From Shelter to Subsistence

By
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A project to set up a municipal program for housing the displaced population in Diyarbakır, Turkey was conducted over two years through the Berlage Institute. It aimed to create a local alternative to the state housing program (TOKİ) and, in many ways, an alternative to how public housing is typically conceived. Influencing our approach were discussions about scarcity, a concept that is again slowly crossing from economics into architectural debate. Housing was thought of not as a form of shelter, but as a form of subsistence. Opening up the definition of municipal housing to include socioeconomic conditions expanded the aim and potential impact of

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1 The project titled Accommodating the Displaced: A New Municipal Housing Service in Diyarbakır was developed between February 2010 and June 2012 as collaboration between the Berlage Institute Rotterdam, the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies Rotterdam (IHS), the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, and the Diyarbakır Development Centre Association. The project was initiated by the Berlage Institute together with Diyarbakır mayor Osman Baydemir and Çağlayan Ayhan-Day (who later acted as project coordinator) during 2009.

2 TOKİ stands for the Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration of Turkey. See: http://www.toki.gov.tr
the public building program. The architect’s role thus became to mediate—and, through form, articulate—the socioeconomic condition of the city. The following essay discusses the premises and results of our approach, revealing how a different conception of housing and domesticity engendered the possible reform of the traditional institution of public housing.

Diyarbakır and Displacement

Diyarbakır is a majority-Kurdish city of about 1.3 million inhabitants on the banks of the Tigris River in Southeastern Anatolia. The Roman city walls that still enclose the old town center point to its long history as a once-strategic trade post. The remnants of courtyard villas, built of black basalt, indicate a historical wealth; today, those same remnants underscore the current precariousness of the original neighborhoods. Now one of the poorest cities in Turkey, Diyarbakır has no identifiable economic sector aside from the construction industry.

The urban population was notably heterogeneous until the end of the Ottoman Empire, when efforts to form a republic tried to sort what was once a varied geography into a homogenous nation. In the southeast, however, the intended “Turkification” never arrived: Diyarbakır became less diverse, but no more ethnically Turkish. Rather than being smoothly incorporated into the nation, it became the symbolic capital of a stateless group. It is the largest city in the Kurdish-inhabited region of Turkey and the place

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3 The difficulty of actually establishing a population count should be noted, as it is indicative of the contested state of even the simplest material facts of the city.
where the effects of the last thirty years of social and political conflict are condensed and inscribed on the fabric as a new, uneven geography of divisions and extremes.\textsuperscript{5}

The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) entered into armed conflict with the central government in 1984. Their operations in the mountainous regions of the southeast led the Turkish government to try and deplete what was believed to be the source of supplies and information for PKK fighters. Rural settlements were overtaken by paramilitary “village guards,” or even burned down, and their inhabitants fled into the region’s main cities.\textsuperscript{6} The systematic military efforts in the countryside overlooked the effects of this migration: no provisions were made to anticipate the influx of domestic refugees in cities.

In Diyarbakır, forced migration of the rural population to the city completely altered its urban structure. While refugees settled in scattered informal settlements concentrated in older, central neighborhoods—where an estimated half of the urban population lives—high-rise neighborhoods for the middle class that had been slowly clustering outside of the city walls now rapidly enveloped the city’s western farmland. This “modern” image of zoned order became the motor for the city’s economic growth, ensuring that municipal planning was focused on defining FAR (Floor Area Ratio) guidelines and the road infrastructure to enable them. In this thick periphery, one finds the city of 2014 rendered in pastels and equipped with pools, large balconies, and solar water heaters.

The middle class, now reconfigured in the periphery, abandoned the historical core. Municipal planning, for its part, focused on guiding this new expansion. Left behind in a vacuum of ideas were the historical neighborhoods and public lands, which suddenly accommodated a new half of the city. The walled center was un- and rebuilt by this new wave of migration, both in terms of demographics as well as built substance. Foundation walls built for single-family courtyard homes now form the base of new, multifamily dwellings, self-constructed and rising up to seven floors. In place of a mixed class fabric defined by a range of modest to opulent courtyard houses is a core that, while no longer vacant, is stressed by a population density it was never meant to accommodate. Though the street pattern of the ancient city remains, the buildings themselves are now mostly less than three decades old. The black basalt city has been remade in hollow brick.

