





Beyond Campus Walls: Studentification in Ankara's İşçi Blokları Neighborhood – Housing, Affordability, and Community Dynamics

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of studentification in İşçi Blokları, Ankara—a 1970s cooperative-housing district adjacent to Middle East Technical University (METU). Originally constructed in 1973 as a workers' cooperative housing estate, İşçi Blokları today functions as a major student-housing cluster, with many dwellings rented to students. Using a mixed-methods design (survey and in-depth interviews, 2022–2023), the study analyses how student demand reshapes housing affordability, dwelling quality, and neighborhood cohesion. Studentification emerges as a multifaceted urban issue. Residents depict students as a “guaranteed market,” linking their presence to higher property values but also to reduced maintenance and social frictions; yet many support a more balanced citywide distribution and acknowledge students' economic and cultural contributions. Empirically, we find rent inflation and physical decline in older cooperative stock alongside growth in cafés, study-friendly venues, and youth-oriented services that enhance cultural vibrancy. In response, the paper proposes a new housing model that brings together the municipality, housing cooperatives, and universities. The model sets affordable rent limits (30–35% of household income), creates a revolving renovation fund to repair old buildings, and includes university agreements to guarantee stable student occupancy. Together, these measures aim to keep rents stable, improve living standards, and prevent resident displacement. Overall, studentification in İşçi Blokları is a transformative socio-spatial process requiring inclusive housing policy, multi-scalar governance, and the revitalization of cooperative institutions to balance affordability, diversity, and urban sustainability.

Keywords: *Housing affordability, Studentification, University-city relations*

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INTRODUCTION

Studentification refers to the process by which specific urban areas experience a significant influx of student populations, often leading to noticeable changes in the housing market, local economy, and community dynamics. This phenomenon has been a prominent feature of urban development since the late 1990s, highlighting the growing impact of student populations on urban dynamics and social structures (Allinson, 2006; Munro et al., 2009; Sage et al., 2013; Smith, 2005). Studentification is often viewed through the theoretical lens of gentrification (Atkinson & Bridge, 2004; Lees, Shin, & López-Morales, 2015; Smith, 2005). Both studentification and gentrification reshape urban areas, though in different ways (Smith, 2005). While both processes are linked to rising rents, displacement pressures, and shifts in neighborhood identity, their drivers differ. Gentrification is typically associated with middle-class professionals, whereas studentification is propelled by a transient student population whose collective presence reshapes urban space (Moos, Revington, Wilkin, & Andrey, 2018). Both processes contribute to increased housing costs and can result in the marginalization or displacement of long-term residents (Moos et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these transformations significantly alter the social, economic, and cultural character of neighborhoods (Boersma, 2013; Fabula & Kovács, 2017).

Universities exert a profound influence on urban development, extending beyond education and research to encompass demographic, spatial, and economic effects (Felsenstein, 1996; Russo, Van den Berg, & Lavanga, 2007). Concentrations of students in proximate neighborhoods often accelerate urban change, from the subdivision of family homes into shared rentals to shifts in community cohesion and local business ecologies (Chatterton, 1999; Brookfield, 2019). While such transformations can revitalize areas, they also create tensions around affordability, service provision, and neighborhood identity (Hubbard, 2008).

Heterotopia & Theoretical Lens

Heterotopia, as introduced by Foucault (1986), refers to “spaces of otherness” where multiple and often contradictory social practices coexist within a single place. Such spaces operate outside or alongside dominant spatial norms, simultaneously reflecting and challenging them (Foucault, 1998; Johnson, 2006). In urban contexts, heterotopias illustrate how neighborhoods can host diverse populations and competing uses, generating tensions but also new cultural meanings. In the case of İşçi Blokları, originally designed as cooperative housing for workers, the coexistence of long-term families and transient student households has produced a hybrid social environment. This overlap demonstrates how studentification reshapes not only the physical fabric but also the symbolic meaning of place, aligning with Harvey’s (2000) observation that heterotopias disrupt prevailing spatial orders.

Significance of Studentification

Despite its challenges, studentification can generate important opportunities for urban neighborhoods. It may revitalize housing stock, stimulate local employment, and diversify cultural and social life (Ley, 2003). Universities and their students often bring vibrancy and cultural diversity to communities, while institutional investment in infrastructure such as public transportation and recreational facilities can benefit residents more broadly. Students also contribute to local labor markets by providing a flexible workforce.

At the same time, these benefits coexist with significant challenges. Studentification is frequently associated with overcrowding, rising rents, and tensions between permanent and temporary residents (Kinton, Smith, & Harrison, 2016). In the case of the 100. Yıl İşçi Blokları neighborhood in Ankara, regions traditionally dominated by family residences have been transformed into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), undermining community cohesion and producing unbalanced demographics. Recognizing this dual-edged nature is crucial for urban planners, policymakers, and community leaders seeking balanced and sustainable development. This study highlights the importance of addressing housing affordability, ensuring quality of life for both students and long-term residents, and implementing comprehensive strategic planning for student accommodation. By examining studentification in Ankara, the research underscores the broader policy challenge: how to utilize the vibrancy students bring while mitigating displacement and housing precarity, ensuring that urban growth benefits all members of the community.

Turkish Context & Research Gap

Over the past two decades, the Turkish government has mobilized universities to support regional development and economic growth (Demirdag & Nirwansyah, 2025). At the same time, national studies report that dormitory bed capacity does not meet student demand (Sarıpek, Peker, & Cerev, 2024). In Ankara, a citywide inventory of 21 higher-education institutions (2018–2019) shows institutional bed capacity far below enrolment, with documented spillover into nearby neighborhoods around Middle East Technical University (Yalçinkaya, 2020; Hansu, 2023). Given the limited stock of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), students rely heavily on private and shared rentals, a pattern closely associated with localized studentification dynamics (Sage, Smith, & Hubbard, 2013; Smith, 2005). Despite the rapid expansion of higher education and its urban imprint, Turkish case studies on these dynamics remain comparatively scarce, indicating a gap in national and international scholarship (Yalçinkaya, 2020; Sarıpek et al., 2024).

Building on this conceptual frame and the Turkish context, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does studentification affect housing affordability, dwelling quality, and neighborhood sustainability in İşçi Blokları?

RQ2: How do long-term residents and students negotiate coexistence, belonging, and conflict in everyday spaces?

RQ3: Which policy instruments—regulatory, financial, and organisational—can align cooperative-stock renewal with affordability and social cohesion?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and Conceptual Framework

Studentification is defined as the socio-spatial restructuring of urban areas driven by the increasing presence of students (Hubbard, 2008). It involves demographic, cultural, and economic shifts that reshape neighborhood identity and everyday life. While often discussed in relation to gentrification, studentification differs because it is propelled by a transient, young population rather than middle-class professionals (Smith, 2005). As Smith argues, students can be considered “apprentice gentrifiers,” whose temporary residence, limited financial capacity, and distinctive lifestyle practices create unique forms of urban change.

