Transitioning from Artichoke Fields to a Peri-Urban Settlement: The Role of İzmir Katip Çelebi University

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Abstract

The rapid urbanisation experienced in Türkiye since the mid-20th century has dramatically reshaped the urban landscape. This transformation has been particularly evident through the phenomenon of peri-urbanisation, a process marked by the expansion of urban spaces without cohesive spatial development planning at various government levels. A notable misalignment exists between the decisions made at higher levels of governance, such as the siting of new university campuses, and the master plans implemented at local levels. This disconnect often results in urban environments that are unbalanced and fail to meet their intended purposes.

The present research focuses on the Balatçık neighbourhood in the Çiğli District of İzmir, where İzmir Katip Çelebi University has been established. This area exemplifies the socio-spatial changes induced by the integration of significant educational infrastructure into its peri-urban context. Initially a peripheral settlement, Balatçık has evolved into a complex urban area that straddles the identities of both a residential community and a university town. This case study aims to dissect the spatial transformations prompted by this development, exploring how the neighbourhood's composition, demographic characteristics, and housing market dynamics have been altered with the following research question, what key factors have influenced the spatial transformation of Balatçık Neighbourhood from a rural settlement to a peri-urban area, particularly in relation to the development of a new university campus?

Utilising a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates statistical analysis, document review, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. Quantitative data was obtained from open-access sources, while qualitative insights were gathered through interviews (n=21) with residents, business owners, real estate agents, and local administrators. Thematic coding was employed for analysing collected data, revealing key socio-spatial patterns. Employing both quantitative and qualitative data, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of policy misalignment on Balatçık. By investigating these changes, the research seeks to offer insights into the broader implications of urban planning decisions in Türkiye. The findings are intended to inform future urban development strategies, emphasizing the need for coordinated planning across different governmental levels to foster balanced and purposeful urban growth.

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INTRODUCTION

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Urbanisation is a dynamic and complex process that has unfolded across the globe at various times and speeds. This transformative movement, driven by forces such as industrialization, population growth, and migration, has reshaped the spatial and social landscapes of cities worldwide. Urban centres, with their robust employment opportunities in burgeoning industries, have historically drawn individuals from rural settings. This migration into cities fuels further industrial growth, establishing a symbiotic relationship whereby urban environments become critical hubs for economic transformation and demographic shifts. As noted by Lewis in 1954, this interdependence is fundamental to understanding urban dynamics.

However, the pace of urbanisation is not uniform across the globe. As Davis (2006) highlights, some regions experience swift and broad urban expansion, while others undergo a slower, more regulated development. This variability can be attributed to different socio-economic conditions, governmental policies, and historical contexts, which together shape the urbanisation trajectory of each region.

Echoing this global pattern, Türkiye has been undergoing significant urbanisation since the mid-20th century. Major Turkish cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir have become magnets for the rural population, driven by the promise of better economic prospects and living conditions. This rapid influx of people has spurred a surge in demand for housing, compelling these cities to expand at unprecedented rates.

The rapid urban expansion often occurs without sufficient planning, leading to the gradual erosion of the traditional boundaries between cities and the countryside. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in developing countries where urban planning may not keep pace with growth demands. According to Ahani and Dadashpoor (2021), such unplanned urban sprawls are evident in the expanding metropolitan areas of Türkiye, where the delineation between urban and rural areas becomes increasingly blurred.

A case in point is the city of Izmir in Türkiye, where the case study area reflects a significant transition from rural characteristics to those of a peri-urban settlement. This transformation is part of a broader trend observed in many developing nations where rapid urbanisation is challenging the existing paradigms of city planning and development. The consequences of these changes are multifaceted, impacting not only the physical layout of cities but also the socio-economic dynamics within them.

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Peri-urbanisation refers to the process by which rural or semi-rural areas at the outskirts of cities undergo transformation due to urban expansion. As urban areas expand, they encapsulate nearby villages and agricultural lands, transforming them into suburban or peri-urban districts that blend urban and rural features. These newly formed peri-urban areas often struggle with both the benefits and the challenges of rapid urbanisation. They benefit from closer proximity to urban amenities and employment opportunities but grapple with issues such as inadequate infrastructure, housing shortages, and social displacement.

Furthermore, the demographic shifts associated with urbanisation bring about profound changes in community composition and social structures. Newcomers, often younger and from diverse backgrounds, inject vibrancy into the urban fabric but also introduce challenges such as social stratification and cultural integration. These shifts necessitate thoughtful urban governance and policy-making that can harness the benefits of urban growth while mitigating its adverse effects.

The significance of this research lies in its exploration of the socio-spatial transformations occurring in Balatçık as a result of the integration of İzmir Katip Çelebi University within a peri-urban context. By examining the neighbourhood's evolution from a rural settlement to a dynamic urban area, the study highlights the complex interplay between the higher education sector and urban development. The research question, 'what key factors have influenced the spatial transformation of Balatçık Neighbourhood from a rural settlement to a peri-urban area, particularly in relation to the development of a new university campus?' directly addresses the core of this transformation. The originality of this case lies in the unique interaction between the rapid growth of a university town and the socio-spatial changes occurring in a previously rural settlement. The selection of Balatçık as a case study is driven by the significant changes the neighbourhood has undergone due to its proximity to İzmir Katip Çelebi University, which has profoundly influenced local demographics, housing patterns, and urban identity. This research offers new insights into the phenomenon of peri-urbanisation, particularly in the context of Türkiye, where urban expansion often occurs without coordinated planning. The study aims to uncover how these transformations have shaped the neighbourhood, offering a deeper understanding of peri-urbanisation and its implications for urban planning, while providing valuable lessons for similar contexts.

Based on this existing body of literature, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating statistical analysis, document review, semi-structured interviews, and field observations to examine socio-spatial dynamics. Quantitative data is drawn from open-access sources, while qualitative insights are based on 21 interviews with residents, business owners, real estate agents, and local officials.

