

# 06

## URBAN POOR IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR OF GAZİANTEP, TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

The poor or people who were close to the poverty line, built 'slums' to meet their shelter needs- the basic needs of humanity. They turned to the informal, in other words, shadow sectors, due to their livelihood concerns and lack of employment. Reasons such as rapid population growth, intensive migration, inter-regional development difference, and high unemployment rates bring about urban poverty and push people to the informal sector. The informal sector hides unemployment rather than preventing it. In this article, the informal sector and the problem of urban poverty in Gaziantep Turkey are focussed. A questionnaire was conducted among the targetted population to understand the social and spatial dimensions of the problem. Upon observations, in-depth interviews and surveys as part of the studies, an urban transformation project was proposed in Güneş neighbourhood -where urban poverty and informal sector are most significant. With this project, it will be possible to ensure that the urban poor, who were formerly excluded from social and urban life, will live in better quality housing areas and have access to social-cultural activities. In this context, the identification of the problems faced by people working in the informal sector had provided solutions and policies for the holistic development of the neighbourhood.

**Keyword:** *Urban Poverty, Informal Sector, Urban Design, Gaziantep*

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### INTRODUCTION

A *city* can be defined as a residential area where the majority of the population works in the service, industrial or business sectors and does not specialise in agricultural work.

*Urbanisation* is a demographic event that includes the growth of the city. It is the transformation process of environmental and social life with the shift of the working population from the agricultural sector to the industrial and service sector (Keleş, 1998; Kaypak, 2013).

*Urban poverty* is the poverty experienced in cities. It can also be thought as the lack of some resources in economic and sociological fields in the city as well as imbalance, service and equipment deficiencies, impaired functionality and disorderliness of the city (Masika et al., 1997). It affects people who have migrated from rural to urban areas without property and participate in working life in informal sectors and lives in slums due to economic and political reasons (Özcan and Karakılıç, 2007; Ergun and Koçancı 2017).

This group, which can be named as “*the silent majority of the world*” (Kapar, 2007), is not only unable to obtain financial gain to sustain their lives in urban areas but also cannot benefit from rights such as health, education and judiciary. This group also faces problems with citizenship and exclusion, being pushed to the skirts, being exposed to violence, having problems in terms of social status and living in insecure and unhealthy environments (Bayraktutan and Akatay, 2012; Es, et al., 2013; Türk, 2017). The fact that most of the job opportunities in the city are temporary and unsecured along with existing urban poverty breaks the resilience of the new immigrant urban poor and causes them to be excluded from the society (Adaman and Keyder, 2006; Kaypak, 2013). *The sector* can be defined as ‘labour market segmentation’ in developing countries (Atauz and Atauz, 1992). *Formal sector* has the meaning of formal, regular and formative (TDK, 2019).

*Informal sector* has many different definitions. In general, Informal sector can be defined as the sector that is excluded from formal employment types and not taxed or partially taxed (Kalfa, 2016). *The Urban Informal Sector (UIS)* is the department that handles the urban part of the informal sector and does not include the rural sector. The informal economy is a very complex phenomenon. It even covers the underground or criminal world. It is a field that can be moulded according to all economic models of the world (Atauz and Atauz, 1992).

This article aims to answer questions such as “How can the difficulties experienced by the urban poor in Gaziantep Güneş Quarter be facilitated within the framework of the urban planning discipline? What are the policies and strategies that can be implemented to legalise these groups that earn their living in informal ways?” This problem does not only exist in the Gaziantep in particular but also prevail in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey and worldwide. Elimination of this problem in Güneş Quarter will have positive effects on the other quarters such as Şahinbey District and Gaziantep Province.

The article consists of an introduction, literature review, methodology, field survey and conclusion sections. In the introduction, the reasons for the emergence of urban poverty and the informal sector were examined. The literature review reviewed the informal sector and urban poverty in the world and Turkey. At the field survey section, the opinions of the public and private institutions and the projects were highlighted, and findings related to the case study area were discussed. Recommendations are presented in the conclusion section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

“Poverty means that the income level from employment is lower than basic human needs. Poverty-stricken people and families go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention” (URL 1).

Six types of poverty status were “situational, generational, absolute, relative, urban, and rural. Urban poverty occurs in metropolitan areas with populations of at least 50,000 people. The urban poor deal with a complex aggregate of chronic and acute stressors (including crowding, violence, and noise) and are dependent on often-inadequate large-city services” (Jensen, 2009).

Urban poverty refers to exclusion from the labour market and inability to access urban services such as health, education and infrastructure. Accordingly, the urban poor feels excluded, powerless, isolated and oppressed. This situation brings along important economic, cultural and social problems (Kaypak, 2013).

The common feature of all informal sectors is unprotected, unregulated and unsecured employment. There persist a no-gain continuity. The most important motivation of a person working in the informal sector is the hope of earning more than the money earned the day before. Although the informal sector exists in the economic and social structure of many countries, it is universally recognised as an issue to address. The informal sector is common in less developed countries. Due to problems such as scarce resources, rapid population growth and insufficient urban employment, the informal sector becomes a permanent feature in these countries (Özkul and Kanyılmaz, 2012).