Those not accommodated in the old city have found space for new informal construction on public land. For Diyarbakır, as in other cities in Turkey, this was not a new phenomenon. Since agricultural crises in the 1930s, building a \textit{gecekondu}—a Turkish term for informal housing, roughly meaning “built overnight”—on public land has been a common solution to housing scarcity. Some of these are now central neighborhoods and are, though irregular and precarious, well established. Forced migration pressured these dense areas. Neighborhoods like Bağlar, where irregular structures reach up to twelve stories, had to absorb additional population. New settlements were also established on farmland often owned by the national or local government. These, unlike the ancient city center or the historically informal areas, have been the target of planning—primarily in the form of clearance and resettlement.

TOKI, the Housing Development Administration of Turkey, has been the main actor in this process. Across the country, its social and market-rate housing projects are ubiquitous. This is possible because TOKI has access to the vast land reserves of the Turkish state in a country where sixty percent of all land is still in the hands of the state’s treasury. Since its inception, the organization has been involved in the resettlement of people living in


\textsuperscript{6} The perception of dispersed, rural settlements as a threat to the governability of the countryside did not arise in the 1980s, but rather with the founding of the Turkish state. See Joost Jongerden, \textit{The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: an Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War} (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007).
Fig. 3: The modern city expansion of apartment towers, now reaching and surrounding old villages.
informal areas. Often, a new TOKî development is built on low-value land at the outskirts of the city. Families living in informal settlements are given a mortgage for an apartment in the new development at a subsidized rate. The gecekondu districts can then be cleared and redeveloped for market-rate or low-subsidy housing.

The city challenged the familiar means of subsistence for many migrants. Knowledge of agriculture and animal husbandry was irrelevant in a situation already struggling to accommodate human inhabitants. A conflict now persists in the urban space between the skills of those living there and the inadequacy of those spaces to host them. In courtyards rebuilt into multifamily homes, one finds small livestock or crops. There is, however, neither enough space nor light to sufficiently grow anything. Thus, urban farming in Diyarbakır is not productive enough for subsistence, let alone profit. The municipal authority shudders at these enterprises, sympathetic to the need to provide for oneself but horrified at the—in their eyes—antiurban and antimodern nature of that sustenance.

For the displaced population, settling into the city was a shift from a pre-modern life with clear social structures and relational networks to an unclear urban society and economy. The arrival of the refugees also changed the city itself, forging an unfamiliar mixture of rural and urban patterns of subsistence, social life, and solidarity. To integrate, they suddenly needed to rely on social and economic resources, like access to employment, housing, health care, and education facilities. The arrival of so many people at once pressured these services into scarcity.

Against this backdrop, we developed test projects together with the local municipal government for the establishment of a municipal housing service—an alternative, and in many ways, ideological opposite to the national government housing program. This collaboration aimed at fully accommodating the displaced in the city and assisting their integration into civil society. Pilot projects for housing that took a comprehensive view of
socioeconomic welfare served as a testing ground for the establishment of the new housing authority.

The Problem of Scarcity and Housing

Modern economics is based on the idea of scarcity. To non-economists, scarcity may seem mostly related to energy resources (like the oil crises of the 1970s). This illustrates well the assumption that scarcity is a geological fact that society confronts as an external problem. Thomas Malthus’s work—not to mention that of the Neomalthusians who seemingly dictate so much contemporary policy—is the most famous embodiment of this assumption.

However, scarcity as we experience it today is only tangentially related to limited natural resources. First, a resource is defined by our use of it. To be a resource, a need for it must be produced, and how great that need is defines its scarcity. That scarcity, in turn, defines its value. David Harvey phrased it succinctly in 1974: “it is erroneously accepted that scarcity is something inherent in nature, when its definition is inextricably social and cultural in origin.”

Scarcity must be produced along with commodities for markets and price mechanisms to function. As they enter the economic system, resources that have no natural origin—such as labor, housing, or location—become commodities. If they are abundant, they lose value. Scarcity must thus be maintained, either through institutions or violence. As Karl Marx argued, capital accumulation is predicated on “conquest,

7 The projects were developed by participants in the studios “After Displacement: Large Scale Housing Solutions for Diyarbakır” (Berlage Institute, spring 2010, tutors Martino Tattara and Joachim Declerck) and “Designing for Suriçi: Rethinking Urban Renewal” (Berlage Institute, spring 2011, tutors Martino Tattara and Çağlayan Ayhan-Day).
enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force”. The precondition of this is displacement of the majority of producers from the means of producing their own livelihood. Moreover, as capital is reproduced through unequal access to the means of subsistence, the market itself generates a form of abstract violence in which commodity relations structure everyday forms of hunger and displacement.

