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maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

International Urban Planning Workshop

Diyarbakir, Turkey – 9th to 22nd of October, 2011

## BEN U SEN in DIYARBAKIR

*Call for applications in order to select the 21 professional participants of the workshop.*

# POTENTIALS OF EVOLUTION OF A SELF-MADE DISTRICT



Take a new point of view on Ben U Sen, a **consolidated illegal district** in Diyarbakir, main city of the Eastern Anatolia region in Turkey, a city facing a major urban expansion. Proposing an **evolution process** bringing together population and local authorities in order to **improve the living conditions** and **create a symbolic and physical integration** of the settlement to its environment – fortified city, new districts, Tigris valley.



# Foreword

In Turkey, most cities are swiftly changing due to the demographic and economic growth, and the increase of their standard of living. This urban development is led by private companies and by the National Agency for Housing Development, the TOKI. In this « housing race », the regeneration operations of illegal districts (qualified as insanitary = gecekondu in Turkish) are quite often radical. The districts are being demolished and their population is being relocated in the suburbs in 5 to 15 storey projects.

The city of Diyarbakir, the main city in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey, with a population of almost 1 million, has decided to reduce the gecekondu, with the support of the TOKI. While Diyarbakir's mayor recognized the importance of this urban fabric and the fact that its adapted to the immigrant population's way of life, the city has decided to lead an experimental project in Ben U Sen, which is one of the oldest and the main gecekondu in the city, with an estimated population of 20 000. The district is located at the foot of the walls surrounding the historical center, which look over the market gardening farms of the Tigris river valley, next to the the city's urbanized area. This innovating operation's goal is to maintain most of the current population in the area, and in a more global way, to experiment new intervention ways on the Turkish gecekondu.

This will is shared by the Mayor of Yenisehir (local administration, location of Ben U Sen), and supported by the Mayor of Rennes, whose city has been cooperating for almost 30 years, and also supported by the AFD (French Agency for Development). These partners have asked Les Ateliers to organize an international urban planning workshop with local and international professionals in order to work on the evolution potentials of the Ben U Sen district, and to propose an intervention plan that will keep the population on site. The TOKI should be involved in the collaborative process in order to make a profitable contribution for the renewal of the national agency's methods.



## **Presentation of Les Ateliers**

Les Ateliers is a non-governmental organization that gathers universities, decision makers and professionals dedicated to planning, development and urban design. The organization focuses on the practice of urban planning project management, and organizes its workshops in order to create a place for conception and creativity. In France as well as in other countries, these workshops are an opportunity for the contractors to get an international point of view and groundbreaking propositions for their local planning issues. Given the presence of many cultures and the diversity of the education backgrounds of the participants involved in the workshops, these are a great place for high-level debates and exchange.

Every year, Les Ateliers organize three students and young professionals workshops, in Irkoutsk, in Porto-Novo, and in Cergy-Pontoise, about local or metropolitan planning issues. Local authorities and their partners also contact Les Ateliers in order to organize International professional workshops in France, Asia, The Mediterranean region, and more recently, in West Africa and South America.

## Presentation and credits

This document is an introduction to the workshop's topic. It is sent to the partners and Les Ateliers's international network, so as to generate professional applications.

Writing: Marie-Marie Pénicaud, Marc Errera, workshop's managers.

Sources :

- Cahiers méthodologiques et diagnostic de la ville de Rennes,
- Mémoire « bidonvilles et architectes » de Yann Barnet,

Based on the discussions that occurred during the first preparatory mission in March 2011 between:

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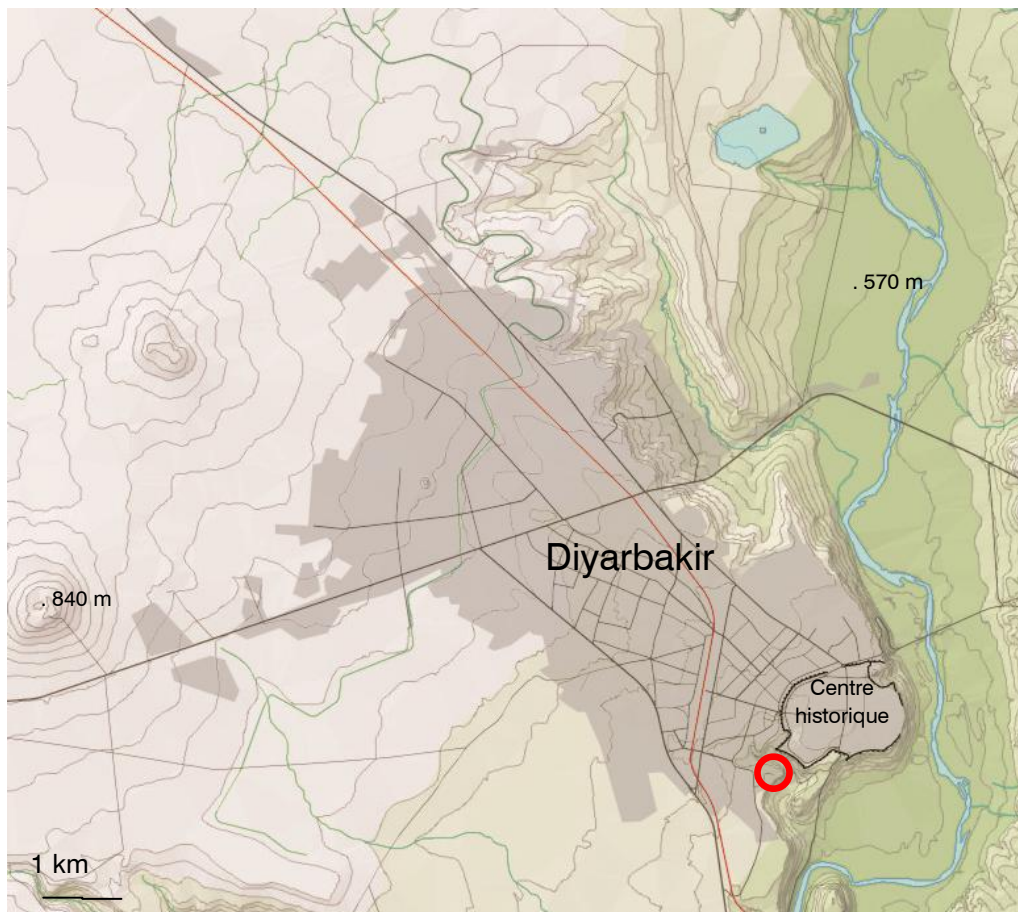
This document is available and downloadable in French, English and Turkish at [www.ateliers.org](http://www.ateliers.org)