According to another view, poverty and informal employment should not be handled as an economic problem but should be considered together with social and cultural factors. This phenomenon is common not only in underdeveloped and developing countries but generally found worldwide (Bağırzade, 2012).

Urban poverty and unregistered employment occur more in cities with high population growth rates and high immigration rates. Gaziantep’s border gate to Syria is an important factor in increasing these rates. Industrial infrastructure has increased job opportunities. However, more immigrants are coming into the city than job opportunities can afford. Due to its geographical location and development, Gaziantep receives a high number of immigrants, and the rate of urbanisation is increasing gradually day by day. The majority of the urban poor working in the informal sector in Gaziantep live in the city centre due to job opportunities and easy access. The population of Gaziantep has increased significantly with the immigration of Syrians since 2011. Syrian immigrants constitute approximately 22% of Gaziantep’s population (URL 2; SEGE, 2011).

	Reasons	Political Reasons	Problems
<b>Income Insufficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Inability to access essential goods and services</li> <li>-Unqualified workforce and temporary jobs</li> <li>-High unemployment rate</li> <li>-The cost of living</li> <li>-Low paid jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Economic crises</li> <li>-The insufficiency of social and physical structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Housing problems</li> <li>-Unhealthy living areas</li> <li>-The decline of social capital and rising crime rates</li> </ul>
<b>Health Insufficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Unhealthy living conditions</li> <li>-Coexistence of residential and industrial areas</li> <li>-Infectious diseases</li> <li>-Unsafe working conditions</li> <li>-Physical disability</li> <li>-Mental disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The inability to protect the environment</li> <li>- Unsolved solid waste and water problems</li> <li>-Insufficient job and social security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Health problems caused by lack of education</li> <li>- Neglected health due to financial difficulties</li> </ul>
<b>Education Insufficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The insufficient number of schools</li> <li>-Education costs</li> <li>-Low education level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The lack of public education infrastructure</li> <li>- Accessibility problem to educational institutions</li> <li>- Insufficient boarding schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Employment problems</li> <li>-Not organizing activities for young people</li> <li>-Racial crime</li> </ul>
<b>Security Insufficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The existence of illegal housing areas</li> <li>-The lack of minimum housing standards</li> <li>-Social exclusion and urban violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The problem of land policies</li> <li>- Legal regulations have very costly and difficult processes for licensed structures</li> <li>- Security vulnerabilities and spatial disconnections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The increase of people working in the informal sector</li> <li>- Increased security costs</li> <li>-Social exclusion</li> <li>-The lack of urban services</li> </ul>

Figure 1: The reasons and consequences of poverty (Source: Zastrow & Bowker, 1984)

It is possible to classify urban informal sector employees in three groups as follows:

- (i) Individual workers such as peddlers, and solid waste collectors form a group;
- (ii) People who work in a home environment such as housekeeping and babysitting are in the second group; and
- (iii) Small producers who do not meet the social security of their employees constitute the other group.

Poverty, immigration, unemployment and unplanned urbanisation are the most important reasons for the emergence of occupations in the informal sector (Özkul and Kanyılmaz, 2012).

The number of people employed in the informal sector is about 1.34 million in Turkey. The vast majority of this population are male workers. The survey according to their educational status found 62% of them are primary school graduates, 14% are secondary school graduates, 9% are those who do not graduate from any school, and 2% are the rate of college graduates. About 75% of the workplaces in this sector operate continuously, 4% work seasonally, and 21% work irregularly, whenever they find a job (Özkul and Kanyılmaz, 2012).

According to the results of the TÜRK-İŞ Research for January 2020; Turkey hunger limit for a family of 4 is 2.219,45 TL (290 US \$). Turkey poverty line for a family of 4 is 7.229,49 TL (942 US \$) (URL 3).

Figure 2 shows that a large proportion of the income derived from economic sectors was from the informal sector in Turkey.

