REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF DISPLACEES FROM SULUKULE: A DOCUMENTARY-BASED ANALYSIS

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MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

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Isabela DOS SANTOS SILVA

Signature

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Isabela DOS SANTOS SILVA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS **vii**

LIST OF FIGURES **viii**

LIST OF TABLES **ix**

LIST OF MAPS **x**

ABSTRACT **xi**

ÖZET **xiii**

1 INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Theme 2

1.2 Problem 4

1.3 Justification 5

1.4 Objective 6

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK **8**

2.1 The Displacement Turn in Urban Studies 8

2.1.1 Definitions and typologies 8

2.1.2 Socio-spatial Consequences of Displacement 11

2.1.3 Global South: the Urban Poor and Urban Transformations 14

2.1.4 Displacement in Istanbul and Urban Dynamics in Turkey 17

2.1.5 Gaps and Future Research 21

2.2 Audiovisual Analysis in Urban Research 24

2.2.1 The Documentary Method 26

3 METHODOLOGY **36**

3.1 Research Design 36

3.2 Exploring the Context 37

3.3 Data Selection 39

3.4 Data Analysis 39

3.5 Methodological Challenges and Limitations 42

3.6 Coding Strategy 42

3.6.1 Formulating interpretation: Exploring topics and subtopics 43

3.6.2 Reflecting interpretation: Uncovering atheoretical and conjunctive knowledge 43
3.6.3 Type formation: Presenting the orientation frameworks 45
4 SULUKULE THROUGH TIME 46
4.1 The Early Urban Settlement of the Peripatetic Roma 48
4.2 Decline and Marginalization in the Late 20th Century 49
4.3 The 2006 Urban Regeneration Project 50
4.4 Aftermath and Current Situation 53
5 SULUKULE THROUGH FILM 56
6 FINDINGS 69
6.1 Loss of Belonging 69
6.1.1 Socio-genesis of Loss of Belonging 72
6.2 Increasing Marginalization 74
6.2.1 Socio-genesis of Increasing Marginalization 77
7 CONCLUSION 80
7.1 Reflections and recommendations 82
7.2 Challenges encountered 86
7.3 Theoretical contributions 87
7.4 Future research 88
REFERENCES 90
APPENDIX 100
PUBLICATIONS FROM THE THESIS 114

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
EU	European Union
GEÇAK	Project for transformation from squatter to contemporary housing
İBB	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
MoViQ	Movies and Video in Qualitative Social Research
SDI	Slum/Shack Dwellers International
STOP	No Frontiers Autonomous Planners
TiQ	Talk in Qualitative Social Research
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
TOKİ	Housing Development Administration of Turkey
UCL	University College London
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPFs	Urban Poor Funds

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Structure of the thesis 7

Figure 2.1 Conceptual evolution of displacement 11

Figure 2.2 Comparative conceptual map 14

Figure 2.3 City factors that support or restrain the development of the urban poor 16

Figure 2.4 'Sulukule yok olmasın' gösterisi 28

Figure 2.5 Dimensions of meaning and interpretation in the picture 30

Figure 2.6 Transcript from film 30

Figure 2.7 Flowchart of the analytical steps in the Documentary Method 35

Figure 3.1 Visual coding section under the topic 'critical awareness' 40

Figure 3.2 Flow chart of the analytical steps 41

Figure 3.3 Visual coding section under the topic 'staging benevolence' 44

Figure 3.4 Code matrix 45

Figure 5.1 Photogrammes of Sulukule 57

Figure 5.2 Photogrammes of İstanbul Çıplak 58

Figure 5.3 Photogrammes of Canım Sulukule 59

Figure 5.4 Photogrammes of Selahattin'in İstanbul'u 60

Figure 5.5 Photogrammes of Mein Haus stand in Sulukule 61

Figure 5.6 Photogrammes of Slum Stories 62

Figure 5.7 Photogrammes of The Last Days of Sulukule (Mundi Romani) 63

Figure 5.8 Photogrammes of Sulukule Mon Amour 64

Figure 5.9 Photogrammes of My School, My Rights 65

Figure 5.10 Photogrammes of Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü 66

Figure 5.11 Testimonies overview 67

Figure 7.1 Circle of exclusion and the influence of pro-poor policies 83

Figure 7.2 Types of community-managed finance available at the local level 85

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Content of the analytical steps in the Documentary Method 34
Table 5.1 Summary of the audiovisual material included in the analysis 68
Table A.1 Codebook 101

LIST OF MAPS

Map 4.1 Location Map of Sulukule 47
Map 4.2 Relocation Map 51
Map 4.3 Temporal Transformations Map Analysis 55

ABSTRACT

Understanding the lived experiences of displacees from Sulukule: A documentary-based analysis

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Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Master of Science Thesis

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tolga İSLAM

Despite being celebrated as a global city, Istanbul remains a place where many residents experience displacement, marginalization, and loss. This study focuses on the aftermath of the urban regeneration process in Sulukule, one of the world's oldest Roma settlements, which was demolished and replaced with Ottoman-style architecture in the first decade of the 2000s. While this transformation was exhaustively studied under the label of gentrification, the absence of an affluent incoming population has recently led scholars to question the applicability of the concept in this context. The notion of indirect displacement has only recently begun to be used in Turkey to expand on urban analysis beyond gentrification as its primary analytical frame. This study builds on existing research by using secondary audiovisual data analysis as the central method for exploring the social transformation of urban space in Sulukule. It draws on a set of eleven documentary films in which former residents (n=58) provide access to personal and collective memories, visual representations, and symbolic articulations of loss and transformation. Grounded in a phenomenological approach, this qualitative study applies Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method to audiovisual testimonies, enabling the exploration of how displacees perceive the urban transformations they have undergone and to what extent indirect displacement reveals the underlying social structures of social injustice that shape urban development. The analysis identified

two interrelated major themes through which indirect displacement is lived: loss of belonging and increasing marginalization. These findings demonstrate that displacement in Sulukule operates not only as a material process but as an ongoing condition that erodes cultural continuity, social recognition, and spatial agency, while giving rise to forms of resilience and resistance. The case of Sulukule further illustrates a process of failed gentrification, in which state-led displacement occurred without attracting the affluent replacement population it promised, suggesting that indirect displacement offers a more analytically precise lens than gentrification for understanding urban transformation in comparable contexts. Beyond its empirical contributions, this study advances the methodological repertoire available to displacement scholars and advocates for urban policies that recognize displaced communities as right-bearing subjects with the capacity to shape their own urban futures.

Keywords: indirect displacement, symbolic displacement, social justice, documentary method, Istanbul.

ÖZET

Sulukule'de yerinden edilenlerin yaşanmış deneyimlerini anlamak: Belgesellere dayalı bir analiz

Isabela DOS SANTOS SILVA

Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Anabilim Dalı

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Tolga İSLAM

İstanbul küresel bir şehir olarak kutlansa da, birçok sakinin yerinden edilme, marjinalleşme ve kayıp deneyimlediği bir mekân olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, dünyanın en eski Roman yerleşimlerinden biri olan Sulukule'de 2000'li yılların ilk on yılında yıkılarak Osmanlı tarzı mimariyle yeniden inşa edilen kentsel dönüşüm sürecinin sonrasına odaklanmaktadır. Bu dönüşüm, uzun süre soylulaştırma (gentrification) başlığı altında kapsamlı biçimde incelenmiş olsa da, varlıklı bir yeni nüfusun bölgeye yerleşmemesi, son dönemde araştırmacıların bu kavramın bu bağlamdaki geçerliliğini sorgulamalarına yol açmıştır. Dolaylı yerinden edilme kavramı ise Türkiye'de ancak yakın zamanda, kentsel analizleri yalnızca soylulaştırma çerçevesinin ötesine taşımak amacıyla kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, Sulukule'de kentsel mekânın toplumsal dönüşümünü incelemek için ikincil görsel-işitsel veri analizini temel yöntem olarak kullanarak mevcut literatüre katkı sunmaktadır. Çalışma, eski sakinlerin (n=58) kişisel ve kolektif hafızalara, görsel temsillere ve kayıp ile dönüşümün sembolik ifadelerine erişim sağladığı on bir belgesel filmden oluşan bir veri setine dayanmaktadır. Fenomenolojik bir yaklaşıma dayanan bu nitel çalışma, görsel-işitsel tanıklıklara Ralf Bohnsack'ın Belgesel Yöntemi'ni uygulayarak, yerinden edilenlerin yaşadıkları kentsel dönüşümleri nasıl algıladıklarını ve dolaylı yerinden edilmenin, kentsel gelişimi şekillendiren toplumsal adaletsizliklerin altında yatan sosyal yapıları ne ölçüde açığa çıkardığını incelemektedir. Analiz sonucunda, dolaylı

yerinden edilmenin deneyimlenme biçimlerini ortaya koyan birbiriyle ilişkili iki temel tema belirlenmiştir: aidiyet kaybı ve artan marjinalleşme. Bu bulgular, Sulukule'de yerinden edilmenin yalnızca maddi bir süreç olarak değil, kültürel sürekliliği, toplumsal tanınmayı ve mekânsal özneyi aşındıran, aynı zamanda dayanıklılık ve direniş biçimlerini de ortaya çıkaran süreğen bir durum olarak işlediğini göstermektedir. Sulukule örneği ayrıca, devlet öncülüğünde gerçekleşen yerinden etmenin vaat ettiği varlıklı nüfusu çekemediği bir başarısız soylulaştırma sürecine işaret etmekte; bu da benzer bağlamlarda kentsel dönüşümü anlamak için dolaylı yerinden edilmenin soylulaştırmaya kıyasla daha analitik olarak isabetli bir çerçeve sunduğunu göstermektedir. Ampirik katkılarının ötesinde, bu çalışma yerinden edilme araştırmaları için mevcut yöntemsel araçları genişletmekte ve yerinden edilen toplulukları kendi kentsel geleceklerini şekillendirme kapasitesine sahip hak öznesi aktörler olarak tanıyan kentsel politikaları savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dolaylı yerinden edilme, sembolik yerinden edilme, toplumsal adalet, belgesel yöntem, İstanbul.

1
INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that the city of Istanbul, like many other metropolises, has undergone urban transformation processes aimed at conforming to aesthetic codes and attracting global investment. However, these new urban conditions rarely consider the democratic distribution of urban space or the shared management and planning of the city through collective action and public participation. On the contrary, the legal framework governing property rights and tenancy in Istanbul perpetuates social inequalities, often fuelling gentrification processes.

Despite being one of the most visited cities in the world and designated the European Capital of Culture in 2010, many of its residents experience the city through discrimination and displacement. The regeneration project in Sulukule, facilitated by Law No. 5366, is a well-known example of Istanbul's neoliberal approach to urban development. The Romani houses in the neighbourhoods of Hatice Sultan and Neslişah, collectively known as Sulukule and since 2008 merged into Karagümrük, were demolished and replaced by Ottoman style houses (Bilsel & Arican, 2010). This traumatic process led to the displacement of a Romani population that shared a thousand-year bond with the land.

Not only was the social fabric disrupted in this process of segregation, but Romani memory was also erased from the urban landscape. Cesare Brandi (2004), in his Theory of Restauration, introduced the concept of *falso storico* (historical forgery), which refers to the falsification of historical truth by presenting an altered narrative as authentic. Although no restoration took place in Sulukule, a similar phenomenon occurred: a deliberate choice was made to replace the original Romani architectural heritage with a supposedly more 'appropriate' narrative, erasing cultural and historical significance. This transformation distorted the identity of Sulukule,

leaving new passersby unaware of the Romani struggle to remain in their homes or the layers of inequality concealed behind glass and concrete. Additionally, it remains unclear to what extent the loss of a sense of place has increased the vulnerabilities of the displaced Roma.

This raises fundamental questions about the meaning of development. Specifically, what kind of development are we witnessing in our cities? In the face of increasing pressures from gentrification, the affordable housing crisis, and urban renewal projects, it has become urgent to rethink urban policies in order to ensure that vulnerable communities retain their right to the city. Urban space must be designed to foster equitable urban development. In this regard, the reflections of the renowned Brazilian geographer Josué de Castro are particularly enlightening.

> "*There is only one true development: the development of man. Man, as the factor of development, and man, as the beneficiary of development. It is the human brain that is the factory of development. It is human life that must flourish through the use of the products made available by development*" (translated by the author; Castro, 2003:104).

In social geography, what comes first is society and not space (Clerval, 2008). From this perspective, studying the social division of space through the case of Sulukule aims to bridge the gap in research that addresses gentrification and urban regeneration while overlooking the experiences of the displacees. The impacts of displacement processes remain underexplored in academic literature. This qualitative study, grounded in a phenomenological narrative, seeks to understand the lived experiences of displacement through audiovisual analysis. By engaging with the subjective social and historical structures that shape narratives of displacement, the study identifies and discusses key emerging themes.

1.1 Theme

While postmodern cities remain focused on aesthetic rather than social concerns, they create a hostile environment for the urban poor (Hall and Barrett, 2018). The institutional structures that constrain their development are shaped by planning regulations, resource distribution, financial restrictions, and political decision-making mechanisms (Schermbrucker et al., 2016). The urban poor are treated as

second-tier citizens and face limited access to education, financial resources, and housing.

In a neoliberal context, housing is seen as a commodity, not only valued for its use but also its role in the economy. It serves as a key instrument in the process of capital appreciation. Social rights that should be provided by the state are instead transferred to the housing market. As a result, the supply of low-income rental units declines. In parallel, the image of a 'global city' excludes poverty, fostering urban regeneration as a strategy to drive development and wealth in targeted areas (Hall and Barrett, 2018). The consequences of urban regeneration, particularly the displacement of low-income communities, are often discussed in relation to gentrification.

Gentrification is a widely recognized concept, extending beyond academia into public discourse. It frequently appears in newspaper headlines and urban debates, referring to social and economic transformation of neighbourhoods. However, the concept of gentrification, as originally formulated, emerged within an Anglo-Saxon context. Created by Marxist sociologist Ruth Glass in London during the 1960s, the term described the transformation of low-income central urban areas through physical renovation and the influx of middle- and high-income households (Clerval, 2008).

> "*One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes —upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in earlier or recent periods have been upgraded once again. Once this process of "gentrification" starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed*." (Glass, 1963)

While this definition has been widely adopted, the increasingly complex urban transformations that have occurred since that period have expanded its usage and conceptualization. According to Clerval (2008), gentrification is both an urban and social transformation process, linked to the concept of centrality. The changes occurring in central areas of the city reveal underlying social structures and their relationship with the right to create place. Ultimately, it is essential to look beyond

the physical transformation of space and consider the actors involved in the symbolic revaluation of centrality.

In the Turkish context, the term gentrification was first employed by Nil Uzun in the mid-1980s (Bilecen, 2019). It is used in various forms, such as its literal translation *soylulaşma* (to become noble) and other related terms like *soylulaştırma*, *seçkinleştirme* (to become distinguished), *mutenalaşma*, *mutenalaştırma*, and *kentsel süzülme* (urban infiltration) (Bilecen, 2019). According to the Turkish Language Association's Güncel Türkçe Dictionary, soylulaşmak means '*soylu duruma gelme; asilleşmek'*, where *soylu/asil* refers to nobility and *laşmak/leşmek* refers to the process of becoming (TDK, n.d.).

In Istanbul, particularly in the 1960s, new residents from rural areas settled in both informal settlements, known as *gecekondu*, and vacant buildings in inner-city neighbourhoods like Arnavutköy, Cihangir, and Balat-Fener. These areas later experienced gentrification, similar to the process described by Glass (1963), until the late 1990s (Islam, 2009). However, unlike the socio-spatial segregation in post-industrial Europe, the formation of informal settlements in Istanbul began well before deindustrialization and neoliberal processes, with the establishment of areas like Teneke neighbourhoods and some Romani settlements in the late 19th century (Akkaya and Yılgür, 2019). A notable difference in the displacement of low-income populations, after the early 2000s, is its close association with state-led urban regeneration projects and the neoliberal housing market (Islam, 2009).

1.2 Problem

As highlighted by Glass (1963), displacement is the primary consequence of gentrification. As gentrification drives the physical displacement of low-income households and the material and symbolic reappropriation of social space by middle- and high-income classes, displacement becomes the heart of gentrification.

Displacement is often associated with physical dislocation. However, the absence of direct displacement does not mean that displacement is absent altogether (Slater, 2009). Reducing displacement to mere spatial movement overlooks its psychological and emotional dimensions, particularly the loss of feelings of belonging (Davidson and Lees, 2010). Residents of neighbourhoods undergoing

gentrification often face trauma, the erosion of social ties, and the decline of political agency, without having moved from their homes (Fullilove, 2001). Atkinson (2015) argues that these social and psychological costs reveal the deeper inequalities underlying displacement, forming the core experience of exclusion. They also serve as the foundation for calls for equitable urban development to counteract gentrification.

Furthermore, displacement is also linked to the worsening of urban inequalities, reflecting neoliberal processes that shape postmodern cities. Urban renewal projects, touristification, green gentrification, and creative placemaking are among the strategies contributing to the polarization of urban spaces. Land value appreciation following urban renewal projects is often presented as an economic advantage, while the effects of displacement are neglected (Atkinson, 2002). Ultimately, the most vulnerable urban populations are the ones who suffer the consequences of urban development, reinforcing the notion that there are both winners and losers in contemporary city transformation dynamics (Hall and Barrett, 2018).

Several scholars (Marcuse, 1985; Davidson, 2009; Cahill, 2007) have identified different categories of indirect displacement, while empirical studies demonstrate that experiences of displacement vary depending on factors such as age, race, and social class (Mollet, 2014; Mah, 2022; Ah Goo, 2024; Twigge-Molecey, 2014; Vigiola and Morais, 2024). By exploring this problem through the case of Sulukule with Ralf Bonhsack's methodology for audiovisual analysis, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of indirect displacement's multidimensional effects.

1.3 Justification

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of displacement in Istanbul, particularly from a social justice perspective. While extensive research exists on gentrification and urban regeneration, the experiences of displacees remain largely overlooked. The impacts of indirect displacement lack comprehensive academic analysis and remain underexplored in scholarly literature (Slater, 2009). By focusing on these neglected aspects, this research seeks to fill a critical gap in urban studies.

In the specific case of the Romani community of Sulukule, academic literature is far from consolidated at the international level. A search in the Web of Science and Scopus databases retrieved only five publications, indicating limited academic literature available. Although a broader search in Google Scholar retrieved 91 publications, more than half were written in English and published in international journals. Notably, only three of these studies explicitly employed displacement as a keyword. The predominant focus of existing research has been on the broader processes of urban regeneration and gentrification, rather than on the lived experiences of those displaced.

This study not only contributes to discussions on Sulukule but also engages with the broader issue of displacement under neoliberal urban policies. By emphasizing the voices and experiences of displacees, it highlights the gaps in both Turkish and international academic literature regarding the social, economic, and psychological effects of indirect displacement.

1.4 Objective

This research seeks to examine systematic urban inequalities through the voices of Sulukules' former residents. It aims to:

(i) Explore how displacees perceive the urban transformations they have undergone; and

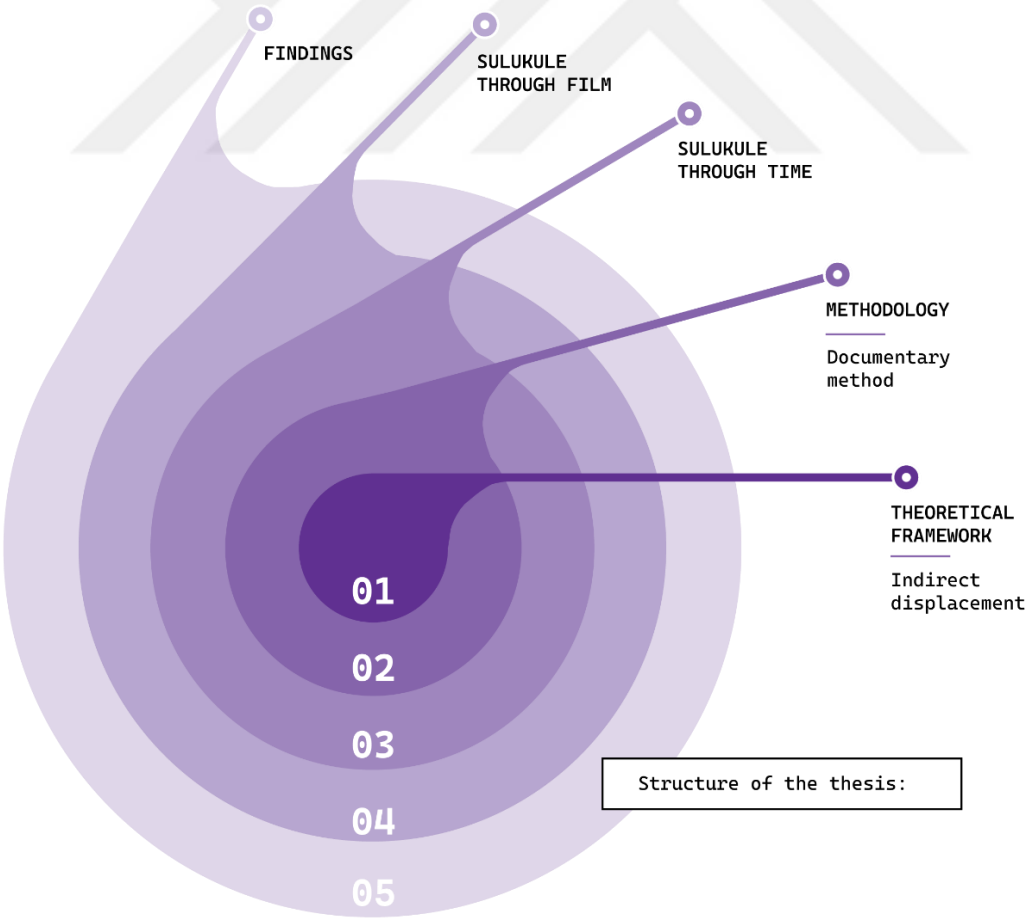
(ii) Understand to what extent displacement, through economic, social, and psychological pressures, is able to reveal the underlying social injustice structures that guide the development of our cities.

To explore these questions, the methodology adopted aimed to capture the lived experiences of former residents facing displacement. By bridging audiovisual analysis, phenomenology, and displacement theory, this study not only expands the methodological approaches for urban scholars but also reorients urban transformation discourse towards the lived realities and memory of displaced communities. It includes secondary audiovisual analysis of documentaries in which former residents of Sulukule speak directly about their experiences, emotions and perspectives. This analysis was able to illustrate the material ways in which

displacees experience exclusion, social injustice, diminishing right to the city, and other related aspects.

This thesis is divided into six parts. The first part of the study is devoted to the Theoretical Framework. The Methodology section constitues the second part of the study. In this section, the research design, data sources, data analysis, and the challenges and limitations of the method are explained alongside with the coding process. The third part, Sulukule Through Time, which is devoted to the historical context, discusses the case study and its historical, social and urban transformations. The fourth part, Sulukule Through Film, is devoted to presenting the audiovisual materials selected and the testimonies analysed. In the fifth part, the Findings are presented. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the research, gives suggestion for future research, and states the contributions of this study to the field of urban geography.

Figure 1.1 Structure of the thesis.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter establishes the theoretical grounding of the study by reviewing key debates, concepts, and frameworks within the literature on displacement. The aim is to critically examine how displacement has been conceptualized and studied, with a particular focus on indirect displacement, and to highlight how this thesis contributes to and builds upon existing theoretical approaches. Drawing on studies from diverse socio-political contexts, the chapter emphasizes the importance of centering lived experiences, intersectionality, and temporality in understanding displacement. While many studies remain descriptive in nature, this research adopts

Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method approach that uncovers the social history behind everyday narratives.

2.1 The Displacement Turn in Urban Studies

2.1.1 Definitions and typologies

Displacement, traditionally conceptualized in urban studies as the physical eviction of residents due to redevelopment or rising housing costs, has significantly evolved to encompass a broader range of indirect, symbolic, cultural, and political dimensions. This conceptual expansion has been shaped by scholars seeking to better understand the lived experiences of those affected by urban transformation, particularly under gentrification and neoliberal urban policies. At its core, displacement represents a lack of choice.

Grier and Grier (1978) were among the first to formally define what later became known as direct displacement, emphasizing its involuntary nature. According to them, physical displacement occurs when three conditions are met, which:

> "*1) Are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent; 2) Occur despite the household's having met all previously-imposed conditions of occupancy; and 3) Make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable.*" (Grier and Grier, 1978:8)

This foundational framing established displacement as a coercive process, not a neutral market outcome, in which individuals and families are forced to leave despite fulfilling their roles as residents. Building on this, Marcuse (1985), drawing on Chernoff's (1980) earlier reference to 'social displacement', introduced the concept of indirect displacement through his analysis of housing dynamics in New York City. He identified two main categories with four types of displacement: *direct displacement*, which includes (a) last resident displacement, when the final low-income tenant is pushed out, and (b) chain displacement, involving earlier waves of displaced residents; and *indirect displacement*, including (c) displacement pressure, which reflects the psychological stress, uncertainty, and erosion of belonging felt by remaining residents as local amenities and networks vanish, and (d) exclusionary displacement, where rising housing costs and market shifts prevent similar low-income groups from moving in, effectively reshaping the demographic without formal eviction.

In parallel, the concept of *political displacement* emerged through Martin (2007), describing situations where local governance spaces, such as advisory boards and neighborhoods councils, are overtaken by gentrifiers. This shift silence the voices of incumbent residents and reorients decision-making away from their needs, producing a form of institutional erasure (Mah, 2023).

These processes highlight that displacement is not limited to physical removal, but often involves the gradual erosion of access, belonging, and affordability. Indirect displacement typically does not involve the immediate replacement of families, it rather unfolds through the long-term consequences of economic and cultural restructuring. Put simply, indirect displacement is a process that restricts certain groups, particularly those with lower incomes, from finding adequate housing and remain in their communities (Slater, 2009).