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FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREA VS. FROM RURAL TO UNIVERSITY TOWN

The transformation of a rural settlement into an urban dwelling is a complex process influenced by various economic, social, and environmental forces. Economic factors play a significant role in driving this transformation, with urbanisation often seen as a response to increased economic opportunities in urban areas (Hinderink & Titus, 2002). The attraction of better employment opportunities and improved living standards can motivate individuals and families to migrate from rural settlements to urban environments (Tacoli, 2003; Satterthwaite, 2016). Urban areas often offer better access to educational and healthcare facilities, cultural amenities, and a more diverse social environment (Champion, 2001; Storper & Manville, 2006; Buzar et al., 2007). The desire for improved education and healthcare services, as well as exposure to a broader range of social opportunities, can act as compelling factors driving individuals and families to relocate from rural settlements to urban centres. Social networks and migration patterns within communities can further amplify the influence of social forces on the transformation, as individuals may be motivated to move based on the decisions and experiences of others in their social circles (Stockdale, 2002; Savage et al., 2005).

Additionally, the shift from agrarian economies to more diverse and service-oriented industries in rural areas as well as urban areas accelerates the transformation of rural settlements into urban dwellings (Losch et al., 2012). Therefore, a combination of economic and social forces interplays to shape the transformation of rural settlements into urban dwellings, reflecting the dynamic nature of urbanisation processes.

The flows of people into an area with better employment opportunities and life standards result not only in the transformation of rural villages/small towns to urban areas but also in the expansion of existing urban centres into surrounding regions, giving rise to urban sprawl. As cities expand, they often extend beyond their initial administrative boundaries, resulting in the conversion of agricultural landscapes into suburban or exurban developments. This spatial transformation has implications for environmental sustainability, transportation infrastructure, and social dynamics of the urban centres and their surrounding areas (Lang, 2003; Ewing et al., 2017).

In addition to population growth, migration patterns and economic development, policy ambiguities and flexible regulations might contribute to urban sprawl (Silva, 2018). When regulations lack clarity or flexibility, it can create an environment that fosters haphazard and unplanned urban expansion. Inadequate land-use planning and zoning regulations may lead to unchecked suburban growth, inefficient land utilization, and increased dependency on private vehicles, ultimately contributing to the sprawling nature of urban landscapes (Ewing & Hamidi, 2015). Also, peri-urbanisation might cause leapfrog

development in metropolitan cities (Colsaet et al., 2018) due to the restrictions or policies in the development direction. Many developments and changes in spatial structure are affected by the urbanisation process. For instance, a political decision such as opening a large-scale industrial facility or university might play a major role in initiating this process (Sargin, 2017).

As well as industries and service sector, higher education institutions serve as catalysts for urban development, influencing the socio-economic landscape, cultural vibrancy, and overall dynamism of cities. The presence of universities attracts a diverse and educated population, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and a skilled workforce (Castells, 2004). Additionally, universities often contribute to the physical expansion of cities through campus development and associated infrastructure projects. The impact of universities on urbanisation extends beyond economic considerations, encompassing cultural enrichment, social diversity, and the creation of vibrant intellectual communities (Florida, 2002; LeGates & Stout, 2018).

The literature on the spatial transformation of small settlements into university towns is relatively limited but is gaining attention as universities increasingly become anchors for regional development (Revington et al., 2020; Livingstone et al., 2023). Existing research often emphasizes the transformative effects on land use, infrastructure, and social dynamics. It also highlights that the establishment of a university in a settlement not only brings changes to the physical environment, such as the construction of academic buildings and student housing, but also triggers a shift in the socio-economic fabric, with implications for local businesses, housing markets, and community interactions (Hubbard, 2008; Sage et al., 2013). Understanding these spatial transformations is crucial for both academics and policymakers seeking to harness the potential benefits and manage the challenges associated with the growth of university towns.

The literature also underscores the impacts of increased population, altered traffic patterns, and the emergence of new cultural and recreational spaces are all crucial elements that contribute to the evolving spatial character of the region (Fabula et al., 2017; Ackermann & Visser, 2016; Grabkowska & Frankowski, 2016; Woldoff & Weiss, 2018). Through case studies and theoretical frameworks, researchers delve into the complexities of this transformation, shedding light on how the presence of a university can catalyze economic development and shape the physical and social fabric of the surrounding landscape (Smith & Holt, 2007; Smith et al., 2014). Although the major part of this literature focuses on the countries of the Global North, the number of publications examining the process in the developing world is also growing (He, 2015; Dewi et al., 2019; Ackermann & Visser, 2016; Situmorang et al., 2019; Fabula et al., 2017; Grabkowska & Frankowski, 2016).

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In the Turkish context, establishing new universities in Anatolian cities in the 1990s generated widespread economic, socio-cultural, and spatial changes in their cities (Akçakanat et al., 2010; Atik, 1999; Görkemli, 2009; Öztürk et al., 2011; Savaş Yavuzçehre, 2016, Yilmaz, 2011). As a second wave, many new public universities have been established since 2006 targeting to have at least one higher education institution in every province (Karataş Acer & Güçlü, 2017). As a result of this goal, there are 113 higher education institutions in Türkiye as of 2023 (YOK, 2023). Most of these universities are established in small Anatolian cities. However, this research focuses on how an urbanisation process has been shaped by establishing a university in rural areas on the outskirts of one of the metropolitan cities of Türkiye, Izmir in 2011.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the spatial transformation of the Balatçık Neighbourhood, tracking its evolution from a modest rural settlement into a burgeoning urban neighbourhood characterized by a significant influx of unusually small housing units. The period from 2011 to 2023 serves as the focus for this analysis, capturing 12 years of developmental changes within the area. The research framework is structured around three primary themes: the alteration of land usage patterns, demographic shifts, and variations in the local housing market. Before delving into these specific areas, the subsequent section will present detailed data and introduce the case study area, setting the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the transformative processes that have reshaped Balatçık.