The necessity of access to the market turns urban space itself into a commodity. As new migrants to Diyarbakır learned, the quality of urban life is determined by access to its institutions and to the possibility of earning an income. Thus, their migration meant a dislocation not just from rural to urban life, but also from self-sufficiency to reliance. The most visible symptom of this is the often substandard housing of recent migrants, whose shelters have been built under duress. And it is to this condition that the project of public housing typically responds. The aim becomes giving shelter to as many people in need as possible.

This understanding—ideology, even—of housing intervention is particularly present in post-conflict reconstruction. The efforts undertaken in Diyarbakır thus far are no exception. Despite apparent good intentions, this motive raises several problematic and unresolved questions. TOKİ has built several mass housing compounds in Diyarbakır in the past years. Most units are apartments in prefabricated high-rises, unsuccessful not just because of their poor-quality construction, but also due to their unfavorable locations: these developments are in remote areas on state-owned but low-value land, isolating inhabitants and detaching them from any opportunities the city can normally offer.

The challenges of these developments point to the difficulty of providing social housing in the context as well as to the fundamental problem of the program’s aims. TOKİ provides shelter at the expense of all other facets of socioeconomic welfare. These housing projects follow the archipelago model of city development, whereby prefabricated towers assemble to create a large-scale development cut off from the city. Housing is the only program provided and other activities—from opening a business to planting flowers—are not only withheld, but are banned by the mortgage contract signed to receive a unit. Because of their typically remote location, infrequent or prohibitively expensive transportation to other areas offering employment prospects becomes the final nail in the coffin.

This model of relocation is particularly difficult in Diyarbakır for two reasons: first, those being relocated are still dealing with the effects of a previous forced migration, and second, refugees, as newcomers to the city, are unlikely to be involved in an urban economy of employment and instead provide for themselves through subsistence. It is difficult to see how relocation is in the best interest for those being rehoused. Socially, the largest benefit of this model is its effectiveness in reopening valuable land for real estate development within the city while increasing the holdings of TOKİ in turn. Inhabitants, though, give up the possibility to provide for themselves and their families. In exchange for this welfare of the everyday, they are merely given assurance that their house will remain safe in the not-so-extraordinary event of an earthquake.

In Diyarbakır, the two recently built TOKİ settlements in Üçkuyular and in Çölgüzeli—respectively twelve and fifteen kilometers away from the historical core—exemplify TOKİ’s model of operation. As soon as a gecekondu district or an area of the historical city center is recognized as potentially lucrative for urban transformation, evictions begin. Inhabitants are minimally compensated for their dwelling and offered a unit in one of the new TOKİ

11 Huber, 818.
settlements. Regardless of whether they were tenants or property owners in the informal settlement, they are put on a monthly installment scheme to eventually become the owner of a TOKİ apartment after a repayment period between ten and twenty years. This differs from a usual mortgage because TOKİ does not hand over the deed for the unit until the debt has been repaid in full.13

Subsistence that was dependent on the community is abruptly interrupted by relocation. Neighborhood-based informal businesses, the ability to buy on credit as a known customer, possibilities for casual employment like carpet weaving, and even communal, open-air ovens all disappear as means and institutions of collective support. Small-business activities like baking bread at home, knitting and sewing by women, and animal husbandry by men do not transfer to the rigid spatial structures of the new settlements. All this is at odds with the results of a survey on housing needs carried out during the project period, in which it was shown that poverty and food security are bigger concerns among inhabitants than housing.

Once evicted, inhabitants find themselves in small apartments. They are now obliged to formally access electricity and pay waste collection and building maintenance costs, which they cannot afford. Life in new TOKİ settlements makes it impossible to benefit from social services that are crucial to survival. In central areas affected by forced migration, the municipality provides community centers, employment centers for women, and laundries with spaces for children where counseling and training are conducted. There is no correlate to these services in the new outer developments. Without a job and without access to services, residents have a hard time meeting the monthly installments once the small paid compensation for the eviction evaporates. After three missed loan payments, they are again evicted from their new dwellings and put back into a vicious circle of precarious existence.