Historical Evolution and Global Spread

The concept of studentification was first observed in British cities, where large student populations transformed inner-city neighborhoods (Chatterton, 1999; Smith, 2005). Over time, the phenomenon expanded beyond the UK, becoming a global issue affecting university towns and metropolitan regions worldwide (Kenna, 2011; He, 2015; Daneri et al., 2015). This global spread demonstrates that studentification cannot be understood solely as a UK-based model but requires comparative attention to different housing systems and socio-political contexts. In England, local authorities use a combination of house in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing and Article 4 Directions to regulate the concentration and quality of student housing. HMO licensing establishes minimum standards for space, safety, waste, and noise management, while Article 4 Directions— a UK planning tool—remove permitted development rights in designated areas, so that converting family dwellings (Use Class C3: single-household dwellinghouses) into small HMOs (Use Class C4: 3–6 unrelated occupants) requires full planning permission and can be refused where local HMO thresholds are exceeded. Applications are evaluated against local HMO thresholds (commonly around 10–20% within a defined area) to prevent excessive clustering (Revington, 2018). In parallel, planning policies promote purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) through Section 106 obligations — legally binding agreements under the UK Town and Country Planning Act 1990 used to mitigate site-specific impacts (e.g., management plans, travel plans, public-realm/transport contributions, and, in some cases, affordability or university nomination agreements) (UK Government, n.d.; Town and Country Planning Act 1990, s.106; Nottingham City Council, 2024)— and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) —

guidance that adds detail to adopted development plan policies and is a material consideration in decision-making, prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (UK Government, n.d.; Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). These mechanisms aim to control over-concentration, improve standards in the private rented sector, and steer demand toward better-managed PBSA developments. City-level experiences, such as Leeds and Nottingham, show how combined regulatory tools (licensing + thresholds + PBSA requirements) can balance housing demand and mitigate neighborhood externalities, providing useful insights for contexts like Ankara, where dormitory capacity is limited and informal HMOs dominate.

Impacts of Studentification

The literature identifies a wide range of economic, social, and cultural impacts of studentification—both positive and negative.

Negative impacts: Neighborhood change is often perceived negatively by long-term residents. Common concerns include noise, littering, antisocial behaviour, crime, parking problems, and the deterioration of local environments (Munro & Livingston, 2011; Kinton et al., 2016; Revington, 2022). Studentification has also been linked to segregation, where students cluster together and become socially distant from other groups, weakening community cohesion (Chatterton, 2010; Sage et al., 2012a, 2012b). The growth of shared rentals (HMOs) can reduce housing quality, displace families, and lead to unbalanced neighborhoods (Hubbard, 2009; Mulhearn & Franco, 2018). Moreover, neighborhoods dominated by students may suffer from seasonal decline during non-term periods, with empty streets and closed businesses (He, 2014).

Positive impacts: Students also bring significant benefits. They contribute to local economies as reliable consumers of housing, food, retail, and leisure services (Chatterton, 2010; Hubbard, 2008; Knight Frank, 2019). Their presence supports local businesses, creates employment, and stimulates investment in services such as property management, maintenance, and real estate markets (Smith, 2005). At a cultural level, students can enhance vibrancy, diversity, and cosmopolitan identity, turning university neighborhoods into lively urban quarters (Munro et al., 2009; Ruii, 2017). As Chatterton (1999) and Smith (2005) note, students and young professionals often cluster in areas that reflect their shared lifestyles, influencing local retail adaptation and shaping culturally distinct urban quarters. However, as Hubbard (2009) note, positive contributions are often overlooked in public debates and the

media, which tend to highlight negative effects. Table 1 presents an overview of studentification and its neighborhood consequences.

Table 1. Neighborhood Transformations under Studentification

Economical	Sociocultural	Physical
Students create a demand for rental housing- Limited availability of affordable housing for non-student residents.	Changes in the composition of the population and the rising density of the population.	The conversion of building forms and functions to cater to student services.
Local businesses cater to the requirements of students by offering a wide range of products and services.	The absence of social cohesion leads to the occurrence of segregation and social conflict.	Urban and regional land use undergoes transformations.
The increase in land and rent prices, inflation, and economic segregation.	Transient residency, seasonal depopulation, and floating population.	Urban aesthetic shifts (graffiti, noise barriers, cycle storage).

Overall, studentification produces a dual-edged urban experience: it can energize cities while also creating social tensions and spatial inequalities.

Strategies for Managing Studentification

Urban responses to studentification typically focus on housing regulation and community integration. Two dominant forms of student housing provision are houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA).

HMOs provide flexible and relatively low-cost housing but often suffer from poor quality, overcrowding, and weak regulation. When highly concentrated, they are frequently linked to neighborhood decline (Hubbard, 2009; Kenna, 2011). In İşçi Blokları, the expansion of HMOs has transformed family housing into shared student rentals, reshaping both the built environment and the neighborhood's social composition.

PBSA has been promoted in many cities as a way to relieve pressure on private rental markets. While it can reduce competition for local housing, critics argue that PBSA creates homogeneous, isolated student enclaves that reinforce segregation and commodify student life (Sage et al., 2013; Smith & Hubbard, 2014). In contrast to Western European contexts where PBSA has expanded rapidly, Ankara has limited PBSA provision, which intensifies reliance on informal HMOs.

Effective management of studentification therefore requires more than simply increasing housing supply. It involves balancing integration and diversity, regulating rental practices, and ensuring that planning frameworks address both the risks of informal HMOs and the exclusionary potential of PBSA.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study investigates studentification in the İşçi Blokları neighborhood adjacent to Middle East Technical University (METU) in

Ankara. The area's proximity to the campus, varied housing stock, and evolving socio-spatial dynamics make it a particularly illustrative case for examining the interplay between student populations and long-term residents. The research aims to provide deeper insights into the multifaceted effects of studentification on community relations, neighborhood identity, and housing conditions, while also identifying implications for policy and planning. The central guiding question is: How does studentification affect housing affordability, community cohesion, and neighborhood sustainability in İşçi Blokları, and what policy instruments could address these challenges?

To address this question, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative strategies. In-depth interviews were conducted with students, long-term residents, local business owners, real estate agents, and the neighborhood mukhtar, while a large-scale questionnaire survey was used to capture broader patterns and perceptions. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive understanding of how studentification is negotiated at the everyday level and how it reshapes urban space.