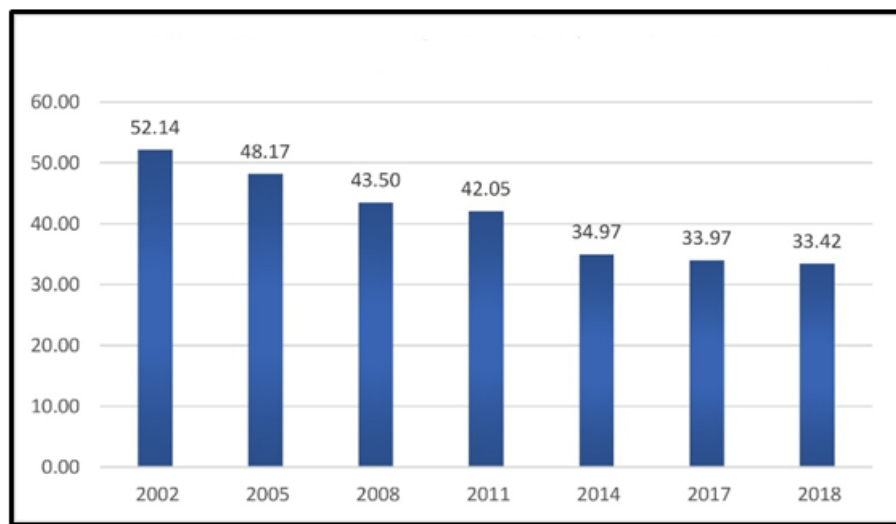


Figure 2: The ratio of people employed in the informal sector in Turkey (Source: TÜİK, 2019).

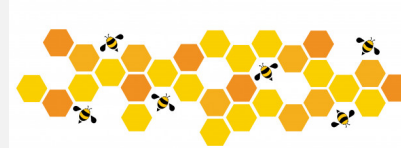
## METHODOLOGY

For this research, the literature review by examining the literature on urban poverty and informal sector issues was conducted. Interviews with institutions and organisations (İŞ-KUR, SSI, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, District Governorships, Municipal Police Directorate) within the scope of the study were then carried out in Gaziantep between 21-27 October 2019.

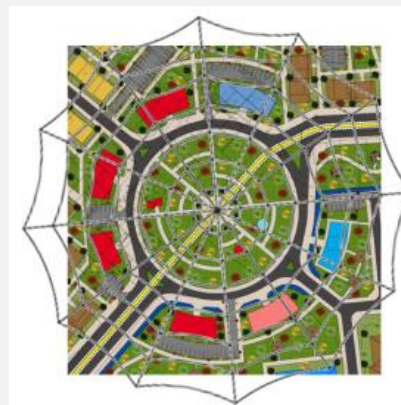
Observations, interviews and surveys were conducted to identify the problems in the sampling area. Interview questionnaire to approximately 40 people working in the informal sector was also carried out.

The computer software that allows two and three-dimensional drawing, visualisation, design and modelling such as SketchUp, Lumion and Infracore360 were utilised during the urban design project.

An urban transformation project was proposed in a pilot region to improve the quality of life of the urban poor working in the informal sector in Gaziantep. The design criteria presented below are considered in this project.



One of the most beautiful patterns in nature is the hexagon. All sides of the regular hexagon are the same length, and all angles are equal. Moreover, the hexagon shape can be seen as symmetrical when viewed from all sides. Hexagon has a stable and aesthetic geometric shape. It is noteworthy that bees use hexagon shape in honeycombs.



Research on honeycomb has proven that hexagonal prism has a solid structure, aesthetic appearance and ability to store more in a small area. The hexagon enables the usage of the area efficiently and obtaining facilities such as low cost and high efficiency (URL 4)..



In the sampling area, a design inspired by cobweb and hexagonal form was created. The decision addressing the problematic area was by implementing similar to a spider completing a broken thread in the cobweb.

Figure 3: Conceptual Scheme (Source: Authors, 2020)