13 See Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration (TOKİ), *Due Diligence Document* (Ankara: TOKİ Strategic Planning Department, 2011), 22.
The urban geography of the TOKİ settlements weakens the dweller’s social and economic sustainability. It also proves to be a cunning geopolitical apparatus. Dispersing Kurdish inhabitants in remote and isolated areas far beyond the current city’s edge strategically dissipates the risk of turmoil, political revolt, and urban violence that have marked the city over the last thirty years. TOKİ’s model of operation—far from just providing shelter—represents a conscious biopolitical tool to control inhabitants’ lives and keep them in a regime of scarcity. Especially for those who were already displaced once, dispossession through relocation is a violent act. That this is a pattern becomes immediately clear by looking at these interventions in Diyarbakır, not to mention those in other Turkish cities. Relocation—even to “social” housing—robs residents not just of their familiar livelihood, but of any benefit that access to the city can provide.

Housing Design and Its Expanded Agenda

To write a new agenda, housing must foster participation in urban life through access to employment, health and education. These aims interweave the public building project of the state with the possibilities and potentials of the infrastructural apparatus of the city—in its present state or as an actor in its future development. Location and urban geography are fundamental. Only when these “external” aspects are taken into account can accessibility and subsistence opportunities become integral to any housing scheme.

Ensuring that housing is not merely thought of as shelter reconfigures not just the political calculations for how to locate public housing, but also what composes the housing itself. State building projects have always come with an agenda of modernization. If, however, one uncouples the basic needs that housing is to address from the spatial attitudes of modernization, a different agenda appears. It is now generally assumed that housing and production require two separate spatial provisions. Since industrialization, housing is for the domestic realm, as the workshop, the office, or the factory are for production. Spatial separation comes with a conceptual division between wage and sustenance. It is assumed that one works in order to earn an income that buys sustenance, rather than simply producing what is needed to survive. In Diyarbakır, subsistence is presently separated from the space of the household. This is an unfamiliar condition for many families, who came from a lifestyle that integrated living and production in the same spaces. Now, many residents can neither work at home nor for an employer, as Diyarbakır’s economy struggles to provide employment possibilities. Observing domestic practices makes it clear that a family’s life could be improved by weakening this separation.

The test projects we developed started with an expanded agenda for public housing and converged with the realities of how the city is occupied. Diyarbakır has long outgrown the patrician traditional lifestyle that the city government still imagines reemerging out of its urban redevelopment program. The fabric built by the mercantile class has been reconfigured for rural habits also found in gecekondu settlements and even formal areas of the city. City initiatives have fixated on “correcting” this behavior, preferring a uniform facade of modernity. But because economic growth has not accompanied Diyarbakır’s expansion, it is impossible to assume that citizens can provide for themselves through formal employment. Ensuring means of subsistence is thus critical, whether or not this becomes incorporated into more abstract economic systems. Housing could act as a broad-spectrum form of welfare for inhabitants if means of subsistence are incorporated into its program.

Our project assumed that the varied livelihoods found within the city, like urban agriculture, animal husbandry and traditional craftsmanship—livelihoods that are now,
1900 (Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman period): Diyarbakır was settled during the Roman period around 3000 BC and remained the same until the beginning of the twentieth century.

3000 BC - AD 1900: Housing units were first built outside the city walls in cooperative developments for the wealthy in the 1950s. In 1950, the airport was established for military use, restricting further development to the south.

1985-2005: During the conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK of the 1980s and 1990s, mass forced migration from the countryside into the city caused a rapid urban expansion.

1960-1985: As agricultural production became more efficient through industrialization, people began to migrate in large numbers in search of work. What had been the city vineyards, Bağlar, began to be developed as a gecekondu settlement. During this period, the population of the city doubled.
at best, tolerated—should be facilitated. These practices are now found in direct opposition to their surroundings and the government’s wishes. Despite that, providing appropriate spaces for them to flourish would not, as feared, de-urbanize or de-modernize the city. Rather, a vision of the city should be built up from its current occupancy patterns as an alternative statement of what it means to be urban. This is not a matter of simply providing space, but rather setting a structure in place within which different lifestyles and districts can act as complements to each other. Depending on the site, we proposed different combinations of live-work settlements ranging from houses with workshops on the ground floor to farming areas with housing of decreasing density that can actively protect the city’s edge from endless expansion.

To allow for this wide range of urban spaces and foster interaction between them, mobility must be possible across the whole urban territory. The infrastructural projects of a previous era—both for automobiles as well as for regional transit—cut neighborhoods in Diyarbakır off from one another, giving sharp physical borders to stark socioeconomic difference. Middle-class workers in the new neighborhoods at the periphery commute by car into the center, a possibility not available to those living in social housing even farther away. The public transportation system is inadequate, with limited routes and only a small number of buses. If new living spaces are to be provided for those crowded into the center, a larger geography of transit and employment opportunities is critical to support the relocation process.

