This will facilitate the displacement within Istanbul and give Yalı Mahallesi a very advantageous position. Whoever the future residents may be, they are likely to experience the improved status of the neighbourhood.

The Turkish authorities recognise the need of better infrastructure in order to solve the problems of traffic. However, one change often leads to another. In this case, the future of Yalı Mahallesi is still uncertain but it is sure that the voices of various stakeholders speak of an upcoming change similar to a gentrification process.

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Informant 7: inhabitant, 2011-04-24
Informant 8: real-estate agent, 2011-04-22
Informant 9: real-estate agent, 2011-04-26
Informant 10: scholar, 2011-04-25
Informant 11: scholar, 2011-04-18
Informant 12: scholar, 2011-04-18

**Internet**
INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following questions constitute the base from which the interviews have proceeded. Further questions have also been developed depending on the profession and the role of the informant.

Today
- What is your relation to Yalı Mahallesi and Yenikapı?

- How would you describe Yalı Mahallesi?
  - Inhabitants, houses, atmosphere, commercial activity etc.

- What would you point out as special features in Yalı Mahallesi?

- Have you noticed any changes in Yalı Mahallesi recently?
  - Trade of houses, renovation, commercial activity, immigration/migration of inhabitants etc.

Future
- How do you look upon the future development of Yenikapı and Yalı Mahallesi in particular?
  - How do you think that the neighbourhood will be like in five years?

- What importance do you think that the Marmaray and Metro have got for the neighbourhood?
  - Land value, function, attraction etc.

- Does the development in Yalı Mahallesi depend on other stakeholders? Which ones?