Data Collection and Procedures

Survey. A structured questionnaire was distributed electronically and in person to 200 respondents, comprising 100 students and 100 non-students living in or around İşçi Blokları. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling to reach both student and long-term resident populations. Efforts were made to include respondents of different ages, genders, and housing arrangements to enhance diversity. While the sampling method does not allow full statistical generalization, it provides a sufficiently diverse pool to capture varied perspectives. The survey included both closed questions (e.g., Likert-scale items on housing affordability, neighborhood change, and safety) and open-ended questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences (see Appendix A for the survey structure and sample items).

Interviews. In addition to the survey, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted between April 2022 and February 2023. Interviewees included students (n=10), long-term residents (n=8), landlords and real estate agents (n=6), local business owners (n=4), the neighborhood mukhtar, and two METU sociology professors (see Appendix A for the interview guide and discussion themes). Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted face-to-face in homes and workplaces or online, depending on participant preference. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was preserved through the use of pseudonyms. We present survey results in section 4.5 and interview themes in section 4.6.

Data Analysis

Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and cross-tabulations) to identify general patterns. Open-ended survey responses and interview transcripts were examined through content analysis (Weber, 1990). Data were organized into thematic categories to enable systematic comparison across respondent groups, including affordability, neighborhood identity, noise and safety, and perceived benefits of students. Table 2 illustrates the areas explored in the interviews and survey, covering social relations, housing dynamics, cultural contributions, neighborhood identity, and economic impacts.

Table 2. Analytical Framework for Content Analysis

Analytical Dimension	Categories	Sample Codes
Economic Impacts	Housing pressures and displacement,	Rent inflation; Resident displacement, Landlord profit motive
	Local economic contributions	Business growth; Consumer demand, Student workforce
Social Relations	Student–resident interactions	Coexistence; Lifestyle conflicts, Temporary presence
	Belonging and identity	Student belonging; Identity shift, Resident resistance
Cultural & Spatial Change	Amenities and lifestyle transformation,	Cafés; Nightlife, Study spaces; Youth cultures
Residential Satisfaction	Spatial assets and deficiencies	Accessibility; Public services, Housing inadequacy

Case Selection: Why Ankara and İşçi Blokları?

Ankara was selected for its dual role as Türkiye’s capital and a major educational hub. According to national higher-education statistics, the city hosts 21 universities with roughly 350,000 students. METU enrolls about 26,251 students; based on METU’s official statistics (dormitory capacity $\approx 7,300$), approximately 70% live off campus, generating sustained pressure on nearby rental markets (Middle East Technical University, 2023a, 2023b). Survey and interview evidence indicate that students prefer İşçi Blokları for walkability to campus, dense everyday amenities, and time/cost savings on transport—factors that reinforce the spread of shared rentals (HMOs) and demand for centrally located dwellings.

İşçi Blokları, adjacent to METU, was chosen for three reasons. (1) It originated as a workers’ cooperative estate, making it socio-economically distinct from nearby middle-class districts. (2) Over the last two decades it has undergone a marked shift toward student occupancy, including widespread conversion of family flats into shared rentals. (3) Compared with other student areas in Ankara, İşçi Blokları exhibits a sharper juxtaposition of long-term residents and transient students, offering a rich context to examine how adaptation and conflict co-exist—and how policy can balance affordability, quality, and social cohesion.

CASE STUDY: İşçi Blokları Neighborhood

This study investigates the multidimensional dynamics of studentification in İşçi Blokları, focusing on social, economic, and spatial transformations. Located east of the Middle East Technical University (METU) campus in Ankara's Çankaya district, İşçi Blokları has become a key student-rental zone where housing pressures, shared living, and evolving community relations illustrate broader urban change.

Historical Background of İşçi Blokları

İşçi Blokları, located in Ankara's Çankaya district east of the METU campus, was developed as a cooperative housing project by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions between 1973 and 1988. Initially planned for 3,500 units, it expanded to 4,906 due to rising demand. Constructed with reinforced concrete and brick infill, the neighborhood reflected the principles of social housing, integrating schools, parks, service buildings, and a marketplace to foster community life.

Over time, İşçi Blokları attracted university students seeking affordable rentals near METU. Shared living arrangements became common, gradually reshaping its social and spatial character and embedding the neighborhood into Ankara's wider studentification process.

Social and Cultural Impacts

The influx of students has transformed İşçi Blokları into a youth-oriented hub characterized by cafés, study-friendly venues, and affordable eateries. While many long-term residents appreciate the vibrancy and convenience, others perceive the neighborhood's growing "student identity" as a sign of transience and disruption.

Positive and Negative Impacts

Positive impacts

Economic vitality: Rising student demand for rentals and everyday services increases local footfall and stabilizes off-season demand, which, in turn, supports new business formation (e.g., cafés, copy shops, repair services) and extends opening hours. Landlords and small firms hire additional staff, while supplier linkages (laundry, printing, food wholesalers) create secondary spending locally, strengthening the neighborhood's micro-economy (Baron & Kaplan, 2010).

Cultural diversity: Students introduce new cultural practices—languages, cuisines, arts, and sociability patterns—through clubs, festivals, and informal events, expanding the urban social landscape and enriching everyday public life. These interactions foster "bridging" ties between long-term residents and newcomers, broadening tastes and amenities (e.g., international eateries, cultural venues) and enhancing the area's symbolic attractiveness (He, 2015).

Negative Impacts

Housing market pressures: Student-driven demand enables room-by-room pricing, short-term tenancies, and high turnover, lifting asking rents and weakening tenure security for non-student households. In İşçi Blokları, aging cooperative flats are subdivided for flat-sharing; owners prefer students because frequent re-letting allows regular rent increases and lower upkeep. The result is reduced affordability and “quiet displacement” of longer-term residents. (Smith, 2004).

Social tensions: Different daily routines and norms, plus short-term tenancies, weaken neighborly trust. In İşçi Blokları, thin walls and shared stairwells amplify disturbances, while high turnover disrupts building committees and informal support. Result: more complaints about noise, litter, and wear—and a loss of place attachment and belonging (Hubbard, 2008).

Current Status of İşçi Blokları

Demographic structure: According to Endeksa, a real estate data and analytics platform in Turkey, the total population of the İşçi Blokları neighborhood is approximately 16,650. Recent demographic and housing data underline the dual nature of the area: a youthful, mobile population coexisting with an aging, rooted community. Approximately 35% of residents are under 30, predominantly METU students, while the remainder includes retirees and long-term households. This coexistence reinforces İşçi Blokları’s hybrid identity as both a “student enclave” and a remnant of Ankara’s cooperative-housing legacy.

Middle-aged households and families with children are underrepresented. Household distribution is estimated at 55% student households, 25% elderly households, and 20% nuclear families. According to Figure 1, the neighborhood demonstrates a balanced mix of younger and middle-aged residents.