Building on Marcuse's typology, Davidson (2009) adocated for a deeper engagement with the meanings and experiences of place. He proposed three types of indirect displacement: (i) *indirect economic displacement*, which refers to rising costs and investment-driven exclusion that gradually push out low-income residents; (ii) *community displacement*, drawing on Chernoff (1980) and Martin (2007), involves the shifting of neighborhood power and social capital toward wealthier newcomers who redefine social norms and priorities; and (iii) *neighborhood resource displacement*, which occurs when services, institutions, and businesses begin to cater to the preferences of new residents, thereby alienating and marginalizing long-term inhabitants.

Closely related is *cultural displacement*, associated with *symbolic displacement*, which occurs when the symbolic and social meanings of a neighborhood change to the point that it no longer feels like home (Cahill, 2007). This form of displacement is deeply tied to emotional and psychological bonds. In this sense, the concept of "home" extends beyond a housing unit to encompass the sociocultural values and identities of a neighborhood. When gentrification occurs, not only do the physical elements of a neighborhood change, but its historical character and local identity can also disappear (García and Rúa, 2017).

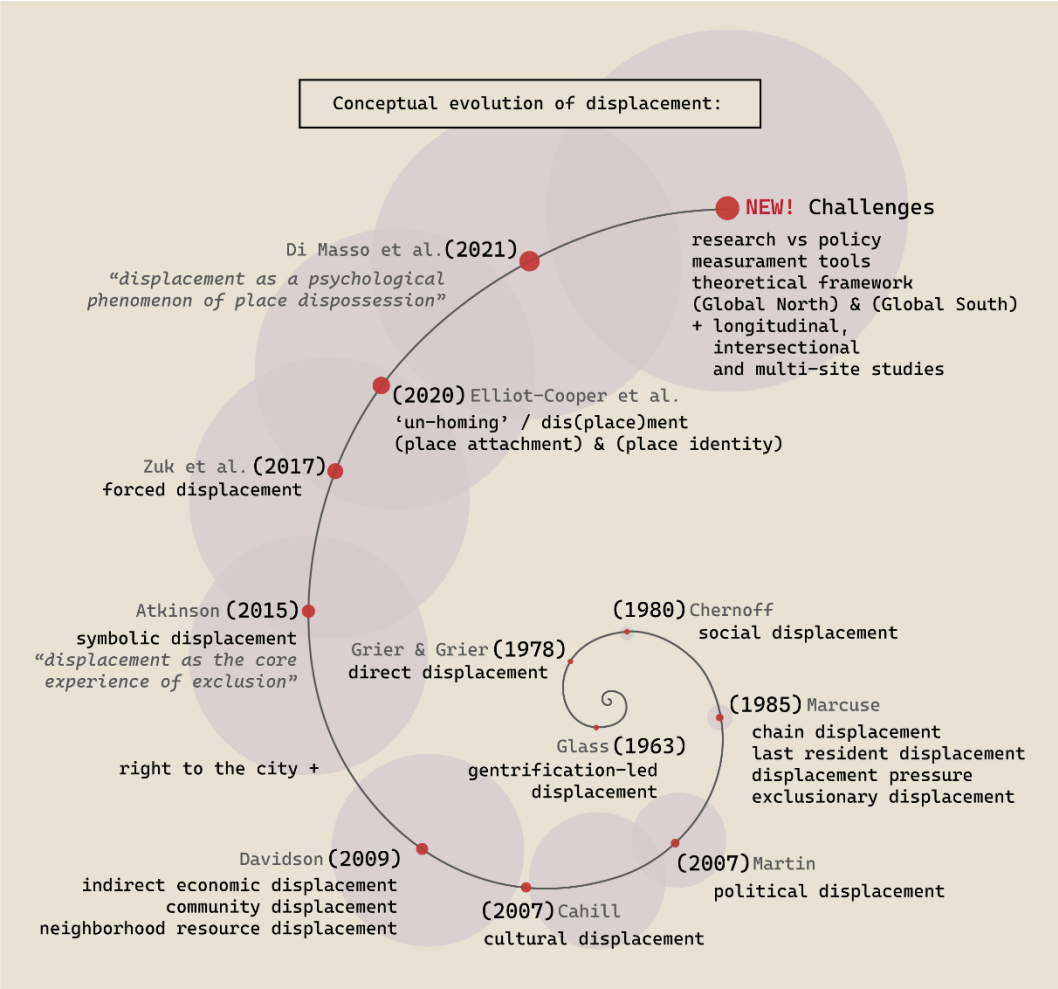
Recent discussions on displacement have re-centered the conversation on the affective, symbolic, and experimential losses it entails, moving beyond purely

economic or physical dimensions. Displacement is thus connected to concepts such as ‘place attachment’ and ‘place identity’ (Cocola-Grant, 2019; Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020). According to Twigge-Molecey (2014), *place attachment* is formed through emotional, cognitive, and behavioral ties to a location, while *place identity* reflects how place becomes integral to one’s self-understanding. Displacement, therefore, constitutes a loss of self as much as a loss of space.

According to Davidson and Lees (2010:403), the analyses of displacement are not solely focused on spatial movement, but rather on their association with ‘structures of feeling’ and the ‘loss a of sense of place’. When viewed through the lens of Harvey’s (2012) and Lefebvre’s (1968) right to the city, gentrification becomes a mechanism for redistributing urban power and decision-making. From this perspective, displacement is not just a housing issue, but “*a social injustice that encumbers certain groups from their right to the city*” (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016:6). The displacees are denied the power to shape the city, while newcomers exercice that power through capital and institutional influence (Mah, 2023).

Seeking a concept that better conveys the violence and rupture experienced by people, Elliot-Cooper et al. (2020) propose the term ‘un-homing’. If gentrification is understood as a territorialized form of the capitalist dynamic of accumulation by dispossession, then symbolic displacement can be interpreted as a psychosocial phenomenon of place dispossession (Di Masso et al., 2021).

Figure 2.1 Conceptual evolution of displacement.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

2.1.2 Socio-spatial Consequences of Displacement

Displacement is tied to broader mechanisms of capitalist accumulation which target spaces and ways of life (i.e., informal economy) previously outside of the market. This process does not always involve physical eviction or gentrification, but relies on the commodification of culture, history, urban form, and non-hegemonic lifestyles. By integrating these elements into market dynamics, new forms of dispossession, exploitation, and appropriation emerge, reshaping the urban fabric through subtle yet powerful restructuring (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016).

Although much of the foundational literature on displacement emerges from North American and Western European contexts, scholars have highlighted the need to recognize regional and historical specificities. Displacement does not unfold uniformly: it is always mediated by local policies, socio-cultural structures, and historical trajectories. The case studies discussed below aim to show that even

though the outcomes of displacement, such as loss of sense of belonging, in situ marginalization, and increased vulnerability, may resonate across geographies, the mechanisms and degrees of violence involved differ significantly. Recognizing this diversity is essential for developing more just and context-sensitive urban planning responses.

In European contexts, displacement tends to take a subtler, symbolic, and incremental forms. For instance, in the García neighborhood of Barcelona, Spain, Di Masso et al. (2021) highlight how long-term residents experience symbolic displacement through changes in their relationship to space. These include avoiding key public spaces overtaken by tourism, altering daily routes to evade gentrified areas, retreating into private spaces rather than interaction in the neighborhood's public spaces, and revalorizing overlooked local spots as intimate refuges in a landscape perceived as inaccessible. These practices reveal a process of symbolic displacement, where the material presence of residents remains intact, but their ability to inhabit space meaningfully and comfortably is deeply undermined.

In Nordic welfare states such as Sweden, displacement is often indirect and slow, shaped by what Thörn (2011, as cited by Listerborn and Baeten, 2022) call 'soft policies of exclusion'. These include mechanisms such as renovation-led displacement, alongside exclusionary municipal policies that redirect lower-income residents to marginal areas, and non-coercive "forcing out" strategies that limit housing options. While formal evictions are relatively rare, these indirect tactics still produce significant consequences, including stress, housing insecurity, and psychological burdens, mirroring the effects of more aggressive displacement strategies seen in other urban contexts.

In contrast, displacement in the Global South is often shaped by more aggressive forms of state intervention. These processes are connected to authoritarian planning, crisis-driven development, and the priorization of economic development over social equity. Forced evictions, infrastructural mega-projects, and speculative land-use transformations are more prevalent and typically unfold with limited accountability or community involvement (Sorboe and Braathen, 2022). In this context, displacement is not merely a byproduct of market mechanisms but often a result of state-led policies and coercive governance strategies. In the Global South

context, displacement is not only frequent but systematically deployed as a tool of urban restructuring.

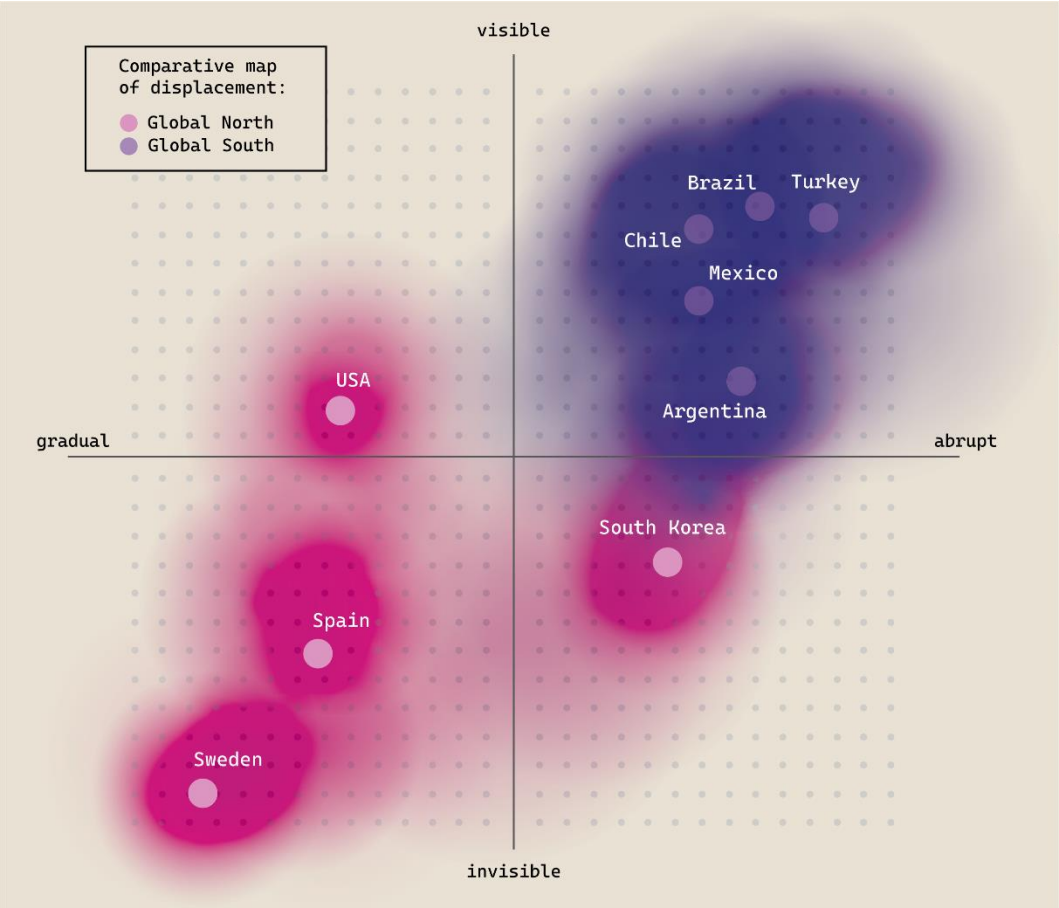
In Istanbul, for instance, Islam and Sakizlioğlu (2015) describe displacement processes tied to policy-driven restrictions, forced rehousing, and the use of state power to silence resistance. These patterns resonate with the case of Rio de Janeiro, where public-private initiatives uses force and strategies such as electricity and water cut, pressure and persuation in order to displace low-income residents from valuable land in inner-city areas (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016).

In Latin America, Janoschka and Sequera (2016) present eviction and displacement as key mechanisms of gentrification in this urban context. They characterise displacement in four major cities as: Displacement by heritage accumulation, orchestrated through the 'rescue' of historical heritage in Mexico city (Mexico); Displacement by cultural dispossession, related to tango heritage in Buenos Aires (Argentina); Displacement by militarization and 'states of exception', refering to the real estate market expansion in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil); and Displacement by ground rent dispossession, as capital returns to previously degradeded inner-city areas in Santiago del Chile (Chile).

To illustrate these variations, Figure 2.2 presents a conceptual scheme of the different displacement dynamics around the world. It positions selected countries based on the perceived visibility and pace of displacement processes. This map is a conceptual visualization produced by the author, not based on specific indicators, but on interpretations drawn from literature. The distinction between Global North and South highlights geopolitical disparities in the manifestation of displacement.

Despite shared terminologies, the analytical frameworks derived from Global North contexts often fall short in capturing the complexity of displacement in the Global South. As Listerborn and Baeten (2022) argue, context-specific tools are needed to engage with local policies and socio-spatial practices.

Figure 2.2 Comparative conceptual map. Different dynamics of displacement around the world, according to visibility (vertical axis) and pacing (horizontal axis).



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

2.1.3 Global South: the Urban Poor and Urban Transformations

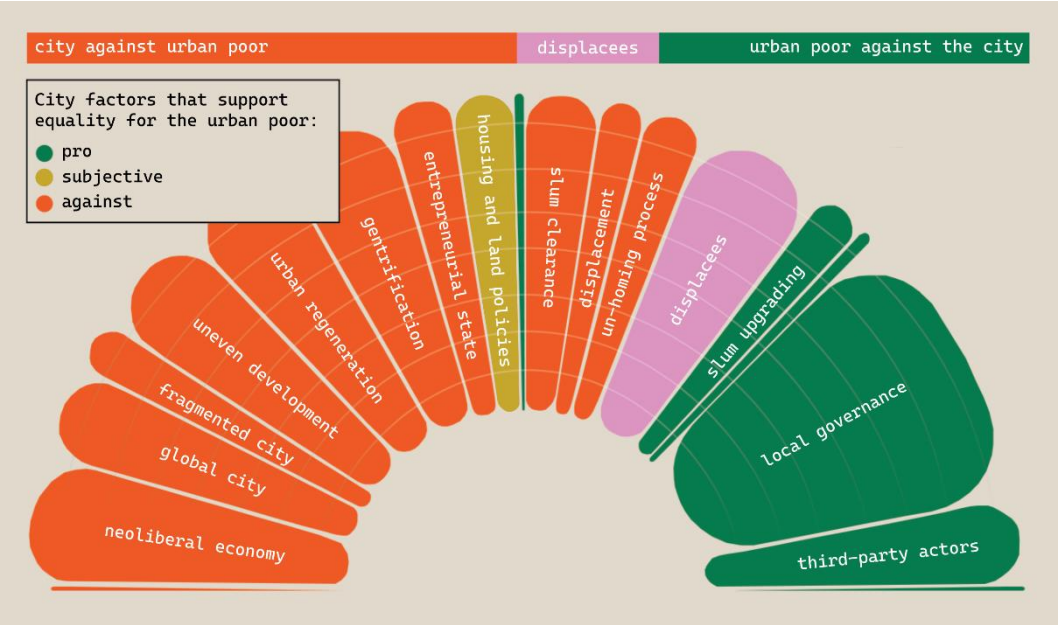
In the Global South, informality is not an exception but the dominant mode of urbanization for the most vulnerable populations. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) describe the emergence of 'guettos of exclusion', which are zones characterized by extreme abandonment, stigmatization, and marginalization. Living in an 'excluded ghetto' means being economically disconnected from the rest of the city, being at a state of non-profit. The urban poor are excluded from the circuits of capital, governance, right to the city, and opportunity of human development. When urban regeneration projects are implemented, targetting these population, it not only aims at 'cleasing' the global city from poverty but also to forcebly change their economies and ways of living to a more hegemonic one.

Yet, the urban poor are not passive. Even if many authors describe the urban poor as not participating in the city's dynamic, there is little research on the informal economy produced and maintained by this population. Some authors argue that there's a bigger influence of the informal economy onto the formal one than we can

imagine (Hall, 2006). Moreover, the available data on informal economy is not enough to formulate evidence-based policy (Roberts and Okanya, 2022). In most nations, informal zones exist without support from the state as they are not formally recognized, and are forced to be self-sufficient.

Drawing on the Contentious Policy framework, Sorboe and Braathen's (2022) study forced displacement and relocation in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*. Two dominant narratives emerge: 'city agaisnt the urban poor', where state-led development agendas justify evictions under the guise of modernization; and the 'urban poor agaisnt the city', where residents mobilize to resist displacement. In the first scenario, governments prioritize market-driven growth and global competitiveness, using coercive tactics that violate human rights and deepen existing inequalities. In the second, grassroots resistance emerges as a defense of territory, community, and identity in the face of dispossession. This framework can be reproduced among different contexts when it comes to displacement and opposite forces in the Global South (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 City factors that support or restrain the development of the urban poor.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

The root causes of excluded areas (slums and/or informal settlements) include failed land and housing policies, inadequate urban planning, unaffordable land and housing, rural-urban migration, and a regulatory environment that privileges the wealthy (UN-Habitat, 2014). Those areas are defined by UN-Habitat (2014) as lacking in one or more of the following five characteristics: durable housing, sufficient living space, access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and secure tenure.

Additionally, the terminology used to classify urban poor communities, especially the term ‘slum’, is itself politically loaded. It often serves to delegitimize entire populations and justify their removal. Charles Stokes (1962) introduced an useful distinction between *slums of hope*, where residents actively invest in improving their environment, and *slums of despair*, characterized by degradation and abandonment. In the case of Sulukule, despite the residents’ willingness to improve their neighborhood, they face several restrictions. The area borders the Byzantine city walls and has been part of UNESCO’s Golden Horn World Heritage Site since 1985 (Erdi, 2019, para.4), placing it under strict preservation regulations. This status, combined with bureaucratic barriers and governmental neglect, made it nearly impossible for residents to renovate their homes legally or access support, which lead to their gradual degradation. As a result, no comprehensive plan was developed to assist the community, despite their vulnerability and the cultural significance of the area.

Urban regeneration is considered a fast “solution” to this problem, despite the fact that forced evictions are considered as violation to human rights (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020; UN-Habitat, 2014). They are often done by illegal means and do not always offer compensation or relocation, which often results in new slums formation, homeliness or increased vulnerability. These projects destroy more than homes, they perpetuate a cycle in which the urban poor are constantly pushed to the margins, only to be displaced again when the city expands.

This cyclical nature of displacement shows how exclusion and inadequate responses to displacement perpertuate housing insecurity. Without meaningful alternatives, displaced populations remain perpetually vulnerable, facing challenges such as distance from their place of employment, fractured social networks, risks to ecological disasters, as well as fragilized basic service and infrastructure (Roberts, 2022). Adding to that, race can also be an important factor that influences spatial limitation, hostile political policies and restricted opportunities.

To address these challenges, scholars propose a range of rights-based, pro-poor policies. These include the formalization of informal settlements through in-situ upgrading, reframing negative narratives around informality, and building strong alliances for the urban poor, particularly through civil society involvement. When evictions are unavoidable, they must respect human rights (Roberts and Okanya, 2022; Sorboe and Braathen, 2022).

2.1.4 Displacement in Istanbul and Urban Dynamics Turkey

Despite early interest from researchers (Marcure, 1985; Davidson, 2009), the notion of displacement has only recently begun to be used in Turkey to expand on gentrification and urban transformation analysis. Although the international literature on displacement remains largely unfamiliar in Turkey, urban research still lacks a precise, shared definition to work with.

Istanbul is a historic city shaped by cultural layering, reflected not only in its diverse social fabric but also in its residents and traditions (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013). It is the largest city in Turkey and home to the largest population in Europe, generating 31% of the country’s total income (Daş and Özşahin, 2021). This demographic and

economic significance makes Istanbul a key site for the implementation of neoliberal urban policies and large-scale transformation projects.

According to Islam (2009), gentrification in Istanbul was marked by two main phases. The first began in the 1980s, driven by housing availability following the departure of the non-Muslim population and mass rural migration in the 1950s. This phase was slow, informal, and institutionally unstructured, similar to what Glass (1964) described in her original formulation of gentrification. In the 1980s, early gentrifiers included artists, writers, and musicians, and the process was visible in neighborhoods like Ortaköy and Kuzguncuk (Ronael and Oruç, 2019). The 1990s marked a transitional period, exemplified by projects such as the pedestrianization of Istiklal Caddesi and changes in neighborhoods like Beyoğlu, Cihangir, Asmalımescit, and Galata. The second period emerged after the 2001 economic crisis and the establishment of a one-party government in 2002. From this point foward, gentrification became more state-driven, supported by foreign investment and large-scale urban policies such as shopping malls and mass housing developments.

In parallel, Temizel (2007) identifies three waves of neoliberal transformation in Turkey: a "liberalization phase" in the 1980s, a "reform implementation phase" in the 1990s, and a "market-friendly reconfiguration phase" in the 2000s. The entry point of these policies relates to Turgut Özal's government and the economic decisions made on 24th of Januarty, 1980, which had a significant impact on the 1980 Master Plan of Istanbul, envisioning the city as a "global metropolis" (Tok and Oğuz, 2013). As Harvey (1989) and Hall (2006) suggest, this transformation involved a shift in the role of the state from a managerial entity to an entrepreneurial actor. The *liberalization phase* has lead to the deterioration of historic centers and unplanned urban growth (e.g., informal settlements), while the *reform implementation phase* centralized power in local governments, facilitating private investment in high-value urban areas (Pak and Yılmaz, 2013). Finally, the last phase involved active state engagement in public-private partnerships targeting inner-city "deprived" areas.

According to Robins (2011), the 1937 Master Plan by Henri Prost, implemented until the 1950s, was grounded in modernist, secularist, and Turkification principles, which influenced later redevelopment strategies. Several key laws paved the way

for widespread urban transformation: the 1984 Metropolitan Municipality Law (No. 3030), the 1985 Building Law (No. 3194), and expropriation legislation. Rather than emphasizing rehabilitation, these laws legalized squatter areas and shifted responsibility to property owners (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013). The 1996 Habitat II Conference in Istanbul marked a turning point, and the 2005 Urban Renewal Law (No. 5366) institutionalized the transformation of "worn" historic neighborhoods. The Sulukule project, implemented by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, TOKI, and Fatih Municipality, was one of the first outcomes of this framework (Uysal, 2011).

Although the 1999 earthquake revealed the urgent need for safer housing, the government's urban renewal efforts prioritized profit over the preservation of cultural values and social ties. The urban renewal process in the 2000s affected districts such as Zeytinburnu, Fener-Balat, Kartal, and Sulukule, often erasing not just the physical fabric of communities but also their way of life (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013).

Under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Istanbul has undergone intense urban transformation aimed at modernizing the city and increasing its global competitiveness, often at the cost of cultural heritage and social equity (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013). Gentrification in Istanbul is largely top-down, led by state and private developers with the aim of increasing land value through high-end real estate production. The targeted areas are often *gecekondu* neighborhoods or historically marginalized spaces inhabited by minorities (Erdi, 2019).

Neighborhoods like Sulukule and Tarlabaşı were among the first to experience state-led gentrification, followed by other projects such as Fener-Balat, Galataport, and Haydarpaşa Port (Ronael and Oruç, 2019; Karaman, 2014). In Başıbüyük, where informal settlement began in the 1960s, residents lacked property titles, making them especially vulnerable to displacement (Karaman, 2014).

The problem of displacement extends beyond Istanbul and is observed in other parts of Turkey as well. As Borsuk and Eroğlu (2019) show, physical displacement in Turkey is frequently accompanied by the destruction of social networks and place-based identities. Their study on the relocation of Kurdish populations in Izmir reveals how moving residents from *gecekondu* areas to peripheral social housing

not only increased their vulnerability but also rendered them invisible in the city. Residents became borrowers of subsidized mortgages, transforming their role from citizens to consumers.

Whether in Ankara's *gecekondu* zones (Aykaç, 2024; Uzun, 2005; Topal et al., 2019; Bayırbağ et al., 2023b), Istanbul's squatter settlements (Türkün, 2011; Unsal, 2015), or smaller cities like Karabük, Gaziantep, and Çorum (Altınöz, 2016; Ayık, 2022; Claney, 2024), the physical upgrading of neighborhoods systematically disadvantages the most vulnerable residents while generating value for developers, municipalities, and well-connected political actors. The financial logic underlying nearly every project, whether managed by TOKI, private contractors, or local municipalities, requires the introduction of higher-value land uses to make regeneration economically self-sustaining, and this structural imperative consistently overrides stated commitments to retaining communities in place.

Uzun's (2005) early Ankara cases already demonstrated this pattern in the 1990s where projects like Dikmen Valley and GEÇAK began with inclusive rhetoric but gradually displaced original residents as rising land values made staying economically irrational or financially impossible. Unsal (2015) adds that even legally established homeowners, as in Tozkoparan neighbourhood of Güngören district in Istanbul, are not protected from this dynamic. The state's need to generate profit from every regeneration project creates a structural bias against models that would keep existing residents in place at no cost. Altınöz (2016) extends this critique to the realm of heritage, showing that in Karabük the erasure of working-class residential fabric was not an unintended side effect but a deliberate outcome of municipal and private actors seeking to unlock the speculative potential of centrally located land. Claney's (2024) Çorum findings further reveal that even in smaller, less economically dynamic cities, the terms offered to residents are systematically skewed, with valuations based on outdated prices, replacement units that are smaller and debt-encumbered.

The degree to which outcomes depend on the political relationship between local governments and the central state is another dimension that cuts across the literature. Kuyucu's (2018) comparative analysis of regeneration projects in Sümerbank factory complexes in Bursa, Izmir, and Diyarbakır makes this most explicit, showing that alignment with the governing party proved more decisive

than technical capacity, community support, or project quality in determining whether a regeneration initiative could be implemented. The Bursa municipality, backed by the AKP, benefited from smooth property transfers and political facilitation, while Izmir, governed by the opposition CHP, faced systematic obstruction at every stage.