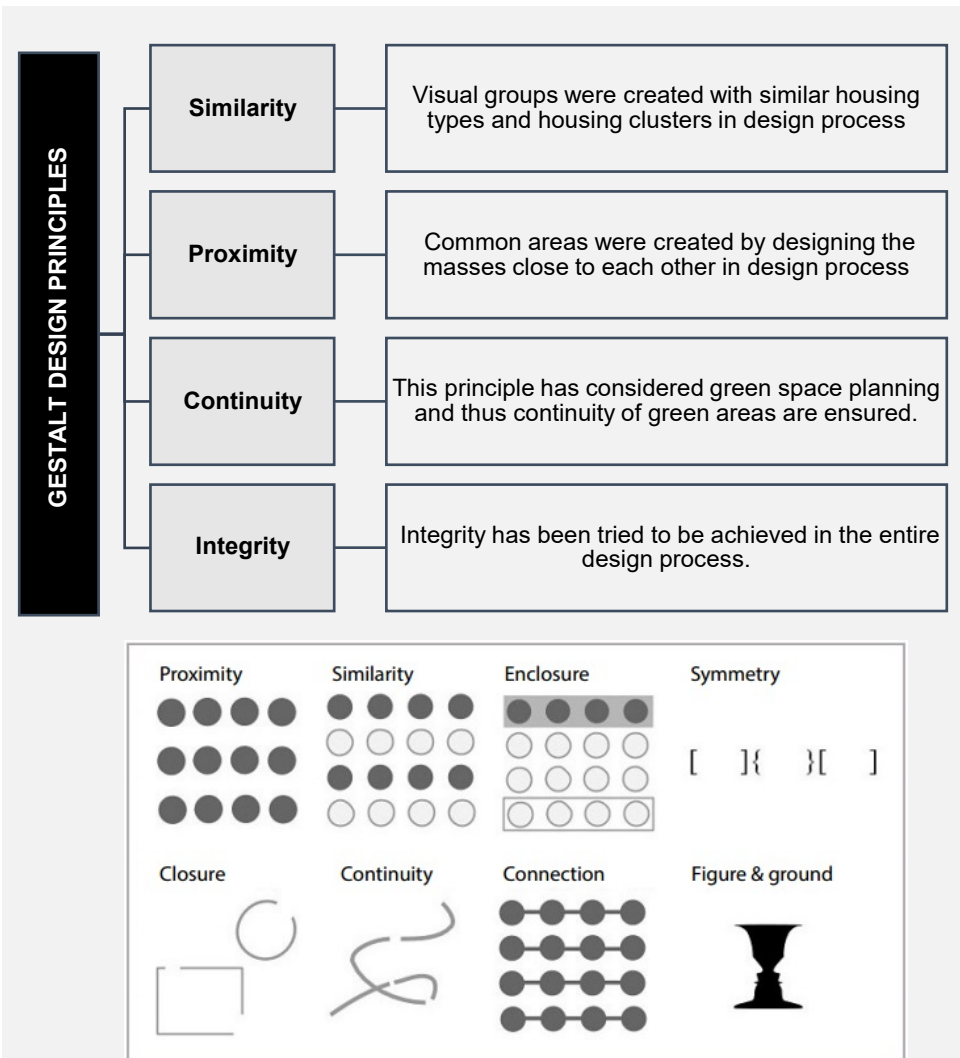


Figure 4: Gestalt Design Principles (Source: URL 5)

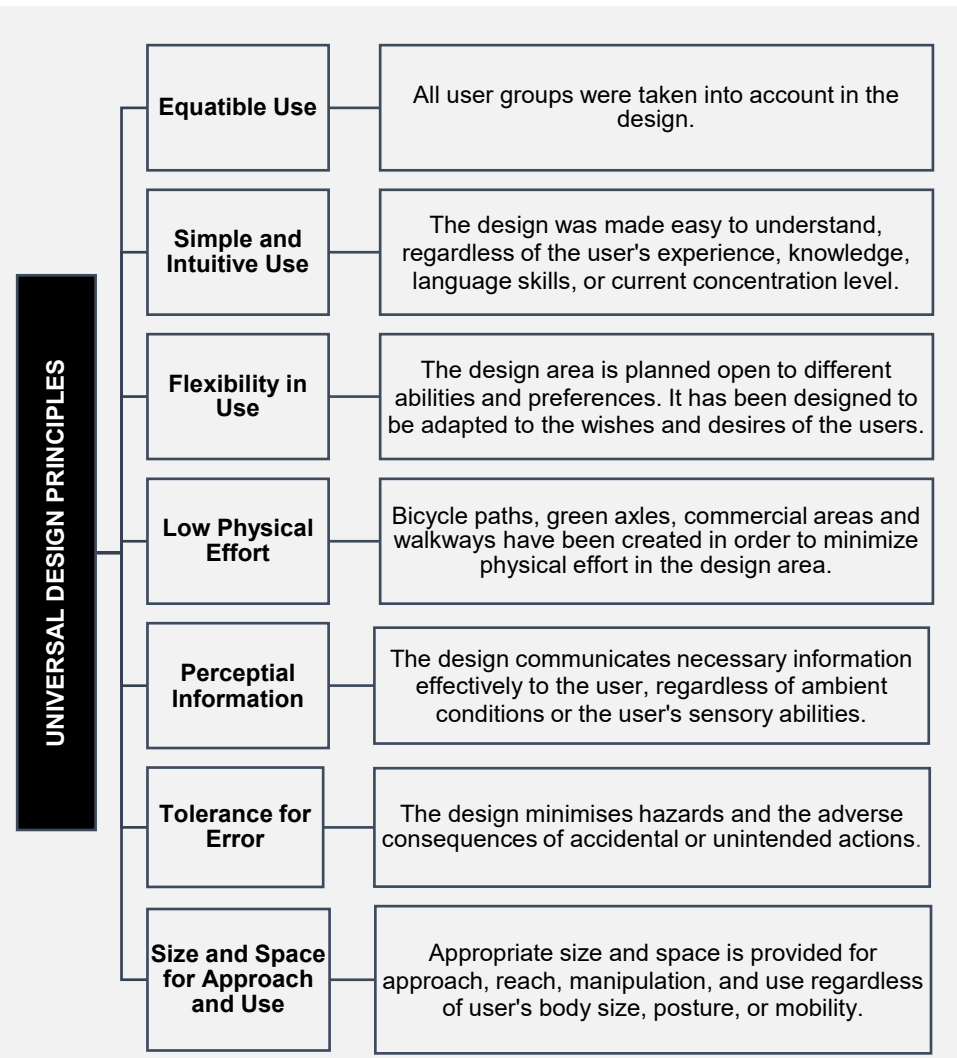


Figure 6: Universal Design Principles (Source: URL 6)