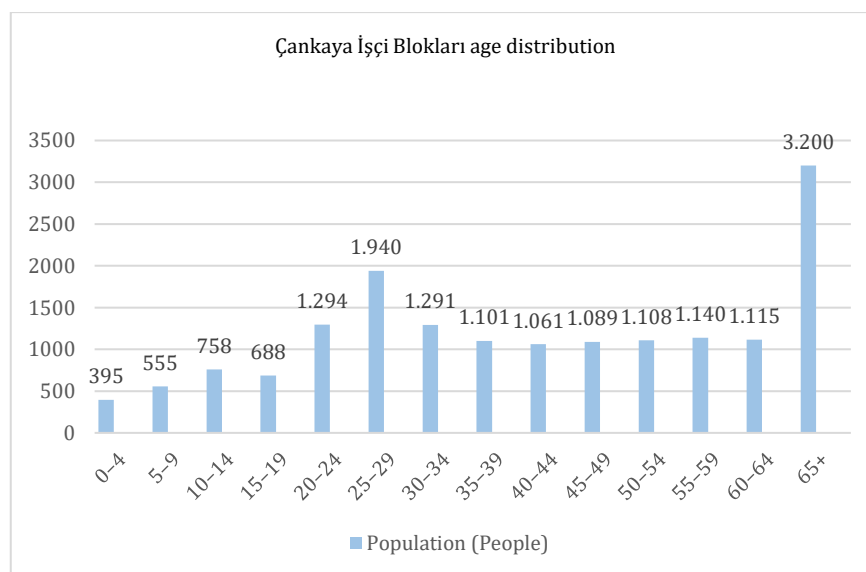


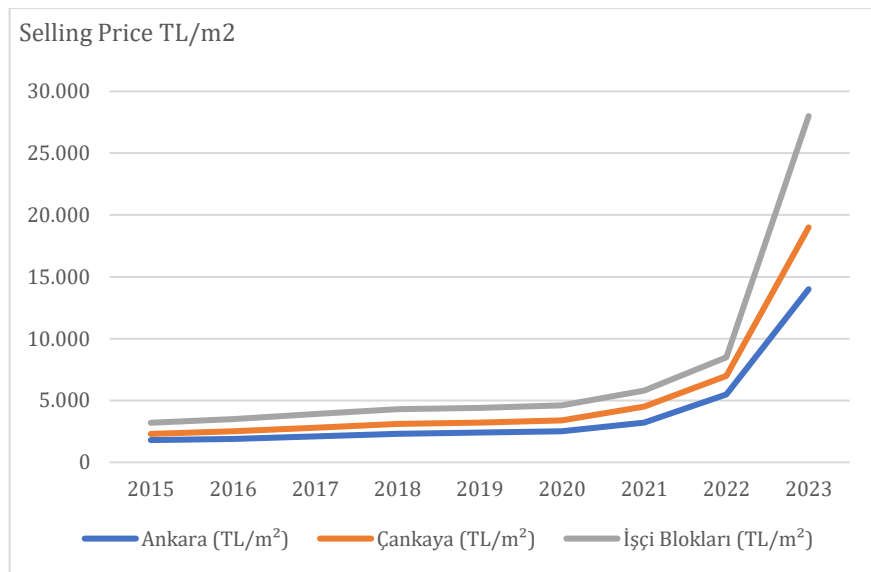
Figure 1. Age distribution of İşçi Blokları neighborhood. Source: Endeksa (2024), demographic data. Figure prepared by the author.

Economic pressures and housing dynamics: As Sage (2010) argues, landlords in England often view student areas as a guaranteed rental market, which contributes to continuously increasing rents. A similar pattern is evident in İşçi Blokları, where the neighborhood's growing popularity among students has driven sharp rises in both rents and property values. Tenants report that residential blocks have deteriorated over time, as landlords, confident their properties will be rented regardless, refrain from investing in maintenance. This neglect has resulted in widespread physical decline.

Median listing prices (TL/m²) and asking rents indicate that location advantages (centrality, walkability to METU, low transport costs) sustain demand even as the cooperative housing stock ages. In İşçi Blokları, median listing prices rose from ~5,000 TL/m² (2021) to ~30,000 TL/m² (2023) —consistent with platform analytics for the neighborhood (Hepsiemlak). Within the cooperative stock, renovated units show faster rent growth and higher TL/m² than non-renovated units, reflecting depreciation after ~10 years and penalties from poor insulation/heating, lack of elevators, and deferred maintenance. Although flat-sharing can lower per-person outlays for students—creating a perception of affordability—average rents continue to rise, intensifying pressures on working-class and retired households and risking “quiet displacement.” (Figure 2).

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Figure 2. Change in housing sales prices (TL/m²) in Ankara, Çankaya, and İşçi Blokları (2015–2023). Source: Figure adapted from Endeksa (2023); prepared by the author. Values approximated from visual data.



İşçi Blokları – Change in Sales Prices

18.63% ↑ 617% ↑ 574.9% ↑
1 Month Change 3-Year Change 5 Year Change

Educational Status: According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2023), Ankara recorded the highest average years of schooling in Türkiye for the population aged 25 and over, with 10.7 years, followed by Istanbul, Eskişehir, Kocaeli, and İzmir as illustrated in Figure 3.

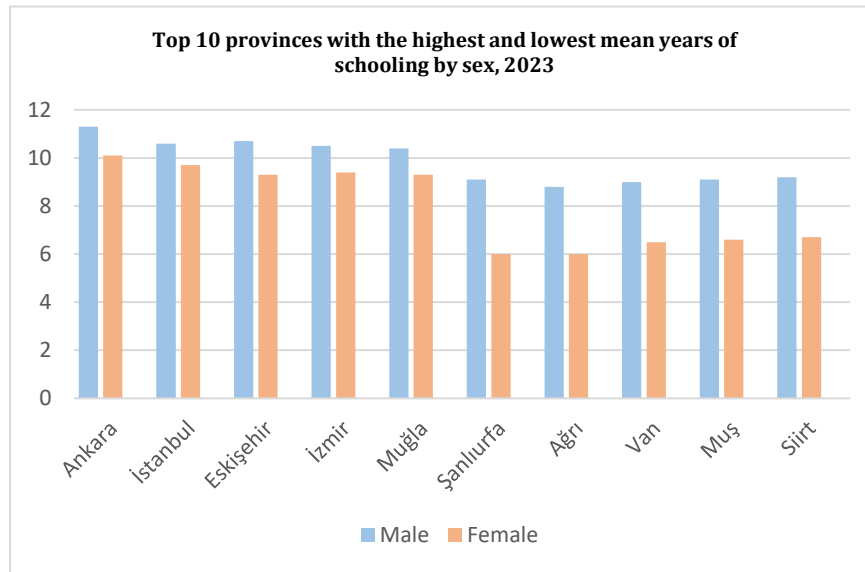


Figure 3. Educational status of Ankara. Data source (Turkish Statistical Institute [TÜİK] (2023). Figure prepared by the author.