Data and Methodology

The research was designed with the mixed method. The data comprised open-access statistical data from the Turkish Statistical Institution and interviews with local residents, business owners/employees and local administrative representatives in 2022. In addition, the observations were conducted twice in March 2022 and May 2022. The illustration of the methodology can be seen in Figure 1.
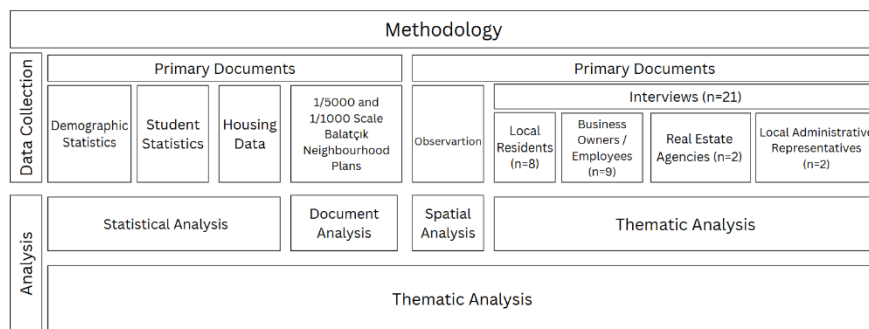

Figure 1. Research methodology diagram (Source: Authors, 2023)

Before initiating the fieldwork for this study, a thorough analysis of primary documents was conducted to establish a foundational

understanding of the research context. The documents reviewed included a range of sources: demographic statistics provided by the Turkish Statistical Office, student enrolment and demographic figures from the IKCU database, housing data from the General Directorate of Land Registry & Cadastre, and local urban planning documents such as the Balatçık Neighbourhood Plan sourced from Çiğli Municipality. These varied documents were subjected to a dual-method analysis approach. Firstly, a statistical analysis was employed using descriptive techniques to quantify and outline the data trends observed. Secondly, a document analysis was performed, which involved a detailed examination of the texts to extract thematic codes. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the available information, ensuring a robust analytical framework to support the subsequent stages of the research. These preparatory steps were critical in framing the conditions and characteristics of the study area, providing essential insights into the social, demographic, and infrastructural dynamics at play.

The primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews during the fieldwork. The ethical approval for the fieldwork was obtained by the Social Research Ethics Committee of Izmir Katip Çelebi University (No. 2021/20-11). The interviews aimed to obtain the local residents (n=8), business owners/employees (n=9), real estate agencies (n=2) and local administrative representatives' (n=2) points of view on the recent developments taking place in the neighbourhood. Each interviewee had different standpoints regarding the change in the Balatçık Neighbourhood. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and they took a minimum of 45 and a maximum of 90 minutes.

The research and data analyses were conducted via a non-linear process. The primary documents and data and their analysis not only led but also fed each other during the project. Initial codes of the thematic coding system arose from the literature review and primary document analysis. Afterwards, the thematic coding system was finalised with analysis and interpretation of all collected data.

The Timeline of Balatçık Neighbourhood

The changing characters of the case study area; Balatçık neighbourhood has internal and external forces that are leading the change. The graph below indicates that the macro-level and micro-level events have impacts on the spatial change of the Balatçık neighbourhood. Figure 2 shows the external forces in the upper section and internal forces in the lower section of the illustration. All of these events in Figure 2 have been impacting the transition of the Balatçık neighbourhood over the last 40 years. However, the research, as mentioned earlier, focuses on the 2011-2023 period which starts with the foundation of the university in the neighbourhood.
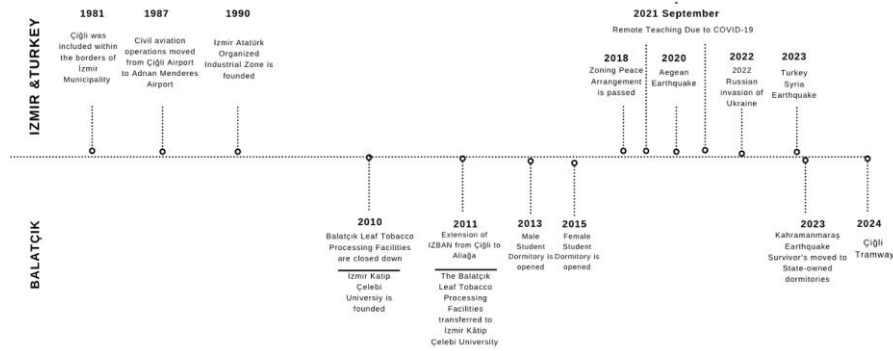
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Figure 2. The timeline of Balatçık Neighbourhood (Source: Authors, 2023)

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The site selection of the university was made by the Central Government and the Council of Higher Education in 2011 (IKCU, 2019). Without a site evaluation and involvement of any other local or mezzo-level governmental bodies in the selection process means that how the university in this particular location might have impacted the neighbourhood and the wider city has not been evaluated thoroughly in terms of development planning. This conflict between the upper-level decision (site selection of IKCU) and lower-level results triggers an unsolicited and ungoverned spatial change in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the site selection of the main campus in Balatçık might be claimed as the breaking point of the spatial change of the neighbourhood. As can be predicted, not all events have the same weight on the change. Their impact will be investigated in detail later in the discussion part of this research. However, as with many aspects of daily life, specifically, remote working and online education during the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the understanding and the traditional use of the built environment. Turkish higher education institutions moved to remote teaching from March 2020 until September 2021 due to the increasing COVID-19 cases (YÖK, 2020b). When face-to-face teaching resumed in September 2021, students encountered a student housing crisis. In 18 months, housing prices increased all over Türkiye and students struggled to find affordable accommodation near their universities (see housing market section). It needs to be highlighted again that rising housing prices are observed not only by students but also by all the citizens in Türkiye as mentioned earlier.