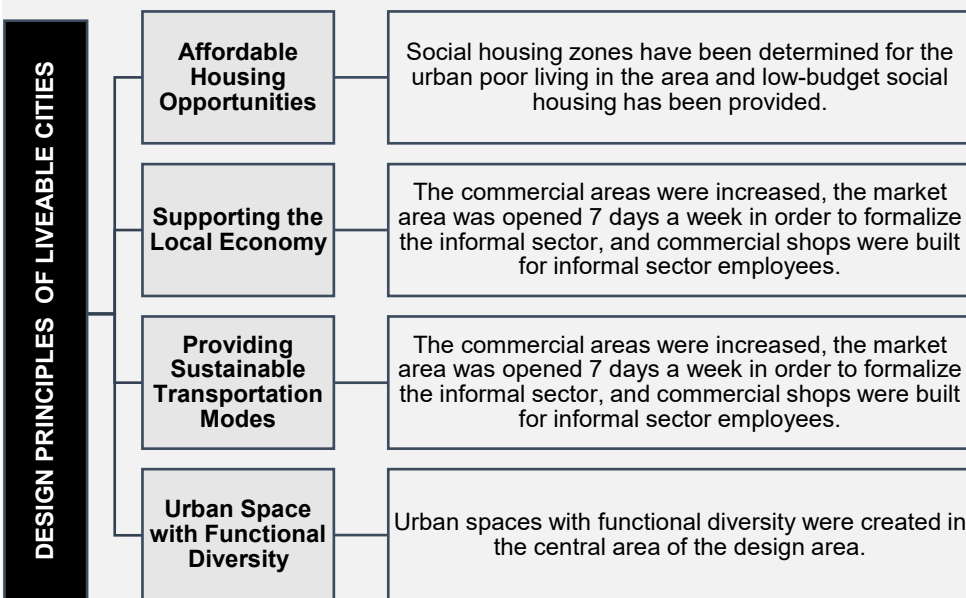


Figure 5: Design Principles of Liveable Cities

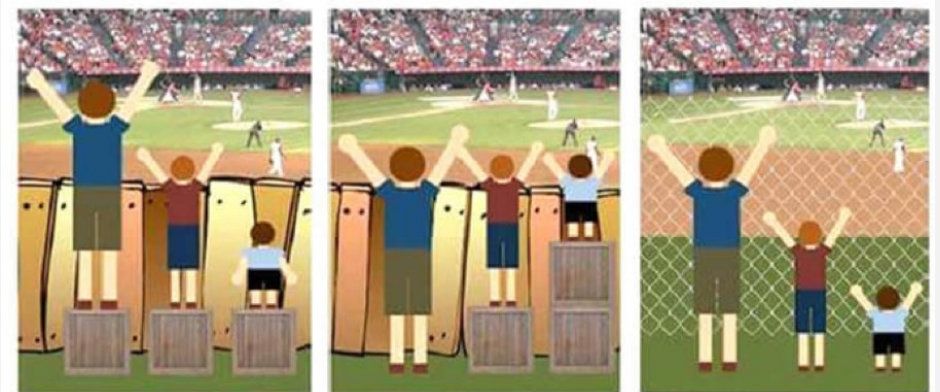


Figure 7: Difference between Accessibility, Accommodation and Universal Design (Source: URL 7)

## FIELD SURVEY

“Gaziantep is one of the great melting pots of civilisation, so it is not surprising that this city features great traditions, stunning history, and so much more. It is the sixth-largest Turkish city, one of the oldest settlements in Anatolia, located in Southeastern Anatolian of Turkey. Gaziantep, a city whose roots go back more than ten thousands years, that reflects the power of Mesopotamia” (URL 8).



Figure 8: Location of Gaziantep

According to the interview with Gaziantep SSI (Social Security Institution), unregistered workers generally work in small industrial sites, organised industrial zones and labour-intensive jobs. These workers are generally Syrians and also Turks with financial difficulties. The rate of unregistered workers in Turkey is estimated to be approximately 40%. This rate is expected to be 50% and above in Gaziantep.

Within the scope of the field study, an interview questionnaire was conducted with approximately 40 people working in the informal sector. This questionnaire, consisting of 38 questions, was asked to peddlers.

Approximately 75% of the informal sector employees participating in the survey were over the age of 30, and 95% are male. It is observed that most of these workers were married and born in the city or district centre. It is also observed that the education level among the majority of the participants was at the literacy level of primary school graduates. Their monthly income is below the minimum wage.

About 79% of the respondents stated that they do not have any social security. Another 48% of the participants stated that they spend the majority of their income on food, and 29% for house rent. About 47% of the participants see the economic situation of the residential neighbourhood as the lower-income group, and 45% see it as the lower-middle-income group. They define themselves as 55% lower class and 45% as lower-middle class.

Most of the informal sector employees who participated in the survey started working at the age of 17. About 50% of them stated that they would continue their work as long as they are healthy, and 92% of them want to live in the city.