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# Geography



Diyarbakir, capital of the Province in the South-Eastern Anatolia region, near Syria and Irak's borders.



Diyarbakir, is a fortified city built on a promontory looking over the Tigris river valley. The city's urban development is currently important in the north-western plateau.

 Ben U Sen, a district next to the city's curtain wall, near the city and the farming land.

# 1- Introduction

## **A universal outreach...**

Bidonvilles, slums, katchi abadi, bustee, camapentos, kampong, gecekondu, favelas, townships, barrios, ranchos, colonias proletarias, villas miserias, ciudades perdidas... All around the world, one can find these self-made districts, originally hosting newcomers, principally coming from the rural world. All these expressions bring forth the notions of temporary, poverty and exclusion. This is a complex phenomenon with a variety of analysis. These districts are often seen as problems that need to be solved, if not erased. They also are a natural response to the demographic and economic flows of our world, when the local and national governments didn't have efficient answers to provide regarding the rural depopulation and weren't able to create welcoming and integrating solutions for these transitioning people.

Bringing their rural expertise, these people gather and settle in the cities forsaken areas, sometimes in the center, with very little ways of moving. The illegal character of these areas buildings are a source of uneasiness, jurisdictional and sanitary problems, as well as insecurity. The «Old» population tend to reject these often traumatized and impoverished newcomers. Over the time, even though these districts remain quite different from the legal part of the city, they tend to grow, and get a little bit healthier; their population are involved in the local economy and they also take part in the urban economy, as a workforce and as consumers. These districts therefore function within the city, and cannot be considered as an external part that we could remove without consequences on the whole city.

Obviously, there is not only one reality. Every self-made district has its own story, its own characteristics: origins, size, organization, age, morphology (bioclimatic and sociocultural factors), poverty and unsanitary level... Despite these differences, the intervention on these districts is a universal matter and UNO agrees. During the last World Urban Forum, organized by UN-Housing in Rio de Janeiro in March 2011, the following topics stood out: a right to access the city, reducing the urban divide, an equal access to housing, cultural diversity and identity differences, management and participation, sustainable and inclusive urbanization.

## **... so as to give detailed propositions**

This universal context gives us hope that the questions raised and the answers provided during the workshop will inspire other Turkish cities and other countries ; yet, the workshop will focus on the concrete reality of the Ben U Sen district and as such, it needs to provide particular answers to the issues of the district, whether they are historical, topographic, economic or social.

One of Ben U Sen's qualities is its tangent location to the city center. The gecekondu has many urban, social, even architectural qualities that stand out as varied and warm public areas. The conviviality of the urban area seems to be more real in Ben U Sen, thus, it brings more hope than in other, more legitimate areas of the city. This architect-free and urban planner-free district seems to promote, according to us, some qualities that question the urban planning as we generally know it.

Over the years (40 years), the district's architecture has strengthened and is no more the expression of a slum made out of corrugated metal and knick-knacks. The main insecurity that the people of Ben U Sen suffer from is their low standard of living. The lack of jurisdictional guarantee is also an important insecurity for the population, because they cannot invest in their houses. All these insecurities also come with a wide range of discrepancies in the population's quality of life. A more rural way of life is probably one of the only reasons people survive. This rural know-how and the manners that come along have been forgotten by the population who live in the comfort of the modern, sterile cities.

Moving the population means breaching a fabric, a network, a solidarity that is much more valuable in the long term than the simple destruction/reconstruction equation. This solution doesn't solve any problems, it only improves the land value on a short-term basis. Due to the tremendous consequences created by moving the population to the suburbs, in situ solutions are the only efficient ones for us ; even though, such solutions will have a wide-range of applications.

The dichotomy between urban qualities of the gecekondu and the areas that are under construction raises a double question: the original question « **what right to access the city for the Ben U Sen population?** » from which another question stands out «**what urbanity for the population of Diyarbakir's new districts?** ». Answering the first question will allow the workshop to create new methods for the gecekondu's urban regeneration, but it will also allow to stress the differences between the answers currently provided for the second question. There is a double challenge.



A view of the north-eastern part of the Ben U Sen district from the curtain wall of the fortified city.

## 2- General considerations about self-made districts.

The fast pace urbanization of the world has become a major challenge during this new century. Every day, 180.000 people or so move in urban areas. As an estimation, 2/3 of the world population will live in a city by the next 50 years. In such a context, the worldwide priority is to avoid this growth to be accompanied by an increase of the urban poverty.

**Inclusive urbanization.** The city remains attractive, but nowadays, inclusion is not an immanent urban characteristic. Poverty means being deprived of goods, but also fundamental needs, being excluded from the social process.

**The urbanization's balanced development.** With the effects of the globalization, cities have suffered from a social, economic and spatial shattering process: from a unitary, organic, united city, more random, shattered forms have emerged, with strong territorial aspects. The balanced territorial development appears to be the only way to achieve a harmonious evolution, even more so than the urban fragmentation increased social fragmentation. The concept of sustainable development spreads to other dimensions, such as culture, whether its contemporary or heritage, respect of the diversity and identity... These elements add up to constitute the soul of the city and give a meaning to it.