The Case Study: Balatçık Neighbourhood

Land use transformation plays a critical role in the evolution of urban environments, particularly in rapidly expanding metropolitan regions. The Balatçık Neighbourhood in İzmir serves as a significant case study of this process, where former agricultural land has been converted into a peri-urban area following the establishment of a university campus. This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the neighbourhood's existing conditions, focusing on its spatial structure, land use dynamics, and the underlying factors driving its transformation.

Balatçık is located in Çiğli District which is in the northern part of Izmir. As can be seen in Figure 3, Road D550 and IZBAN line cut through

the neighbourhood and the main campus of IKCU is located in the western part of the neighbourhood. The Egekent station of IZBAN connects the neighbourhood and the university to the rest of Izmir. The university is surrounded by Çiğli Air Base in the west, the Ege Industrial Zone in the north, and the Izmir Atatürk Organized Industrial Zone in the south. Therefore, the most suitable and accessible area for further development to accommodate students and staff of the university was the Balatçık Neighbourhood. Therefore, private real estate investors and construction companies took the initiative rapidly and started to build on the former agricultural land which was converted to residential land with a 1/5000 scale master plan by the local government.

Figure 3. Balatçık in Izmir and Balatçık Neighbourhood Administrative Area

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Figure 4 shows the conversion of the neighbourhood land from cultivated agricultural land over 20 years. The light green represents the 2002 period while almost half of the neighbourhood was agricultural land. The dark green demonstrates the agricultural land in 2023. As can be seen in Figure 4, the agricultural land has decreased to almost one-tenth due to a significant increase in residential development in the neighbourhood by 2023 with lower-level planning decisions.

Figure 4. Cultivated land change between 2002 and 2023 (Source: Prepared by authors based on Google Earth)
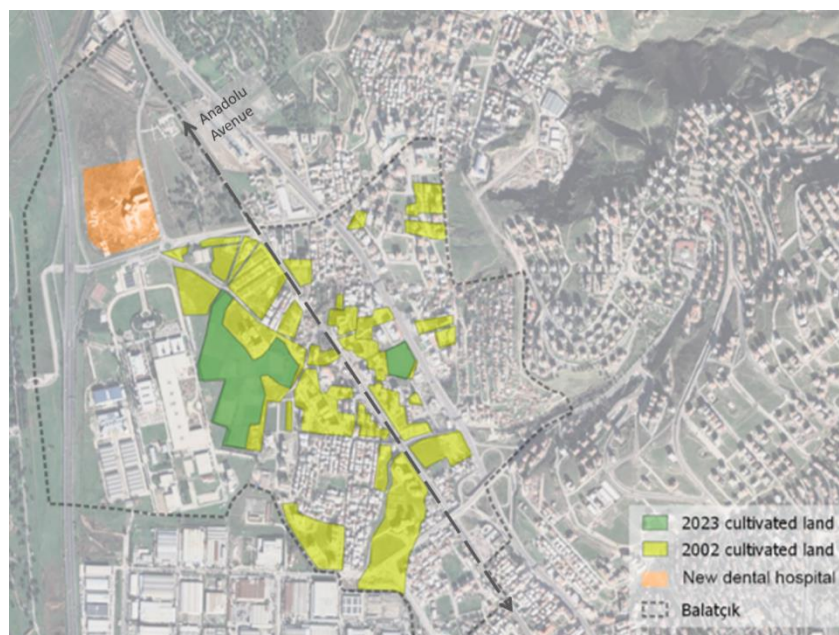
It is important to emphasize that the university's dental hospital is in the process of relocating to the vicinity just across the north gate of the main university campus. This development is contributing to a significant reduction in the surrounding rural land, thereby catalysing a notable spatial transformation within the broader region. Given these circumstances, there is an increased imperative to closely examine the Balatçık area in terms of the spatial changes occurring at this critical point. This analysis will provide deeper insights into how the movement of such significant institutional infrastructures can impact the regional landscape and its development trajectory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the spatial transformations of Balatçık Neighbourhood are explored, focusing on how land use, demographic characteristics, and housing market dynamics have been altered by the integration of İzmir Katip Çelebi University while the research aimed to answer: 'What key factors have influenced the spatial transformation of Balatçık Neighbourhood from a rural settlement to a peri-urban area, particularly in relation to the development of a new university campus?' As mentioned in the previous sections, the development of the university has played a pivotal role in reshaping the area. This discussion revisits these key transformations, offering a deeper analysis of the factors driving the neighbourhood's evolution and their broader implications for urban planning in peri-urban contexts.

The undeniable impact of demographic shifts on the spatial configuration of cities and neighbourhoods is evident as the profiles of residents evolve. These changes are influenced by various factors including age, income levels, and cultural backgrounds, which in turn necessitate adaptations in the spatial environment to accommodate these new demographics. As a response, modifications are often made to housing structures, amenities, and the broader urban infrastructure to satisfy the varied needs of the residents. Such transformations are well-documented in urban studies literature, highlighting the dynamic relationship between resident demographics and urban form (Lynch, 1960; Gehl, 2010).

This research has observed significant spatial changes over nearly a decade, coinciding with the establishment of a university in the area. These observations form the basis of the discussion in this study, which is structured around three principal themes: the transformation of land use patterns, shifts in population dynamics, and changes in the housing market. Each of these aspects reflects the broader impacts of demographic changes on the urban landscape, underscoring the complex interplay between urban development and its social fabric. This investigation aims to dissect these themes to better understand the continuous evolution of urban spaces in response to their inhabitants' changing needs.