However, the Diyarbakır case demonstrates that success without central state support remains possible under three specific conditions: (a) strong local leadership capable of uniting diverse actors around a shared agenda, (b) access to alternative funding sources such as EU grants, and (c) a favorable political conjuncture. Crucially, the factory had been transferred to the municipality in the 1990s during a coalition government period, before the AKP, a timing that proved irreplaceable. Kuyucu (2018) argues that under the increasingly centralized and authoritarian governance framework that has characterized Turkey since 2010, the conditions that made Diyarbakır's success possible are unlikely to be reproduced by opposition-governed municipalities.

Türkün (2011) and Bayırbağ et al. (2023a) push this argument futher, describing a governance regime in which laws are changed retroactively to legitimaze desired transformations, planning decisions are taken unilaterally by the central state, and the gap between legality and democratic legitimacy widens with each successive project. What emerges across literature is a picture of urban transformation in Turkey as a politically saturated process in which the distribution of benefits and burdens rarely follows technical or social criteria, but tracks instead the lines of power connecting the central state and private capital, with communities bearing the costs of a system they had little role in designing and even less power to contest. The displacement of residents is rendered invisible as the state insists on presenting urban regeneration as a "*win for all participants*" (Bayırbağ et al., 2023a:465), an approach that neither accounts for human development not for equality in the distribution of space, and that in practice serves only to deepen urban segregation.

2.1.5 Gaps and Future Research

The literature on displacement spans multiple theoretical traditions, including Lefebre's right to the city, postcolonial urbanism, and critical urban theory. However, many studies tend to remain within descriptive parameters, engaging

with concepts like gentrification and urban transformation. Most research focus on the displacement of low-income residents, though some address more specific populations such as older adults (Mah, 2023; Versey et al., 2019; García and Rúa, 2018), or examine less commonly studied forms of gentrification, including transit-induced gentrification (Doucet, 2021) and airbnbisation (Rozene and Lees, 2023).

In terms of methogology, most displacement research relies on single-case qualitative studies, utilizing interviews, ethnography, focus groups, and participant observation. These methods are well-suited to exploring the phenomenology of place, which resists quantification, and is central to understanding the lived experiences and subjective perspectives surrounding indirect displacement (Di Masso et al., 2022). Additionally, official statistics often fail to capture the subtler and indirect forms of displacement (Doucet, 2021; Listerborn and Baeten, 2022). While some scholars incorporate mixed methods, combining qualitative narratives with census or geospatial data, qualitative research remains indispensable for capturing how residents interpret and experience urban change. As Doucet (2021:40) notes, "*the knowledge that local residents have of their community (particularly those with lived experiences of poverty) is not treated with the same degree of respect and reliability as key stakeholder interviews or official statistics*".

Nonetheless, critical gaps persist in the field. One recurring limitation is the predominance of single case studies, which, although rich in local detail, often lack comparative depth and generalizability. Twigge-Molecey (2014) explicity acknowledges this limitation and calls for more multi-site or comparative research designs. Another challenge concerns the uneven application of theoretical frameworks across geographies. Concepts developed in the Global North are frequently applied to cities in the Global South without sufficient adaptation, thereby neglecting differences in social structures, urban informality, and governance (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016; Listerborn and Baeten, 2022). This underscore the need for contextually grounded and historically informed perspectives on the research of displacement.

Another persistent gap is the disconnect between academic research and policy implementation. While some scholars propose actionable strategies, such as Mah (2023) who call for planners to identify and protect spaces where marginalized residents feel a sense of belonging, these recommendations often fail to influence

formal planning processes. Institutional inercia, misaligned policy timelines, and the marginalization of community voices prevent the incorporation of lived experience into planning frameworks (Mah, 2023; Doucer, 2021). For instance, in Turkey, Borsuk and Eroğlu (2019) emphasize the need to acknowledge the cultural and social losses that come with relocation, such as the disruption of informal economies and communities bonds, yet these dimensions are rarely prioritized in urban regeneration schemes. Similarly, Listerborn and Baeten (2022) call for increased recognition of slow, legally suble forms of displacement in Sweden, proposing stronger tenant protections and regulatory oversight.

Longitudinal studies, such as that by Kriznik and Kim (2024), are particularly valuable in revealing the cumulative effects of neighborhood transformation over time. Intersectional approaches also add critical insight, showing how displacement is experienced differently across gender, age, race, and class (Mah, 2023; Versey et al., 2019).

A further conceptual challenge lies in defining and operationalizing indirect displacement. Scholars such as Davidson and Lees (2010), Mah (2023), and Doucet (2021) note that indirect displacement is difficult to capture with conventional tools, as it often manifests through feelings of alienation, erosion of social ties, or symbolic loss of place, elements not easily captured in traditional metrics. In response, some researchers avocate for the development of new indicators and methods that can better reflect the emotional, temporal, and symbolic aspects of displacement. Measuring displacement implies having a clear definition of the term so that empirical findings can align with an agreed standard. Yet no consensus has been reached, and the concept has only become more complex since its initial theorization. This study understands displacement as a continuous (i.e., expectrum) phenomenon.

Future research could benefit from the use of indices and indicators to better capture the diverse expressions of displacement and provide a more global perspective. In this regard, it is crucial to articulate between technical, scientific, and popular knowledge. Until now, lived experiences have served mainly to illuminate the consequences of displacement and aid with planning practice implementations.

This study contributes to the displacement literature by integrating perspectives from the Global South and adopting a longitudinal lens through the case of Sulukule, which is revisited through the framework of displacement. In addition to engaging with broader theoretical discussions on displacement and phenomenology, the research employs Ralf Bohnsack's social research approach, the Documentary Method. This method enriches the analysis by offering both depth and temporal continuity.

2.2 Audiovisual Analysis in Urban Research

The historical and cultural relevance of cinematography has been a subject of debate since the late 19th century (Soulet, 2012). Polish filmmaker Boleslaw Matuszewski (1989) was among the first to argue that film could serve as an authentic and precise testimony of reality. This perspective has been echoed in institutional frameworks, such as UNESCO (1981), which regards moving images as vital components of national cultural heritage. Documentaries, in particular, have been recognized for their ability to "*capture life as it is experienced in a constantly changing world*" (translated by the author; Kula, 2004:106).

In the context of urban research, documentaries serve as powerful tools for exploring complex phenomena such as displacement and the loss of place. They not only offer visual and emotional insights into lived experiences but also help to contextualize and deepen the narratives gathered through other qualitative methods. As Kula (2004) notes, documentaries can function as archives of collective memory, enabling access to experiences, emotions, and discourses that may otherwise remain inaccessible.

Sociological engagement with film dates back to the early 20th century with the work of German sociologist Emilie Altenloh, contributing to the emergence of the sociology of cinema (Kaczmarek, 2020). Torresan (2019) highlights that audiovisual storytelling in research does not necessarily lead to personal transformation for participants but allows them to reveal themselves both to others and to themselves. She also emphasizes the political power of audiovisual narratives, particularly in peripheral communities like the favela of Vidigal in Brazil, where short ethnographic films have been used to challenge mainstream portrayals and reclaim agency through cinematography.

Despite their potential, the use of audiovisual materials in social research presents several challenges. While the so-called "linguistic turn" in qualitative research emphasized text as a self referential system, the analysis of images and visual media has historically remained marginal, and visual materials have been underutilized and undervalued in social science (Bohnsack, 2009). The increasing sophistication of textual analysis has, in many cases, paralleled the relative neglect of visual interpretation. Although translating images into text is necessary in qualitative research, "*it seems to be important to explain pictures by texts, but to differentiate them from texts*" (Bohnsack, 2009:318). This calls for the development of distinct methodological approaches to the analysis of moving images.

Further concerns include reconciling different interests during the production process and engaging ethnically with participants (Torresan, 2019), as well as the limited visual literacy of many researchers (Kaczmarek, 2020). These factors underscore the complexity of using audiovisual materials in research.

The Documentary Method, developed by Ralf Bohnsack, has been widely applied in the qualitative analysis of visual materials within the social sciences (Baltruschat, 2010). This approach differentiates itself from other frameworks (e.g., the Grounded Theory) as it enables for multidimensional type formation through sequential and comparative analysis. It moves beyond the surface of narrative content to examine how cultural phenomena are constructed within social history, distinguishing between two levels of interpretation: the 'what', referring to explicit content, and the 'how', referring to the underlying forms of representation.

Other approaches to film analysis, such as hermeneutical sociology, center on the interpretation of human actions within audiovisual narratives (Kaczmarek, 2020). This method examines not only the images themselves but also their production and post-production processes. In his study of the Nigerian film industry, Igwe (2018) used semi-structured interviews with filmmakers to explore how gentrification is portrayed and driven through cinema. Similarly, Uchôa (2015) explores the impacts of images on urban space by analyzing through representation how television advertisements and miniseries serve as tools for gentrification and urban requalification in São Paulo (Brazil), effectively creating an 'imagined city' that can replace lived reality with sanitized, marketable cinematic representations that appeal to the affluent classes.

Eren and Aktan (2024) contribute to this discourse by conducting a sociological secondary analysis of twenty-seven science fiction films to explore future configurations of public life, suggesting that cinema is not merely entertainment but a potent agent that actively participates in shaping social reality and spatial perception for future urban planning and social organization.

Dinç (2024) uses the content analysis of the film Bozkır to examine the emotional and psychological dimensions of space in relocated settlements, demonstrating how cinematic narratives can reveal a profound sense of place and human attachment that traditional urban geography studies often overlook. Lastly, Kaba (2022) employed visual analysis through a virtual ethnographic method, which involved coding and categorization of 26 video transcriptions, in order to explore rural gentrification in Turkey. These authors emphasize that the study of space through movies provides a unique lens into how human experiences, technological shifts, and social structures intersect to define our relationship with the urban environment.

Together, these frameworks underscore the value of audiovisual analysis as a legitimate and rigorous tool in urban research. When used critically and methodically, audiovisual materials can illuminate dimensions of urban transformation that are often overlooked in conventional data sources. Given the focus of this research on uncovering the implicit orientation, cultural frameworks, and historical patterns embedded in visual representations of displacement, the Documentary Method offers a particularly fitting analytical lens. For this reason, the processes of this methodological approach are outlined below.

2.2.1 The Documentary Method

The Documentary Method is a qualitative research strategy designed to interpret spoken, written, or visual data through comparative analysis (Nohl, 2010). Rooted in the sociological tradition of Karl Mannheim, this method emphasizes the distinction between what is said and how it is said, prioritizing not only the content but also the form of expression (Baltruschat, 2010). It draws upon Michel Foucault's distinction between the visible (what is seen) and the sayable (what is spoken), exploring the complex relationships between vision, representation, and language. In this way, the method distinguishes between two levels of meaning: the

first level, composed of 'intentional expressive meaning' and 'objective meaning', and the second level, known as the 'documentary meaning' (Nohl, 2010).

'Intentional expressive meaning' refers to the speaker's conscious intentions, what individuals deliberately try to express through language or image, while 'objective meaning' relates to socially structured, observable realities such as facts, norms, and contextual cues that goes beyond personal intention. In contrast, 'documentary meaning', which is the central focus of the documentary method, reveals the underlying patterns and orientations, the *modus operandi*, that guide how individuals or groups experience and interpret the world, uncovering shared, habitual frameworks that often operate beneath the level of conscious awareness.

Another core distinction emphasized by Bohnsack (2009) is that the logic of visual imagery differs significantly from that of language or text. The Documentary Method access visual materials as autonomous, self-referential systems, and differentiates between the pre-iconographic and iconographic levels of image interpretation. The main reason for this is that "*the single elements of a text as well as the elements of a picture arrange themselves as contexts and settings, and attain their proper meaning only through the settings which they are a part of*" (Bohnsack, 2009:316).

Similar to the concepts of connotation and denotation, the iconographic level involves interpreting image elements through a broader cultural or symbolic meaning (e.g., in Figure 2.4, Roma boys playing darbuka drums in front of the Galata Tower, which evokes a scene rich in cultural significance), while the pre-iconographic level refers to the immediate, surface-level perception of those elements (e.g., four boys are sitting in front of the Galata Tower, each holding a percussion instrument), prior to any categorization or conceptual framing. Bohnsack (2009) emphasizes that the researchers must set aside their pre-existing knowledge and assumptions in order to access the pre-iconographic level authentically. This suspension allows deeper, often hidden patterns of orientations to emerge, rather than imposing theoretical expectations onto the material.

Figure 2.4 ‘Sulukule yok olmasın’ performance.



Source: Online Magazine Yeni Şafak (2008). Retrieved from https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/sulukule-yok-olmasin-gosterisi-155701

In order to access the pre-iconographic level, the Documentary Method advocates for a comprehensive and systematic analysis of visual material. As outlined by Bohnsack (2009), this entails examining the composition and formal structure of the image. Three key concepts guide this analytical process. ‘Planimetric composition’ refers to the structural arrangement of elements within the image frame, governed by an internal visual logic that shapes how the viewer perceives the scene. ‘Perspective projection’ concerns the representation of spatiality and physical depth, reflecting the viewer’s orientation toward the depicted environment. Finally, ‘scenic choreography’ focuses on the positioning and interaction of subjects within the scene, thereby revealing underlying social relations and configurations.

Once the iconographic level is set aside, the Documentary Method enables access to deeper layers of meaning grounded in embodied and collective experience. At this stage, two concepts introduced by Mannheim (1997) become central to the method’s epistemological stance: ‘conjunctive knowledge’ and ‘atheoretical knowledge’. Conjuntive knowledge refers to the shared, socially embedded forms of understanding that arise from common life experiences. In the context of Sulukule, this may include the residents’ collective sense of belonging and everyday practices that shaped community life prior to urban transformation.

Atheoretical knowledge, on the other hand, denotes practical, non-conceptual knowledge that individuals use to make sense of and navigate their daily environments. It is not derived from abstract theorizing but from routine, embodied

engagement with the world, such as the residents narrating their displacement without reference to formal urban discourse. This ideia is captured by Bohnsack (2009), who notes that people often do not fully recognize the extent of what they actually know.

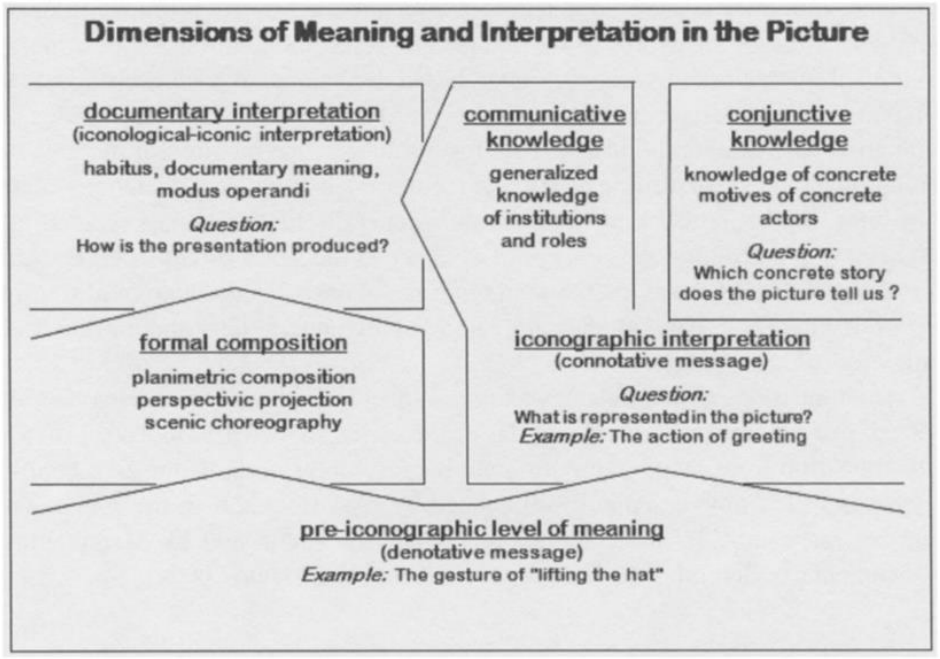
The final, yet equally significant, concept is Pierre Bourdieu's (1972) *habitus.* Bohnsack (2009) incorporates it into this approach to highlight differences between the representing and the represented in audiovisual materials. *Habitus*, described as "*an immanent law, embedded in each individual through early socialization*" (translated by the author; Bourdieu, 1972:272) refers to the system of dispositions that shape perception, action, and thought. It contributes to the reproduction of behaviors and social structures across different milieus, often unconsciously.

In audiovisual research, *habitus* play a central role in understanding the dynamic between those behind the camera (e.g., researchers or filmmakers) and those in front of it (e.g., community members). Their relationship is shaped by whether they share the same milieu, i.e. space of experience (Bohnsack, 2009:302), that is, similar backgrounds, social conditions, or cultural references points. The degree of correspondence, or lack thereof, between their *habitus* influences how stories are told, interpreted, and mediated. As Bourdieu notes:

> "*Every agent, whether they know it or not, whether they want it or not, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning: because their actions and works are the product of a modus operandi of which they are not the producer and over which they have no conscious control, they carry an 'objective intention', as scholastic philosophy puts it, which always goes beyond their conscious intentions*" (translated by the author; Bourdieu, 1972:272-273).

In other words, individuals continuously produce and reproduce objective meanings without full awareness or intentionality, an idea that resonates deeply with the goal of the Documentary Method (Figure 2.5). As Nohl (2010) explains, the researcher's task is not to supply knowledge from an external perspective but to reveal the latent structures embedded in participants' narratives and actions. In this sense, the researcher brings depth by being methodologically equipped to interpret the documentary meaning.

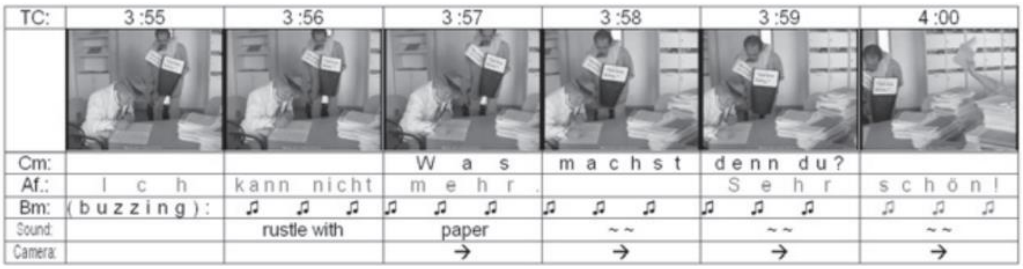
Figure 2.5 Dimensions of meaning and interpretation in the picture.



Source: Bohnsack (2009:300).

The Documentary Method has been adapted to analyze audiovisual materials by emphasizing the importance of maintaining both verbal and visual elements of data. As Baltruschat (2010) notes, relying solely on text transcription without engaging with visual elements bypasses the pre-interpretative level of analysis, since textual representation already constitutes an interpretative act. To counter this, transcription systems like MoViQ (Movies and Video in Qualitative Social Research) and TiQ (Talk in Qualitative Social Research) have been developed (Kaczmarek, 2020). These systems transcribe image, sound, and speech concurrently, in one-second intervals within a tabular format. This approach retains the complexity and flow of the original material and helps preserve the iconic dimension of images at the pre-interpretative stage (Baltruschat, 2010) (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.6 Transcript from film.



Source: Baltruschat (2010:314).

The methodological application of the Documentary Method unfolds through the following one pre- and three analytical stages: 0) Pre-analysis; 1) Formulating interpretation; 2) Reflecting interpretation; and 3) Type formation.

0. Pre-analysis

This pre-analytical stage begins prior to transcription, and consists of screening all the material. The research should take chronological notes on each individual case in order to construct a case structure for each of them out of 'topics of interest'. This process helps structure the material and identify relevant themes before a full transcription is made (Nohl, 2010). This process helps to situate the researcher on the content of the materials and to underline the relationship of the material with the researcher's studies.

1. Formulating Interpretation

Formulating interpretation in the Documentary Method focuses on the 'what', that is, the explicit content of the interviews, and involves a more detailed interpretation if compared to the pre-analysis. The researcher reviews the selected interview segments to identify distinct shifts in topic, resulting in the classification of main topics and subtopics. For each subtopic, a brief summary sentence should be prepared, covering more than one line of dialogue, to capture its essential content.

The selection of topical segments are based on the following criteria: i) 'Topics of interests', identified before the empirical phase; ii) 'Focusing metaphors', which are topics raised by interviewees with noticeable frequency, emotional intensity, or detail. These may challenge or refine the initial topics of interests; and iii) Recurring themes across different cases, which may contribute to the later comparative analysis.

In audiovisual materials, the identification of 'focusing metaphors' is based on "*high interactive and metaphorical density*" (Baltruschat, 2010:321) in the movie scenes. As Bordwell (1985) suggests, cinematic space can be conceptualized through three dimensions: shot space, editing space, and sonic space. Here, editing plays a crucial role, as it "*slice stories, juxtapose their fragments, and re-place them in a composite or linear narrative that becomes stories of ethnographic encounters guided by making, action and speech, and also by abstract concepts*" (Torresan,

2019:para.14). Through editing, film acquires unique language and generates meaning.

2. Reflecting Interpretation

Reflecting interpretation focuses on 'how' a topic is constructed within a given framework. The objective is to uncover atheoretical and conjunctive knowledge embedded in the interviewees' narratives. This part of analysis emphasizes both the formal and semantic aspects of the narratives, while considering the underlying orientation frameworks. It is important to take into account the *modus operandi*, a set of shared practices within a specific milieu, shapes individuals' everyday actions and perceptions.

A) Formal Interpretation of Interviews

Nohl (2010) outlines a method for the formal interpretation of interviews that treats interviewees' statements not as objective representations of reality, but as subjective perspectives or narrative constructions. He identifies four types of narrative elements to classify interview segments, the first three originate from Schütze's framework, while the fourth is Nohl's own addition. These include:

i) Narratives: accounts of events or actions presented chronologically with a beginning and end;
ii) Descriptions: portrayal of recurring actions or established facts;
iii) Argumentations: explanations of motives, reasons, or conditions based on common-sense knowledge; and
iv) Evaluation: judgements or assessments of the actions of self or others.

Distinguishing between narratives and descriptions is crucial, as they provide valuable insight on atheoretical and conjunctive knowledge (Nohl, 2010).

In the context of audiovisual analysis, structural diagrams can help track the progression of a film by identifying changes in camera angles, spatial settings, and recurring visual or auditory elements. These diagrams aid in identifying patterns of continuity and discontinuity (Baltruschat, 2010). Moreover, a distinction between diegetic (narration that directly addresses the viewer) and mimetic narration (narration through enacted scenes) is essential, as most films tend to emphasize one narrative mode over the other.

B) Semantic Interpretation of Interviews

The semantic interpretation of interviews involves moving beyond the subjective and objective meanings attributed by the interviewees, in order to identify the underlying structure that shapes their actions and narratives. This is achieved through sequential analysis, which examines the order and development of textual segments to reconstruct the actors' *framewoks of orientation*. If a topical segment appears consistently across multiple cases and narratives, it becomes possible to infer the documentary meaning as it transcends individual perspectives. According to Nohl:

> "*By comparing the sequences in the first interview with the potentially different experiences of second and third interview, we no longer see the first interview against the background of our own common-sense theories only, but against the background of other empirical cases. Our previous knowledge is not obliterated but is methodically relativised*" (Nohl, 2010:203).

3. Type Formation

The third step of the Documentary Method, type formation, differs fundamentally from the previous stages, which focus on the reconstruction of single cases. In contrast, this step aims to develop generalized orientation frameworks across multiple cases. This process unfolds in two dimensions.

A) Sense-genetic Type Formation

Sense-genetic type formation abstracts orientation patterns from individual cases and identifies recurring interpretive frameworks that transcend personal experience. However, as Nohl (2010) notes, this approach does not account for the social conditions under which these types emerge. To address this limition, socio-genetic type formation is introduced.

B) Socio-genetic Type Formation

Socio-genetic type formation investigates the sociogenesis of the orientation frameworks generated in the sense-generic type formation. This involves analysing the historical and structural conditions that have shaped the emergence of different orientation types. Rather than merely comparing orientations, socio-genetic analysis reveals the social processes and contexts that give rise to them. In this sense, while sense-genetic types describe how people make sense of the world,

socio-genetic types seek to explain why certain orientations prevail in specific social constellations (Nohl, 2010).

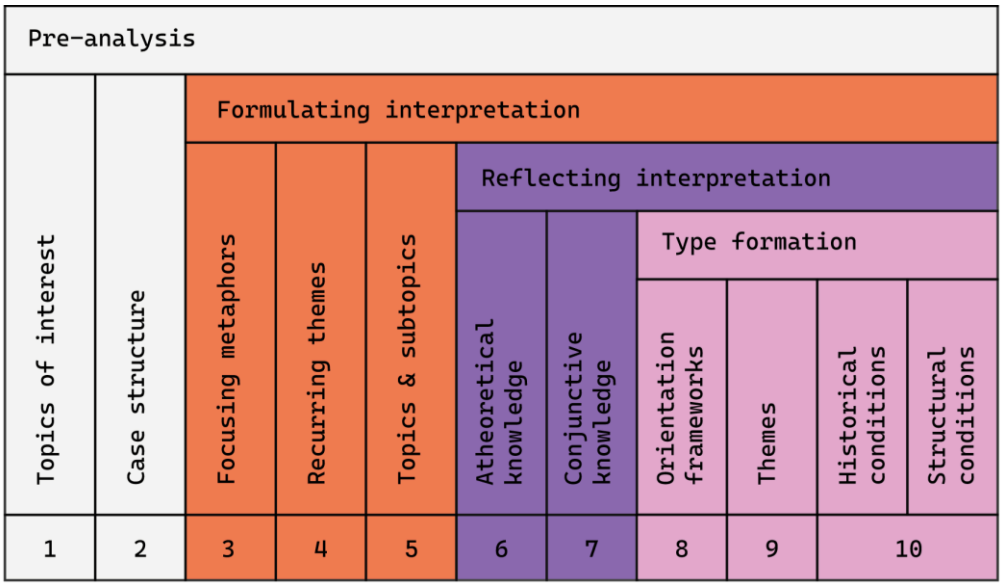
This step shows the capacity of a type formation to be generalised and depends on the overlapping extension of a type formation. The socio-genetic type formation not only shows a comparison of different types, but the social processes are also being identified.