Despite the differences that exist between self-made districts (illegal) of different regions or time periods, one can try to identify the similar elements that bind them, and the issues they raise.

**Outside the law/Outside the city.** The first feature of a self-made district is the fact that it is illegal. Illegal occupation of the soil and illegal constructions. It is a no man's land, with no real status. Many people face expulsion and that increases the district's precarious aspect.

**Poverty and Survival.** Poverty is the backbone of these self-made districts. The population finds resources in the parallel economy, hard labour (construction sites, farming), small services to the city (shoe polishers, street sellers...)

**Lack of urban equipments.** One of the main differences between illegal districts and other parts of the city, is that the illegal districts don't have a proper access to urban services and equipments. Sewage system, drinking water, electricity, waste collection, sanitary equipments, police...

**Density and space congestion.** In addition to the average size of the lots and of the families, the natural growth factor is always important. In many « slums », density often reaches one inhabitant per 10 m<sup>2</sup>. This lack of privacy leads to specific family and social behaviours.

**Insecurity and informality.** The police has deserted the « slums », and their destruction is often scheduled on the basis of their reputation to host delinquents and various illicit traffics. One can obviously attest that many informal activities occur inside « slums » and provide income for a large part of the population. The reputation of insecurity weakens the district whereas the dynamic informal activities could be improved.

**House as a struggle.** The family house is the main part of the self-made district. As opposed to the city, the house is much more than just an estate, it is a genuine fight. People worked really hard to build their house and it's their only property. The house is a shelter from the way of life imposed by the city, it is a struggle for their identity.

**Limits and isolation.** The barriers between the self-made district and the city are often physical at first (motorway, railway, river or even walls). In addition to that, the networks tend to stop at the entrance of

the district (infrastructures and public transport). The self-made district is psychologically banned from the city because it doesn't have the same language. Yet, there is a certain unity with many undeniable urban qualities.

**The self-made district: an organized area.** The house is the pivotal feature of the area. The size of the plots define the district's morphology. The plots are never large, usually between 50 and 150m<sup>2</sup>. Traffic areas are reduced to the minimum and ways and streets are organized following this hierarchy;

- one or several large main streets. They are used as public areas. They are often hidden so as to have a certain intimacy.
- Small narrow streets, semi-public areas.
- A network of semi-public dead-ends that serve several private courtyards. In some districts, they have entrance doors so as to be used as a shared area for people who live nearby.



Ben U Sen's valley

**The self-made district: a social area.** First of all, it is the place where populations from the area gather. Indeed, one notices that in the « spontaneous districts », people settle according to their location of origin. A great solidarity has emerged from the pain of being far from home and living in a rather brutal environment. Nowadays, it is a crucial element in the struggle against poverty. Without this mutual help, many people wouldn't be able to survive.

**The self-made district: a dynamic area.** The « slum » is an organized and social area, an activity area, where houses and streets are workplaces and trade places. Most of the activities are informal, but they bring substantial resources for the population of the district, and of the city as well. The « spontaneous district » is an area in constant movement and development, and the activities are very flexible. It is a living structure, that can adapt and be molded. When the population is sufficiently organized, they can gather themselves into organizations and manage the district in the way of a city government.

**The self-made district: a cultural area.** The population in « slums » is mostly rural. With the growing globalization process that occur in the cities all over the world, self-made districts can be seen as havens for traditional cultures. There is a rise of a « slum culture » phenomenon, which is not a subculture but a

culture of poverty with its own forms of expression (singing, music, theater...), its references, its values (dignity above all) . It is also a place for survival mentality, mutual help, but also different capitalistic rules because these districts are under a tremendous internal land pressure.



# 3- The context of a booming construction in Turkey

The topic focuses on an old district, inside an urban environment that's more prone to regeneration than to construction. That said, it is crucial to bear in mind the global context in Turkey and in Diyarbakir: an incredible urban sprawl, with a very fast-pace, intense housing construction.

## 3.1- Land Strategy

The State is the first property owner in Turkey: lands and real estate that directly belong to domains, and lands placed « under the responsibility and at disposal of the State » that belong to Government, administrations, foundations. 65% of the territory's surface was owned by the State in 2001.



Alternative offered by new districts

In Diyarbakir, the land situation is similar to the national trend. Indeed, many land lots belong to the State, and are placed under the status: « under the responsibility and at the disposal of the State ». These lots have allowed the urbanization phase that begun in the 1930's and 50's, but also the implementation of the military garrison and the hospital in the North, the citadel and the airport in the West. The rest of the lots are scattered around inside the metropolitan territory, without any logic. In the urbanized area, especially in the suburbs, the majority of the land lots belong to private owners, individuals or gathered in associations.

The late 1960's economic crisis led Turkey to face a massive foreign debt. The Government began selling its land. In addition to that, local authorities, especially metropolitan governments, pled for a « decentralization of the public land management », asserting that the « necessity of an improved land management was crucial before planning a consistent urban development which would preserve a spirit of social equality ». The 2003 and 2004 decentralization laws allowed the transfer of Government-owned land to local authorities. Furthermore, the TOKI, the central administration for collective housing acquired an important part of the land in order to fight against Turkey's diagnosed lack of housing.

In Diyarbakir, all the Government-owned land lots are now under the supervision of the TOKI. The city doesn't participate in the transactions and is therefore deprived of any land management capacity. During an interview, the President of The Diyarbakir Real Estate Developers Association claimed that TOKI was not using all its land assets during its operations, but was in fact selling available lands in the market, leading to an inflation. In the urban development market, the average price of a building land doesn't exceed 18 euros/m<sup>2</sup> whereas TOKI sells lands between 20 and 40 Euros/M<sup>2</sup>.