Reflecting this broader trend, the İşçi Blokları neighborhood also demonstrates a diverse educational profile among its residents. As shown in Figure 4, 52% of the population have completed tertiary education or hold higher qualifications, representing a substantial share of highly educated individuals. A further 42% of residents have attained formal education at the primary or secondary levels but have not graduated, while the remaining 6% fall into other categories, including those with minimal or no formal schooling (Endeksa).

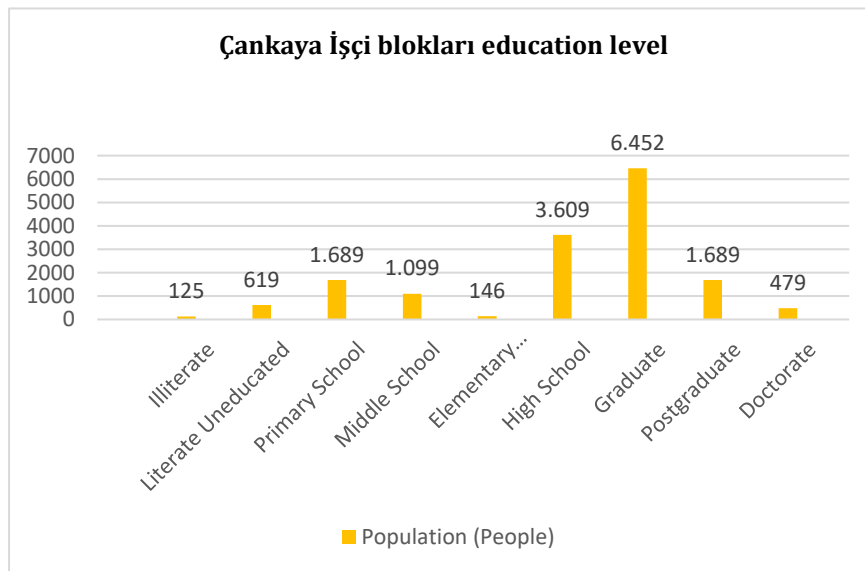


Figure 4. Educational level of İşçi Blokları neighborhood. Source: Endeksa (2024), demographic data. Figure prepared by the author.

Survey findings (Quantitative)

Sample: A structured questionnaire (n = 200; students = 100, non-students = 100) was administered in 2022–2023 to residents living in or around İşçi Blokları.

The survey aimed to capture how residents perceive social integration, housing conditions, and neighborhood satisfaction amid ongoing change.

Identity, distribution, and social relations

Students were commonly viewed as a distinct demographic: 32% described students as a separate group with different lifestyles. A majority (65%) preferred dispersing student households across the city rather than concentrating them. Despite this, 80% of student respondents reported a sense of belonging to the neighborhood. Overall, 90% agreed that students contribute meaningfully to the city's development (e.g., cultural diversity, innovation), and 77% characterized İşçi Blokları as having strong cultural/educational attributes relative to other Ankara neighborhoods. Figure 5 illustrates key survey perceptions among residents and students in İşçi Blokları.

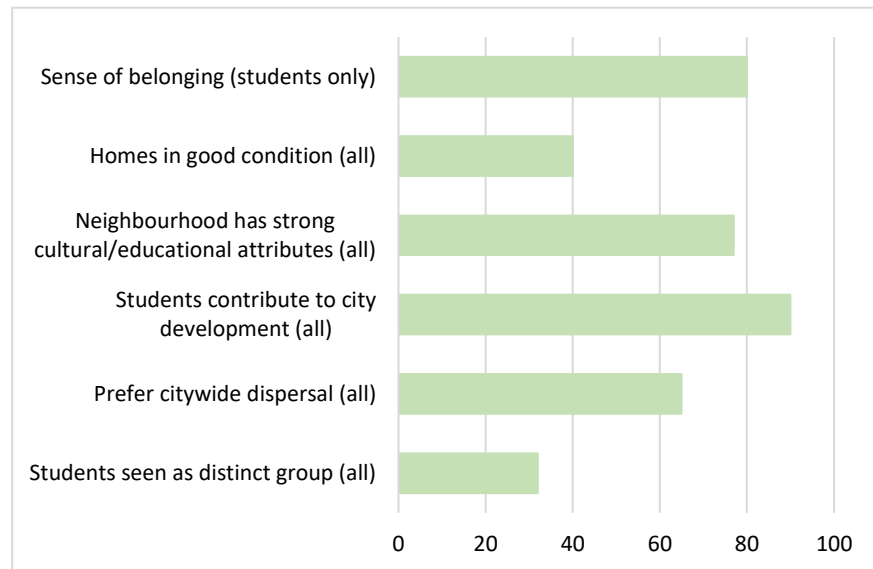


Figure 5. Key survey perceptions in İşçi Blokları (2022–2023 survey). Prepared by the author.

Economic Pressures and Housing Dynamics

Respondents widely perceived rising rents and maintenance shortcomings in the housing stock. Many reported deteriorating building conditions and linked these to limited landlord investment. While flat-sharing was seen to reduce per-person costs for students, respondents noted that total rents per dwelling remain high, intensifying affordability pressures for working-class and retired households and raising perceived displacement risk.

Social and Spatial Satisfaction in the Neighborhood

Survey responses indicate high satisfaction at the neighborhood scale and low satisfaction at the dwelling scale. A majority reported that accessibility to the city center and services (healthcare, markets) is good, and many accept higher neighborhood rents as consistent with this centrality. By contrast, respondents expressed low satisfaction with housing quality, citing small unit size, poor insulation/heating, lack of

elevators in five-story buildings, and deferred maintenance. Overall, residents value public spaces and everyday amenities and wish to preserve the neighborhood's social environment, even as they call for upgrades to dwelling standards.