It is also observed that the expectations of the participants on their future are (i) 21% wanted to live calmly and peacefully, (ii) 24% wanted an economically comfortable life and (iii) 55% with no expectations of the future.



Figure 9: Informal Sector Employees in Gaziantep City Center (Source: Authors, 2019)



Figure 10: A Young Peddler in Gaziantep (Source: URL 9)

## CONCEPTUAL SCHEME

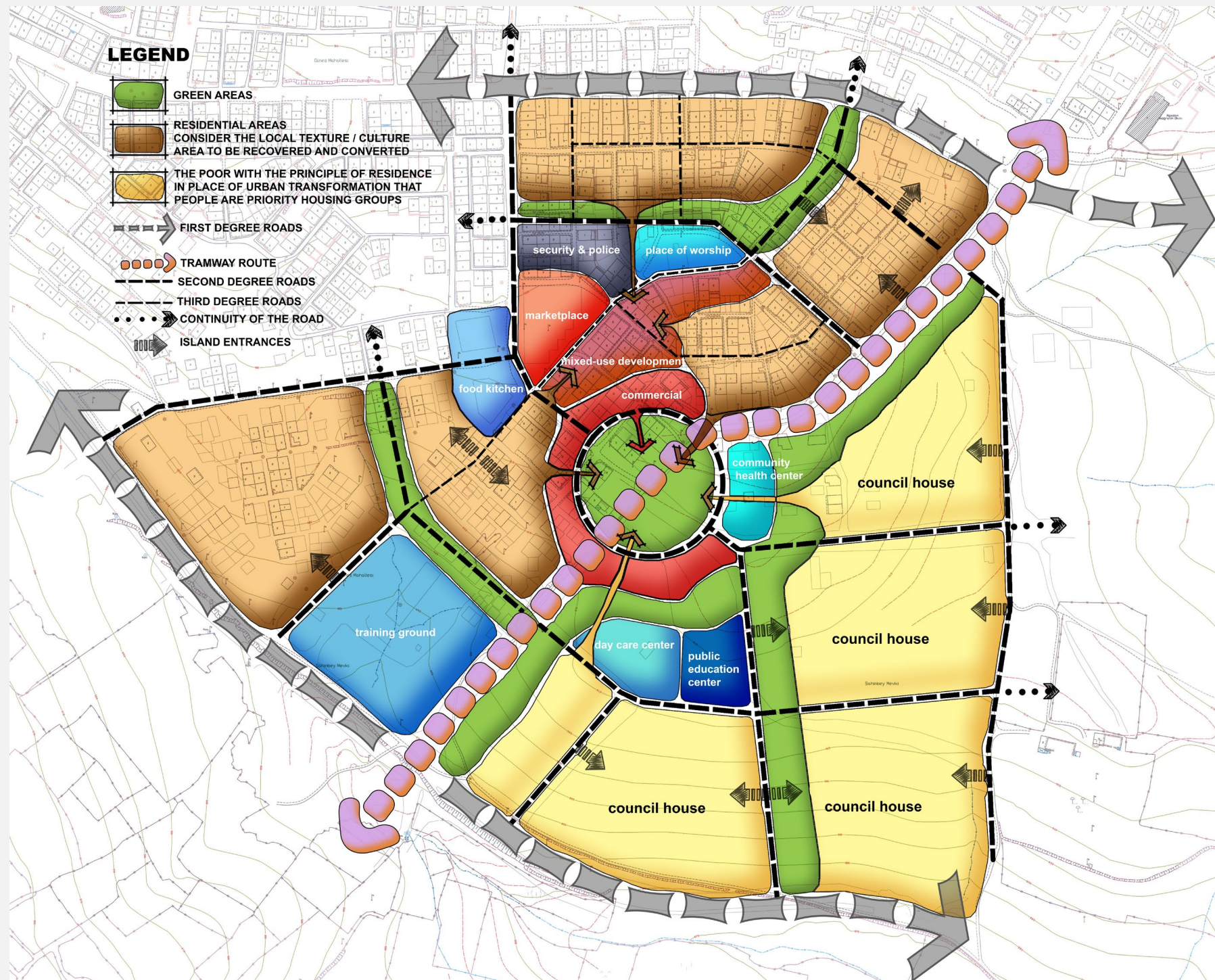


Figure 11: Coceptual Scheme  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

A 40-hectare sampling area covering urban transformation and social housing areas was selected as the design area after considering the plan decisions made on the Strategic Spatial Plan. Universal design criteria were determined along with various sources of inspiration, and a scenario specific to the field was designed. An alternative transportation hub, green space continuity and commercial area circulation were provided in areas with urban poverty. Furthermore, an urban transformation project was proposed by preserving the urban and social fabric of the quarter. Social shop opportunities and certified hawkers were considered in planning to prevent the growth of the informal sector and to increase the quality of life. The proposal was planned where the bazaar area would operate seven days a week instead of one day and be controlled by the municipal police. The policy of on-site transformation was adopted instead of displacement with the social housing areas proposed within the scope of urban transformation.