## 3.2- Soils status and building capacity

The Turkish territory is not yet completely registered, therefore, the government doesn't have a record of everything. The first soil's status is simply a field, an unregistered farming land. The second status is: registered non-building land, and finally, the third status is: building land.

The land price is dependant of these legal status, defined by the City's plan and the zoning regulations, edited by the district's authorities. Diyarbakir's plan has drawn a new 2670 hectares building area next to the urbanization front, with a will to foresee the housing demand by 2025.



Anticipating the development in the North of the city

Other areas have been reserved by TOKI for the production of collective housing. Yet, this important availability doesn't prevent from speculation. The President of the Real Estate Developers Association made it clear that the strategy of its members was to acquire land outside the building areas in order to anticipate. They let illegal constructions settle in the land they acquired for a very cheap price and then rent it. Then, they try to convince the local authorities to expand the building land areas to these unorganized, yet already occupied areas.

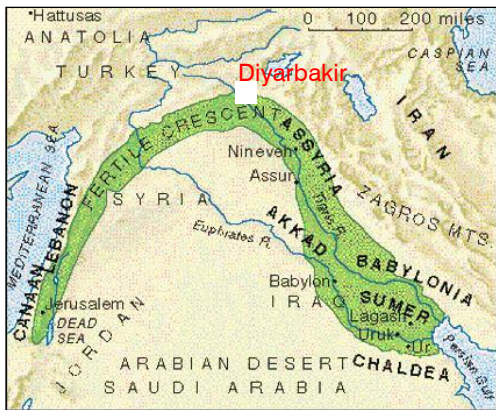
### **3.3- The construction's mechanisms.**

The first system is the decision by an entrepreneur to build. That system spread out during the first extension of the city, and it is the main system inside the urbanization front. Usually, the entrepreneur acquires the lots during an exchange excluding money, based on trust: the owner of the lot will be compensated with several floors of the building. This system goes on with the finishing work's craftsmen. When the building is done, each new owner sells its apartment or rents it, though the latter is very rare. There is another version of the system called « Yap-Sat »: the apartments are sold as they are built, that way, the entrepreneurs don't need to possess a lot of cashflow or contract a loan.

Second system, the housing co-op. People who want to own a property originally gather following their professional kinship and thus, regroup the building costs. The co-ops usually build upon land that have been sold by the State for a cheap price. This system has also spread during the city's first extension. Nowadays, inside the urbanization front, we find these building co-ops, but they lost their original goal. They can be easily spotted by their architectural shape, made of buildings called « blok », which are grouped inside a site that's protected by walls and barbwires and a caretaker's house. These « blocks » are secluded, and shops and services can be found on the ground floor. Nowadays, co-ops mean profitable operations made by private entrepreneurs who want to take advantage of this system.

The public administration for collective housing (TOKI) is also an important driving force in Diyarbakir's construction market. The agency led a major operation with the construction of the Toplu Konut district, a rather dull stream of R+6 buildings. Since 2004, the domain of the « urban soils office » has been transferred to the TOKI, and that increased its influence and its construction capacity. Large land reserves have been settled in the North of Diyarbakir and will soon be used for construction operations of the same kind.

# 4- South-Eastern Anatolia: a fertile and historically rich province, far from the political centre.



The Fertile Crescent, from Tigris to Euphrates

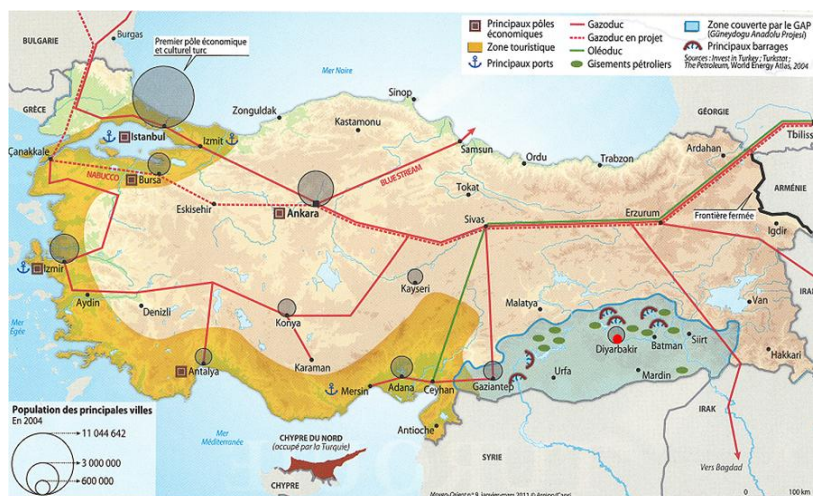
Turkey is sometimes part of Europe, sometimes part of Asia. Its geographical location, over two continents, at the crossroad of the Russia – Mediterranean sea and Balkan - Middle-East axis, on the historical silk road, and nowadays on the path of strategic pipelines, place Turkey at the heart of economic, cultural and religious exchanges. It is a link between East and West, therefore, its geostrategic location is very important and increases with the political events that occur in the Middle-East, as well as with the tensions in the oil market and the water issues.



Location of the Kurdish culture area..

(source : magazine Moyen-Orient, 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre 2011)

Diyarbakir is located in a Kurdish culture area, in the South-West of Turkey, the North-East of Irak, the North-West of Iran and two small areas in the North-East and North-West of Syria. Only two out of these four countries officially recognize the « Kurdistan » region: Iran with the province of Kordestan, and Irak with the autonomous region of Kurdistan.



Economic potential of the Turkish republic.

(source : magazine Moyen-Orient, 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre 2011)

Far from the attractive tourism areas or from the industrial development, Diyarbakir's area possesses many oil resources and water resources. It is located within the GAP project's perimeter, a planning and economic development project in the south-eastern Anatolia region launched by the central government: The project's aim is to build dams on the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, for irrigation purposes and electricity production.