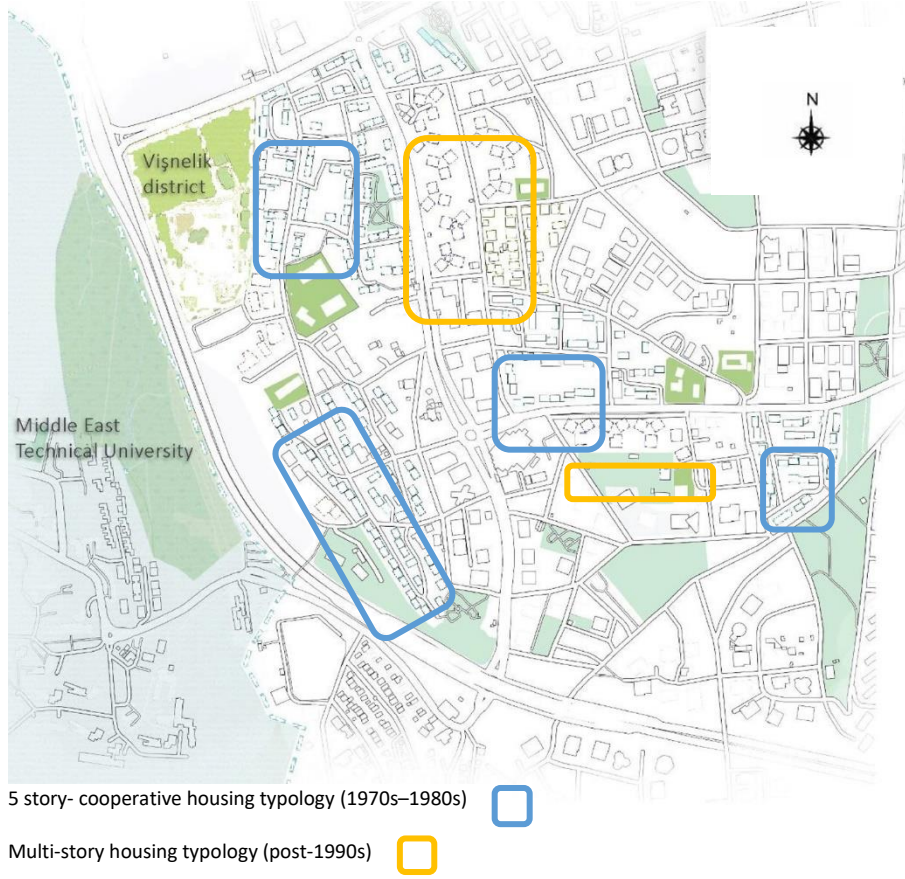


Figure 6. Spatial context of 100. Yıl İşçi Blokları, showing its proximity to Middle East Technical University (METU) and surrounding green areas. Adapted from Çağla Hansu (2023)



Figure 7. Morphological diversity in 100. Yıl İşçi Blokları, combining low-rise cooperative housing with later high-rise developments. This coexistence of forms reflects the district's evolution from worker housing to a mixed-income urban neighborhood. Photo adapted from (a). "16 Adımda ODTÜ Kampüsü," by ODTÜ Ar-Ge Topluluğu (2018), Onedio.

Figure 8. Typical cooperative housing typology — small flats, poor insulation, no elevators, but strong neighborhood identity (Photo by author, 2024).



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Figure 9. Multi-story buildings constructed as part of later development phases, these high-rise buildings represent the neighborhood's transition from mid-rise cooperative housing to denser residential forms. (Photo by the author, 2024.)



Interview Findings (Qualitative)

Thirty semi-structured interviews (students n=10; long-term residents n=8; landlords/estate agents n=6; local business owners n=4; the *Muhtar*; two METU academics) were conducted April 2022–February 2023.

Theme 1– Affordability trade-offs and sharing

Participants described sharing HMOs to manage rising rents, often accepting maintenance problems and reduced privacy.

“Four of us share; insulation is poor and heating fails, and maintenance is slow” (Student)

Theme 2– Landlord practices and housing quality

Under strong demand, some landlords were perceived to under-invest in upkeep.

“Landlords don’t repair anything because they know students will rent regardless.” (Long-term resident).

“Several landlords said students are a ‘guaranteed market,’ so flats can be re-let often and owners feel less pressure to do maintenance.”

Theme 3– Neighborhood identity, seasonality, and safety

The café/nightlife economy and study-friendly venues foster a youth-oriented atmosphere, but interviewees noted quieter streets during university breaks.

“It is the students who keep the cafés open and the shops running—without them, this neighborhood would lose its heartbeat.” (Shop owner)

Theme 4– Belonging, coexistence, and tension

Accounts reflected both attachment and friction: students described belonging despite temporariness; some long-term residents reported social fatigue due to turnover.

“This neighborhood feels like home to me, even if I will only be here for a few years.” (Student)

“We used to know everyone in the building; now faces change every year.” (Resident)

Theme 5– Renewal, place attachment, and value

Views on redevelopment diverged: investors expected higher values; older cooperative members emphasised social ties and the everyday use-value of shared spaces.

“These buildings are old, but they carry our memories. We don’t want them demolished just for profit.” (Elderly resident)

Together, these narratives reveal a complex coexistence of transience and attachment, economic rationality and emotional value. While students express belonging despite temporariness, long-term residents work to balance continuity and change.

DISCUSSION

This section highlights the dual impacts of studentification in İşçi Blokları, relates them to previous research, and considers policy implications.

Interpretation of Findings: The impacts of studentification are multifaceted, with both beneficial and detrimental effects on urban areas.

Comparisons with Previous Research: This study confirms previous findings on the socio-economic effects of studentification but also highlights unique challenges in different urban contexts.

Policy Implications and Recommendations (Affordability-anchored policy and cooperative feasibility):

Drawing on survey income groups and current rent data, we propose rent ceilings that keep rent-to-income ratios within 30–35% for typical 2+1 units (extendable to 1+1 as needed). These thresholds can anchor renewal subsidies and graduated property-tax rebates for landlords that meet maintenance, insulation, and safety standards.

We further outline a municipality-cooperative-university partnership that combines a municipal land/use agreement, a revolving renovation fund, and university nomination agreements to stabilize occupancy and rents. A 50–80 unit pilot with 10–15-year affordability covenants and no-displacement phasing provides a realistic test bed for governance, costs, and outcomes.

Based on survey and interview findings, this study proposes a Cooperative-Renewal Model for affordable student housing in İşçi Blokları (Figure 10). The model conceptually links rent regulation, cooperative renovation, and university nomination mechanisms under municipal coordination.

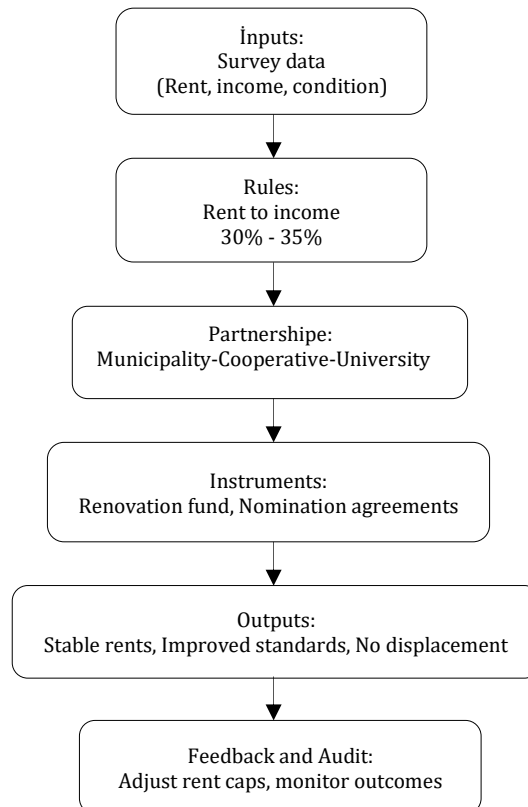


Figure 10. Cooperative-Renewal Model for affordable student housing in İşçi Blokları. Prepared by the author, 2024.)