Table 2.1 Content of the analytical steps in the Documentary Method.

Documentary Method			
Step	1. Formulating interpretation	2. Reflecting interpretation	3. Type formation
Description	Describe what's said or shown at face value of single cases	Reconstruct the implicit knowledge of single cases	Compare case studies to identify recurring orientation frameworks
Concepts	Focusing metaphor, pre-iconographic level	Atheoretical knowledge, conjunctive knowledge	Habitus, modus operanti, documental meaning
E.g.	Case A Case B Case C	Reflecting interpretation of each case (A, B, C)	Type 1 Type 2

Source: produced by the author based on Bohnsack (2009); Nohl (2010).

Figure 2.7 Flowchart of the analytical steps in the Documentary Method.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

3 METHODOLOGY

After clarifying the main concepts used to analyse displacement in Sulukule, this chapter presents the methodological approach adopted in the study. This approach offers a renewed interpretation of the Sulukule case, offering a perspective that differs from previous studies on the topic. While existing research on Sulukule often focuses on urban regeneration and gentrification, this study prioritizes the experiences and perceptions of former residents. Additionally, longitudinal studies are especially valuable for understanding the temporality of displacement and its long-term consequences. The methodology aims to shed light on the layered and evolving nature of dispossession.

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study is grounded in phenomenological theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the lived experiences of Sulukule's displacees. Since the phenomenology of place cannot be easily measured or quantified, qualitative methods are better suited to explore perceptions related to indirect and

symbolic displacement (Di Masso et al., 2022). Furthermore, official statistics often underestimate the scale of direct displacement and overlook its indirect manifestations (Doucet, 2021; Listerborn and Baeten, 2022; Versey et al., 2019).

This study relies entirely on secondary audiovisual analysis as the central method for exploring the social transformations of urban space induced by displacement in Sulukule. Given the temporal distance from the original events and the difficulties in accessing displaced residents directly, the research draws on a set of ten documentary films that captured voices, images, and atmospheres of Sulukule, during and after the urban regeneration project. These material provide access to personal and collective memories, visual representations, and symbolic articulations of loss and transformation. Additionally, my first contact with the neighborhood was in 2025, years after the regeneration project, with the long-established Karagümrük neighborhood. As I did not see Sulukule for myself, secondary data was essential to understanding the historical and cultural framework of the Sulukuleans.

Several alternative methodological approaches were considered before arriving at the Documentary Method. Content analysis, for instance, offered a structured means of categorizing and mapping recurring themes across the audiovisual material (Inman et al., 2019), but its focus on manifest content made it insufficient for a study concerned with the implicit, conjunctive knowledge embedded in residents' narratives. Grounded theory, while better suited to the generation of interpretive frameworks from qualitative data, was similarly limited in its capacity to engage with the audiovisual dimensions of the material, such as editing, gesture, and sonic space, as meaningful analytical units in their own right.

The Documentary Method, by contrast, is specifically designed to reconstruct the implicit orientation frameworks that shape how individuals narrate and make sense of their experiences, making it the most appropriate and rigorous choice for a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experiences of displacement. By using analysis through representation as both narratives and visual evidence, the study seeks to uncover the orientation frameworks embedded in the lived experiences of displacement. This allows for the identification of not only thematic content but also the underlying social and cultural knowledge embedded in the visual and narrative forms.

3.2 Exploring the Context

As the primary subjects of this research are Romani individuals displaced by the urban regeneration project in Sulukule, it was essential to go beyond text and visual materials to develop contextual familiarity before conduncting the documentary analysis. Although direct access to the community was limited, activists and key actors were consulted to provide a broader understanding of the context. These individuals were selected based on their engagement with Sulukule's history and their familiarity with the local community. Key informants included people with cultural or professional expertise who were willing to share insights into the displacement process.

Besides insights from my own supervisor, who extensively researched the area (Islam, 2009; Karaman and Islam, 2011; Islam and Sakizlioğlu, 2015) and significantly contributed to shaping form and content of this research, initial contact was made via email with several researchers, including Aysun Koca, Hacer Foggo, Egemen Yılgür, Gülçin Erdi, and Kevin Yildirim, as well as institutions like the Sulukule Volunteers Association (*Sulukule Gönüllüleri Derneği*), which had been involved with the Sulukule families. While these conversations provided valuable context, none of the informants were still in direct contact with displaced families.

To deepen my understanding, I visited Karagümrük, the neighborhood where some displaced Sulukule families had relocated. There, I met Şükrü Pündük, president of the Sulukule Romani Culture Development and Solidatiry Association (*Sulukule Roman Kültürünü Geliştirme ve Dayanışma Derneği*), who explained that the families had been extensively interviewed and exposed to the media, leading to general reluctance to engage with outsiders.

Slater et al. (2004) highlighted the difficulty of engaging with working-class communities, noting that while researchers often find it easier to connect with gentrifiers, the working class tends to remain silent in the public sphere. This was also observed by Clerval (2008), who, while researching gentrification in Paris, was only able to interview a small number of working-class households. These reflections help frame the limits of direct access in this study.

Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to speak informally with two former residents at the same café where I met Mr. Pündük. Their insights helped me better

understand their social conditions and cultural reference points since I did not see Sulukule during the urban regeneration time and am not familiar with Romani culture. As Bohnsack's (2009) emphasizes, the degree of correspondence between researcher and researched plays a significant role in how stories are interpreted and mediated.

3.3 Data Selection

The primary data source in this research consists of secondary audiovisual materials that document the urban transformation process in Sulukule and its consequences for the displaced community. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, the focus is on exploring the expressive, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of displacement, especially how it is remembered, narrated, and embodied through visual storytelling. Plus, the exact words of the displacees, as captured in the selected documentaries, are central to the analysis. For this reason, direct quotes are used throughout the thesis to convey their perceptions and emotions authentically.

Audiovisual data were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, with attention to the time period covered, the perspectives represented, and the emotional or symbolic content they convey. Making use of YouTube and Vimeo search engine, the inclusion criteria were: full-length documentaries and shorts films, segments of documentaries and shorts films, where the displacees speak directly about their lived experiences. Additionally, audiovisual materials had to be created during or after the urban regeneration process (from 2006 onwards). Exclusion criteria were: news reports, entertainment shows, live performances, and documentaries in which displacees do not appear or narrate their own experiences. Visual materials that match the inclusion criteria but are inaccessible or no longer available were also excluded, along with audiovisual materials created before the urban regeneration project. Based on the previously defined criteria, 16 documentaries were identified and, after close examination, 11 short films were selected for the analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis focused on both the visual and narrative representations of displacement, including recurring themes, symbolic imagery, and emotional tone. Transcripts were kept in Turkish to preserve original expressions and meanings, allowing for more nuanced interpretation. Combining the Documentary Method with indirect displacement studies, allows to uncover not only the meanings and perceptions in the narrative of the displacees beyond what is explicitly presented and represented, but also understand how these patterns are rooted within broader social history.

All films were transcribed, analyzed, and coded using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA 22, in alignment with the steps of the Documentary Method. MAXQDA was selected for its capacity to code the complex structure of moving images, allowing for temporal referencing and sequential organization. This made it possible to access the audiovisual material without imposing an initial interpretative lens, an essential condition for maintaining analysis at the pre-iconographic level. In this way, the coding remained on the pre-iconographic level, because "*visual level is represented by visual means and the verbal level is simultaneously transcribed to text*" (Baltruschat, 2010:315).

The first step of the analysis, 'formulating interpretation', generated a set of topics and subtopics for each testimony analysed, and a short summary capturing the core meaning of each topic. The coding was done by paraphrasing the explicit context (i.e. the 'what') in order to set the iconographic level aside. As an example of the coding strategy, in Figure 3.1 after explaining the speculative logic behind the regeneration process, where land is purchased at low prices and resold for maximum profit, the speaker articulates his critiques. He suddenly goes silent and places his hand over his mouth. This movement was accompanied by a shift in facial expression and a brief smile. This silent gesture was coded under the topic of 'critical awareness'.

Figure 3.1 Visual coding section under the topic 'critical awareness'.

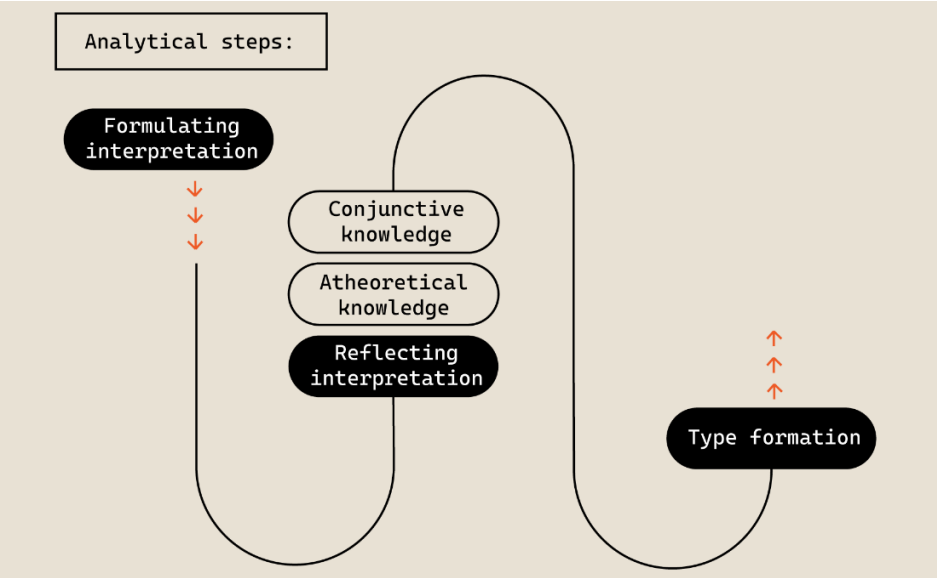


Source: Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:15:18

Next, on ‘reflecting interpretation’, the method was able to reveal ‘conjunctive’ and ‘atheoretical’ knowledge underlying these topics and uncover orientation frameworks shaping ‘how’ their voices are expressed. Conjunctive knowledge refers to socially embedded understandings shaped by shared life experience (e.g., Sulukule’s residents’ sense of belonging and everyday practices before the urban regeneration project), while atheoretical knowledge denotes practical, non-conceptual ways of knowing derived from routine engagement with the world (e.g., the way former residents narrate displacement without relying on formal urban discourse). As Bohnsack’s (2009) notes, individuals often remain unaware of the depth of what they actually know. ‘Reflecting interpretation’ requires generating interpretations without value judgements or assessments of correctness, in order to maintain analytical impartiality.

Finally, these orientation frameworks were situated within their broader historical and structural contexts, connecting personal accounts to systemic processes of urban transformation and social injustice. The last step of the method, ‘type formation’, regards the themes’ analysis, and was divided in two sections. First, ‘sense-genetic type formation’ consists of abstracting the shared orientations from single cases and identifying recurring patterns. It reveals how individuals make sense of the world beyond personal narratives. Lastly, on ‘socio-genetic type formation’, the method was able to situate these narratives within broader historical and structural contexts. It examines the social conditions that gave rise to particular frameworks, explaining why certain forms of sense-making emerge within specific social constellations. In this way, combining the Documentary Method with indirect displacement studies allows to uncover not only the meanings and perceptions in the narrative of the displacees beyond what is explicitly presented and represented, but also to understand how these patterns are rooted within broader social history.

Figure 3.2 Flow chart of the analytical steps.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026).

3.5 Methodological Challenges and Limitations

This study faces several methodological challenges inherent to the phenomenological investigation of displacement, a phenomenon that often resembles the act of "measuring the invisible". While audiovisual materials provide a powerful lens for accessing lived experiences and evoking emotional and spatial memory, they are also inherently interpretative and shaped by contextual gaps.

Elements such as footage selection, framing, editing choices, and the absence of certain voices or perspectives can influence the narrative in ways that may not fully capture the complexity of the displacement experience. Moreover, as Turkish is not my first language, occasional linguistic limitations may have affected the clarity and depth of interpretation.

The Documentary Method was chosen specifically to address such issues. By beginning the analytical process at the pre-iconographic level, it encourages the researcher to set aside theoretical expectations and attend first to the material ifself. This method helps minimize interpretative bias and maintain sensitivity to the structure of meaning as expressed by the subjects themselves.

Despite these limitation, secondary audiovisual materials remain a trustworthy and rich source for accessing the affective, spatial, and symbolic dimensions of displacement, especially when direct participation is no longer feasible by the

current means of this research. These sources allowed for a layered and reflective reconstruction of Sulukule's story, contributing to a deeper understanding of how displacement is felt, remembered, and narrated through collective memory.

3.6 Coding Strategy

In total 2 hours 45 minutes 29 seconds of moving images were analysed, the transcription accounted for 12.215 words, 64 testimonies where 58 former residents shared their voices. Below, there is a detailed description of the application of the three steps of the Documentary Method to the analysis of secondary audiovisual sources aimed at exploring indirect displacement.

3.6.1 Formulating interpretation: Exploring topics and subtopics

The first stage of Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method is the *formulating interpretation*, which focuses on paraphrasing what is explicitly said in the materials without any interpretation or evaluation (Baltruschat, 2010). The aim here is not yet to reveal the underlying orientation frameworks, but rather to map the manifest content such as 'what' is being talked about. While the content involves the former residents' description of their lives, concerns, and situations, the coding focusus on the pre-interpretation of the material and, thus, general topics are identified through the paraphrasing. Through this step, the study identified recurring themes across the testimonies and prepared the ground for the subsequent stage of reflecting interpretation, which engaged with implicit knowledge.

After the familiarization with the material, the coding process started with the selection of 'focusing metaphors', moments of emotional congruence, constantly discussed or described themes, etc. The frequency and emotional intensity of these topics underscore their centrality to the lived experiences of displacement. The topics were not yet interpreted for their latent or symbolic meanings (e.g, pain, sarcasm, exhaustion, or resistance) but described as they appear in the displacees' own words and emboddied expressions. Each coded section holds a description related to the paraphrasing of the material aborded in the scene.

There were two complementary procedures in coding the material: (a) the selection and coding of moving images with their transcriptions, where participants verbalize their experiences and emotions, and (b) the selection and coding of moving images

with the absence of spoken language, which leads to the interpretation of gestures and movements. Across the 58 testimonies, 58 topics and subtopics emerged. A more detailed account of the exerpts, coding structures, and topics can be found in the Appendix.

3.6.2 Reflecting interpretation: Uncovering atheoretical and conjunctive knowledge

The subsequent *reflecting interpretation* phase built upon this foundation to reveal how such expressions emerge from shared modes of orientation, and coping strategies shaped by structural conditions. However, in contrast to the *formulating interpretation*, which paraphrases the manifest content of testimonies, this phase aims to uncover the orientation frameworks, the implicit, conjunctive knowledge that shapes how individuals understand and respond to their experiences. In other words, it seeks to reveal the *habitus* and shared worldview behind what is said, beyond the narrative level.

As a practical exemple, the Figure 3.3 shows a public figure dancing with a local resident during a public conference. At the pre-iconographic level, this can be described simply as "a public figure dances with a resident" which was coded under the topic of 'staging benevolance'. However, on the 'reflecting interpretation' stage, the gesture can be interpreted as a way to public engage with Sulukule's musical heritage under a symbolic action or performance designed to convey's the state's accessibility and cultural openness. It is part of the collective experience of the former residents (i.e., conjunctive knowledge) and was later coded in relation to that conceptualization. This performance can also be read as tokenism, where public visibility replaces genuine participation, masking the absence of meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process.

Figure 3.3 Visual coding section under the topic 'staging benevolence'.



Source: Tükmen (2010, 05:47).

The topics and subtopics from phase one were distributed in two categories: atheoretical knowledge or conjunctive knowledge, according to the iconographic level of their content. A matrix was created, mapping the topics and subtopics against these two categories, enabling the consolidation of statements for pattern identification (Figure 3.4). In this sense, the testimonies were read in relation to their categorization as a shared experience or as a conceptualization of the urban realm. Coding, beyond verbal expression, also encompassed imagery, gestures, facial expressions, and editing elements that portray the lived experiences of displacement.

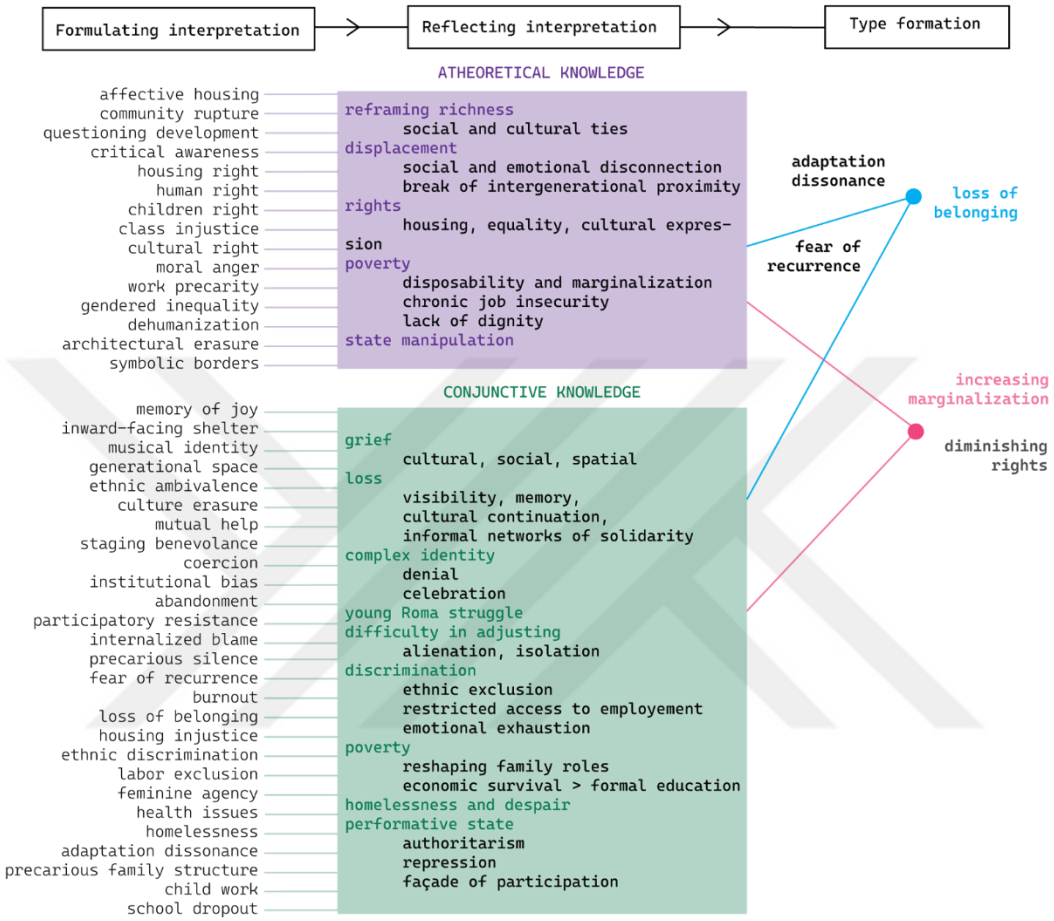
3.6.3 Type formation: Presenting the orientation frameworks

The final step of the Documentary Method is type formation, in which a comparative analysis across individual testimonies identifies shared orientation frameworks. This step, which will be further explored in the Findings section, presents the two major themes which speak for the material ways Sulukuleans have experienced indirect displacement: loss of belonging and increasing marginalization.

These themes represent the first category of type formation, 'sense-genetic', which accounts for the orientations individuals draw upon when facing displacement. The Documentary Method goes beyond the themes and accounts the social conditions

under which each of them emerges, called the ‘socio-genetic’. This category involves the analysis of the historical and structural conditions that shape the major themes since they are rooted in distinct historical conditions (Nohl, 2010).

Figure 3.4 Code matrix.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026).

4 SULUKULE THROUGH TIME

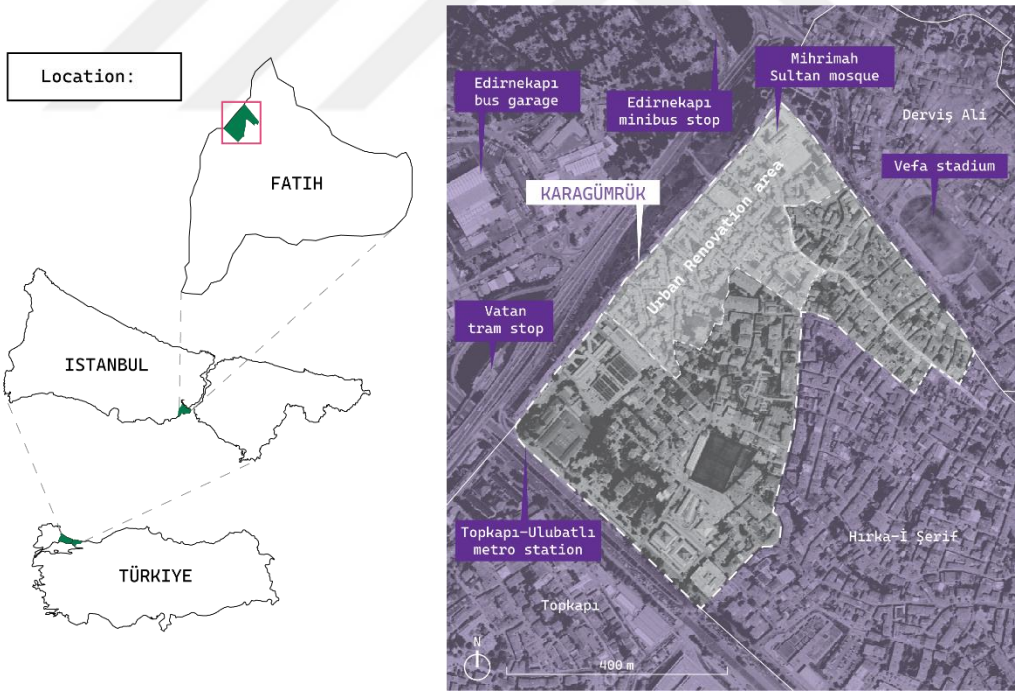
Sulukule has been the focus of extensive research on urban regeneration (e.g., Karaman, 2010; Erdi, 2019), project implementation (e.g., Çanakcıoğlu, 2013), and activism and resistance (e.g., Foggo, 2007; Pak and Yılmaz, 2013). According to Cin and Egercioğlu (2016), the project received widespread international attention and sparked protests at the national level.

The urban regeneration project in Sulukule, Istanbul, carried out between 2006 and 2011, resulted in the displacement and dispersal of the Romani community. This state-led and neoliberal urban transformation, designed to attract higher-income residents and increase land value, brought profound socio-economic and cultural

changes to the neighborhood. The regeneration process, implemented under Law No. 5366, has been widely criticized for its role in accelerating socio-spatial polarization, segregation, and displacement in historic neighborhoods. It has been framed as a mechanism of social exclusion, lacking public participation and sensitivity to local identities.

This process also generated alliances between the Romani community and external support networks (e.g., academics, professionals, and activists) who opposed the top-down project design and advocated for more inclusive planning approaches. Sulukule, one of the oldest continuously inhabited Romani settlements in Europe, is located within the historic peninsula of Istanbul, bordered by the Theodosian Land Walls and situated between the Edirnekapı and Topkapı gates. The area falls under the *waqf* of Mehmet II is currently situated in the Karagümrük neighborhood, in Istanbul's district of Fatih, and has been home to a Romani population since at least the 11th century (Foggo, 2007; Yılgür, 2025).

Map 4.1 Location Map of Sulukule.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025, adapted from Google Maps, 2025).

Its strategic location is adjacent to four major transportation routes, accessible by tram, bus, minibus, and only 300 meters from the Topkapı-Ulubatlı metro station. It played a significant role in making it a target for urban redevelopment

(Çanakcıoğlu, 2013). Yet, despite this centrality, the area was stigmatized, and its informal economies, strong social networks, and ethnically distinct character were framed as incompatible with the city's modern image (Çevik, 2011).

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of Sulukule and its Romani community, tracing their trajectory from their settlement on the outskirts of the Theodosian Walls to the aftermath of the regeneration project. It examines how displacement-based frameworks offer critical insights into urban change, challenging dominant narratives of gentrification that often overlook long-term marginalization processes. In this context, Bay and Güler (2024) raise important questions about whether Sulukule's transformation can be accurately framed as a case of gentrification, to which this study, through the lens of displacement, understands as a social injustice that reflects deeper patterns of state-led exclusion.

4.1 The Early Urban Settlement of the Peripatetic Roma

During the Byzantine period, Roma populations were forced to live outside the city walls by the Orthodox Church, which prohibited them to residing within the fortified city (Uysal, 2011; Foggo, 2007). This spatial marginalization marked the beginning of a long history of exclusion, with Roma communities settling in what would later become the Sulukule neighborhood. Despite their marginal status, these communities maintained vibrant cultural traditions and engaged in various forms of informal economic activities.

Under the Ottoman Empire, the Romani remained marginalized, but their labor and services were not invisible to society, particularly in entertainment and seasonal agricultural work. They were renowned for their musical traditions, dancing, and agricultural products such as lettuce cultivation (Somersan and Kırca-Schroeder, 2007). However, institutionalized prejudice persisted, as Romani identity was often associated with negative stereotypes, such as a drinking culture (Uysal, 2011).