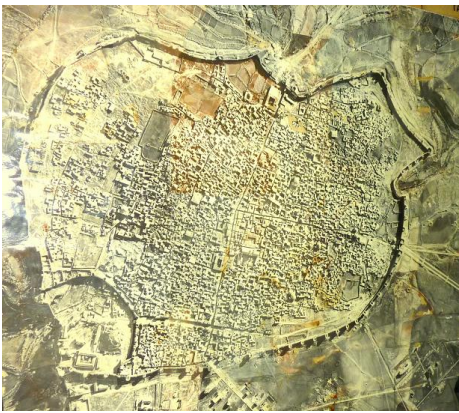


# 5 - Diyarbakir : From a stronghold to a large agglomeration, urban coexistence.

Diyarbakir, the main city of the eponymous Turkish province, is also the mythical capital of Kurdistan, a region that's torn between the national borders of Turkey, Irak, Iran and Syria. The city, where the Tigris flows, is located in the heart of Mesopotamia, often described as « the cradle of civilization ». Like everywhere in Turkey, the region is suffering from an important seismic activity, due to the North-Anatolian fault's activity.

Nowadays, Diyarbakir is made of a dual urban planning, opposing modernity and the comfort of recent buildings to poverty, intensity and the cultural and identity strongholds composed by the gecekondu and the historical center.

## 5.1 From the fortified city...



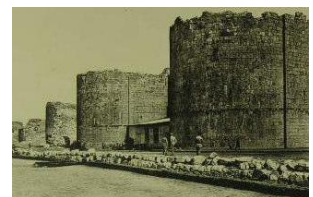
The original city was built upon a 650m high basalt promontory, on the eastern limit of a wide plateau extending the Karaca Mountains to the Tigris. The Eastern side of this promontory is located 100m over the valley, which is made of a branch of the River, surrounding Hevsel's fertile gardens. Diyarbakir was originally a stronghold, surrounded by a curtain walls that is still 5,5km long.

The city's map is organically linked to the curtain wall and is structured by a cardo and a decumanus, with four gates at their ends. These two ways are the structure of the city-center, and along them can be found monuments and housing areas. The secondary roads network is a dense, shattered system. Often, the ancient bedrocks were used as foundations for the buildings, leading to a verticalization of the old city. As a result, the alleys are more narrow.



The curtain wall, a barrier, a junction and a traffic area.

The historical interest and the value of Diyarbakir's heritage in the center are considered by all the public actors as an economic development leverage. Yet, the inner part of the town is impoverished and the wealthy population has moved out. Many historical monuments or ordinary buildings are in ruins.



The public areas in the historical city.



An urban regeneration program is necessary. The city's domain doesn't go beyond a protection plan, but it is not enough. There is a need for a financing system of the regeneration program. The urban regeneration operation of the Alipasa district (South-Western part of the citadel) is led by a tripartite agreement between the city, the Prefecture (decentralized services of the Ministry of Culture), and the TOKI (which recently acquired the domain of the urban regenerations in the historical centers), and could be a great opportunity to implement a sustainable and efficient project management.

## 5.2 ... To an unbridled urbanization

### The new districts

The city began to expand outside the curtain wall at the end of the 1960's. The urban development extends to the north-western part of the city, on the plateau, and leave the citadel looking over the Tigris. The city 's plan is orthogonal, with avenues in continuation of the inner city's openings. Secondary streets are drawing the limits of large islets which host tower buildings. Since 1984, the city faces a true urban explosion. The urban shape remains the same, and the architecture is a continuous stream of R+7 to R+15 buildings, with some wealthier gated communities scattered in between.



Diyarbakir's north-eastern urban front

### Illegal housing- the gecekondu

Outside any planning program, in the city center as well as in the suburbs, we find some illegal construction areas for the poorest population. Diyarbakir counts 11 illegal housing areas called « gecekondu », literally « overnight house ». It is a rough house, close to the vernacular house, a combination of rural house and historical city house. The first building method has been to use material from the curtain wall and from houses in ruins (basalt). This construction system swiftly evolved, without changing the urban shape, and promoting a recycling economy.



Bundle of firewood stocked on the roof for the heating system.



Patios are living rooms



Densification of the district: the apartkondu

### **The apartkondü**

Although the construction has been supported with a policy of interesting loans for new buyers since 2010, self-made housing is still one of the main construction system used by the low income families. Sometimes, self-made houses become self-made buildings. This buildings are built in a simple way: concrete beams structure, bricks filling, for a better verticalization. Baglar district is a good example of that construction method: the 8 storeys buidlings are called apartkondü because they have been built outside the law and don't respect the plan. Nonetheless, the owner of the land is the builder.

### **The university campus**

The university is facing the city. It is located in a land reserve in the East of the city, beyond the Tigris valley. The campus has been developed like an island chain and doesn't occupy the total area of the land lot. Luxury residences have been built for the last ten years on the free areas with planning operations led by the local education authority.

## **5.3 The History of an urban population and of its exiles.**

Today, the population of Diyarbakir reaches 800.000 (from the census that was based on adresses) and the population of the province is of 1.500.000. The metropolis's population has been multiplied by 9 over the last 50 years, with an important growth in the 1980's. The difficult situation since 1984 has emphasized the economical divide between the East and the West of the country. In the Eastern part, the rural world, that was living from livestocking has collapsed after the 1987 law banning the migration and the destruction of almost 3500 villages. These desperate farmers left their land to move in the agglomerations, hoping to find jobs. Officially, 378 000 people have been forced into exile. In addition to that number, we must count the displaced population that was forced to leave their villages because of the floodings caused by the construction of the dams under the GAP program.