This flowchart illustrates the proposed cooperative-renewal model, summarizing the inputs, mechanisms, and outcomes discussed above. The model connects affordability data with coordinated actions by the municipality, housing cooperatives, and universities. Rent limits (30–35%), renovation funds, and university agreements help stabilize rents, improve housing quality, and prevent displacement, with audits ensuring continual adjustment.

The model's feasibility depends on an enabling governance framework, transparent financial management, and phased implementation. With appropriate safeguards—fast-track retrofit permits, capped capex with contingencies, and annual audits—the proposal offers a credible, low-risk pathway toward sustainable, student-friendly housing renewal.

Findings from İşçi Blokları underscore the need for balanced strategies that protect affordability for long-term residents while accommodating student demand. As in other contexts, landlords can increase rental income by housing multiple students in a single apartment, making HMOs a lucrative investment (Hubbard, 2008); without appropriate regulation, however, such practices risk intensifying affordability pressures and undermining community well-being.

International evidence supports these directions. Planning frameworks can guide student-housing provision (Holton & Riley, 2014), while planning controls help prevent over-concentration and displacement (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2001). Purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) can relieve pressure on the private rented sector and improve quality (Holton & Mouat, 2021), reducing overcrowding and mitigating environmental decline associated with unregulated rentals (Brennan et al., 2017). Beyond supply, dialogue initiatives between students and long-term residents and student well-being services can foster coexistence (McDougall et al., 2023). Aligning student-housing policy with neighborhood revitalization and sustainable transport links studentification to a broader urban-sustainability agenda (Stimson & Baum, n.d.).

Table 3. Challenges of student presence in İşçi Blokları, based on survey findings (2022–2023)

Challenges	Description
Rising rents and affordability pressures	Student demand drives up rents, creating burdens for working-class and elderly residents.
Deterioration of housing stock	Landlords neglect maintenance, assuming units will be rented regardless.
Risk of displacement	Long-term residents face growing difficulty remaining in the neighborhood.
Communication problems	Misunderstandings between students and permanent residents reduce neighborhood cohesion.
Cultural differences	Differences in lifestyles and daily rhythms contribute to social tensions.
Gentrification tendencies	Rising property values and shifting demographics gradually transform the neighborhood's identity.
Uniform housing stock	Standardized dwellings fail to meet the needs of diverse household types.

Table 4. Positive impacts of student presence in İşçi Blokları, based on survey findings (2022–2023)

Benefits	Description
Economic vitality	Students sustain local cafés, restaurants, markets, and small businesses.
Cultural diversity	Young populations bring new lifestyles, perspectives, and cultural practices.
Knowledge and human capital	Students contribute to a knowledge-based economy through education and research.
Activation of public spaces	Students' use of parks, cafés, and shared areas increases vibrancy and social interaction.
Improved neighborhood visibility	Student demand enhances the neighborhood's profile and perceived attractiveness.
Enhancing safety and vibrancy	The presence of active youth populations makes the neighborhood livelier and perceived as safer.
Fostering innovation	Student activities encourage creativity, social initiatives, and entrepreneurial projects.
Art and cultural production	Students bring artistic practices, events, and performances that enrich the cultural life of the neighborhood.

ANALYSIS

Survey findings reveal a dual perception of students in İşçi Blokları. On the one hand, 32% of respondents regarded students as a distinct demographic, describing their lifestyles as temporary and incompatible, often summarized as a “clash of lifestyle” —a view consistent with previous studies where students were categorized as “others” (Sage et al., 2012; Hubbard, 2008; Long, 2016; Munro & Livingston, 2012). Accordingly, 65% of residents expressed a preference for dispersing student households across the city rather than concentrating them in specific areas, echoing broader evidence of resistance toward clustering (Munro & Livingston, 2012).

Such concerns are not limited to İşçi Blokları but also appear in wider policy discourse. The UK National HMO Lobby (2009, p. 1), a community advocacy group, argues that when students make up one-third of the population, an imbalance may arise, with the student community emerging as the dominant social group and contributing to the erosion of cohesion.

At the same time, survey responses indicate recognition of the positive contributions of students. A clear majority (90%) believed that students make a significant contribution to the city's development through cultural diversity, innovative ideas, and youthful energy. One shop owner remarked: “It is the students who keep the cafés open and the shops running—without them, this neighborhood would lose its heartbeat.” Respondents emphasized students' role in stimulating economic growth, commercial activity, and new businesses, while also positioning them as drivers of cultural and educational vitality. Notably, 80% of student participants reported a sense of belonging to the neighborhood despite their temporary stay. A student interviewee reflected: “This neighborhood feels like home to me, even if I will only be here for a few years.”

Regarding housing, 40% of respondents reported their homes to be in good condition, while opinions were split over the neighborhood's potential inclusion in an urban transformation project (53% in favor,

47% opposed). As one elderly resident put it: “These buildings are old, but they carry our memories. We don’t want them demolished just for profit.” A large share (77%) further described İşçi Blokları as possessing strong cultural and educational attributes, elevating it above other neighborhoods in Ankara in terms of identity and reputation.

To complement the survey results, observational notes and interview responses were systematically analyzed to capture the complexity of community relations and neighborhood perceptions in İşçi Blokları. The analysis focused on key themes such as student–resident relations, community cohesion, cultural and economic contributions, sense of belonging, and housing conditions. Table 5 synthesizes these findings, combining quantitative patterns with qualitative insights to illustrate how studentification shapes everyday life in the neighborhood.

Table 5. Observation and interview-based comprehensive analysis of community relations and perceptions among İşçi Blokları residents

Theme	Survey & Interview Findings	Observation Insights	Implications
Student-resident relations	32% regarded students as a distinct group (“others”); participants emphasized “clash of lifestyles” (different schedules, household practices)	Limited daily contact; older residents often seen in separate spaces from students	Perceptions of difference reinforce social distance
Community cohesion	65% preferred dispersal of student households across the city; National HMO Lobby (2009) warns of imbalance when students form one-third of a population	High turnover in housing stock, visible concentration of student rentals	Risk of weakening cohesion and dominance of student community
Cultural and economic contributions	90% reported students contribute to city development through culture, innovation, and energy; 77% valued neighborhood’s cultural/educational attributes	Vibrant cafés, bars, and cultural spaces observed; local shops adapting to student demand	Students enhance neighborhood identity and visibility
Sense of belonging	80% of students reported feeling belonging despite temporary stay	Students integrate socially in shared housing and public spaces	Belonging is present but fragile, linked to short-term tenure
Housing and neighborhood conditions	40% reported homes in good condition; 53% supported urban transformation, 47% opposed	Buildings show physical aging; cooperative character still visible	Neighborhood at a crossroads between preservation and redevelopment

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that studentification in İşçi Blokları is a multi-dimensional process that reshapes housing, neighborhood life, and urban governance. Students contribute vitality, innovation, and cultural energy, yet their concentration also intensifies affordability pressures, accelerates housing deterioration, and fuels tensions with long-term residents. These dynamics highlight the importance of integrated policy measures that balance student needs with neighborhood sustainability.