To go along with housing settlements, then, we proposed a ring-like transit network that could help stitch the city’s disparate regions together. This was outside of the original scope of the project, which was initially limited to strategies to house the displaced. However, as work proceeded, it became clear that sudden migration and its aftershocks restructured the whole city such that the condition of the displaced is inextricable from the condition of the city itself. All areas of the city, from

Fig. 11: The proposed ring-like transit system
Fig. 12: While the ring is established as a transit mechanism, a series of interventions along the line serve to reinforce the new urban hierarchy and attempt to define the center away from the historical city core.
Fig. 13: Plan for a proposed urban room along the transit network in Kayapinar
Fig. 14: Rendering of a proposed urban room along the transit network in Bağlar

Fig. 15: Rendering of a proposed urban room along the transit network in Kayapınar

ing village-like informal settlements to gated communities, reflect the fact that the city has grown in crisis. Piecemeal additions responded to personal need, foreclosing the possibility of an overview or vision. Problems for the city as a whole affect most of the displaced population, but those problems are not theirs alone. To look only at strategies for housing would ignore or even reinforce the processes that caused their distress.

Restricted by the river valley to the east, a military site to the north, and the airport to the south, Diyarbakır grew in a corridor towards the northwest. As it sprawled, the historic core and its first expansions at the beginning of the twentieth century remained the point of reference. This “center” is now at the southeastern edge of the city. Over half of the population and the majority of employment prospects are still concentrated here, resulting in a lopsided form in which areas for development are far away from any jobs. Current growth exacerbates this uneven geometry. To ensure the success of any effort at accommodating the displaced, Diyarbakır must be reoriented. Spaces of participation and identification need to be distributed so that those living outside of the old neighborhoods are not penalized as peripheral. At the same time, the variety of the spaces provided need to be expanded to include means of subsistence for those excluded from the formal economy. Finally, transport is needed to give continuity and movement between disparate parts.

Along the trajectory of the new ring-like transit line, we selected a number of sites from the areas that are currently vacant. We proposed transforming each site into a dense system of living and working spaces. These would be organized around large, open urban rooms—multipurpose, collective spaces to be used for daily market activities as well as public events. The architecture is devoid of any ambition, focusing simply on meeting the needed capacity. This generic architecture, however, would be structured by an urban form and spatial composition that serve as the real catalysts for transforming the status quo into something more specific.
The proposed development zones are juxtaposed against a backdrop of grid-based, concrete “pixel” towers that currently spread across the city. Instead of this isolated and isolating urban form, the vacancies are filled with parallel residential slabs above a common plinth. The connected ground level acts as a living platform for production, craftsmanship, and commercial activities. Programs at the site boundary are oriented to serve the surrounding neighborhoods. At the interface of the plot and the transit network, the plinth extends to frame an open inner room. This new, intentional void acts as the hinge of a new urban centrality. With its disparate and complementary uses, it attempts to advance alternative representations of urbanity.

A similar logic has driven a parallel test project that attempts to counter the ongoing process of urban renewal in the walled city. Starting with a few neighborhoods, TOKİ is trying to buy up as many properties in this district as possible. As soon as the tenants have moved out, the house is demolished in order to prevent reoccupation. Once a sufficiently large area is fully razed, TOKİ starts implementing its process of urban transformation, aiming at transforming the historical city into a large leisure park.\textsuperscript{15}

Our test project for the city center is a counter-proposal to this tabula rasa approach. Through observing various practices and uses of domestic space, we determined that a family’s life could be radically improved by adopting livelihoods that were perhaps seen in the past and are latently accommodated by the spatial structure of the traditional house. Traditional houses in Diyarbakır were organized around stone-paved courtyards, which served many purposes as fundamental spaces for the extended families inhabiting them. This housing type defines the intricate urban pattern of historical

\textsuperscript{15} Although a project for this part of the old city was never officially presented, a promotional video by TOKİ revealed how the intricate pattern of courtyard houses in the neighborhoods of Alipaşa and Lalebey would be transformed from a residential area into a large leisure park, interspersed with pools and pavilions.
Fig. 17: The entirety of family life is organized around the space of the courtyard, which is isolated from the street and provides privacy, safety, and good climate in all seasons. Each courtyard is used differently by each family according to habits, beliefs, and economic status. With forced migrations placing pressure on the city’s limited resources, many courtyards in the city today are shared by more than one family.
residential areas. It is also almost universally adopted in the largely self-built neighborhoods, reflecting continued identification with the same type. Sheltered, amply dimensioned, directly accessible from the street, and considerably flexible in terms of use, the courtyard could host and stimulate manifold economic activities.