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Change in Land Use: From the artichoke fields towards a peri-urban settlement

To understand the spatial transformations in Balatçık, it is important to consider its history and key developments. This section examines the early stages of this transformation, including from artichoke farming to the establishment of tobacco processing facilities and the subsequent influence of İzmir Katip Çelebi University on the area's development.

Before initiating a detailed investigation into the specific area of interest, it is crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the surroundings that define Balatçık. Notably situated on a flat plain, Balatçık retained its village status until 1992, as previously noted. According to statements from interviewees, during the 1990s, agriculture was the predominant activity in the area, conducted on a large scale. The focal point of the village life centred around what is now Balatçık Elementary School. During this time, the primary agricultural output of the village was artichoke, highlighting the region's agrarian roots and the traditional lifestyle of its inhabitants prior to its urban transformation. This historical backdrop is essential for appreciating the current and future changes in land use and community structure within Balatçık. It continued to be a rural settlement area until the 2010s (Çiğli District Governorate, 2020). Some interviewees who were also producers explained the villagers' preference for artichokes over other agricultural produce that could have been cultivated in the area;

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"When it was a village, we had our artichoke fields." (A2)

"Many agricultural products can be grown [in the areas], however, artichoke is the simplest product to cultivate. Therefore, the villagers preferred to grow artichokes." (L6)

The change in spatial patterns becomes evident through both the quotations and Figures 4 and 5, revealing a transformation within a remarkably brief 15-year timeframe. Notably, the first housing development, Erzurumlular[1] Neighbourhood, has emerged on the outskirts of the village commons, rather than directly encircling the village centre. In addition to these two settlements, the neighbourhood originally comprised expanses of actively cultivated agricultural land which can be seen in Figure 4 at the southwest part of the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood's new inhabitants had a strong employment bond with the previous Balatçık Leaf Tobacco Processing Facilities in the neighbourhood which was in operation from the 1970s until the 2000s (İZKA, 2021). They were mainly working and living in the same neighbourhood. New housing units began to be established with the establishment of Balatçık Leaf Tobacco Processing Facilities in the neighbourhood in the 1970s (İZKA, 2021).

[1] Erzurumlular Neighbourhood is named after the residents' hometown city who live in one part of the Balatçık Neighbourhood.

"The tobacco factory was closed between 2008-2009. 60-70% of the population living in the neighbourhood were working in the [tobacco] factory." (A2)

The second phase of observed development unfolded a couple of years after establishing the university's campus in Balatçık. The buildings and the land of the nonoperating Balatçık Tobacco Leaf Processing Factory were transferred to the university to be used as a campus in 2011.

As explained by Sargin (2017), a political decision, to open a large-scale industrial facility or university might initiate the urbanisation of their surroundings. The case study; the transfer of the factory's land to the university proves Sargin (2017)'s statement. With this transition, the new development was nestled in the agricultural area between the university campus and the IZBAN train line with new residential building complexes. The features of these residential areas are different from the existing housing. While the ones constructed before 2011 were mostly three-floor and three-bedroom flats, the new residential structures are multi-floor, multi-unit and gated communities (see housing market section for details).

These new residential zones, which were still actively cultivated as depicted in Figure 4, underwent a transformation into residential areas starting in 2011. This change suggests a pattern where the metropolitan city of Izmir was expanding towards the north, with Balatçık lying directly in its path. Despite this development, Balatçık managed to retain its rural characteristics until very recently. The phenomenon of leapfrog development, particularly evident in the Ulukent area from the 1990s onward, illustrates the non-continuous expansion typical of many metropolitan areas, as discussed by Colsaet et al. (2018). Leapfrog development is a common urban growth pattern where development jumps over closer areas to further ones. As a result, while Balatçık continued its traditional agricultural activities, mainly the cultivation of artichokes, the southern and northern parts of the neighbourhood were already undergoing significant urbanisation. This dual existence highlights the transitional phase of the area as it slowly integrates into the broader urban landscape of Izmir.

"It took a couple of years due to the regeneration of the university campus. They adapted the existing buildings for educational purposes. Therefore; the 2014-2015 period was the cornerstone of the development of the neighbourhood." (A2)

Figure 5. Balatçık Neighbourhood 2011-2016-2021 (Source: Google Earth)

Figure 5 illustrates the changes in land use over the span of a decade. During this period, the neighbourhood experienced a significant increase in the density of residential zones. This surge was primarily driven by the establishment of the IKCU main campus, which acted as a catalyst for the area's development. The arrival of a substantial number of newcomers, including students and university staff, further contributed to this rapid urbanisation. These changes reflect the dynamic transformation of the neighbourhood's landscape, transitioning from less densely populated areas to more concentrated residential developments.

In summary, the spatial evolution of Balatçık highlights a complex interplay of agricultural heritage, industrial development, and educational infrastructure. The integration of İzmir Katip Çelebi University has accelerated the transformation of the area. These shifts offer important insights into the broader processes of peri-urbanisation and urban growth in the metropolitan context of İzmir, setting the stage for continued changes in the neighbourhood's demographic and housing dynamics.

Population Change

Socio-spatial features are deeply intertwined with demographic changes, as urban areas adjust their characteristics to accommodate the evolving needs of their populations. As the university attracted mainly young population, including students and university staff, the local demographic shifted significantly. The new population profile contributes to changes in housing, businesses, and service facilities. This analysis explores how these changes have shaped the socio-spatial characteristics of the neighbourhood.

Socio-spatial features and age factors are interlocked features. Urban areas are inclined to readjust their features based on the features of the population. Spatial distribution of businesses, housing types and service facilities are modified to serve specific age groups (Bruegmann, 2006; Gehl, 2010). Without effective control by the local or central government, social segregation might be observed in the long term (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Sandercock, 2017). In this perspective, the population change in the neighbourhood is scrutinised.