## BUILDING TYPOLOGY

	DETAIL	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	
HOUSING TYPE-1				<p>HOUSING TYPE: APARTMENT                      CONSTRUCTION TYPE: SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE                      BUILDING FLOOR NUMBER: 3                      FLOORS NUMBER OF FLATS ON THE FLOOR: 2                      APARTMENT HALL: 12 M2                      FLAT AREA: 80 m2                      NUMBER OF ROOMS: 2 + 1                      HEIGHT: 9 M</p>
HOUSING TYPE-2				<p>HOUSING TYPE: APARTMENT                      CONSTRUCTION TYPE: SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE                      BUILDING FLOOR NUMBER: 3 FLOORS                      NUMBER OF FLATS ON THE FLOOR: 2                      APARTMENT HALL: 12 M2                      FLAT AREA: 100 M2                      NUMBER OF ROOMS: 2 + 1                      HEIGHT: 9 M</p>
HOUSING TYPE-3				<p>HOUSING TYPE: APARTMENT                      CONSTRUCTION TYPE: SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE                      BUILDING FLOOR NUMBER: 3 FLOORS                      NUMBER OF FLATS ON THE FLOOR: 2                      APARTMENT HALL: 12 M2                      FLAT AREA: 100 M2                      NUMBER OF ROOMS: 2 + 1                      HEIGHT: 9 M</p>
HOUSING TYPE-4				<p>HOUSING TYPE: APARTMENT                      CONSTRUCTION TYPE: SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE                      BUILDING FLOOR NUMBER: 3 FLOORS                      NUMBER OF FLATS ON THE FLOOR: 2                      APARTMENT HALL: 12 M2                      FLAT AREA: 140 M2                      NUMBER OF ROOMS: 3 + 1                      HEIGHT: 9 M</p>
HOUSING TYPE-5				<p>HOUSING TYPE: APARTMENT                      CONSTRUCTION TYPE: DETACHED HOUSE                      BUILDING FLOOR NUMBER: 4 STOREY                      NUMBER OF FLATS ON THE FLOOR: 2                      APARTMENT HALL: 12 M2                      FLAT AREA: 100 M2                      NUMBER OF ROOMS: 3 + 1                      HEIGHT: 12 M</p>

Figure 12: Building Typology of Urban Design Project (Source: Authors, 2020)