The overlapping of living and working spaces resembles both the background of the current inhabitants, whose productive and living activities occurred side by side in rural villages, and the traditional mixed uses of large historical portions of the city, where houses were embedded in economically dynamic and diversified urban fabrics. As the history of the city demonstrates, Diyarbakır has been remarkable for its integration of cultures, commerce, and forms of production. Thanks to this ability, the city and the region enjoyed prosperity for several centuries. This economic wealth was lost due to the geopolitical circumstances of the last decades. As a consequence, districts of small-scale production have been shrinking, contributing to the depreciation of land values and the overall poor conditions. Diversified production at the domestic scale would thus be beneficial not only for the residents but also for the urban conditions in general. The project of housing would become a punctual and proactive intervention, able to stimulate positive urban transformation.

In these test projects, we made an argument by means of the architectural representation of space, namely large urban rooms or domestic courtyards. By emphasizing the spatial impact of the proposal instead of relying on facts and figures, we tried to shift the discussion away from economics towards the societal value of common infrastructures and civic space.

The Project as a Form of Collaboration

The project’s organizational form was as important as its architectural output. It was devised as a collaborative
effort among different partners. We aimed at bringing international and local architects, academics, central and regional government, and local NGOs together around the same table. Together, all could discuss how to provide adequate housing for the displaced communities of the city. Representatives from the displaced communities were also incorporated to serve as both guides and as reviewers of the project.

To respond to the varied urban character and the social structure of the city’s districts, the project attempted to establish a design approach in which architectural form results out of exchange, mediation, and dialogue. The test projects are the result of designers—together with the municipality and the other partners—having engaged in workshops, meetings, presentations and trainings with both partners and stakeholders. This established a new working method at odds with both the hierarchical structures of local government and the lack of a progressive and broadly informed national planning legislation.

We also tried to use our international status to bypass the lack of cooperation between local and national institutions. Because these two administrative bodies are hierarchically linked, dialogue between them is never equal. Any exchange typically takes place in the form of official meetings, letters, and protocols to be signed and delivered. We discovered that providing neutral spaces for encounter between local and central government agencies—be they in another city or another country—improved the manner and content of the conversation. Representatives of foreign cities have also been invited to present their own problems and solutions to the two planning agencies, a tool that helped the two parties find common ground. For this reason, a long-term project initiated by the local government, supported by an international donor, and executed by young, international professionals became a catalyst in overcoming many years of planning apathy and finding the momentum with which to build up a new municipal housing service.

Fig.19: Proposal for a new courtyard house, with social and production facilities located at the ground level and two living units at the upper floors

Fig.20: Ground floor plan: 1) courtyard, 2) kitchen, 3) bathroom
Conclusion

A large part of the current population in Diyarbakır fled to the city as “forced migrants” from the surrounding region. In this situation, it is clear that accommodating them as inhabitants cannot be limited to offering shelter. Housing must be used as a means of integration into the economic and the social conditions of the city. The failure of the national housing program to even attempt to do this makes it unfit to address the conditions in Diyarbakır, let alone many other settlements in Turkey. Although our mandate to expand the ambitions of public housing came out of extraordinary circumstances, it is not limited to them. The confined and confining nature of public housing is a problem that repeats itself globally, often reinforcing exclusion instead of fostering integration.

Working with a revised notion of domesticity, our series of test projects put forward an alternative idea of public housing. Instead of merely being a place of shelter detached from the condition of production and cooperation, we conceived of domestic space as the place where different models of subsistence could be facilitated. Our ideas about the importance of location, mobility, and the spatial character of the house were illustrated through projects with a unitary architectural approach.

By designing not just organizational structures and timelines but also concrete proposals, we have tried to convey the potential quality of an innovative municipal public housing program to a broad swath of the city. Over the two years that we spent collaborating on the project, we commonly agreed upon a method; trained municipal personnel; and carried out, discussed, and negotiated test projects. Now, it is up to the present political forces to make it happen.

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