The Ottoman state categorized Roma as "Muslim Gypsies" and subjected them to special taxes, although these classifications were officially removed during the 1881 census reform (Yılgür, 2025). Still, structural exclusion persisted. Yılgür (2025) describes the case of a Roma couple, Sadık and Züleyha, who attempted to

purchase *waqf* land in Yenibahçe but were ultimately denied due to neighborhood opposition rooted in stigma towards Roma population.

During the early Republican era, the Roma of Sulukule continued to live in the area, sustaining themselves through entertainment houses and informal labor. These entertainment houses offered music, dance, and food, and could be rented as a whole or by the room. They created work opportunities not only for dancers and musicians, but also for nearby tobacco shops, taxi drivers, and other service providers (Tok and Oğuz, 2013).

Despite their cultural vitality, Roma communities remained socially and politically marginalised. The 1934 Settlement Law No 2510 (*İskân Kanunu*), in effect until 2006, explicitly prohibited immigrant Roma from entering the country or obtaining citizenship, reflecting the nationalist and assimilationist ideology of the Turkish Republic (Somersan and Kırca-Schroeder, 2007). This law grouped Roma together with "*those who are not affiliated with Turkish culture; anarchists; spies*" (translated by the author; Iskân kanunu No. 2510, 1934:1), demonstrating the state's intent to exclude them.

The inventiveness and resilience of the Roma have been key to their survival. In 1956, the construction of Vatan Avenue caused the displacement of Roma residents and partially destroyed the historic Theodosian Walls (Robins, 2011). Until the 1960s, Roma communities were not limited to Hatice Sultan and Neslişah neighborhoods, they also inhabited the Sultan neighborhood, which was demolished to make way for the highway. Neslişah neihborhood was created shortly thereafter. According to Erdi (2019), although the name "Neslişah" is used officially, residents and the broader public continued to refer to the area as Sulukule, reinforcing the neighborhood's enduring identity.

4.2 Decline and Marginalization in the Late 20th Century

Sulukule experienced a steady decline in the late 20th century due to legal discrimination, economic precarity, and state-led marginalization. The closure of the entertainment houses in 1992 removed a key source of income, pushing many residents into informal labor such as basket-making, street vending, and waste collection (Karaman and Islam, 2011; Bayar, 2015; Foggo, 2007). With limited

formal employment opportunities and minimal social support, residents became increasingly vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. Studies from the early 2000s reveal harsh socio-economic conditions: 31% of residents were illiterate, compared to 8% in Istanbul and 14% nationally, and many households lacked social security or relied on child labor (Meriç et al., 2006).

Despite these challenges, Sulukule's informal economy and neighborhood solidarity helped sustain everyday life. Local shops played a vital role by enabling residents to buy goods in small portions and on credit (Karaman and Islam, 2011). This community-based economy, supported by close social ties, provided a degree of resilience in the face of structural vulnerability.

The spatial organization of homes in Sulukule also reinforced this social cohesion. A typical house often included a communal courtyard, which served as a shared space for social interaction while preserving privacy from the street. Access to individual units was made through the courtyard, reflecting a form of urban design deeply rooted in the community's social life (Karaman and Islam, 2011).

Sulukule also preserved important aspects of urban history, with a street pattern dating back to the Ottoman period and continuous Romani habitation since the 11th century (Karaman, 2014). According to Karaman and Islam (2011), the boundary that both separated Sulukule from the rest of Istanbul and defined its identity paradoxically allowed the community to survive and preserve its cohesion.

At the same time, Istanbul's urban policies shifted toward large-scale renewal. Events like the Habitat II Conference (1996) and the enactment of Law No. 5366 (2005) marked a turning point in the state's approach to historic low-income neighborhoods. These areas were increasingly framed as needing "rehabilitation", often overlooking the embedded cultural heritage and complex social networks within them. Due to its strategic location near the Theodosian Walls, Sulukule became a primary target for these top-down interventions (Uysal, 2011).

4.3 The 2006 Urban Regeneration Project

The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project, announced in 2005, marked what Karaman and Islam (2010:3) called the "*death sentence*" of Sulukule. Implemented by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Fatih Municipality, and the Housing

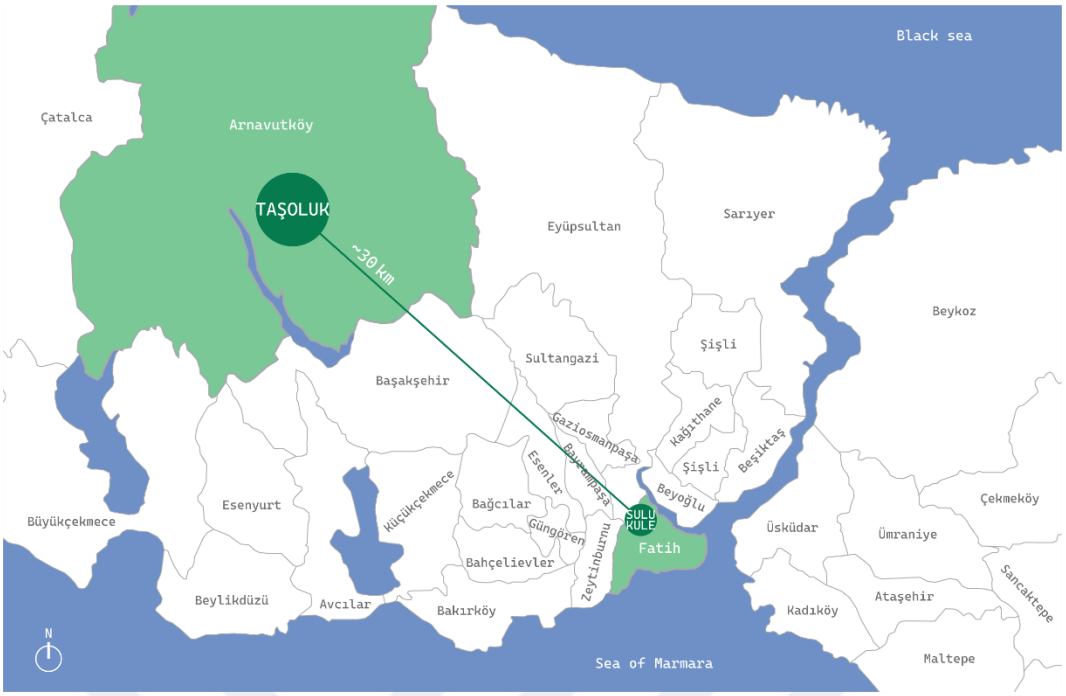
Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ), the project led to the forced displacement of nearly 5,000 people, 3,500 of whom were Romani, and the demolition of 645 homes, including those of 256 homeowners and 434 tenant households (Foggo, 2007; Balcı, 2023).

Despite being promoted under the slogan "People First", the project embodied top-down state intervention with an ethnic undertone. According to Karaman (2010), it was framed as an effort to "save" the Roma community by integrating them into the "good values" of Turkish society. The project was legitimized through Law No. 5366, titled 'The Renewal, Protection, and Sustainable Use of Deteriorated Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets' (*Yıpranan Tarihi ve Kültürel Taşınmaz Varlıkların Yenilenerek Korunması ve Yaşatılarak Kullanılması*), and enacted in July 5, 2005, which enabled district municipalities to designate historic areas for renewal (Balcı, 2023). TOKİ justified the demolition by citing the physical degradation of the area, alleged criminality, and earthquake risk (Erdi, 2019).

The plan covered 12 city blocks, 10 streets, and 3 avenues, including 22 registered buildings, 17 of which were classified as civil architectural heritage and 5 as monuments. It projected housing for 2,735 people in 163 units, with six different architectural plans ranging from 75 to 100 sqm. Additional infrastructure such as an elementary school, a cultural center, a motel, and green spaces were also included (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013).

However, no meaningful public participation took place. Those who could prove residency before July 2005 were offered units in distant social housing areas like Taşoluk and Kayabaşı (Figure 4.2). Others received low expropriation payments, often far below market value, and had no choice but to sell the real estate developers (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013). While tenants were temporarily compensated, they were expected to become homeowners through 15-year installments contracts, which is unaffordable for families surviving on daily wages (Karaman and Islam, 2011).

Map 4.2 Relocation Map.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

Even residents who received units in Sulukule faced financial burdens. Homeowners encountered additional costs for archaeological excavations and restoration fees, tripling housing prices and rendering them unaffordable (Bayar, 2015). The new structures lacked the social features of the original neighborhood, such as shared courtyards and close-knit proximity, breaking down the communal life that had defined Sulukule.

While the government claimed to revitalize the area, critics argued that the focus was on spatial transformation rather than social development (Bayar, 2015). Displacement was carried out via compulsory purchase mechanisms (Bilsel and Arıcan, 2010), and the resulting homes were resold at highly inflated prices, new 4+1 units were marketed at values approximately eight to seventeen times higher than the amounts former residents had received for their properties. This represents a price increase of 750-1.600% between the compensation paid to displaced households and the post-redevelopment market rate (Çanakcıoğlu, 2013).

In parallel, opposition movements formed both locally and internationally. Initiatives such as “Forty Days, Forty Nights in Sulukule” aimed to counter negative stereotypes by celebrating Romani culture. Organizations like the Sulukule Platform, supported by the EU and the Helsinki Commission of the US Congress, pressured Turkish authorities (Erdi, 2019). The Sulukule Atölyesi, initially formed

in 2007 under the name STOP (No Frontiers Autonomous Planners), proposed an alternative regeneration plan without evictions. Although TOKİ showed initial interest, it ultimately disregarded the proposal (Pak and Yılmaz, 2013).

Another alternative, the 'Sulukule 2010' project, developed in collaboration with University College London's Planning Department and the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency, also emphasized in-situ development and cultural preservation. Like other counter-proposals, it was ignored by authorities (Bilsel and Arıcan, 2010). Despite widespread mobilization and a legal battle led by the Chambers of City Planners and Architects, which resulted in the project's cancellation in 2012, the neighborhood had already been demolished by 2009.

Demolitions rendered the area uninhabitable before displacement was complete. As they progressed, Sulukule became increasingly dangerous: water and electricity were cut, heating services stopped, and rubble blocked access (Uysal, 2011). Ultimately, the Sulukule case became a global symbol of state-led gentrification, forced displacement, and cultural erasure disguised as urban renewal.

4.4 Aftermath and Current Situation

In Sulukule, displacement is rooted in a long history of informality, state-led redevelopment, and ethnic marginalization. The current socio-spatial configuration of Sulukule and its surroundings is marked by tensions between different population groups, compounded by stigma and concerns over safety and crime (Bay and Güler, 2024). The aftermath of the regeneration project reflects a disconnect between municipal intentions and actual outcomes.

While the municipality aimed to attract middle-class residents through the redevelopment, this goal largely failed. Activism surrounding Sulukule's destruction had stigmatized the new housing units, making them unattractive to wealthier buyers. Instead, many of the homes were purchased by third parties, some acquiring up to ten properties (Bay and Güler, 2024), and were rented out primarily to Syrian refugees (Erdi, 2019). The arrival of refugees in the Fatih district coincided with the completion of new housing in Sulukule around 2012. While most newcomers were Syrian, the area also became home to Lebanese, Iranian, Palestinian, Tunisian, and Turkish migrants (Bay and Güler, 2024).

This shift transformed Sulukule from a "Roma neighborhood" to a "refugee neighborhood," deepening its social stigma. Meanwhile, the original Romani residents faced continued exclusion. Most could not afford to return to the new housing and were pushed into nearby districts such as Karagümrük, often living in overcrowded and precarious conditions (Erdi, 2019). Tensions persist, much like the story of the Roma couple, Sadık and Züleyha, which dates back from the Ottoman era (Yılgür, 2025), non-Romani residents still pressure local authorities to remove Roma families from the area (Bay and Güler, 2024).

Relocation to TOKİ's social housing in Taşoluk was also widely regarded as a failure. According to Erdi (2019), the new setting did not accommodate Romani lifestyles, particularly regarding shared household use and community living. The relocation also worsened social segregation, as it failed to promote interaction with other residents. Additionally, the distance from the city center and lack of nighttime public transportation imposed further costs on families who depend on daily income and informal labor.

Critics describe the Sulukule project as an "ahistoric and non-integrative" model of urban planning (Bay and Güler, 2024). Rather than engaging with the lived experiences and social needs of the community, the project focused narrowly on physical renewal and land valorization. A more inclusive, collaborative approach, incorporating local knowledge and cultural preservation, could have strengthened the neighborhood, reduced crime, and provided real opportunities for residents to remain. Instead, the regeneration process exacerbated existing inequalities and erased a historically significant urban community.

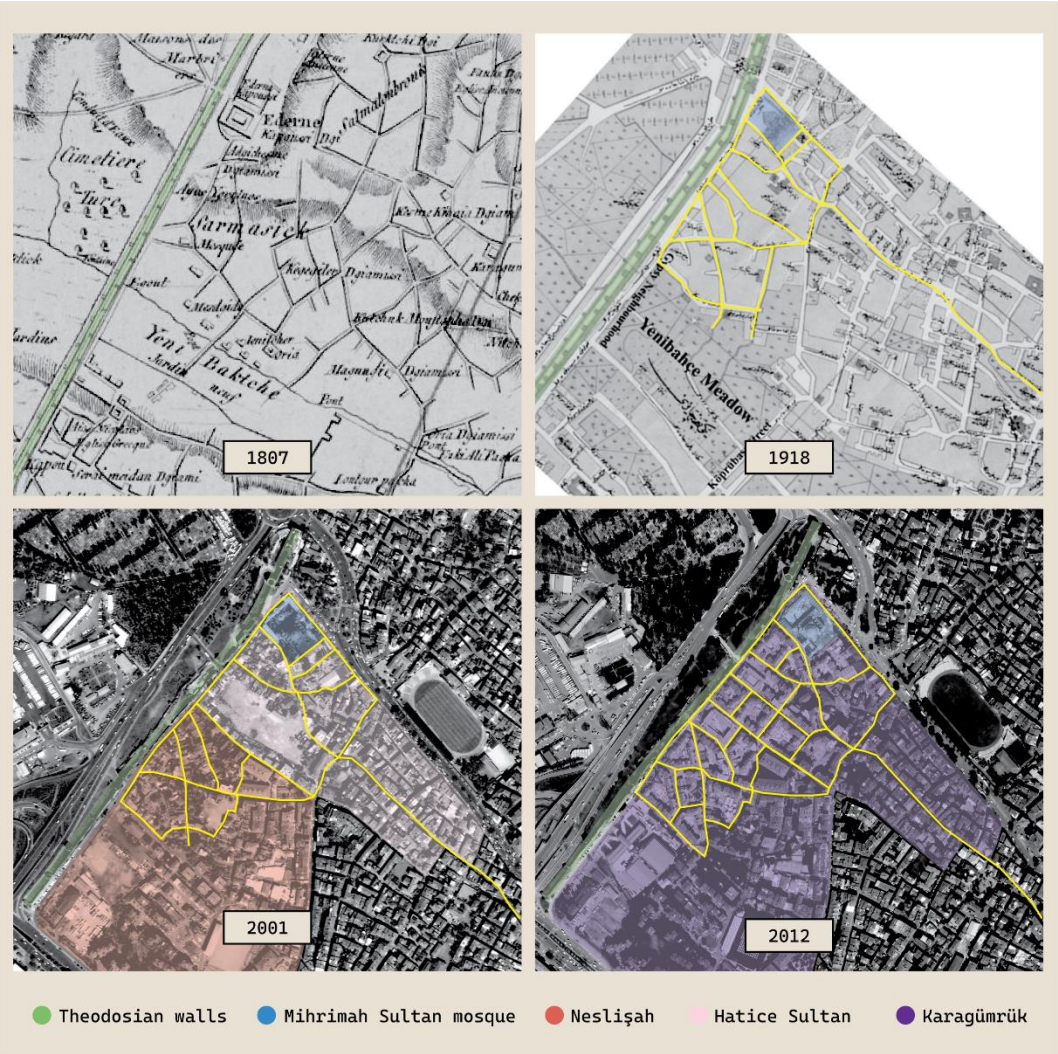
This case illustrates not only structural discrimination against the Romani population but also broader political efforts to marginalize ethno-cultural diversity in Turkey. It reflects neoliberal urban agendas that seek to remove poverty and "undesirable" populations from visible parts of the city. Roma residents continue to face severe discrimination in the housing market, often being denied rentals and pushed into informal, insalubrious settlements. As Karan (2017) points out, the persistence of "Roma neighborhoods" is a visual expression of systemic segregation. What may seem like communal protection often translates into exclusion from basic rights.

All in all, the gentrification process in Sulukule can be regarded as a failed one. This study, therefore, emphasizes the importance of viewing urban transformation through the lens of displacement. Displacement is a critical yet overlooked dimension in urban studies. While gentrification does not always require displacement (Listerborn and Baeten, 2022), it is equally important to recognize that displacement does not always require gentrification, even though the two processes are frequently intertwined.

Since space cannot, and should not, be separated from the social relationships that give meaning, Sulukule's story remains inseparably tied to that of its former residents. The same transformation observed in the physical space, demolition, architectural erasure, was mirrored in the experiences of the Romani community, state-led imposition of values and narratives, hypermediatization of a community by outsiders, exclusion, and displacement. They lost their networks of support, which were vital not only for their participation in the informal economy but also for their cultural survival.

The following analysis of Sulukule and its actors seeks to uncover the historical and social structures that underpin ongoing social injustices. This examination is crucial not only for understanding urban regeneration as more than a spatial process, but also for critically rethinking urban planning strategies that account for human development and cultural difference.

Map 4.3 Temporal Transformations Map Analysis.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025, adapted from Kauffer and Lechevalier, 1807; Yılgür, 2025; Google Maps, 2001; Google Maps, 2012).

5 SULUKULE THROUGH FILM

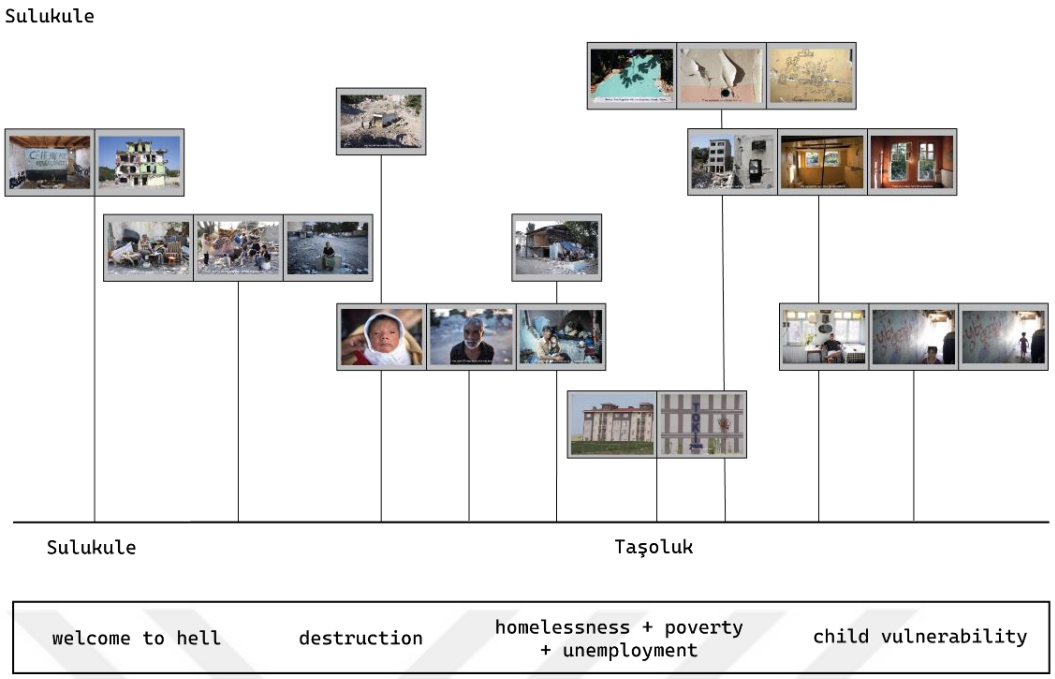
This study analyzes 11 documentary films that portray the urban transformation of Sulukule and its socio-cultural impacts. Together, these films form a diverse audiovisual archive that contributes to the collective memory and visual testimony of the neighborhood's transformation. While all of them address displacement and urban regeneration, they differ significantly in their production contexts, narrative strategies, emotional registers, and documentary forms. This chapters seeks to presents an overview of the selected movies and their content in relation to displacement and gentrification literature. The films spans from 2009 to 2023 and vary in length, source materials, editing styles, and auditory elements. Collectively, they offer a multifaceted representation of Sulukule's transformation, displacement,

and ongoing struggle for visibility and justice. At the end of the chapter, Table 5.1 presents an overview of the selected films.

'*Sulukule*' (Pınar, 2009), produced by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), is a photo montage film recorded during the urban regeneration process. It presents seven anonymous testimonies highlighting injustice, homelessness, and the fragmentation of community life, with particular attention to children's vulnerability. The film offers a sharp denuciation of the destruction of Sulukle, as residents reveal struggles associated with being perceived as second-class citizens, deep feelings of injustice, and the trauma of losing both home and community. Health problems, especially among children, are directly linked to the loss of their homes, illustrating the vulnerability of residents.

Housing injustice appears in the form of forced sales under pressure and the impossibility of return. Community rupture is profound, as families are dispersed and everyday support networks dismantled. The notion of affective housing emerges as a major theme, with homes portrayed as repositories of life, history, memory, and identity. Homelessness recurs as a central concern, accompanied by moral anger and a sense of abandonment, as Sulukuleans openly curse the state for its perceived injustice and absence. Urban transformation is experienced as a class-based attack on dignity and belonging. Residents express a collective sense of having been deceived and discarded, articulating feeling structurally powerless yet morally entitled to their place. Their testimonies frame dispossession not as accidental but as deliberate, where market logic overrides social justice and renders the working poor disposable.

Figure 5.1 Photogrammes of *Sulukule*.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Pinar, 2009).

İstanbul Çıplak (Biçen, 2009, Istanbul is Naked), recorded during the urban regeneration process, presents eight on-screen testimonies that expose the lived experience of urban inequality and forced displacement in Sulukule. Among these voices is Gülsüm Abla, one of the last residents to witness the demolition of her home in 2009. The documentary discusses themes of homelessness, institutional abandonment, and social isolation. Sulukuleans describe home as a personal archive of memory and belonging, now destroyed, and recount experiences of dehumanization, included being transported like objects. Repeated demands for housing rights are accompanied by feelings of betrayal, as participants describe being misled into giving up their homes, while health problems such as depression are directly linked to the trauma of displacement.

The testimonies revealed that home is not just a shelter, but the central stage of life, encompassing family, memory, and everyday practices. Displacement is experienced and both spatial and temporal rupture, cutting off continuity between past, present, and future. There's a sense of dislocation, where the loss of home means the loss of history and social existence. Place is sacralized and represents continuity, in this sense, losing it means the end of life.

Figure 5.2 Photogramme of *İstanbul Çıplak.*



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Biçen, 2009).

'*Canım Sulukule*' (Osseiran, 2009; My Beloved Sulukule) is a photo montage film recorded during the urban regeneration process. It centers on the testimony of Gülsüm Abla, offering a deeply personal account of displacement framed by memory, grief, and resistance. She situates personal loss within a broader context of institutional abandonment and systemic injustice. The documentary challenges dominant urban regeneration narratives by emphasizing that what was destroyed was not only housing, but a way of life and a right to remain in the city. Memory functions as a central narrative device, preserving Sulukule agaisnt erasure.

Political exclusion is one of the major themes discussed in the film. Gülsüm Abla's testimony articulates an ethnical stance that positions the Sulukule community as victims of injustice not only because of poverty, but also because of deliberate disregard by state institutions. Her language oscillates between dignity and despair, expressing a collective consciousness shaped by long-term marginalization. There are demands for recognition, justice, and human rights, presenting displacement as a political act that violates belonging and the right to urban life.

Figure 5.3 Photogramme of *Canım Sulukule*.

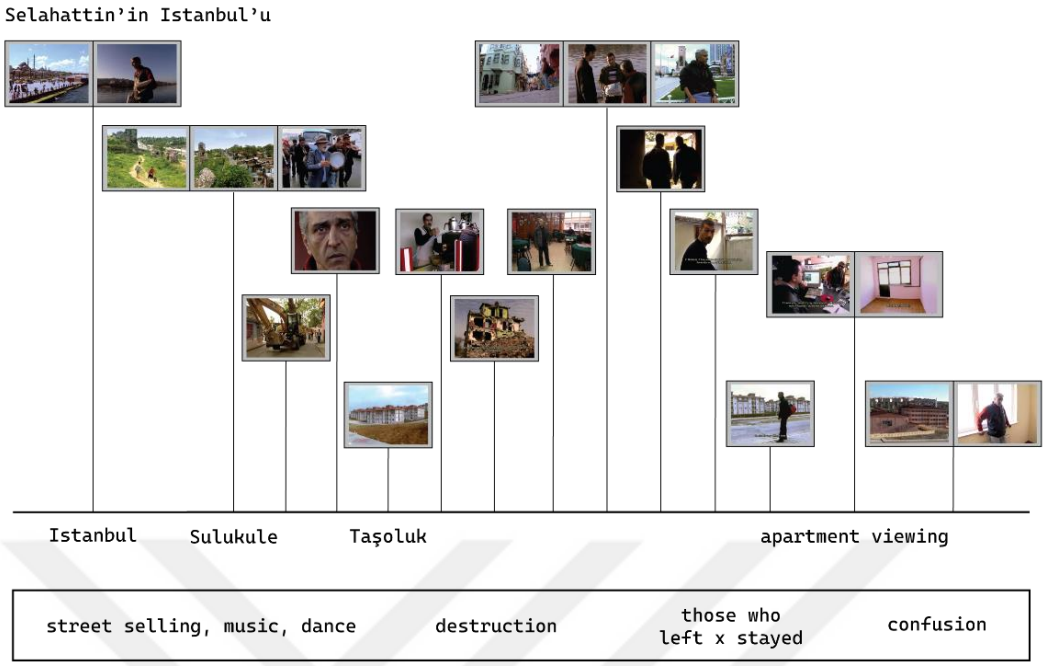


Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Osseiran, 2009).