## URBAN DESIGN PROJECT

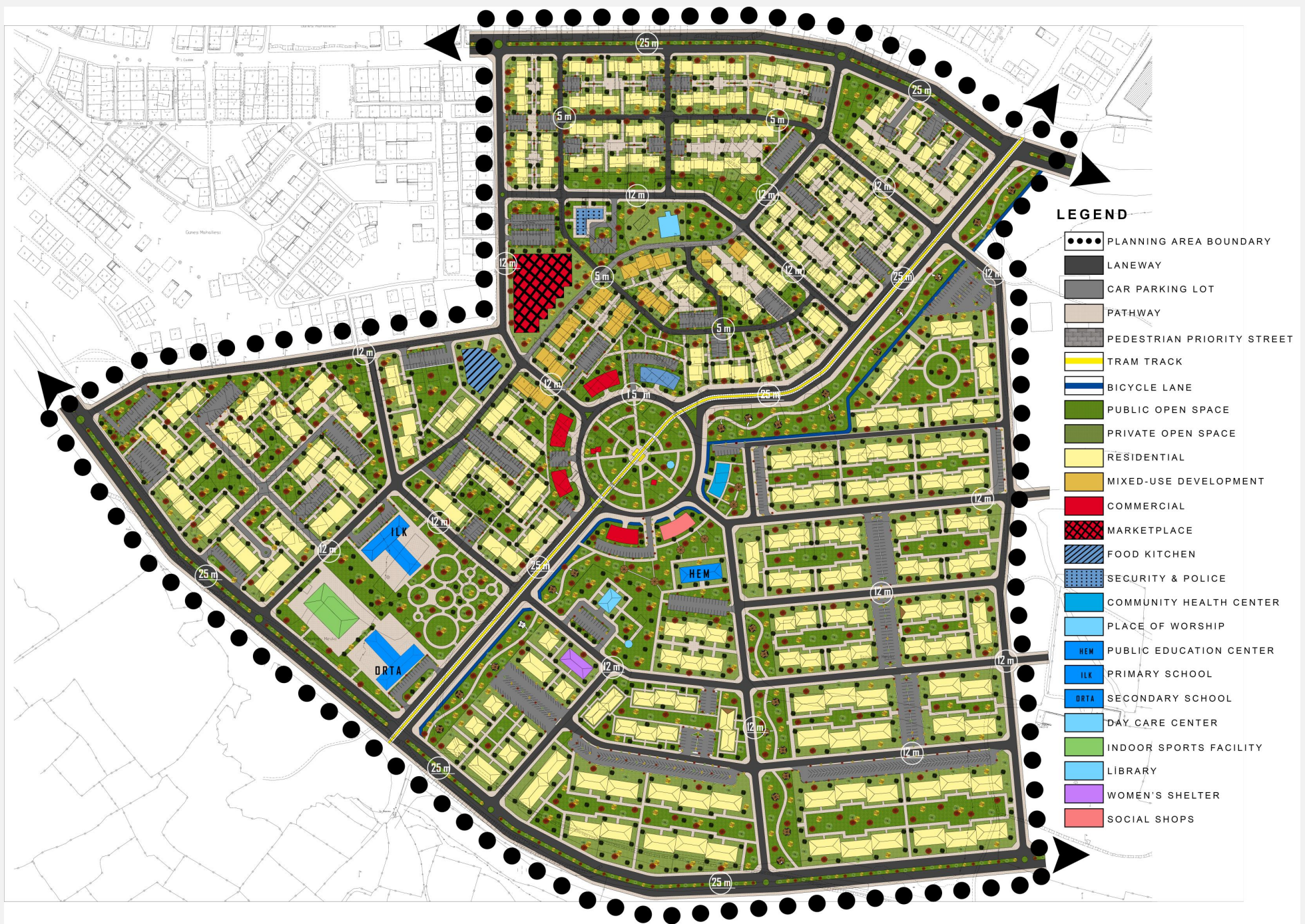


Figure 13: Urban Design Project  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

In the urban design study created in line with the conceptual scheme, the urban transformation was planned following the organic texture of the city. In this study, which was designed based on the Spatial Standards Building Regulation, the social and cultural texture is preserved. In the quarter, where roof culture and street life are active, common courtyards are created, and a spatial setup planned in such a way that these courtyards lead to the larger courtyard of the quarter. Pedestrian access was facilitated by considering commercial and public spaces in the quarter centre. The study also aimed at providing housing production suitable for every family type through diversification.



## AERIAL VIEW OF URBAN DESIGN PROJECT AREA



Figure 14: Aerial View of Urban Design Project Area  
(Source: Authors, 2020)



The social residences are located in the east of the urban design area while areas where urban transformation will occur are located in the west. In the quarter with transportation problems, the road texture was preserved and a system focused on public transportation was designed.



Figure 15: Aerial View of Social Housing Areas  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

The traditional roof culture and social fabric of the residences of the quarter were preserved.



The adequate and efficient education, health and safety sectors. Green space continuity and street life were maintained.



Employment opportunities were provided by means of meal centre, public education centre, nursery and social shops.

Figure 16: Aerial View of Social Facility Areas  
(Source: Authors, 2020)



Figure 17: Aerial View of Housing Areas  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

The bazaar area was intended to be allocated for informal workers during its inactive days.

A municipal police station was designed to be built next to it.



Figure 18: View of Bazaar Area  
(Source: Authors, 2020)



Public and commercial spaces concentrated in the quarter centre were designed in a way that can be accessed by all segment in the society.



A park in the city centre was proposed for the safety of the tram stop and green space sustainability.

Figure 19: View of Park Area  
(Source: Authors, 2020)



Figure 20: View of Housing Areas  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

**Analysis 1**

Population growth and unemployment problem

**Proposal 1**

Job opportunities should be increased.

Urban agriculture should be encouraged.

**Analysis 2**

Social and economic problems of peddlers

**Proposal 2**

It should be ensured that peddlers work in regular and official jobs.

New regular bazaar areas should be established.

Chambers, associations and cooperatives should be established for peddlers.

There should be agents for peddlers and the needs of peddlers should be determined.

**Analysis 3**

Housing problems of the urban poor living in unhealthy settlements

**Proposal 3**

Alternative to slums, inexpensive social housing areas should be created.

Urban transformation projects should be realised.

Urban infrastructure must be improved.

Figure 21: Policy Proposals  
(Source: Authors, 2020)

As a solution to urban poverty and the existence of the informal sector, firstly, activities should be carried out to increase the resilience of the poor. Later, as a solution to the problem of homelessness, social housing should be built, and women's shelters should be provided.

The employment of women and youth should be strengthened to solve the problem of homelessness and simultaneous unemployment. The city should include designs of daycare homes that bring the elderly and children together. Accessibility of disabled people to the city should also be strengthened.

## CONCLUSION

The rate of development could not catch up with the rate of population growth of the city. Inevitably people turned to informal sectors with the increase of unemployment. Employer-worker conflicted with the strengthening of the informal sector fed the urban poverty. As urban poverty increased, the development rate of the city decreased. In a vicious circle, areas with low quality of life, poor, segregated and underdeveloped segment of the city will continue to exist if measures to improve them are denied. In this urban design study, the sampling area survey was carried out as a result of examining the direct and indirect relationship of this issue with the urban space. For this study, solutions and policies were developed to improve the quality of life of informal sector workers and urban poor in Gaziantep through the replanning of the urban space.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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