The cooperative housing stock established in the 1970s is now facing significant physical decline, raising concerns over safety and livability. As one long-term resident explained, “Landlords don’t repair anything

because they know students will rent regardless.” This deterioration is not only a technical issue but also one that threatens the neighborhood’s ability to maintain its distinctive identity and long-standing social fabric, underscoring the urgency of aligning renewal with Ankara Municipality’s broader strategies for sustainable urban development. Addressing these challenges requires policies that renovate aging stock, regulate landlord practices, and prevent speculative exploitation, while respecting the neighborhood’s unique cooperative character.

Survey and interview findings reveal ambivalence: 32% of residents identified students as a separate demographic, and 65% favored dispersal across the city, echoing wider resistance to clustering. Yet 90% also acknowledged the positive role of students in cultural and economic life, and 80% of students themselves reported a sense of belonging despite their temporary stay. This dual perception underscores both the risks of social fragmentation and the potential for deeper integration. A 65-year-old resident reflected, “We used to know everyone in the building; now faces change every year.” By contrast, a student interviewee emphasized, “For a student, finding a sense of home is rare, but in this neighborhood, I’ve found it.” These perspectives reveal both tension and opportunity. Community engagement, cultural exchange, and student–resident initiatives could foster mutual understanding and strengthen cohesion, while acknowledging conflicts over lifestyle differences, housing turnover, and affordability.

Toward Cooperative and Sustainable Renewal

The findings point to an urgent need for renewal policies that go beyond cosmetic upgrading and market-driven redevelopment. In İşçi Blokları, the original five-story cooperative housing, built through collective organization in the 1970s, offers a socially cohesive yet physically deteriorated fabric. Instead of speculative, investor-led projects focused on 1+0 or 1+1 studio units, the neighborhood requires cooperative-based and socially mixed regeneration. A partnership model between Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, housing cooperatives, and residents could implement zero-interest renovation loans, structural reinforcement, and façade improvements while preserving affordability and mixed family typologies.

Such an approach would maintain the cooperative ethos of collective ownership, strengthen intergenerational coexistence, and avoid the displacement effects seen in conventional urban transformation projects.

Students’ housing choices are closely tied to rent levels, accessibility, and household income. Survey data indicate that while students are drawn to İşçi Blokları for its proximity to METU and moderate rents, rising prices risk excluding both lower-income students and older residents. A data-informed housing policy—linking rental market analysis, household income profiles, and property values—is needed to determine viable rent ceilings and renewal priorities. In this sense,

revisiting the cooperative production model could provide an alternative path for producing affordable, collectively managed housing.

Internationally, examples from Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States demonstrate that university–municipality partnerships can address affordability through models such as municipal rental housing and cooperative student residences. Similar mechanisms could be adapted in Ankara, where universities facing dormitory shortages could collaborate with local authorities to lease or rehabilitate existing housing blocks near campuses. This would ensure affordable rents, maintain social diversity, and prevent uncontrolled commercialization of the housing market.

Table 6: Proposed model for building a sustainable, student-friendly community

Dimension	Key Strategies	Intended Outcome
Housing and Physical Renewal	1. Provide mixed dwelling types for students, families, and elderly residents. 2. Introduce zero-interest cooperative renovation schemes. 3. Integrate renewal within Ankara's sustainable development strategy.	Affordable, safe, and energy-efficient housing; preservation of cooperative identity.
Community and Social Integration	1. Support student–resident interaction via local events and co-designed spaces. 2. Encourage cultural exchange and shared use of facilities. 3. Diversify local businesses serving both groups.	Stronger social cohesion and cultural vitality.
Governance and Sustainability	1. Foster participatory governance with universities, municipalities, and residents. 2. Invest in green infrastructure and efficient public transport. 3. Promote recycling and low-carbon mobility.	Inclusive, resilient, and environmentally conscious governance.

The study concludes that studentification in İşçi Blokları is not merely a housing trend but a transformative socio-spatial process. Addressing its challenges requires cooperative renewal, inclusive housing policies, and multi-scalar governance that recognizes both the vulnerabilities and potentials of student-inhabited neighborhoods. By aligning municipal strategies with participatory models of housing production and management, Ankara can evolve toward a truly sustainable and student-friendly city—one that integrates higher education, social diversity, and spatial resilience.

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Resume

Samaneh Sohrabi Akkoç is a PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Planning at Istanbul Technical University. Her research is situated at the intersection of urban sociology and urban studies, with a particular focus on studentification, gentrification, and the socio-spatial transformation of neighbourhoods. Her work engages with questions of urban inequality and everyday urban resilience, examining how different local actors negotiate coexistence within rapidly changing urban environments.

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She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in urban planning, site planning, urban design, housing design, urban transformation, landscape planning, and emergency and disaster management.

APPENDIX A. Survey and Interview Instruments

Survey structure.

The structured questionnaire (n = 200; 100 students and 100 non-students) included 25 items grouped into three themes:

Housing and affordability – rent levels, maintenance, sharing arrangements, and satisfaction with dwelling quality.

Neighborhood change – perceptions of student presence, amenities, and safety.

Social relations – sense of belonging, interaction with neighbors, and attitudes toward renewal.

Example survey items:

“How much of your household income is spent on rent?”

“How would you rate the maintenance and safety conditions of your dwelling?”

“How has the increasing student population affected your building’s livability?”

“Would you support urban transformation in İşçi Blokları if it preserved affordability?”

“Do you feel a sense of belonging to this neighborhood?”

“How often do you interact with student/non-student neighbors?”

Interview guide.

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, long-term residents, landlords, real estate agents, local business owners, and the neighborhood muhtar.

Main discussion themes included:

Affordability trade-offs and shared living

Landlord practices and housing quality

Neighborhood identity, belonging, and tension

Renewal expectations and attachment to place

Use in analysis.

Survey results informed quantitative comparisons (Section 4.5), while interviews provided qualitative insights into coexistence, belonging, and everyday adaptation (Section 4.6).

All responses were anonymized, and key excerpts are integrated in the text to illustrate participant perspectives.