'*Selahattin'in İstanbul'u*' (Türkmen, 2010; Selahattin's Istanbul) explores Sulukule during the urban regeneration process, while offering a semi-biographical perspective on urban transformation through the experiences of Selahattin, a Romani street vendor relocated to Taşoluk. He employs irony and bitter humor as critical tools to question the human cost of urban modernization and Istanbul's branding as a "European Capital of Culture". Besides Selahattin's reflections, there are eleven additional testimonies, including Şükrü Pündük, a recurring witness who also appears in three other documentaries. Through their voices, the film reveals coercion, particularly in the demolition of communal spaces such as children's workshop, framed by authorities as benevolent interventions.

Health issues, emotional distress, and insomnia are recurrent, while Sulukuleans express divergent views on resistance, blame, and ethnicity. Displacement is linked to class injustice and social erasure, producing feelings of obsolescence. Adaptation dissonance is strong, as new housing is experienced as isolating and unlivable, reinforcing Sulukule's role as a protective shelter. Fear of recurring displacement persists, accompanied by confusion about the future. Labor exclusion is discussed in relation to stigma and social reputation that prevent Roma residents from accessing employment. In sum, modernization is experienced as abandonment and institutional betrayal.

Figure 5.4 Photogrammes of *Selahattin'in Istanbul'u.*

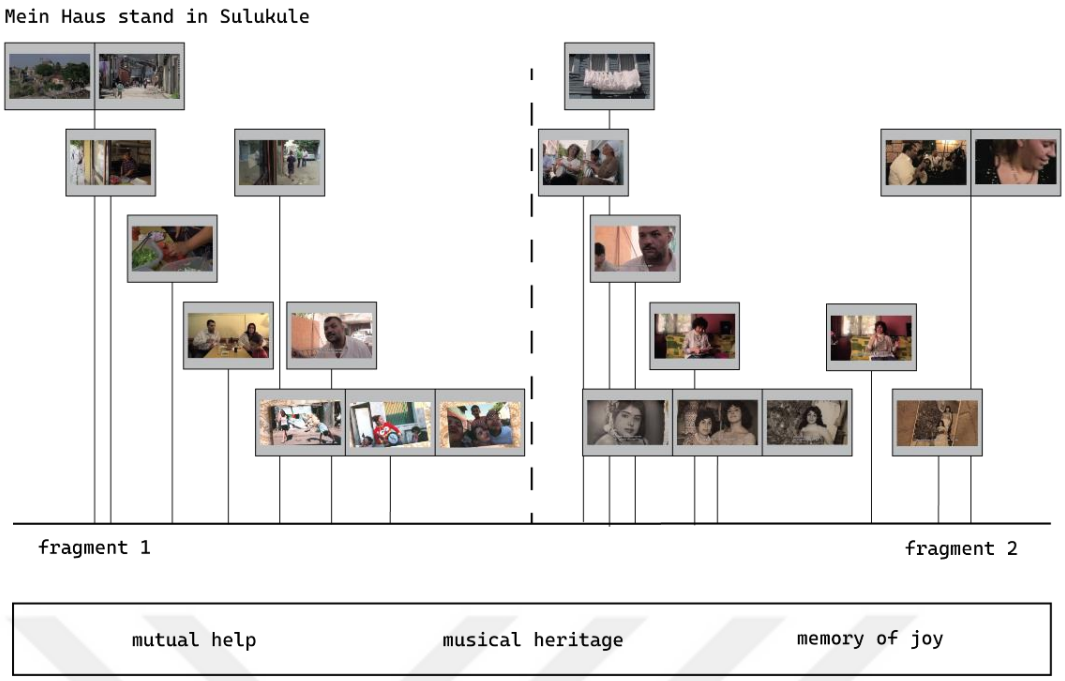


Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Türkmen, 2010).

'*Mein Haus stand in Sulukule*' (Heubrandtner, 2010; My House Stood in Sulukule), recorded during the urban regeneration process, traces the displacement process through personal narratives, interviews, and observation. The documentary is partially available through two fragments that provide an in-depth portrayal of Sulukule's destruction, capturing both emotinal loss and spatial rupture over time. Among the three testimonies featured, one belongs to Şükrü Pündük. A strong demand for human and cultural rights emerges, as participants advocate for the right to live their Romani identity without stigma or criminalization.

Memory, particularly expressed through music and dance, occupies a central place in the collective identity portrayed in the film. Sulukuleans describe systems of mutual help grounded in informal economies and trust-based survival strategies. '*Mein Haus stand in Sulukule*' presents cultural continuity as resistance. In this sense, displacement is framed as the erasure of an entire cultural world. Romani identity is not only remembered but actively performed and defended, even as the spatial anchors of that identity are destroyed. It shows that Roma cultural resilience refuses imposed modernization and affirms collective identity and historical rootedness.

Figure 5.5 Photogrammes of *Mein Haus stand in Sulukule.*

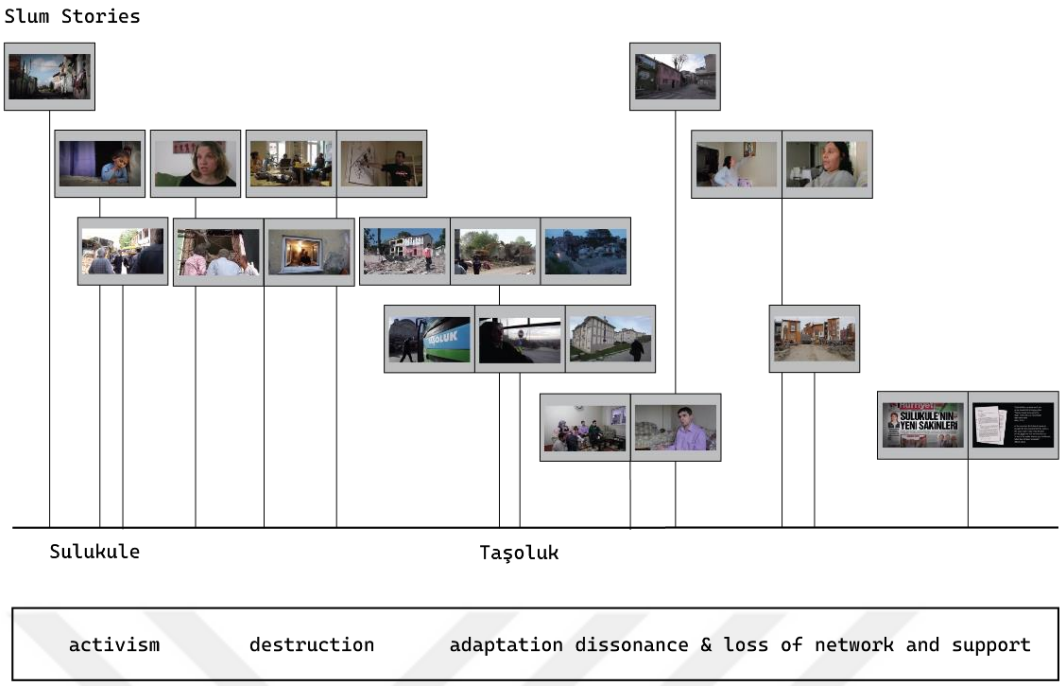


Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Heubrandtner, 2010).

Produced during the urban regeneration process by Amnesty International, '*Slum Stories: Turkey - Urban Renewal, but Who Is Going to Profit?*' (2012) situates Sulukule within a broader critique of profit-driven urban renewal. The documentary explicity questions who benefits from reneration and highlights the systematic exclusion of the urban poor from decision-making processes. Two former residents, Selahattin Güdek and Filiz Ateş, describe Sulukule as a space of comfort and social cohesion, which relates to the theme of affective housing.

Loss of access to employment, affordable rent, and basic services emerges strongly, while new living environments produce adaptation dissonance, leading to economic and social isolation. These difficulties are compounded by emotional strain and domestic tensions. Space is understood through daily functions, such as work, transport, family access, rather than abstract planning ideals. In this sense, relocation to Taşoluk is framed not only as spatial displacement, but as exonomic death, revealing a functional spatial rationality shaped by necessity rather than architectural aesthetics. Proximity is essential to survival.

Figure 5.6 Photogrammes of Slum Stories.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Osseiran, 2012).

'*The Last Days of Sulukule*' (Mundi Romani, 2016) documents the final phase of the neighborhood before complete demolition. There are seven testimonies, including Şükrü Pündük and Ali Hashas, identified on screen by a title card. The film captures diverse emotional registers, ranging from musical memory and cultural pride to fear, frustration, and anxiety about an uncertain future. Homelessness is discussed throughout the film as a constant concern. With a strong emphasis on Romani identity, music, and everyday life, the documentary functions both as a lament and as a cultural testimony.

The residents articulate a clear awareness of the economic logic behind displacement, identifying speculation and profit as driving forces. Cultural erasure is enacted through the closure of music venues and intensified policing. Musical identity is portrayed as complex, combining pride with internalized pressure to assimilate, an expression of ethnic ambivalence. Testimonies oscillate between mourning a disappearing way of life and fearing immediate destitution. Displacement is understood as part of a longer pattern of marginalization, producing a fatalistic tone in which hope is diminished but memory remains active.

Figure 5.7 Photogrammes of The Last Days of Sulukule (Mundi Romani).



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Mundi Romani, 2016).

'Sulukule Mon Amour' (Okyay, 2016, Sulukule, My Love) focuses on two teenage girls, Gizem Nalbant and Dina Madany, presenting dance as a poetic and embodied practice of resistance agaisnt gendered and ethnic marginalization. The film, recorded after the regeneration process, shows feminine agency, reframing dance as an act of defiance and self-expression rather than submission. Generational tensions surface through contrasts between traditional control within their families and their youthful aspirations. Art and identity are discussed as universal human rights.

Gizem and Dina experience marginalization not only as Roma youth, but also as girls confronting gender barriers. Their response is not resignation, but embodied resistance through dance. Dance functions as both counter-narrative and healing practice, reclaiming joy and visibility in public space as acts agaisnts silencing and erasure.

Figure 5.8 Photogrammes of Sulukule Mon Amour.

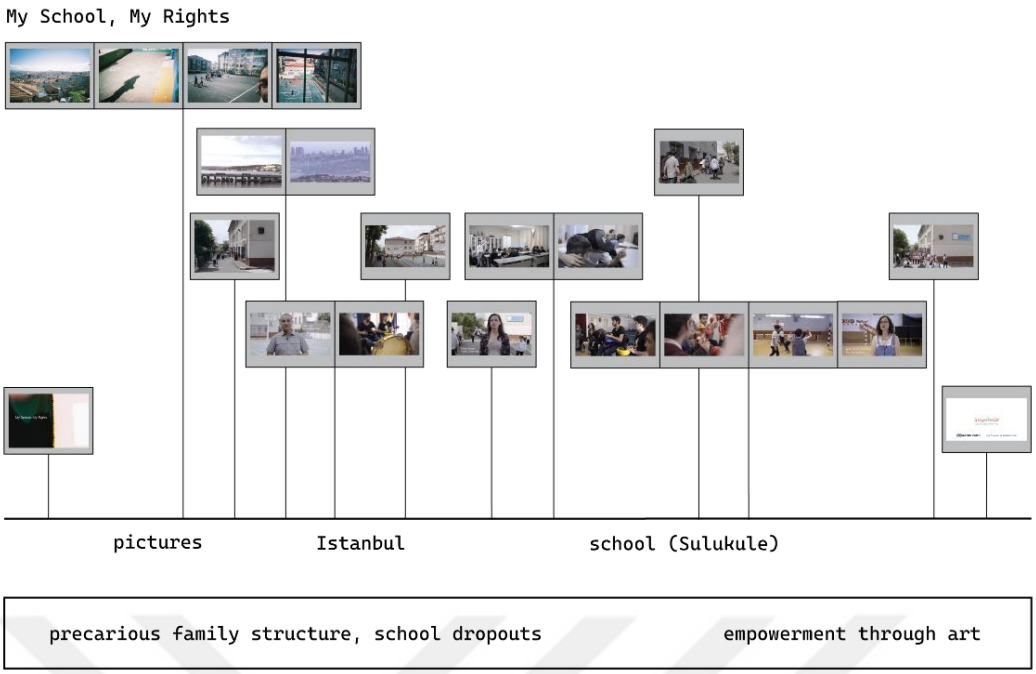


Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Okyay, 2016).

'*My School, My Rights*' (Sabancı Foundation, 2019) highlights the role of the Sulukule Volunteers Association and educational spaces in fostering expression and resilience among Romani youth. The testimonies are those of two fourteen-year-old Sulukuleans, a boy and a girl who, after participating in a photography workshop, anonymously shared glimpses of their lives shaped by school dropout, child labor, and precarious family conditions. Despite hardship, the film foregrounds agency, creativity, and the importance of education as a platform for self-representation.

The documentary emphasizes how school can feel alienating to those whole lived realities are not reflected in institutional structures. At the same time, it presents education and creative expression as potential pathways to empowerment. Resistance is shown through voice and visibility, combining awareness of systemic exclusion with the growing, yet small, sense of agency.

Figure 5.9 Photogrammes of My School, My Rights

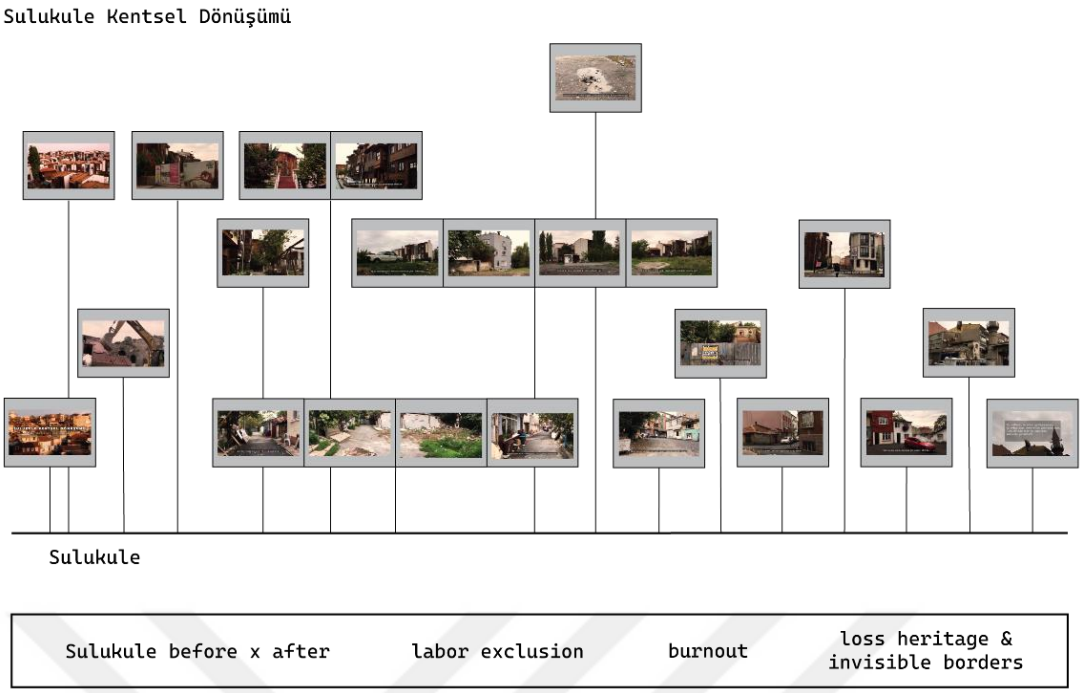


Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Sabancı Foundation, 2019).

'Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü: Bir kültürün yok oluşu' (2022, Sulukule's Urban Transformation: The Disappearance of a Culture) connects early regeneration processes to ongoing struggles related to housing and employment through a single anonymous testimony of an old adult. The film, recorded after the regeneration process, emphasizes burnout and disillusionment after years of resistance, alongside with the clear realisation of systemic failure. Labor exclusion, economic precarity, and the erasure of generational space are central concerns, although practices of mutual aid and solidarity persist.

The single-voice narrative frames displacement as prolonged economic insecurity and identity erasure. Poverty, debt, and spatial exclusion are interpreted as interconnected and politically produced. This shows a critical urban consciousness that has been resisting through a recurring form of violance agaisnt the urban poor, named gentrification.

Figure 5.10 Photogrammes of *Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü.*



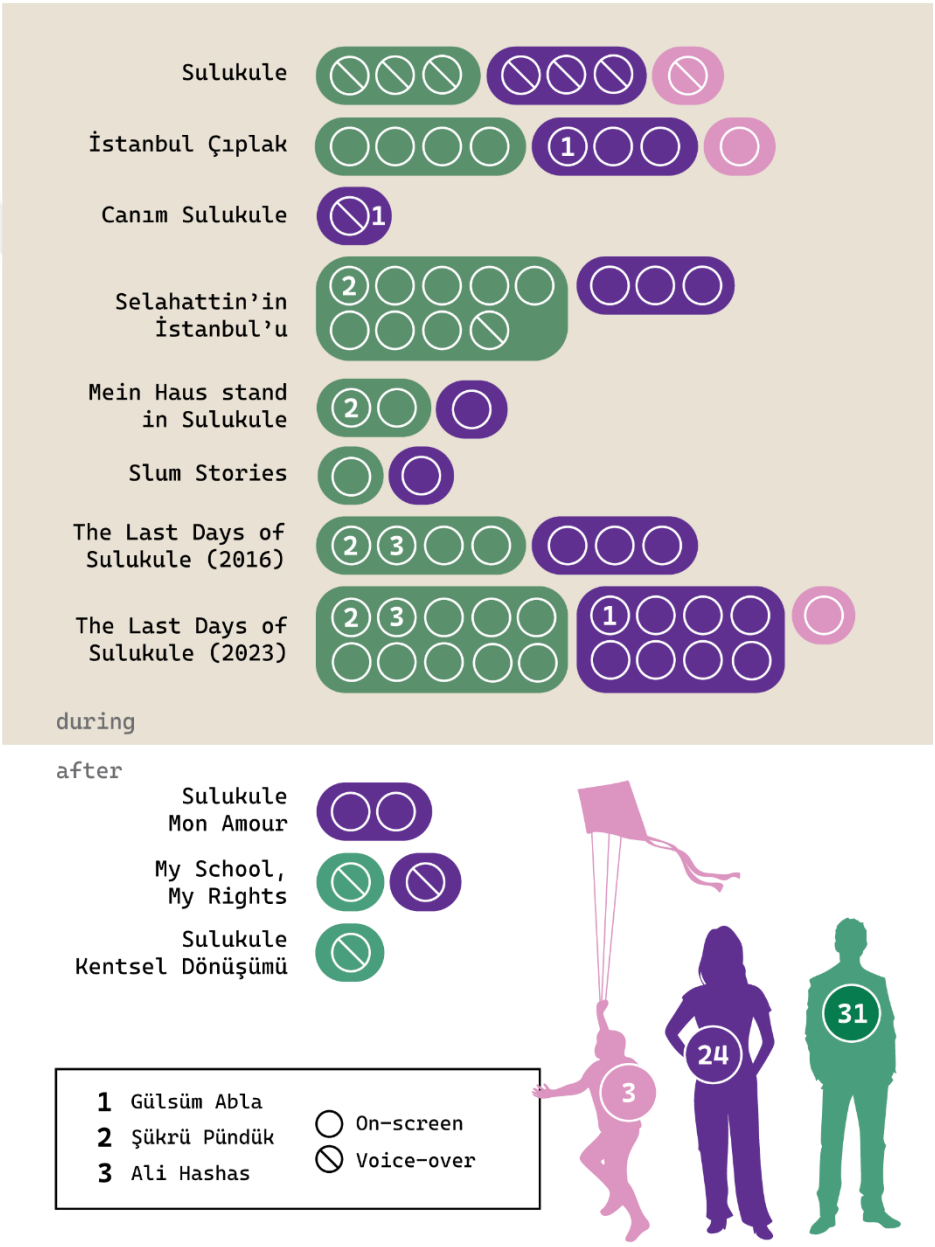
Source: Silva, Isabela (2026, adapted from Sulukule Kensel Dönüşümü, 2022).

Finally, '*The Last Days of Sulukule*' (Erol and Madra, 2023), recorded during the urban regeneration process, presents the Sulukule neighborhood through the perspectives of nineteen former residents, including Gülsüm Abla, Şükrü Pündük and Ali Hashas, exposing the persistent inequalities produced by state and capital-driven urban policies. The documentary foregrounds ethnic discrimination and everyday experiences of exclusion tied to Romani identity. Eviction is framed as a violation of human rights, directly attacking dignity and citizenship. Themes of affective housing, lost dreams, and class injustice recur, particularly in relation to restricted access to health, justice, and opportunity. Accounts of institutional bias underscore how systemic neglect continues to shape both physical and mental well-being. Photogrammes could not be generated for this documentary, as the access to the video was consented by the directors for research purposes and is private to general public.

The eleven selected documentary films account for a total of 64 testimonies. As three individuals appear across multiple films, named Gülsüm Abla, Şükrü Pündük and Ali Hashas, removing these repetitions resulted in 58 distinct voices (31 men, 24 women, and 3 children). Additionally, most productions were recorded during the urban regeneration process, with the exception of three films, *'Sulukule Mon Amour*' (Okyay, 2016, Sulukule, My Love), '*My School, My Rights*' (Sabancı

Foundation, 2019), and *'Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü: Bir kültürün yok oluşu'* (2022, Sulukule's Urban Transformation: The Disappearance of a Culture), which feature the voices of former residents recorded after the regeneration. Most films present the former residents on-screen, only three of them present testimonies exclusively through voice-over. Figure 5.11 provides a detailed breakdown of the testimonies by gender and period of recording.

Figure 5.11 Testimonies overview.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2026).

Table 5.1 Summary of the audiovisual material included in the analysis.

	Director, year	Title, access	Duration	Production
1	F. Pınar, 2009	Sulukule – YouTube [open]	00:05:30	TMMOB
2	Z. Biçen, 2009	İstanbul Çıplak. (*Istanbul is naked*) – YouTube [open]	00:19:39	
3	N. Osseiran, 2009	Canım Sulukule… (*My beloved Sulukule…*) – Vimeo [open]	00:10:01	
4	A. Türkmen, 2010	Selahattin'in İstanbul'u (*Selahattin's Istanbul*) – YouTube [open]	00:29:29	Geoforum
5	A. Heubrandtner, 2010	Mein Haus stand in Sulukule. (*My house stood in Sulukule*) – Private [open segments on YouTube]	01:34:00	Nanookfilm
6	N. Osseiran, 2012	Slum stories: Turkey – Urban renewal, but who is going to profit? – YouTube [open]	00:08:01	Amnesty Internacional
7	2016	The Last Days of Sulukule – YouTube [open]	00:26:28	Mundi Romani
8	A. D. Okyay, 2016	Sulukule Mon Amour. (*Sulukule my love*) – Vimeo [open]	00:06:12	
9	2019	Sulukule Volunteers Association – My School, My Rights – YouTube [open]	00:02:51	Sabancı Vakfı
10	2022	Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü: Bir kültürün yok oluşu. (*Sulukule's urban transformation: The disappearance of a culture*) – YouTube [open]	00:04:42	
11	O.S. Erol and T.C. Madra, 2023	The Last Days of Sulukule – Private [access provided by O.S. Erol]	01:14:46	O.S. Erol and T.C. Madra

Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

6 FINDINGS

This study identified two interrelated major themes which emerged through the secondary qualitative analysis of pre-existing audiovisual material according to the Documentary Method: loss of belonging and increasing marginalization. These themes reveal how indirect displacement is lived not only as a material process but as an ongoing condition marked by exclusion, shrinking social space, and persistent fear of further dispossession. Across the testimonies, indirect displacement emerges as a relational, emotional, and symbolic process that contributes to a profound erosion of residents' sense of place.

6.1 Loss of Belonging

> "*Urban transformation sounded like a meaningless word to us. But what it really meant was that our houses were being demolished and taken from us to be given to others. That's what we lived through."* M, adult (Erol and Madra, 2023, 00:00:37)

The above testimony reflects atheoretical knowledge within the Documentary Method. "Urban transformation" is not narrated as renewal or improvement, but as dispossession and deception. The term itself appears emptied of meaning, functioning instead as an euphemism that masks the violence of demolition and removal. The same happens with the concept of displacement, which is rarely employed by former residents, instead they repeatedly confront the language of

institutions and media that normalize the process as 'transformation'. For residents, however, this process is experienced as far more than physical relocation, it constitutes a deep social and emotional rupture.

The breakdown of intergenerational proximity, kinship ties, and everyday social interaction emerges as a central form of loss. Displacement is described as the dismantling of shared life, spaces where care, solidarity, and cultural transmission once took place. Residents emphasize that the loss of these relational infrastructures was as devastating as the loss of house itself, echoing studies on symbolic displacement (Atkinson, 2015; Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020). This sense of injustice is frequently articulated through the language of rights, as illustrated by the following testimonies:

> *"You are throwing me out onto the street. Is this a human right? Are we not human beings? A human is a human. What are you doing to a human being?"* (00:03:44)
>
> *"They say there is law in this county. What law? There is no law. There is chaos, there is noise, but no law in this world."* (00:01:22)
>
> *"If the same thing happened to them, what would they do? Let them be like me."* F, adult (Osseiran, 2009, 00:03:32)

Housing is framed not as a market commodity or state benevolence, but as a fundamental human right inseparable from dignity, equality, and cultural expression. These narratives align with critical urban studies that conceptualize housing as a social and political right (Atkinson, 2015). Residents express resentment toward institutions and newcomers who benefit from regeneration while long-standing inhabitants are denied humane treatment. Loss of belonging also appears in one of its most extreme forms: homelessness.