Figure 6 shows the change in local population structures in Balaçık, Çiğli and İzmir. The change in Balatçık presents a sharp increase right after the foundation of IKCU in 2011. The population approximately

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doubled between 2010 and 2020. The neighbourhood's population increased to 14,801 in 2020 (TUIK, 2021). The upward trend in Balatçık can be correlated with the establishment of the new university in the neighbourhood. As has been experienced in many university towns, higher education institutions trigger an increase in town demographics with the student population and university employees' relocation to the neighbourhood (Gu & Smith, 2020).
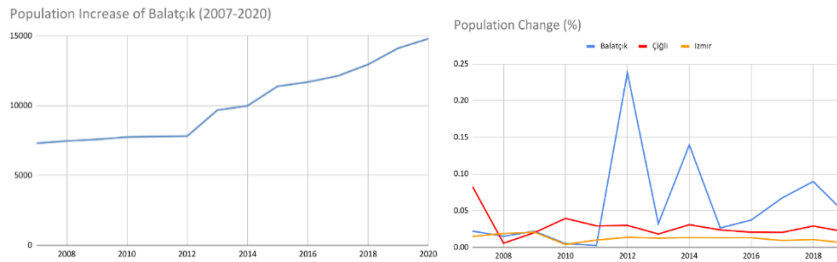

Figure 6. Population Change in Balatçık Neighbourhood (Source: Prepared by authors based on TUIK data, 2022)

The data reflecting the percentage change in population clearly highlights a significant rise in the number of residents in Balatçık, outpacing the population growth rates of both Çiğli and the broader Izmir area. This marked increase in population was most pronounced during the 2011-2012 period, which aligns with the time when the university was established in the area. This correlation suggests that the university's establishment was a key driver of population growth, attracting a larger number of residents to Balatçık as compared to its surrounding areas and contributing substantially to the demographic changes observed during this time.
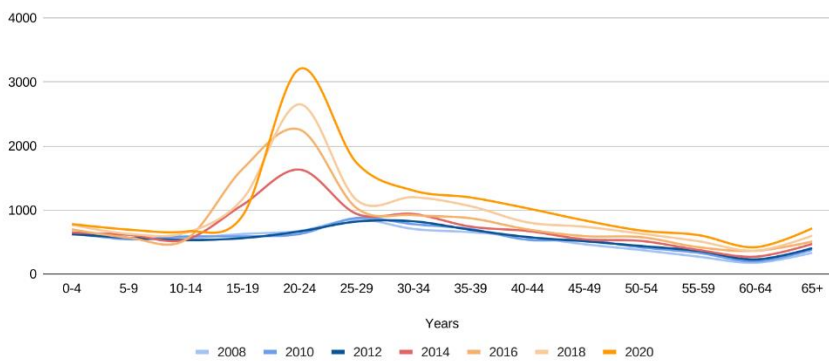

Figure 7. Population change by age groups in Balatçık Neighbourhood (Source: Prepared by authors based on TUIK data, 2022)

The age distribution by years in Balatçık is visualized in Figure 7. The blue colour lines represent the population change before the 2014 period and the orange colour lines signify the change from 2014 onwards. Balatçık stands forward with its youthful demographics. The 20-24 years old population became the predominant demographic in the neighbourhood after the university's establishment and admissions of the first students. Even though the population change can be observed in these graphs, one of the interviewees stated that most of the students do not register at their term-time addresses even though they are obliged legally. Therefore, the exact number of residences between 20-24 years might be even higher than the official statistics.

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"70 or even 80% of the students are not registered. Only one of the students registers to their student houses to register their utilities under their own names." (A2)

"The actual population is almost 20,000." (A2)

In addition to this, students who live in dormitories are not obliged to change their addresses. As a result, it can be asserted that there is a sizable discrepancy between the census numbers and the neighbourhood's real population. Up to 6,000 residents could be missing, which is 1.5 times more than what is already recorded in the census.

Interviews have also revealed another point that residents who work in the Çiğli Air Base[2] started to choose to live in one-bedroom flats in the neighbourhood as well. They are generally single men or groups of friends.

"One-bedroom flats are expensive for students. Usually, people who work at the university and Jet Base live in one-bedroom flats. Students get together and rent out two- or three-bedroom flats to share the expenses." (A2)

Spatial segregation in the neighbourhood between newcomers and local residents was observed in the fieldwork specifically in the southern part of the neighbourhood. The residents of the southern part of the neighbourhood (Erzurumlular Neighbourhood) have not leaned towards renting their flats specifically to students.

"Landlords in the Erzurumlular neighbourhood do not prefer to rent their flats to students because they claim that they [students] destroy their flats." (B11)

As a result of the population change, the service sector in the neighbourhood has been shaped to target university students such as cafes, fast food and takeaway places. The interviews prove that their customers are mainly university students. This demonstrates the market-driven nature of urban transformations. This alignment between population change and business development highlights the role of supply and demand forces in shaping local economic structures, where businesses emerge and expand in response to the needs and preferences of new residents.

The influx of students, university staff, and other newcomers has reshaped local housing markets, service sectors, and even the social fabric of the area. As the neighbourhood continues to evolve, understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the potential challenges of socio-spatial segregation and ensuring sustainable development in peri-urban areas like Balatçık.

[2] The Çiğli Air Base has been situated to the west of the neighbourhood since the 1950s. Owing to the limited availability of accommodation options in the vicinity, residents have been residing in surrounding areas.

