

Jesse Honsa ~ Istanbul's Fading Metabolism



Fikirtepe urban redevelopment.

Image: Bülent Kılıç

As Istanbul undergoes a process of “Urban Transformation,” the plight of dispossessed residents and the bulldozing of historic UNESCO sites are apparently small trivialities. Human rights, historic preservation and even ecological sustainability are strange, unquantifiable concepts compared to the fruits of economic growth. So let us forget these elitist European ideals for a moment, and discuss the economic cost of urban transformation through the lens of an Asian urban concept: Metabolism.

While the Japanese Metabolists’ design work of the 1960’s failed to offer the rapid flexibility it promised, it still serves as an analogy for an adaptable urban form. Istanbul’s historic pattern of differentiated land ownership has been the DNA behind its adaptability, the crucial attribute needed for survival. A shish kebab of various programs, architectural styles and building heights skewered to the street, this dense and pixellated urban form can easily absorb shifts in the economy. But the current process of urban transformation consolidates these cells into monopolies. Like dinosaurs, they are large, slow beasts, unable to evolve under a changing environment.

Read more: <http://www.failedarchitecture.com/istanbuls-fading-metabolism/>