> *"I am 58 years old. Please, if only they would give us a house. If only they would show us a house. I mean, give us a house in the place of the one they took from us. I want a home. I don't have a roof over my head. I am a woman born in Istanbul, but I have no home. I am living on the streets. How can a citizen live on the street? How can someone sleep outside? I am a daughter of Istanbul. Is there no good Istanbul for me? I am from Istanbul, but I have nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets, no home, no homeland. I am homeless."* F, adult (Biçen, 2019, 00:17:31)
>
> *"There were seven of us siblings. Four, three, five of us used to dance here. Five or six of my siblings all played music here. Look, their houses were demolished.*

> *They were not given a home. We all ended up on the streets."* F, adult (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:08:26)

These testimonies convey homelessness not only as material deprivation but as a deeply emotional and psychological state. The loss of home is narrated as the loss of safety, certainty, and control, accompanied by fear, shame, and prolonged uncertainty. Several narratives directly link housing insecurity to deteriorating physical and mental health, including depression, anxiety, insomnia, and chronic illness, which resonates with research on the affective dimensions of displacement (Di Masso et al., 2021). This affective condition of being trapped, without reliable information, options, or agency, undermines residents' capacity to make decisions and sustain hope. Another dimension of loss concerns memory, continuity, and historical rootedness:

> *"My grandmother got married and lived in this house. This is her mother-in-law's place. If she were alive, she would be 102 years old. She married and came here as a bride. […] My father married here and I was born here. Four daughters were born here. I got married here. I had children here. I never lived in another house, do you know that? I never lived anywhere else. I was born, grew up, grew old here. My husband died in this house. My father died in this house. I was born, married, and aged here."* F, adult (Biçen, 2009, 00:13:47)

> *"Now both our village, which we call Sulukule, and our city, which we also call Sulukule, are being demolished. People are being separated from their culture, their graves, their land, their customs, their traditions, everything, and sent elsewhere. This Romani culture will not survive. Just like our language, Romani culture will not survive either."* M, adult (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:22:09)

The destruction of home is described as the destruction of memory itself. It is felt by former residents as the erasure of collective histories and intergenerational belonging. Residents mourn not only buildings, but an entire way of life rooted in intergenerational continuity and informal solidarity networks. This form of spatial grief reflects the loss of permanence and trust in the future, destabilizing residents' sense of historical belonging. Cultural practices are described as delegitimized, surveilled, or criminalized, exemplifying processes of cultural displacement (Cahill, 2007). This grief is therefore articulated as cultural, spatial, and social.

> *"In our old neighborhood we had a one-room house, but we were peaceful, we were happy there. We could go wherever we wanted, even on foot."* F, adult (Türkmen, 2010, 00:20:27)

> *"Maybe after five or ten years it could be better, it's not impossible, but we said in the neighborhood that even if they gave us a place, we want it to be from our neighborhood. Even if it were a tent, let it be in our neighborhood"* F, adult (Erol and Madra, 2023)

> *"There was comfort there. Yes, there was poverty, there was hardship, but it was different. You ate whatever you found. You sat together. There was neighborliness."* F, adult (Osseiran, 2012, 00:05:48)

The above testimonies present a way of life structured by informal networks of solidarity and mutual aid. Material modesty is reframed as cultural and social richness, challenging dominant urban imaginaries that equate value with capital accumulation. Yet, this attachment is constantly undermined by stigma and racialization:

> *"If you are Romani, you have no reputation. They see us as two or four steps lower. If you're Romani, they look down on you. They say, 'He's not a real man.' Why? Aren't we human? […] A guy passes by with a bag. I said, 'Son, look at me.' He said, 'Go on, I don't have money.', 'What money?' I said. 'Do you think I'm asking for money?' I cursed him. I said, 'I'm asking for directions'. He thought I was a beggar or a thief. But I don't even look like a thief."* adult, F (Osseiran, 2009, 00:06:15)

> *"Is our crime being Romani? Or is it a crime to live Romani culture?"* adult, M (Heubrandtner, 2010, 00:00:40)

> *"People insist on discrimination. 'You are Kurdish, you are Chinese, you are this, you are that.' What's the need for that? Look, through dance or rap we can come together. That's how we can overcome it."* F, teenage (Okyay, 2016, 00:04:41)

Romani identity emerges as complex and ambivalent, sometimes proudly affirmed as long-standing and resilient, while at other moments it is silenced, denied, or strategically concealed in response to discrimination. Younger Roma, in particular, are portrayed as navigating tensions between attachment to community and efforts to break free from familial and cultural constraints, revealing generational negotiations over belonging, mobility, and self-definition.

6.1.1 Socio-genesis of Loss of Belonging

Loss of belonging emerges not only as an emotional response to urban regeneration but as the outcome of a long historical trajectory in which place was understood as a relational and protective infrastructure. This orientation developed biographically and intergenerationally under conditions of exclusion, where proximity, kinship, and informal sociality provided security in the absence of institutional support. The socio-genesis of this loss lies in repeated disruptions of Romani spatial continuity through urban policies that frame cultural difference as incompatibility and spatial proximity as disorder. Over time, urban regeneration operates as a regime of normalization that delegitimizes informal life, erodes trust in permanence, and transforms rootedness into dispossession. As a result, place attachment is simultaneously intensified and destabilized, producing spatial grief as a collective response to the structural impossibility of continuity.

This aligns with Twigge-Molecey's (2014) definition of place attachment, where emotion and behavior are tied to a specific location. In this sense, the destruction of Sulukule is experienced as symbolic dislocation, resulting in the erasure of cultural practices and the loss of public presence. The residents mourn not only their homes, but also the community that sustained their identities and everyday survival. As García and Rúa (2017) argue, when the physical elements of space change, so do the symbolic ones. Urban renewal, through demolition and forced eviction, shattered these collective forms of social reproduction, leading to a profound sense of cultural and symbolic displacement.

To understand the broader forces shaping 'loss of belonging', it is necessary to consider the long history of discrimination and marginalization experienced by the Roma population. Stigma, fear, and exclusion produced invisible barriers that limited interaction with the wider city, reinforcing inward-orientated survival strategies rooted in shared space. Cultural expression was inseparable from spatial practices, making place central to the reproduction of identity and belonging. Although these practices were materially disrupted through displacement, they persist in memory, sustaining attachment even in conditions of uprooting.

This framework is further shaped by chronic poverty, aging without institutional support, and the destruction of informal networks, which together intensify

emotional isolation and vulnerability. The rupture of intergenerational ties and the sudden loss of familiar routines contribute to a profound sense of existential collapse, in which place identity is destabilized. Narratives associated with 'loss of belonging' are marked less by analytical reflection than by expressions of grief, fatigue, confusion, silence, revealing the psychological fragmentation that follows displacement. These emotional responses are not merely individual, but reflect the structural violence embedded in processes of urban transformation.

> *"And if we move from there and then come back again, we will live through the same things here again."* M, adult (Türkmen, 2010, 00:25:38)

The fear of recurrence is fed by these structural conditions which has left them with the normalization of urban inequalities. In this sense, the loss of belonging corresponds closely with the indirect dimensions of displacement related with the erosion of place-based identity and existential coherence (Davidson and Lees, 2010). Home is experienced not only as a material shelter, but as the foundation of dignity, continuity, and social recognition. Its destruction thus produces enduring psychological, cultural, and symbolic consequences that extend far beyond physical relocation.

6.2 Increasing Marginalization

> *"There is no place here for the poor. There is a place for the rich. A man with money is a man. The face of the one without money is always dark. Money is the beginning of everything. If we had money, would we be like this? Would we be crawling like this? They call us the poor ones. They threw us away like garbage."* F, adult (Osseiran, 2009, 00:00:15)

> *"I look at them, but I don't blame them. They live beautiful lives..good for them. Why shouldn't we live like that too? Our minds don't reach that point. They have two hands and two feet, we also have two hands and two feet. So what? If you have money, am I a thief? May God give you even more money. Let it be yours. Let all the houses in the world be yours."* F, adult (Osseiran, 2009, 00:05:52)

> *"You treat outsiders like your own children, and your own children like stepchildren. You wouldn't even do this to a stepchild. It's a shame."* M, old adult (Kentsel Dönüşümü, 2022, 00:04:40)

‘Increasing marginalization’ is narrated as a lived experience of disposability. Poverty is not merely economic deprivation, but a moral condition through which certain lives are rendered less worthy of protection. Residents describe being expected to accept degrading conditions without resistance. It shows once again how indirect displacement reinforces arguments that urban regeneration often deepens rather than alleviates socio-spatial inequalities (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016). Structural discrimination, linked to ethnicity, age, and territorial stigma, is also shown to restrict access to stable employment and reinforces job insecurity:

> *“There is no work. Not that there is no work, there is no job. With God’s permission, whatever job I take on, I suceed. But there is no job.”* M, adult (Türkmen, 2010, 00:17:51)

> *“As Roma, there aren’t proper employers for us. And because of our age, they don’t take us, municipality jobs, cleaning jobs, they say ‘You’re too old, you can’t come’. So what am I supposed to eat? Stones? Am I supposed to eat stones?”* M, old adult (Kentsel Dönüşümü, 2022, 00:01:52)

Another aggravating factor in their marginalization is that chronic poverty reshapes family structures and life chances, which often forces children into adult responsibilities as economic survival takes precedence over formal education. These dynamics reflect displacement as a long-term restructuring of social reproduction, rather than a singular housing event. The testimonies below are from Roma teenagers, which account for a standard reality in most Sulukuleans families.

> “*He lives in our apartment building. He dropped out of school. Now he is working*” M, teenage (Sabancı Vakfı, 2019, 00:00:26)

> “*There are many people who drop out of school. I mean, there are even some who would be in 8th grade and are already married.*” F, teenage (Sabancı Vakfı, 2019, 00:00:28)

> “*I got a friend who started belly dancing at a very young age. She started belly dancing when she was about 13 years old. And then she was fed up and she said ‘I am going to kill myself’. And then the girl swallowed a bunch of pills. Her mother called us. We all rushed to the hospital at midnight. One month after she left the hospital, she got married. Just for the sake of not doing this job. Just to get away from her family. Now she’s got two kids or something*.” F, teenage (Okyay, 2016, 00:03:50)

Link to job insecurity and precarious family structures, is emotional exhaustion. It emerges as a key affective outcome of prolonged struggle, illustrating how marginalization is lived through fatigue, frustration, and diminished horizons. Romani identity is repeatedly racialized and stigmatized, positioning racism as a central mechanism of injustice. Intersectional forms of marginalization are particularly evident in the experiences of Romani women, for whom gender and ethnicity compound vulnerability and social exclusion.

When it comes to the relocation sites and the new social houses, alienation emerges:

> *"But after I left there, I couldn't find a proper neighbor in Taşoluk. If I was hungry, there was no neighbor I could go to and talk to. I lived there for two years. I saw that it wouldn't work. Debts piled up. I sold my share. I pay 500 lira rent. Electricity, water… I can't even pay the rent properly."* F, adult (Osseiran, 2012, 00:06:03)

> *"They gave me this house. Yes, the houses look nice, but it doesn't end there. There are roads. Most importantly, there is transportation. […] We already work for minimum wage. We can't pay the installments of these houses."* M, adult (Osseiran, 2016, 00:04:38)

> *"They gave us a shuttle service, but look how many people missed it. People fall asleep from exhaustion. They can't organize themselves. Life here is very hard. Very hard. Let's find a one-room place to rent, however it is, and leave here. Just leave. Wherever we go, let's go. I don't want anything else. I don't want to live here. I couldn't love this place. I couldn't get used to it."* M, adult (Türkmen, 2010, 00:20:12)

Adjustment to new, imposed housing environments is described as deeply alienating. Residents report feelings of alienation and isolation in spatial settings that clash with former lifestyles and social practices. These environments disrupt established forms of belonging while producing new forms of territorial stigmatization. At the same time, narratives also reveal moments of resistance and political consciousness, as residents reflect critically on their displacement and its underlying power structures. These moments of resistance can be contested as forms of agency.

> *"There is nowhere in Istanbul where land costs 500 lira per square meter. Not in Feriköy, not anywhere. The state sells it for 500 dollars, buys it here for 500 lira.*

> *That's impossible. If we have property rights, we will not give it. This is rent. A promise was made to someone, a down payment was given. Everyone knows this. First they deceived these poor people by saying they would build furnished apartments with garages and pools. […] Very few of us are left. What will happen will happen. If we are citizens, if we have property rights, we won't give it or sell it. They can only expropriate it, and there is no expropriation. I don't think they will expropriate anymore. Is it possible for land here to be worth 500 lira per square meter? It's shameful. At least something close to a fair value. But we have no power, we are forced to sell, forced to give. They take it from us for 500 and sell it for 6,000 or 10,000. That's unacceptable."* M, old adult (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:15:03)[1]

> *"Let them try this in Gazi neighborhood. They wouldn't even dare to demolish there, they can't even enter there normally. But when it comes to us, whatever they say, our people say 'okay.' Like sacrificial sheep, everyone accepted everything. If we weren't poor, they couldn't play with us like this. Try declaring urban transformation in Bakırköy. Or Caddebostan. Or let them do it in Gazi."* M, adult (Türkmen, 2010, 00:08:23)

The role of the state is central to these processes. Regeneration projects are widely perceived as profit-oriented driven, with compensatory measures framed as insincere and manipulative. Performative gestures of participation are described as facades that mask authoritarian and repressive practices aimed at dismantling hope, pressuring acceptance, and weakening emotional or support networks within the community. Fear of retaliation or further loss discourages open resistance, leading some residents to question their own or others' passivity rather than holding the true agents of displacement accountable. For some, there is the community's passive acceptance of the demolition as the resistance efforts are not considered enough in comparison with other communities. Similarly with the Romani identity, this shows the complex and contradicting views within the same community.

[1] All figures cited in this testimony reflect nominal Turkish Lira values at the time of the recording. Given subsequent currency devaluation, nominal conversions to foreign currencies have been omitted to avoid misrepresentation.

6.2.1 Socio-genesis of Increasing Marginalization

The socio-genesis of increasing marginalization is shaped by neoliberal urban governance and racialized poverty, which together produce conditions of disposability, endurance, and constrained agency. The testimonies reveal a form of practical knowledge developed through repeated encounters with institutional neglect, performative inclusion, and implicit coercion. This knowledge is rooted in the normalization of insecurity, where chronic poverty, precarious employment, and territorial stigmatization become "taken for granted" conditions of everyday life.

Urban regeneration intensifies these processes by rescaling exclusion from economic marginality to moral and political judgment, positioning residents as passive subjects or as responsible for their own marginalization. As a result, marginalization becomes embodied through limited horizons, restricted opportunities, emotional exhaustion, and a growing political consciousness shaped by cumulative experiences of injustice.

Despite variations in levels of engagement, residents' narratives consistently express attempts to reframe their experiences through acts of resistance. This framework is characterized by a structural interpretation of displacement and a politicized awareness of urban injustice, in which Sulukule's transformation is understood not as an isolated tragedy but as part of broader systems of class-based, ethnic, and generational exclusion. These accounts often rely on metaphor, irony, and sarcasm, as illustrated by the testimony below, signaling both critical distance and enduring resilience in the face of dispossession.

> *"Are they doing this for the benefit of the country? Something is going on, but we don't know what. Yes, 'Capital of Culture.' What will change? Maybe the municipality or the state did this for its own interests. They say it's for future generations, but they have no right to crush people who are already victims. They have no right to make people suffer."* (Türkmen, 2010, 00:25:39)

As Marcuse and Van Kempen (2000) argue, the distribution of power in urban governance is shaped less by geography than by decision-making processes, with space serving as the site where social inequalities are implemented. In this sense, discussions of displacement also highlight the erosion of the right to create place under conditions of urban transformation (Janoschka and Sequera, 2016; Mah,

2023). In Sulukule, this right was already severely constrained due to longstanding exclusion and enclosure. Urban regeneration further diminished residents' spatial agency, reducing their capacity to shape their environment to the point of near nonexistence. Residents are aware of this loss and respond through varied forms of critique, adaptation, and resistance.

Together, the two major themes illustrate how indirect displacement operates through structural forces, eroding belonging while deepening socio-spatial inequalities. In the Sulukule case, resistance, mourning, and reinterpretation become strategies of everyday survival. The next chapter builds on these insights to conclude the research and discuss alternative scenarios for human development opportunities for the Roma, focusing on bottom-up approaches and the reframing of informality.

7 CONCLUSION

This study examined systematic urban inequalities in Istanbul through the case of Sulukule, exploring how displacees perceive the transformation of urban space and what structures of social injustice are revealed through indirect displacement. As gentrification remains one of the primary drivers of social and urban transformation in Istanbul, displacement as its primary consequence offers a phenomenological lens through which to understand how city change is lived from below. The analysis of secondary audiovisual data allowed this study to move beyond the symbolic and emotional dimensions of displacement, reaching toward the historical and social structures that systematically prevent human development from reaching certain urban communities.

The theoretical framework was built to map more than displacement, it aimed at discussing the importance of approaching this phenomenon from a Global South perspective and through the use of visual data. Both choices reflect a commitment to contextual analysis and to qualitative depth that audiovisual material makes possible if compared to textual analysis. Phenomenological analysis, in particular, gives voice to subjective experiences of indirect displacement, capturing a complexity that can and should inform more humane and effective urban policies.

The Documentary Method, developed by Ralf Bohnsack, provided the methodological foundation for this, as an approach designed to analyse visual data rigorously and without imposing external interpretive frameworks. Its application here to secondary audiovisual data on indirect displacement offered a grounded and analytically precise observation of social injustice and broader urban dynamics. The contextual and material chapters then situated the method within the broader history of Sulukule and the lived experiences of its former residents, providing the necessary ground for the analysis.

The findings demonstrated that displacement is lived not merely as physical relocation, but as an ongoing condition marked by loss of belonging and increasing marginalization. These processes are rooted in distinct socio-genetic conditions that shape how residents perceive, narrate, and endure urban transformation, operating simultaneously across cultural, political, economic, and emotional dimensions. This complexity became visible through the identification of different orientation patterns among residents, illustrating how indirect displacement fragments everyday life, erodes social recognition, and restructures subjectivities, while also giving rise to forms of resilience and agency. In this sense, displacement emerges not only as a material outcome of urban policy but as a deeply experiential process that reorganizes memory, identity, and social relations.

The case study of Sulukule reveals how these dynamics converge into a condition of ongoing vulnerability for the Roma community. The destruction of affective homes produced not only spatial grief and psychological harm but the erasure of collective memory and the collapse of vital support networks. Resettlement in Taşoluk compounded this harm through geographical isolation, economic unsustainability, and deep cultural incompatibility. What emerges from the findings is not a story of urban renewal but of what can be termed a failed gentrification, in which state participation functioned as staged benevolence, displacing a historically marginalized community without attracting the affluent residents it promised, and leaving behind a neighbourhood marked by new forms of stigmatization.

By centering residents' lived experiences, this research showed how urban transformation in Sulukule exposed deeper structures of social injustice embedded in contemporary planning practices. Displacement functioned as an analytical lens through which systemic inequality, racialized exclusion, and governance failures

became visible. As a case situated in the Global South, Sulukule contributes empirically and conceptually to comparative debates on indirect displacement, demonstrating how neoliberal urban regeneration intensifies vulnerability while simultaneously silencing historically marginalized communities.

These findings call for a fundamental rethinking of urban transformation as a process grounded in justice, memory, and dignity. When communities are provided with meaningful access to basic services, participatory governance, and recognition of cultural identity, the long-term harms of displacement can be mitigated. Beyond material and institutional measures, this study highlights the importance of cultural and memory-based interventions. This points toward the need for interventions that operate not only at the material and institutional level but at the level of memory, identity, and cultural continuity. Support for local cultural production, participatory education, and community leadership may enable displaced residents to reclaim authorship over their own narratives and to imagine alternative urban futures.

7.1 Reflections and recommendations

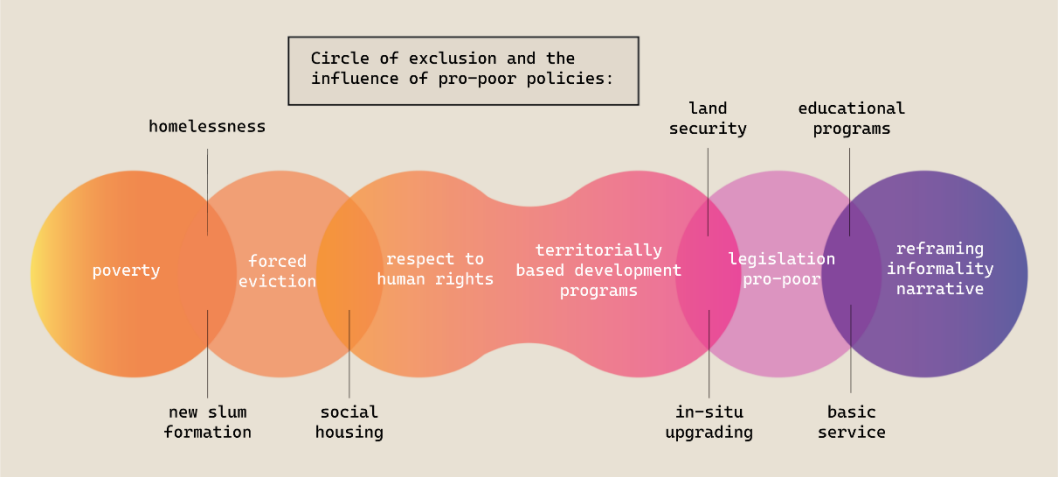
Translating the findings into concrete alternatives requires engaging seriously with the structural conditions that produced displacement in the first place and with the communities who continue to live its consequences. Revisiting Sulukule demonstrates that, while the physical and symbolic landscape has been radically transformed, memory and attachment to place persist strongly within the collective consciousness of former residents. Displacement, as revealed through audiovisual narratives, is experienced not only as the loss of housing, but as the erosion of cultural continuity, emotional belonging, and social recognition. This persistent longing for roots underscores the need for planning and housing strategies that move beyond physical redevelopment and instead engage with the social, cultural, and emotional dimensions of urban life.

If marginalization operates as a structural and deeply embedded condition, as the findings confirm, then responses to displacement must go beyond policy fixes and engage with the underlying logics of exclusion that produce it. Emerging practices such as community-managed financial initiatives, participatory planning, and bottom-up regeneration strategies offer alternative pathways for addressing urban injustice. Remembering collective histories and creating spaces for communal

gathering, such as community centers or museums, constitute crucial first steps toward social and economic reconstitution.

More broadly, empowerment strategies for urban poor communities include strengthening civil society alliances, promoting pro-poor legislation, implementing socially oriented land-use regulations, and developing territorially based development programs. Civil society involvement in this reframing model can have a direct impact on job insecurity, as diminishing stigma towards Romani may consequently raise their employability. Other key interventions include international treaties to protect informal dwellers, investments in affordable and social housing, securing land tenure, improving access to basic services, and providing educational and training opportunities (Marcuse and Van Kempen, 2000; Roberts and Okanya, 2022). As García and Rua (2017) argue, combating displacement also requires sustained attention to housing affordability and the preservation of low-cost, culturally relevant services. The Sulukule experience underscores the urgency of recognizing displaced communities as right-bearing subjects with the capacity and legitimacy to shape their own urban futures.

Figure 7.1 Circle of housing exclusion and the influence of pro-poor policies.



Source: Silva, Isabela (2025).

Barriers to such empowerment, however, remain significant. Shand (2017) identifies key obstacles to financial inclusion, including urban management frameworks that assume low-income communities lack the capacity for self-driven development, limited governmental resources that reinforce exclusionary practices, and the alienation of urban poor communities from governance processes due to

historical injustices. Renz (2022) similarly emphasizes mistrust, communication barriers, and time constraints as major impediments to democratic participation. These dynamics help explain why many state-led development programs fail to adequately support displaced communities such as those from Sulukule. In this regard, a notion of historical debt emerges, referring to long-standing exclusion from rights, resources, and recognition that connects the Sulukule case to comparable experiences of dispossession among Afro-Brazilian communities in *favelas* or Indigenous populations in protected territories across the Global South.

In this context, reframing displaced communities' narratives becomes not only an urban planning concern but a broader societal task. Enabling self-representation through memory-preservation practices, such as a Sulukule Museum, can increase visibility, affirm cultural identity, and support collective healing, allowing erased histories to be reactivated as sources of collective strength. At the same time, community-managed financial mechanisms, including Urban Poor Funds (UPFs) and models such as the Urban Poor Fund International, offer practical tools for supporting housing and infrastructure improvements under terms defined by communities themselves.

For policy frameworks to support such alternatives, three core elements must be embraced (Lightfoot, 2013). The first is autonomy, as residents must have genuine choices and control over their development options, without which systems risk becoming uniform and oppressive. The second is solidarity, as community cohesion and mutual support strengthen collective capacity to improve living environments and negotiate with external actors. The third is responsibility toward the future, understood as a shared commitment to leaving a positive legacy for coming generations through socially just and sustainable urban transformations.

Community-managed finance, defined by Shand (2017) as "*monetary resources created and controlled collectively by low-income households to improve housing and access to services*", represents one such strategy by shifting control and decision-making to the community level and enabling locally appropriate solutions. Mechanisms such as UPFs, including models developed by Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), demonstrate how community-controlled financial systems can support housing and infrastructure improvements while maintaining autonomy

from top-down governance structures. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts like Sulukule, where trust in state institutions has been deeply eroded.

Table 7.2 Types of community-managed finance available at the local level.