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Housing Market

To understand the housing dynamics within Balatçık, it is essential to examine how the broader economic situation and the university's establishment have reshaped the local real estate market and student accommodation trends. The construction sector and real estate market in Türkiye have been encouraged since 2002 through the help of regulations and public and/or private funds initiated by the government`s advice (e.g. megaprojects, urban regeneration laws, and government-directed low-interest-rate housing loans in 2020 and 2023) (Balaban, 2012; Erbaş, 2022). In addition to that, as mentioned earlier, new state universities have been established since 2006 (Karataş Acer & Güçlü, 2017) and they are 113 higher education institutions in Türkiye as of 2023 (YOK, 2023). Moreover, in parallel to the increasing number of students, the student accommodation shortage has increased as well all over Türkiye. Due to not having comprehensive upper-level development strategies, the accommodation gap has risen year by year. In addition to that, Miessner (2020) states that renting strategies are decided based on the students' needs in studentified neighbourhoods. The researchers observed the same dynamics in the case study area where former agricultural land has been converted into a peri-urban area following the establishment of a university campus. Private initiatives have been involved in the student housing market with their renting strategies (e.g. small studio flats).

The study of the residential property market in the Balatçık Neighbourhood is primarily conducted using data from sahibinden.com, which is the most frequently utilized residential property website in Turkey. The accompanying graphs provide a comparative analysis of average property prices within the Balatçık Neighbourhood, the broader Çiğli District, and across İzmir. This comparison is instrumental in understanding the impact of the housing crisis and the ongoing Turkish currency crisis on the residents of these areas. Since 2016, both housing prices and rents in the neighbourhood have experienced an astronomical surge, increasing by over 1000%. This dramatic rise in property prices has significant implications, prompting both inter-city and intra-city relocations as residents seek more affordable living options. The shifts in property values are crucial for assessing the economic landscape of the area and the resultant socio-economic movements of its population. These changes underscore the challenges faced by residents as they navigate the pressures of an escalating market within a fluctuating economic environment. Therefore, this is not only related to the university but also increasing property prices and earthquakes[3] (see Figure 8). However, the crucial part of this situation is the price gap between Balatçık and Izmir which has extended more and more during the last year. Based on these data, it might be claimed that student-oriented residential areas' unaffordability takes attention compared to the district and the city as a whole.

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[3] The Aegean Sea Earthquake occurred on November 30, 2020, while the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake occurred on February 6, 2023. The seismic events prompted an assessment of the structural earthquake resistance not only in the affected areas but all over Türkiye. Also, these leaded to increase awareness and scrutiny of building resilience. Consequently, urban mobility was observed in response to these earthquakes.

Figure 8. Housing market (Source: Prepared by the authors based on Sahibinden.com data, 2023)
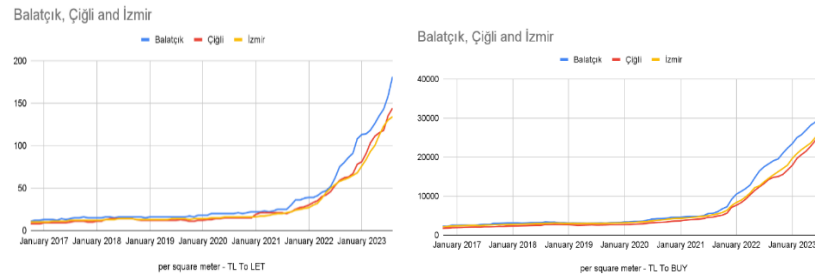
We can observe how remote teaching and the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the rental graph. The disparity between Balatçk and Çiğli & Izmir rentals became less apparent when the remote teaching terms were announced by the university. Changes in housing stock have accelerated since 2011 with the university student population. As can be seen in Figure 9, the unit sizes were changed with the new housing complexes. These new options are constructed after the university's establishment (Çiğli Municipality, 2023) targeting the students as acknowledging the need for accommodation. Due to not having a social welfare policy to establish enough bed capacity with state-run dormitories, the liberal economy has stepped in with housing options. In parallel with this, it is observed that sizes of housing units have been shrunk from three-bedroom to one-bedroom or even studio flats. The research proves Miessner (2020)'s point about having mainly small studio flats in studentified neighbourhoods.

The building complexes that obtained their construction permits from 2011 onwards from the local municipality are shown in Figure 9 (Çiğli Municipality, 2023). The construction permit consists of the construction year, purpose of building use, number of units and housing unit size. Based on these data, 66% of the housing units are one-bedroom, 29% are two-bedroom, and 5% are three-bedroom flats. Most of the three-bedroom flats[4] are located in the eastern part of Anadolu Avenue which is also the mainly family-oriented part of the neighbourhood. However, owing to the rising student population and limited two and three-bedroom flats, residents are facing difficulties in finding affordable housing.

[4] The building complex known as 'My Way Wins' situated just outside of the northern border of Balatçık. However, it is shown on the map and included into the calculation due to its undeniable impact on Balatçık's housing inventory.
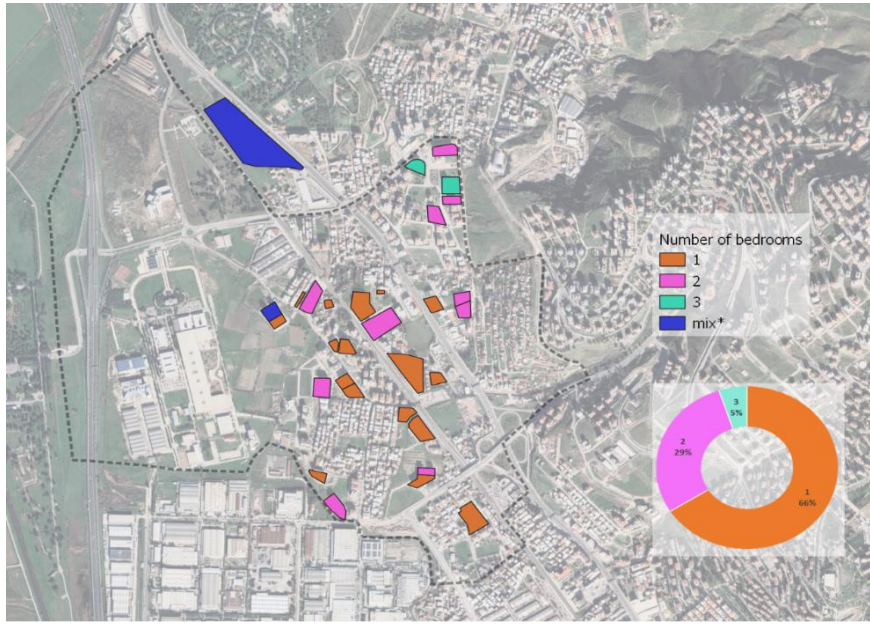
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Figure 9. Housing unit sizes in the building complexes (Source: Prepared by authors based on Çiğli Municipality construction permit data, 2023)5

The building which are shown with blue colour consist of various unit sizes.