Nonetheless, the migration rate remains negative: The explanation can be found in the fact that some of the population that moved in Diyarbakir left right away to settle in other Turkish cities. Furthermore, Diyarbakir's original population moved massively from its center to settle in Turkish (Istanbul and Ankara) or European metropolises. As the South-western population settled in Diyarbakir, the city was drained from its population. Therefore, the rural depopulation doesn't provide the answer for the demographic growth: the answer can be found in the Rate of Natural Increase, with an important birth rate and a very fast decrease of the Infant mortality rate. Nonetheless, the massive flow of rural migrants combined with the massive depopulation of Diyarbakir in favor of other Turkish cities have profoundly changed the city, which obviously lost a part of its social and economic structure.



2010 satellite shot

- Former villages annexed by the metropolis
- Airport, University and Military area
- Historical origin
- Fortified city (Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations)
- Urban development 1930-1960
- Urban development 1960-1985
- Urban development 1985-2005

# 6 - Ben U Sen, an illegal, yet consolidated district

Ben U SEN: 26 hectares, 2220 buildings, 4131 houses, 18 000 people.

The BUS district has been existing for several decades. Some buildings are 4 storeys high, and even though the materials are recycled and varied, the buildings are « permanent ». There is an important density, the size and comfort of the houses are low, so is the presence of services, but there are schools and infrastructures. BUS is far from being a « slum », but it is an « illegal » district. The side of the valley which is located between the city's curtain wall and the main road is labelled as a «green area » in the soil's occupation plan.



*Identification of Ben U Sen's perimeter based on a 2010 satellite picture.*

The Ben U Sen district is leaning on the curtain wall. The wall is the main tourism resource of Diyarbakir and a major part of its identity. The wall, standing in a pasture landscape, contained the city until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Holding on to its promontory, the wall still define the limits of the city in front of the Tigris river valley. Elsewhere, the city has crossed over the wall. The first housing settlements in the Ben U Sen district occurred in the 1970's, which means that it is Diyarbakir's oldest gecekondu. Then, during the 1990's, the district developed itself and welcomed rural people in exile. The district is located « next to the city » and not « inside the city » because of two factors: its geographical situation, near the city center but secluded from it by a piece of the wall, and its relief.

The district is made of small bricks and concrete houses, but also made of collective 3 to 4 storeys buildings. The district is organized around a main street that forks as it goes up North. The road grows larger in its center part with a public garden. A network of small streets, stairs, alleys allows to reach the houses on the side of the valley.



The buildings are poorly built, with low hygiene and comfort. They bring forth the issue of their resistance in case of natural risks, because the district is built upon strong slopes despite the seismic threat in the area.

The district is partly served with a drinking water network and a sanitation network. There is also a waste collection service and electricity is provided from the four districts nearby. The district also has some equipments: a collective launderette (lavoir), a local community center, a school (with insufficient capacity), a junior high, one or several mosques. The women's literacy rate is very low. Kurdish is the mother tongue and children can't speak Turkish when they're old enough to go to school.

The district's urban shape is related to the population's semi-rural way of life. The often informal survival economy is very common and the population live from the income of the market gardening activity that occurs in small gardens nearby, but mainly in the Hevsel's fertile gardens, that spread from the South limit of the district to the Tigris river valley. Some families even migrate during a part of the year to work as seasonal farmers in Northern Turkey, even though the improvement of mechanic tools tends to reduce job offers in that activity. Another skills are an important part of the district's economy: livestocking, (illegal) slaughtering and meat selling. Nonetheless, many people have to work in other sectors, like in the construction sector. There are currently 270 families living below the 1\$/day poverty line. Studies show that Ben U Sen's families are becoming less and less rich from generation to generation.

Trees are a very important part of the district's life, in the public areas and in the patios, where they provide much needed shade.

The small houses welcome the average 6 members family. The courtyard and the roof are additional rooms for the house. The halls and the streets are meeting and leisure areas. Collective ovens (Tandır in Kurdish) can be found scattered around in the district. Women and children meet there and talk while the bread is baking. This district is an interesting urban fabric, regarding urbanity and community harmony.

The population live with no sense of permanence. Their buildings are illegal. The land belongs to the city, the Government and private owners. Some land lots have been acquired without authorization. The constructions have occurred without any planning authorizations. Some houses are rented in a rather obscure manner.

The economic and social consequences of a population displacement inside collective buildings without private exterior areas could be disastrous. It would create a new feeling of loss, their rural way of life would be frowned upon by the current population, and they would be deprived of their sources of income.

Today, all of Ben U Sen's area is labelled as a « green and leisure area » in the city's plan and in the soil's occupation plan. The city plans to update the urban planning documents but still plans to demolish the part of the district that's next to the city's curtain wall. That way, the city hopes to « promote » the city's curtain wall and therefore improve its chances to be registered in the World Heritage List.

Ben U Sen is an inconvenience. Because of the illegal buildings, the parallel economy, the rural way of life. It reveals poverty and violence. It is also inconvenient because it hides the view of the wall. It could also be an inconvenience because it is located on a potentially high value-added area, near the city center.



Bread ovens are important for the social life.



Women are the keepers of the public areas.



Ben U Sen's population keeps on having a farming activity.



The heaters are fuelled with wood or dry pieces.



Ground floor areas are used as sheds. Will they be used as garages?



The Turgut Özal İlköğretim Okulu school, in the heart of the district.



What future for the free areas?



The roof is an additional room.



The old city wall's gates are now used as gateways between Ben U Sen and the old town.



The district's main street.



Houses built on slopes can be reached using



A view of the district from the curtain wall.

# 7 - Ben U Sen, a source of inspiration for a new urbanity.

« The 20<sup>th</sup> century city's paradox is to produce monotonous particularities instead of creating a vibrant and diverse unity, which was one of the old city's secrets. This positive relationship between unity and diversity should be found anywhere despite the scale »

Pierre Calame, *Président de la Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme*

« A buildings ensemble is not a city, just like Frankenstein's creature is not a human being. With their cold functionality, new cities, despite their « agoras » and other decoys, fail to be alive because they force their population to be passive. »

Agnès Pitrou, *sociologist*, in « [Manière de voir](#) — L'urbanisation du monde - janvier 2011 »

« The spontaneous district is a transitional area between rural and urban worlds, between two social status, between two cultures. It doesn't simply adapt itself to the urban life, it changes it. »

Zeynep Aktuna et Yann Barnet, *doctorants*.