Type	Example	Source of funding	Scale
Individual/ household finance	Household savings	Saved earnings accumulated over time within household	Micro — limited to the household members and family
	Rotating savings and credit associations	Set contributions by members over a fixed period of time	Small with circa 10–15 members
	Accumulating savings and credit associations	Variable contributions by individual members	Small savings groups of circa 30 people that can be federated to settlement or city level
Group-based finance	Community savings	Collective savings accumulated over time from individual community members	Small groups within defined neighbourhoods with membership of circa 30
	Urban Poor Fund	Aggregate of community savings with input from state and external donor funds	Operating at city and national scales
Aligned/devolved	Community/city development funds	International donor and government funds blended with community savings for city development	Large — operating at city scale and as part of a national network
	State funding devolved to local level	Public funds from city and national government, devolved with local decision making and delivery (see CODI — Box 2)	Large-scale public resources
	Urban Poor Fund International	International governmental and non-government donors	International scale with resources channelled to national federations of the poor

Source: Shand (2017).

Building on these insights, urban policy in Turkey must prioritize effective and meaningful community participation. Rather than merely consulting communities, policies should empower them to actively shape the projects that affect their lives. Slum upgrading should be prioritized over relocation, and strong regulations should be established to prevent forced evictions (UN-Habitat, 2014). Ensuring housing affordability, providing social housing adapted to local needs, and centering lived experiences in planning processes are essential. Transparency, detailed data collection, and sensitivity to the dynamics of Turkey's real estate market and social fabric are also key to designing urban policies that are both just and effective.

Applied to Sulukule, this framework suggests that identifying displaced residents through informal networks could form the basis of a renewed support structure capable of mobilizing shared financial resources, advocating for housing rights, and launching community-driven projects even in the absence of formal state support. In sum, the Sulukule experience demonstrates the urgent need to empower

displaced communities as autonomous agents, rather than passive recipients of top-down planning. Through community-managed finance, solidarity-based networks, and inclusive memory-preservation strategies, more just and sustainable pathways toward social and spatial justice can be envisioned within contemporary urban contexts.

7.2 Challenges encountered

This study acknowledges certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The focus on a single neighbourhood and a relatively limited sample of audiovisual material may constrain broader generalization, as the specificities of Sulukule's historical, cultural, and political context are not necessarily replicable across other urban settings. Nevertheless, the methodological framework developed here offers a valuable foundation for future comparative research, and the analytical categories produced may carry conceptual transferability beyond this single case.

The use of secondary audiovisual data introduces additional constraints that are important to acknowledge. Unlike primary data collection, this approach does not allow the researcher to control the framing of questions, the selection of participants, or the conditions under which testimonies were recorded. The materials analysed were produced with purposes that do not always align directly with social science research as several of the films engage primarily with documentary denunciation of social injustice, which, while analytically valuable, also means that certain dimensions of residents' experiences may have been foregrounded at the expense of others. This does not undermine the validity of the analysis, but it does call for interpretive caution and transparency about the nature of the data.

A further limitation concerns the researcher's relationship with the field and to the urban transformation process itself. As someone who is not Turkish and was not present in Turkey during the period in which Sulukule's demolition took place, direct observation of the transformation process was not possible. The neighbourhood was therefore accessed primarily as it has been represented and mediated by others (e.g., through documentary films, academic literature, and archival materials) rather than through first hand witnessing of the events under

study. It should be noted, however, that the research did visit the site as it currently stands and made contact with some former residents, which provided a degree of grounded familiarity with the spatial and social realities of the area.

Furthermore, the temporal distance between the production of the audiovisual materials and the moment of analysis also introduces a degree of uncertainty, as the living conditions and testimonies captured may not fully reflect the current situation of former residents. Future research would benefit from combining secondary audiovisual analysis with primary fieldwork, allowing for a more dynamic and updated engagement with the community's ongoing experience of displacement.

7.3 Theoretical contributions

Numerous scholars have advanced the understanding of indirect displacement as a process that operates beyond physical relocation, encompassing symbolic, cultural, and socio-spatial dimensions (Atkinson, 2015; Davidson and Lees, 2010; Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020; Di Masso et al., 2022). This body of work has established that displacement reshapes identity, erodes place attachment, and deepens existing inequalities, particularly among historically marginalized communities. Alongside this, the application of visual and audiovisual methods to urban research has grown as a means of accessing subjective and affective dimensions of urban experience, though their use in displacement studies remains limited and methodologically underexplored. The Documentary Method, developed by Ralf Bohnsack, has been widely applied to qualitative social research but has rarely been mobilized in the specific context of urban displacement.

This study enriches and contributes to the current discussion of indirect displacement in three interconnected ways. First, it demonstrates that indirect displacement in Sulukule is not reducible to a single mechanism but operates simultaneously across cultural, emotional, political, and economic dimensions, producing two interrelated orientation frameworks (i.e., loss of belonging and increasing marginalization) that are rooted in distinct socio-genetic conditions. By revealing how these processes are lived, narrated, and resisted at the level of everyday experience, this study adds empirical depth to existing typologies of indirect displacement and extends their analytical reach to a Global South context where racialized poverty and neoliberal urban governance converge.

Second, this research advances the methodological repertoire available to displacement scholars by applying Bohnsack's Documentary Method to secondary audiovisual testimonies, demonstrating its capacity to uncover conjunctive and atheoretical knowledge embedded in mediated accounts of dispossession. This methodological adaptation opens new possibilities for studying urban phenomena where direct ethnographic access is constrained by temporal or geographical distance, and where communities have been extensively documented by others but rarely analyzed through rigorous qualitative frameworks.

Third, by centering the concept of failed gentrification, a process in which state-led displacement occurred without attracting the affluent replacement population it promised, this study challenges dominant analytical frameworks and invites a reorientation of displacement research away from gentrification as its primary theoretical anchor, toward a broader understanding of urban transformation as a mechanism of structural injustice that operates independently of market success. Similarly, while studying the aftermath of urban regeneration-led displacement in the Yazıcık neighbourhood of Gaziantep, Ayık (2022) found no meaningful economic divergence between incoming residents and those who had been displaced, with both groups sharing comparable income profiles. This convergence suggests that the displacement of communities like Sulukule's Roma cannot be fully explained by the logic of gentrification, and that the concept of indirect displacement offers a more analytically precise lens for capturing the structural injustices at work, drived not by the arrival of wealth, but by the exercise of power over historically marginalized communities.

7.4 Future research

Future research could build on this study in several directions. Most immediately, the methodological framework developed here invites replication in other urban contexts where indirect displacement and racialized exclusion intersect, particularly within the Global South. Comparative studies examining similar processes in cities undergoing neoliberal urban regeneration, whether in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, or other regions of the Middle East, could test the analytical categories developed here and assess their broader conceptual reach. Such comparisons would not only deepen the understanding of displacement as a global urban phenomenon

but also illuminate how local political histories and cultural specificities shape the way marginalization is lived and resisted.

Further investigation into the long-term adaptation strategies of displaced communities also represents a significant gap in the existing literature. While this study focused primarily on the experience of loss and exclusion, future research could center the forms of resilience and community reorganization that emerge in the aftermath of displacement, including empirical evaluation of memory-based initiatives and their role in supporting collective recovery. New primary data, including interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and participatory methods conducted directly with former Sulukule residents, would allow for a more updated and dynamic engagement with the community's current situation. Finally, the findings of this study could be directly applied to the evaluation and reform of urban policies, offering concrete criteria for assessing whether regeneration projects genuinely align with human development principles. Integrating displaced communities as active participants in the design of such evaluations would be a meaningful step toward the more just and dignified urban futures this research has sought to imagine.

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A
APPENDIX

Table A.1 Codebook.

Topic	Description	Example
Affective housing	Emphasizes the deep emotional connection to home. Modest material conditions are framed as rich in social ties and cultural life, presenting a counter-narrative to dominant notions of value and wealth.	"In our old neighborhood we had a small one-room house, but we were peaceful and happy there. We could go wherever we wanted, even on foot if we wished." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:20:27)
Memory of joy	Grief the loss of a vibrant everyday life filled with music and dance. These memories underscore the vitality and meaning once rooted in Sulukule's streets and homes.	"The old state of this place was very beautiful. Europeans like you used to come here to have fun. Back then we were dancers here. This place was very beautiful. Men came here from America, Germany, from every country to have fun. Women came here too. From foreigners to Turks and Kurds, everyone came. They used to enjoy themselves here. We were the old dancers of this place." (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:07:09)
Inward-facing shelter	Refers to semi-private communal spaces, such as cafés, and courtyards, that provided protection and cultural continuity within the neighborhood.	"There's no one coming and going to the coffeehouse now. Only our own people come all day, and we just tell each other about our problems." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:08:09)
Musical identity	Proud declaration of Romani long-standing identity and culture.	"Now we are musicians. It starts from the doorstep — our mothers and fathers were all involved in music, so we came like this. It has continued like this until today. I play the violin. My mother plays the darbuka. My father plays the oud. My brother plays the violin. My sister plays the violin. My aunt's son plays the violin. One of her sons plays the keyboard, one plays the oud. So as a family we've carried this on. It's been going on for centuries. This is our tradition." (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:03:00)
Community rupture	Highlights the breakdown of intergenerational proximity, kinship, and daily interactions. Displacement is shown not only as a spatial loss but also a social and emotional disconnection from others.	"In Sultan Mahalle, if you told me to name my closest five friends, Selahattin would be one of them. But now they've thrown us into different worlds, my brother. Was it like this before, Selat? The castle was ours, the gardens were ours, everywhere was ours." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:17:46)
Generational space	Asserts long-term rootedness through stories of families who lived their entire lives in Sulukule. These narratives legitimize the community's historical belonging.	"Our grandfathers shed their blood for these lands. We live on these lands thanks to them." (Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü, 2022)
Generational divergence	Illustrates younger resident's attemps to break free from familial or cultural constraints in pursuit of autonomy or broader opportunities.	"At first there are family problems. Like, you're a girl, you're supposed to study. They say, what's the point of such things? But they didn't understand us back then." (Okyay, 2016, 00:01:57)

Topic	Description	Example
Ethnic ambivalence	Reveals a complex relationship with Romani identity, sometimes it is celebrated, other times, silenced or rejected.	"So what, are we Roma? So what if I'm Roma? Thank God I'm Muslim. First I'm Muslim, then I'm Roma. When I was born from my mother, was I born labeled as Roma?" (Osseiran, 2009, 00:04:01)
Culture erasure	Denounces how cultural practices were delegitimized or criminalized. Residents express anger over losing both physical spaces and social recognition for their heritage.	"Now both the place we call our village, Sulukule, and the place we call our city, Sulukule, are being destroyed. People are separated from their culture, their graves, their land, their traditions, everything, and sent elsewhere. So this Roma culture will not remain. Just like our language, Roma culture will also disappear." (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:22:09)
Mutual help	Celebrates the community's close ties and the informal networks of solidarity that sustained daily life, especially in the face of poverty and exclusion.	"There used to be shops here. Sweaters, shirts, coats, perfumes, watches. People would come and take things without paying. They'd go to work, bring back what they sold, and return what they couldn't sell. There was such a culture here. You didn't need capital. People would say, 'My children are hungry until noon, after noon they're fine.' Because you go to work in the morning, come back at noon, and feed your kids." (Heubrandtner, 2010, 00:01:04)
Staging benevolence	Performative gestures by the state that frame urban interventions as charitable or inclusive, while masking coercive or exclusionary outcomes. These acts create a façade of participation without enabling meaningful influence from affected communities.	(visual)  (Türkmen, 2010, 00:05:58)
Coercion	The use of authoritarian and repressive practices to dismantle hope, pressure acceptance, and disrupt emotional or support networks within the community.	"They came three or four times to demolish. They said okay, we won't demolish. Then at six in the morning they came again. This place hurt them. But for us this place is light. Yet we had to watch it being destroyed." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:04:18)

Topic	Description	Example
Institutional bias	The presence of structural discrimination or implicit aversion by state institutions toward marginalized groups, especially the Romani community.	"They hate the poor. They don't like us because we are poor. Because we are Roma. They discriminate against us because we are Roma." (Osseiran, 2009, 00:00:40)
Questioning development	Narratives that challenge the language and legitimacy of urban regeneration, exposing how terms like "renewal" often serve as euphemisms for displacement and erasure.	"Is it for the country's benefit? Something is going on but we don't know. Yes, culture capital. What will change? Maybe the municipality did it for state interests, for future generations, but they don't have the right to oppress victims. They don't have the right to make people suffer." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:25:39)
Definition	Definition of an urban problem without making use of technical vocabulary.	"Urban transformation sounded like a meaningless word. But actually our houses were going to be demolished and taken from us and given to others. This is what we lived through." (Erol and Madra, 2023, 00:00:37)
Abandonment	Expressions of despair that emphasize the withdrawal of institutional support and care, forcing individuals into precarious self-reliance.	"I am an Istanbul girl. Isn't there a good Istanbul for me?" (Biçen, 2009, 00:17:57)
Critical awareness	Demonstrations of political consciousness among community members who recognize the profit-driven motives behind the regeneration project and reject compensatory gestures as not sincere and manipulative.	(visual)  (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:15:18)
Participatory resistance	Instances where residents confront authority directly, assert their presence in public discourse, or disrupt official processes as acts of resistance and political agency.	(visual)  (Türkmen, 2010, 00:06:11)

Topic	Description	Example
Internalized blame	Expresses disappointment in the perceived inaction of the community. Frustration is redirected inward, as residents question their own or others' passivity, rather than the true agents of displacement.	"Let them do it in Gazi neighborhood. They can't even normally enter there. Whatever they told us, our people accepted it, like sacrificial sheep." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:08:23)
Precarious silence	Reflects fear of retaliation or further loss. Silence becomes a survival strategy in a context where speaking out may bring more harm than good.	"S11: They might understand wrongly … S8: What, father? S11: They (the state) might understand your words in a wrong way and declare you guilty." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:18:35)
Lost dreams	Articulates the collapse of personal and collective aspirations. Displacement is experienced as not only a spatial rupture but also as the end of long-held hopes.	"I am 55 years old. I've never gone to the sea, you know? I don't know the sea. I see it on TV. I look at how people dress and how the waves are. It looks beautiful. I like it. I never went as a child, never went as a young woman. Now I'm old, it's already too late." (Osseiran, 2009, 00:05:30)
Fear of recurrence	Presents the deep and chronic sense of insecurity. After experiencing displacement, people lose trust in the permanence of housing, place, and rights.	"This will come wherever you go, my uncle said. These demolitions will come, these slum neighborhoods will disappear. All of Istanbul will be renewed. Maybe they won't demolish, they'll restore. But the state will still disturb people. It's a big investment project." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:25:38)
Confusion	Reveals the feeling of being trapped in uncertainty, with limited information, options, or control. This emotional state impedes agency and decision-making.	"We have to endure a bit. But we're also thinking of selling. If I can't pay for three months, they cancel it through legal enforcement. I don't even have transfer rights. Then I'm finished. My only fear is that: either sell and leave or stay and endure. There's no other option." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:26:31)
Loss of belonging	A profound affective detachment from place. (Assertion of historical presence and rootedness. The full cycle of life lived in that place. Generational narratives of space.)	"My grandmother got married and lived in this house. If she were alive, she would be 102. One woman gets married and leaves as a bride, another gets married and leaves, then my father stays. My father gets married here, I am born here. Four daugthers are born here. I got married here. I had children here. I have never lived in another house, you know? I was born, I grew up, I got old here. My husband died in this house. My father died in this house. I was born, I married, I aged." (Biçen, 2009, 00:13:47)

Topic	Description	Example
Housing right	Highlights the failure of the state to ensure secure housing as a fundamental right. Emphasizes that housing is not a favor or privilege, but a right.	"I have a human right. I am a human being. How can you demolish this? This place has a title deed. I am a human being. I am not a mushroom that grew out of the ground. Give me a house. Give me a right. This person lives here. Even if I am not the owner, even if I am only a tenant, isn't that so, my child? Shouldn't you demand a right for me?" (Biçen, 2009, 00:07:34)
Human right	Expresses a demand for equal and human treatment, underscoring the right to dignity.	"You are throwing me out onto the street. Is there such a thing as a human right? Is this what a human right is? Aren't we human? A human is a human. What is done to a human being?" (Osseiran, 2009, 00:03:44)
Children right	Critique of urban regeneration projects that fail to provide adequate spaces and opportunities for children. Urban regeneration as a violation of the future, of innocence, and of state's moral obligations.	"We are six siblings. Kadir is my older brother, my eldest brother is Çato. Let me also include my late father. My father, my sister, my older sister, my sister on my father's side, my sister here… There is no help from any of them. Before my father died, there was a small shop in front of the coffeehouse. We were all staying there. Now my father has died too. The shop was demolished. We were left on the streets. So I had to come here. Are we supposed to stay on the streets? My mother also died. Before she died, my mother had a small house in the neighborhood, like a cave. That was also demolished. She died there too. Everything is ruined. Our houses are ruined. They are demolished. Where will we go? What will we do? What job will we do? I think this place will be completely flattened. Something will happen to this neighborhood now. Whatever it will be." (Erol and Madra, 2023)
Housing injustice	Reflects emotional and symbolic dimensions of loss. The destruction of homes also means the erasure of memory, identity, and intergenerational belonging. It can also be described as spatial grief.	"My child, let's see what will happen now. My situation is pitiful. I am on the streets. I am ruined." (Biçen, 2009, 00:17:15)
Class injustice	Reveals a painful awareness of being made disposable due to poverty. The narratives highlight how economic systems privilege the wealthy while marginalizing and invisibilizing the poor.	"There is no place for the poor here. There is for the rich. A man is someone who has money. The one who has no money always has a dark face. Money is the beginning of everything, money. If we had money, would we be like this? Would we crawl like this? They say 'the poor belong,' but they were throwing us in the trash." (Osseiran, 2009, 00:00:15)

Topic	Description	Example
Ethnic discrimination	Points to the persistent stigmatization and racial exclusion faced by the Romani community, framing racism as a central mechanism of injustice.	"Brother, as a Roma you have no prestige. They already look down on us. You're already seen as inferior. Because you're Roma, they look down on you. They say, 'This one is not a real man.' Why aren't we real men? Why aren't we? Don't we know how to say 'madam,' 'sir'? Don't we know? I go to ask something. What should I say? 'Madam'? Look, I'm not saying 'young lady.' I say, 'dear aunt, I'm going here. Where is this place? Show me,' I say. There are good ones. They say, 'Come, aunt,' and they help. May God bless them. But some look at you like this. I'm going to the prison. Look now at what kind of coat I'm wearing. A guy passes by with his bag. I said, 'Son, look at me.' He said, 'Go on.' I don't have money. What money? Do I owe you money? God damn you, I said, something like that. I said, 'What money? I'm just asking for directions.' So he thought I was a beggar or a thief. But I don't even look like a thief." (Osseiran, 2009, 00:06:15)
Cultural right	Advocates for the right to express, protect, and continue cultural identity.	"We also expect our state leaders to protect this culture, um, to present this culture as a better example, to invest more in education for this culture, because why, you ask? We, our people, have a golden bracelet in our hands. We make music." (Mundi Romani, 2016, 00:21:23)
Moral anger	Voices of resentment toward newcomers who benefit from a regeneration process built on others' suffering. This includes a longing for justice, and that those in power should feel the pain that they imposed on others.	"If the same thing happened to them, what would he do? Let them be like me." (Osseiran, 2009, 00:03:32)
Labor exclusion	Describes how spatial stigma and social prejudice restrict access to employement, particularly affecting Roma individuals.	"As Romans, we don't really have proper employers either. And because of our age, you know, the municipality or cleaning jobs won't take us. They say, 'You're too old, you can't come.' So what am I going to eat? Am I going to eat stones?" (Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü, 2022, 00:01:52)
Gendered inequality	Highlights intersectional forms of marginalization, where being both Roma and a woman deepens social exclusion and vulnerability.	"And being a woman, you're especially at a disadvantage in everything. It's the same with dance. We were born in Sulukule. We grew up right inside it. The place where the luxury residences are now is actually where we were born and lived. I think the demolition started in 2008, if I remember correctly. When the demolition started, people struggled a lot. We struggled a lot too. We were there before Gezi was demolished as well. When the demolition decision was taken, we were there too. We were all

Topic	Description	Example
		there. If you grow up in this neighborhood, and especially if you're a woman, there's this idea that women should stay at home, do housework, and not do much else." (Okyay, 2016, 00:00:30)
Feminine agency	Captures women's resistance to gendered restrictions, both within their own community and society, asserting their right to ambition, movement, and voice.	"I could have been like many girls in this neighborhood, or I don't know, I could have gotten married at a young age and left, but I didn't want to choose that. I mean, that's not me. Dance is my salvation. I don't want to be like other people." (Okyay, 2016, 00:05:17)
Dehumanization	Reflects the emotional toll of being treated without dignity. Narratives describe how displacees were expected to accept degrading treatment without protest, exposing the deep lack of respect and recognition they face.	"I was supposed to load my belongings into this truck. Put my children in and leave. They said they would drop me off wherever I wanted in İzmit. That's what made me angry. After that I neither went again when they said 'come in the evening, the truck is ready' nor did I deal with it anymore. Living among these ruins… And they say they'll take me to İzmit. To any district of İzmit, anywhere they feel like dropping me off. They even say, 'If you want, we can drop you in Adana.' So I'm supposed to go with that truck. Where am I going with this inhumane truck, for God's sake? Okay? İzmit, for example, had one advantage for me. It was important for me in terms of work—I was going there to work—and I could also bring my child here. At least it was close to Şişli Etfal, you could get on [transport] and come on certain days. So it's a strange situation like that. Get on the truck and go. What, man? Where am I going, brother? We've given 25 years of our lives to this neighborhood. The children know us. Even my little babies go to school here." (Biçen, 2009, 00:09:39)
Health issues	Describes the physical and psychological toll of housing insecurity and displacement. Illnesses such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, and chronic conditions are linked to emotional distress and instability.	"S1: I can't sleep at night anymore. S8: The state should let my Selahattin sleep peacefully. The poor man can't sleep at nights. Look, he's turned pale and yellow." (Türkmen, 2010, 00:15:26)
Homelessness	Captures feelings of despair and symbolic helplessness. Homelessness is not only material but emotional. It is marked by fear, shame, and at times, the erasure of home is thought to result in death.	"We are on the streets. I have nowhere to sleep. I'm looking for a place to sleep. Our house was demolished. I am from Sulukule. My house was demolished. I still haven't been given a house in its place. I ended up on the streets. I have no home, no place to stay. I'm in a very desperate situation. What will happen to me? Every day I am in tears. I just want a house over my head. I'm definitely calling out to you. I don't have a home

Topic	Description	Example
		over my head. I want a house. I am left in the middle, with nothing. Every day I am in tears. Yes, our house was demolished. Our houses were demolished. We are in the middle of the streets. You didn't give us a house in place of our home. I want a house. I am on the streets. I beg for a house. I ask you for a house. Everyone knows us, you know, people from 7 to 70 know us. The neighborhood, our people, our community. My child, let's see what will happen now. My situation is pitiful too. I am on the streets. I am ruined." (Biçen, 2009, 00:15:33)
Adaptation dissonance	Expresses the difficulty of adjusting to new, imposed housing conditions that clash with residents' former lifestyles. Emphasizes alienation from unfamiliar and isolating environments.	"But after I left there, in Taşoluk I couldn't find a proper neighbor for myself. Even if I went hungry, I had no neighbor. I mean, no one to go to and tell my troubles. I lived there for two years. Then I saw that it wasn't going to work. Debts piled up. I sold it off. I pay 500 in rent. Electricity, water… I mean, I can't even pay the rent properly." (Osseiran, 2012, 00:06:03)
Erasure	Refers to the loss of visibility and memory of the community. The process by which Sulukule, once vibrant and known, becomes either forgotten or rebranded under new narratives.	"This is my memory bag, whatever you look for in it, it's all memories. That kind of life doesn't exist anymore. Times have changed. Is there anything like that left? This is my life. Where am I supposed to go, brother? This is a shame on the state. It means we're living under this flag for nothing." (Erol and Madra, 2023)
Precarious family structure	Illustrate how poverty reshapes family roles, often forcing children into adult responsibilities due to abandonment or economic need.	"For example, I had a friend who started dancing at a very young age. She was really young, around 13, and she started working as a dancer. After a while she got tired of it. She said things like she couldn't go on anymore. Then one time she tried to harm herself. Her mother called us. We all ran to the hospital. She was discharged in the middle of the night. A month later, she got married. Just to escape that job. Just to get away from her family. Now she's got two children." (Okyay, 2016, 00:03:50)
Architectural erasure	Highlights the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage and architecture. The destruction of urban fabric is experienced as an attack on identity and memory.	"They demolished this place. We saw what happened. They destroyed things that were 50, 100 years old. They demolished our historical heritage." (Biçen, 2009, 00:00:48)
Symbolic borders	Points to shifts in spatial belonging and territorial stigmatization after the urban regeneration process. Former Roma spaces are reclassified (e.g., becoming a Syrian neighborhood), creating new forms of exclusion.	"Well, how can I put it now? This side is Turkey, the other side is Syria, that's the state we've come to. When you go up, you'll see the gates. You may have seen the one on the lower right as well. Those places were

Topic	Description	Example
		closed. They weren't open. We couldn't go in there." (Sulukule Kentsel Dönüşümü, 2022, 00:03:34)
Child work	Reveals how chronic poverty normalizes labor among children, disrupting childhood and limiting future opportunities.	"He lives in our apartment building. He dropped out of school. He is working now." (Sabancı Vakfı, 2019, 00:00:26)
School dropout	Indicates how economic survival is prioritized over formal education. The subtopics of school dropout are: (1) unattractiveness of school, and (2) early marriage.	"There are many people who drop out of school. I mean, there are even some who should be in 8th grade now but are already married." (Sabancı Vakfı, 2019, 00:00:28)

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE THESIS

Oral Presentation

1. Silva, I. & İslam, T. (2025). "Indirect Displacement in Istanbul: Audiovisual Analysis Through the Lens of Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method", 5th International Çankaya Scientific Studies Congress, 08-09 December, Ankara, Turkey.