"There is a housing problem in the neighbourhood. 95% of the houses are occupied, the others are for sale and no rental house can be found." (B11)

"The housing problem in the neighbourhood will turn into a crisis in 3-4 years." (B10)

The main reason causing this problem that was expressed by the interviewees is to have limited student accommodations and diversified housing options in the neighbourhood. The university itself does not provide any student accommodation. There are two state-run dormitories (Cihannuma Female Student Dormitory and Çiğli Male Student Dormitory) in Balatçık Neighbourhood with 2106 bed capacity in total (KYK, 2023) which do not only serve IKCU but other universities in Izmir as well. The total undergraduate enrolment of IKCU is 13937 as of 2022 (IKCU, 2023). Even though it is reserved for IKCU, it only serves 15.11% of the undergraduates. Therefore, students are obliged to rent a flat in the neighbourhood or other areas of Izmir alone or with their friends. Due to the increasing rental prices during the last 3 years, real estate agencies stated that it is more affordable to rent a place outside the neighbourhood that claim is supported by the housing market statistics.

Moreover, based on the interviews and direct observations, student and non-student population distributions across neighbourhood typologies show us that while the students who rent in the neighbourhood are agglomerated in the western part of Anadolu Avenue, the university employees prefer to live in the eastern part of the Avenue due to the size of housing units. Ultimately, these changes in housing types, rental prices, and demographic distributions underscore

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the growing pressure on Balatçık's residential market, highlighting the need for more sustainable housing solutions to accommodate both students and long-term residents.

CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of İzmir Katip Çelebi University has been a key factor in shaping the urban dynamics of the area, drawing a young population and changing urban fabric based on the new population. In this context, this research sheds light on the challenges of peri-urbanisation and the consequences of policy misalignment by examining changes in land use, population dynamics, and transformations in the housing market. This study delves into the spatial transformations occurring within the Balatçık Neighbourhood, tracing its evolution from a quaint rural locale to a burgeoning peri-urban area. This transformation has been marked by several significant shifts, detailed in the following discussion and results sections.

Land Use Changes: The shift in land utilization patterns within the Balatçık Neighbourhood has been pronounced since the establishment of the university campus in 2011. This transformation was initially noted along the western end of Anadolu Street, eventually spreading eastward. Aerial photographs have captured this sprawl and concentration, illustrating how areas once dominated by artichoke fields have transitioned into residential zones. This shift underpins the broader transformation from agricultural land use to a more suburban, residential development model, highlighting the neighbourhood's evolution towards a peri-urban identity.

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Demographic Shifts and Population Dynamics: Contrary to potential expectations of age-based segregation, the demographic shifts within Balatçık have not resulted in significant age segregation across the neighbourhood. Exceptions exist, such as in the Erzurumlular sector, where preferences in rental markets show a trend more akin to student-based discrimination than age segregation. New housing developments, particularly those on the periphery of the university, cater predominantly to students, offering studio and one-bedroom flats. This suggests a clear division in the neighbourhood's demographic and social fabric, with pull-push factors visibly influencing different segments of the community. While these changes offer new opportunities, they also present risks of increasing social segregation if not managed carefully by local or central government interventions.

Housing Market Evolution: Insights into the housing market evolution in Balatçık are informed by building license data from local authorities, as well as interviews with real estate agents and reviews of real estate websites. Post-2011, the housing landscape has shifted considerably, with a predominant rise in one-bedroom units. This trend is particularly impactful for residents in the western stretches of Anadolu Street, prompting a migration of families towards the eastern parts of the street and nearby neighbourhoods. The diminishing size and number of

rooms in new developments are reshaping where and how residents live, influencing community structure and social dynamics.

Challenges in Student Housing: A critical issue highlighted by the study is the inadequacy of state-subsidized student accommodation, which has not kept pace with the growing student population. This shortfall has provided an opening for the private sector to fill the gap, albeit at higher prices that many students find prohibitive. The resulting scenario is a housing market that, while addressing the supply shortage, does so in a manner that is not economically accessible for many students. It is imperative for both local and central governments to address this imbalance by expanding affordable housing solutions to mitigate the student housing crisis effectively.

In conclusion, the transformation of the Balatçık Neighbourhood encapsulates a complex interplay of urban development, demographic shifts, and economic challenges. The findings from this research underscore the need for coordinated urban planning and policy interventions to ensure sustainable development that benefits all residents of the community. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in managing Balatçık's transition and ensuring its development aligns with the broader goals of social equity and inclusivity.

FURTHER STUDY

The research is divided into two main parts; the first section, which this paper covers, delves into the spatial transformation occurring in the area. The second section, which is planned for future investigation, will explore the socio-economic and cultural shifts that have taken place in the Balatçık neighbourhood of Çiğli District following the influx of a student population. This forthcoming study will focus on the phenomenon of 'studentification,' a specific form of gentrification that has been increasingly evident over the past decade as more students move into urban areas, influencing local markets and community dynamics. The term 'studentification' refers to the process by which a growing student population in a particular urban area contributes to demographic and economic changes that can have profound effects on the local cultural and socio-economic landscape. This process is often marked by increased demand for housing and services that cater specifically to students, which can lead to a transformation of the neighbourhood's character and a shift in its cultural fabric.

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