How about changing our perspective on the gecekondu, this district hanging tightly to the iconic curtain wall?

In this global time, where we look for more sustainable urban ways of life, a global relationship with our natural and agricultural environment, where we seek to promote the cross-generation social life, the density of the buildings uses, the population's improved participation, the self-promotion, the temporary use of the forsaken land, self-consumption...

Why shouldn't we try to learn everything that the population of the self-made districts have to teach us? It doesn't mean that we have to deny the reality of the many, varied problems that they face, but it's about getting a fresh, exterior point of view from the international participants. On the one hand, we want to identify the social habits in the current situation, the economic activities and the housing habits that could stand out as valuable tools for a more sustainable urban way of life, and on the other hand, we want to make consistent propositions to provide the population's demand for permanence, economic development and improved housing environment.

All the partners wish that this workshop's results will become guidelines for TOKI's regeneration program of the district.

## 7.1- The workshop's goals and challenges.

### **Integration of Ben U Sen within its environment.**

We have to think on the whole city's scale, and integrate the geographical site. The population's « right to access the city » is a concept that has a meaning in parallel of the historical city center's offer and the new residential neighborhoods's offer. The integration of Ben U Sen inside Diyarbakir is a physical challenge: roads networks, curtain wall, public transport, equipments, activities... and an immaterial challenge as well: Ben U Sen's population must feel that they are citizens of Diyarbakir, the population of the legitimate areas must stop looking down on Ben U Sen.

### **Gathering population and authorities: process and adaptation.**

The answers must not be simple results. They have to become a process grounded in what already exists. A roads network already exists, buildings are strengthened, and a sanitation system already exists. Social life is also well organized, with organizations and legitimate social areas. The challenge is to find the methods that will allow the population and the local authorities to make the project their own in order to make it permanent.

### **Saying no to short-term, anticipating the long-term.**

Ben U Sen is a real estate opportunity for two reasons : its central location and the views it provides on the landscape. Therefore, there is a strong temptation for gentrification, in order to promptly generate an increase in value. But the question remains if the current population stays and acquires the land. A legitimization of the construction rights could lead to an apartkondu phenomenon (increase in heights, occupation of the open spaces... ), an to property speculation. That would also end up in a gentrification process...

### **Reinforce and legitimize the sustainable metabolism of the district.**

It is probably on this side of the workshop's production that the propositions are most likely to be used elsewhere. Sustainability is most likely to be used elsewhere. The main challenge will be to identify the urban, economic and social qualities and potentials of the self-made houses to prevent them from being simply demolished. Moreover, the formal answers about housing will only be consistent if they are matched with regulation and legal propositions about soils and construction rights, about the population's activities and the creation of suitable economic sectors, about a suitable project's economy and implementation methods.

## **7.2- The production of the teams**

The workshop's teams will have to propose a global intervention strategy leaning on what already exists, with a clear decision about whether the population will remain on site or will be displaced- how? - These are two different issues. You will find below a random list of topics. The teams will have to provide consistent and illustrated propositions about them. The variety of the topics is a testimony of Les Ateliers's general approach, and of the openness to a wide-range of professional profiles for the applicants.

### **Buildings and occupation's legitimization.**

How can the undemolished, existing buildings evolve? What legal security can we bring to the population regarding ownership and soil's occupation? What legal tools can we use (long-term lease, land acquisition, occupation agreements...)? What will be the consequences of this newfound permanence? How to promote the renovation work? Does this need an exterior intervention or can the population handle it? What kind of finance and operational mechanisms? What kind of new constructions? What kind of construction methods / suitable renovation methods regarding the geographical constraints, the finance capacity, the way of life? What kind of environment-friendly methods can the population use, regarding heating and cooling systems?

### **Accessibility and mobility / Connection and traffic.**

There are only a few cars in the district. Should it continue that way? How? Otherwise, how can we guide the possible increase of the traffic? How to create a better connection with the « legitimate » city's roads network? How to improve the public transport service? What kind of pedestrian links do we want with the nearby districts?

### **Public spaces and equipments / Social habits.**

The teams will have to think about the quality of the existing physical space, of the public spaces, of the houses and identify the elements that improve the quality of life. The public space is a place for social exchanges. There are public ovens that belong to 2, 3 families and it is a rural habit. What other uses can the public space create? The district needs equipments to function. What are the program's elements that can accompany the district's development? Where and how can we integrate them? The integration of the district is linked to the presence of metropolitan equipments. What are they?

### **Population's activities and suitable economic sectors.**

Ever since they brutally moved in the city, the people haven't found « urban » jobs. Poverty and unemployment is destroying the families. Some people continue to use their rural know-how. Thus, the main economic activities in Ben U Sen are informal market gardening, livestocking or slaughtering. What activities would be suitable for these people who don't have an academic education but who are the keepers of a rural know-how? How to create sectors that would provide employment and increase the household's income? Suburban agriculture, eco-friendly construction... self-consumption and self-construction leading to a sustainable market economy? How can the physical structure and the planning of the district facilitate the development of these sectors?

### **The relationship to the city's wall...to the Tigris river valley.**

Diyarbakir's wall is a major landmark of the city and has a high, yet poorly emphasized tourism value. Ben U Sen is directly linked to the city's wall and the population enjoys an immediate access. The city wishes to increase the value of this heritage and destroy the part of the district that is right next to the wall. Does this solution seems suitable according to your views of integrating the district in the city? If not, what other propositions can you make to increase the global value of the site, which is an iconic part of the city? The relationship to the geographic and productive landscape needs to be identified and developed. The Tigris river valley opens at the gate of Ben U Sen, with its fertile land. How can we increase the global relationship between urban and rural worlds?

### **Image, identity**

The question of the mental image of the district in comparison with the city has to be raised. This is the reason why Ben U Sen is seen as a gecekondu inspite of its similarities with the urban shape of the historical city on the other side of the wall. How can we transform this social exclusion into an acceptance of the district's peculiarities, a district that is as much a part of the city than any other part? How can we create a feeling of unity with the nearby neighborhoods? What are your visions and projects in order to bring harmony between this district and the rest of the city?

### **The city's views on the topic**

For Diyarbakir's authorities, Ben U Sen's main issues are:

- The soil's occupation next to the city's wall that prevent from increasing the value of this historical heritage.
- The illegal ownership and constructions.
- The illegal economic activities.
- The poverty of the social and economic structure.

So far, the city is considering the following propositions:

- Free the area between the wall and the road to increase the value of the site.
- Demolish the houses that show a high collapsing risk.
- Give a new house to a maximum of inhabitants on site.
- Launch consultation projects with the population's participation.
- Ask the TOKI to construct new buildings.

# Organization and workshop schedule

The workshop will be organized following Les Ateliers's original approach. 21 international participants of different professional backgrounds will work within three teams of seven participants during two weeks. Within each team, there will be two local professionals, and one will be a member of the city of Diyarbakir's technical services.

The first days are devoted to meeting people and visiting the site. During the opening ceremony, local authorities will have the occasion to share their point of view on the workshop's topic and their expectations. Then, the leading committee will announce the teams composition. The teams will begin their work without computers. After three days, an exchange forum takes place. It is a pivotal moment of the workshop during which the teams have the opportunity to present their analysis and the first elements of their projects to the other teams and to a local committee that will react spontaneously to the presentations. During the second week, the teams have access to computers in order to finish their graphic and written production. The workshop ends with the presentation in front of an international jury.

With local actors, actors of the city's development, Diyarbakir's partners, members of Les Ateliers's network, the jury is like a « fourth team ». Indeed, the jury doesn't rank the teams. It's work is to identify the most consistent analysis and project's elements that can be used by the local authorities. The workshop is not a contest, there is no prize, no market to win. What matters is the collective production of analysis and new representations, within the different teams at first, and with the jury at the end ; action strategies that Ben U Sen's local actors can then make their own.

## Workshop's schedule

Saturday 8th October	Arrival of the foreign participants in Diyarbakir. Tour of the city center and welcoming dinner.
Sunday 9th October	Introduction lectures and tours of the city.
Monday 10th October	Lectures. Opening ceremony.
From Tuesday 11th to Thursday 13th October	Lectures. Setting up of the teams. Workshop (without computers)
Friday 14th October	Exchange forum with local actors.
Saturday 15th October	Day off. Organized tours of Hasankeyf and Mardin.
From Sunday 16th to Tuesday 18th October	Workshop.
Wednesday 19th October	Delivery of the written work (8 A4 pages + A1 map). <i>Arrival of the jury members. Welcoming dinner.</i>
Tuesday 20th October	Presentations rehearsal. <i>Jury : Tour and lecture. Meeting with the partners committee and the leading committee.</i>
Friday 21st October	International jury. Teams presentations, debate, then, jury's deliberation in private. Closing party, results announcement and awards ceremony.
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	Topic workshops in the morning with members of the city/state's services, jury members and participants. Organized tour. Departure in the evening or the day after.

# How To Participate

## Being a workshop's participant - 9th to 23rd October 2011

The participation to the workshop is open to professionals without distinction of age or nationality, and whose work/experience is related to urban planning: architects, geographers, landscape artists, engineers, economists, artists. The participants must speak at least two of the following languages: French, English, Turkish. Speaking Kurdish will also be appreciated. We wish to specify that applicants that have less than 3 or 4 years of professional practise are very little chance to be selected.

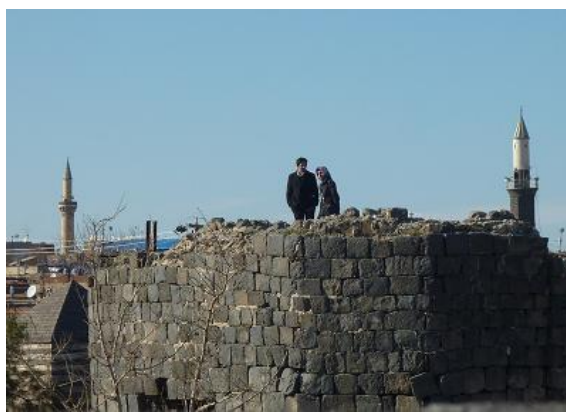
The participants will stay in Diyarbakir and will work in the spaces provided for them. Documentary resources with maps and documents introducing the context and on-going projects will be available.

Participants are not paid but the following expenses are covered: Journey fees (flight+visa), single room accommodation, catering, translation, visits and work material.

The selection of the 21 participants is made by the workshop's leading committee, based on the professional abilities of the applicants, their experience on similar topics, their approach of the subject, their communication skills (language, graphics...) and their motivation!

If you want to apply, please send the following elements before **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2011** at [diyarbakir@ateliers.org](mailto:diyarbakir@ateliers.org):

- Application form (to be downloaded on [www.ateliers.org](http://www.ateliers.org)) Name of the file : NAME\_surname\_Form,
  - 1 page CV. Name of the file: NAME\_surname\_CV
  - A one or two pages note with text and graphic elements designed by you (drawings, schemes, graphs, photomontage...), explaining your interest in the project, the approach that you would privilege and the abilities/previous experience that you can bring to the workshop. Name of the file: NAME\_surname\_Note
- Results will be announced mid-July.



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*Advisors for Diyarbakir : Murat Alökmen, Murat Eminoğlu, Ebru Okmen.*

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[www.ateliers.org/en](http://www.ateliers.org/en)