

Repairing living heritage in Çekmece

Pathways towards
community-led reconstruction



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2024

This publication presents the methodology and outcomes of a community-led planning workshop conducted by Hatay Deprem Dayanışması (Hatay Earthquake Solidarity, HDD) and Architecture Sans Frontières UK (ASF-UK) in June 2024 in Çekmece (Defne), Antakya.

Entitled “Living Heritage,” the workshop aimed to influence official policy and plans for post-earthquake reconstruction in Antakya by developing, testing, and demonstrating a neighbourhood-based, community-led approach to planning. This approach seeks to identify strategies for restoring the city that prioritise its rich living heritage, and ensure that the needs and aspirations of its diverse residents are met.

The workshop is part of a broader collaborative initiative called “Reviving Living Heritage in Antakya,” involving HDD, ASF-UK, and Herkes İçin Mimarlık (HiM). This initiative has been carried out with the support of the Local Empowerment Support Fund, implemented in cooperation with the Support Foundation for Civil Society and the Turkey Mozaik Foundation. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of ASF-UK and does not in any way reflect the views of the supporting organisations.

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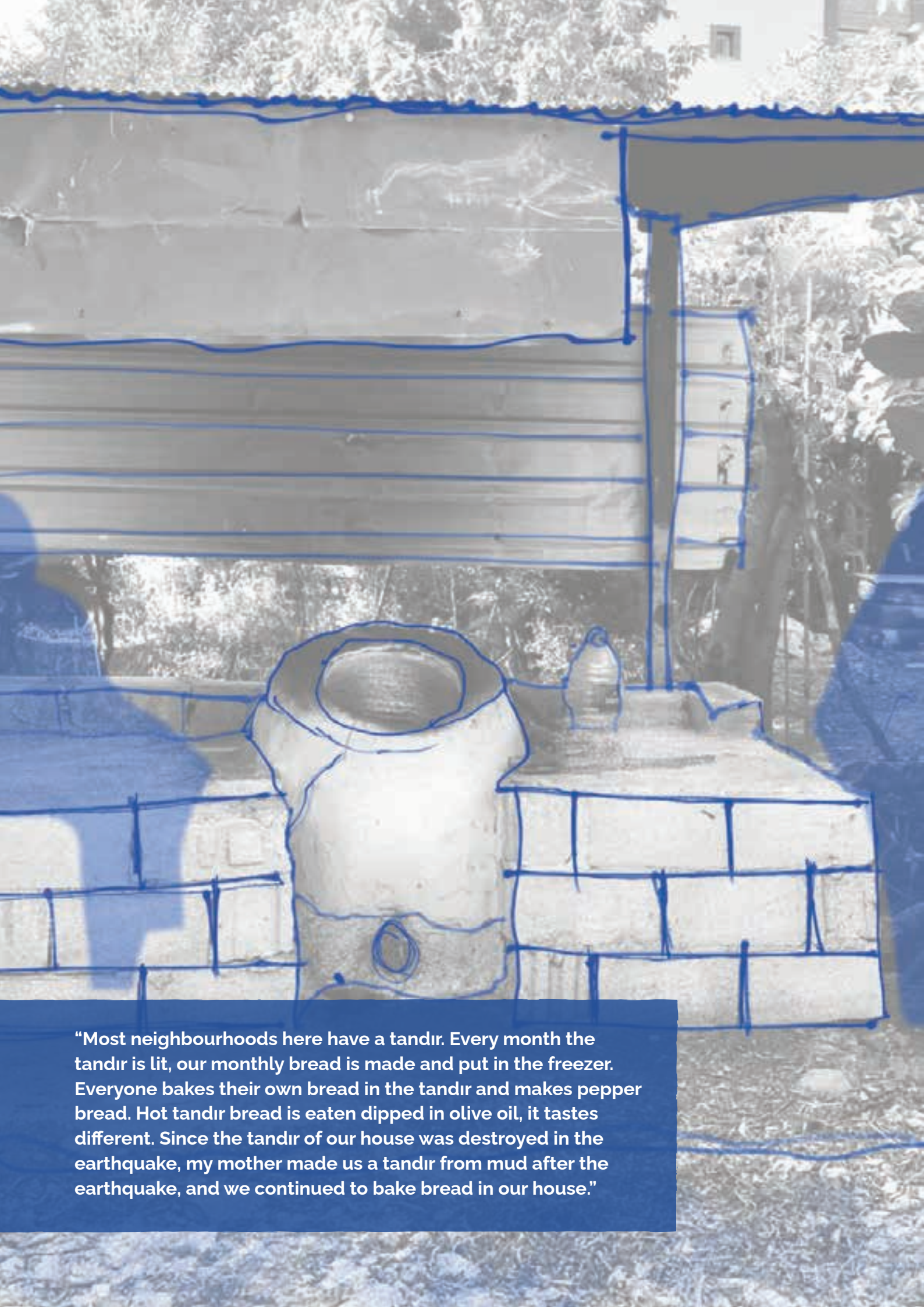


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“Most neighbourhoods here have a tandoor. Every month the tandoor is lit, our monthly bread is made and put in the freezer. Everyone bakes their own bread in the tandoor and makes pepper bread. Hot tandoor bread is eaten dipped in olive oil, it tastes different. Since the tandoor of our house was destroyed in the earthquake, my mother made us a tandoor from mud after the earthquake, and we continued to bake bread in our house.”

1. Living Heritage: What makes Antakya is its people

Why Living Heritage?

The residents of Antakya are playing a crucial role in repairing their city following the devastating earthquake that struck southern Türkiye in February 2023. However, current reconstruction plans lack coordination among stakeholders and involve limited input from civil society. In this context, it is essential to identify, support, and amplify locally-led efforts that promote a more inclusive planning and design approach to the reconstruction process, placing the people of Antakya at the heart of the city's future.

The concept of "living heritage" serves as a vital framework for understanding the complex landscape of post-earthquake reconstruction and envisioning the city's future. Living heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, including places, people, practices, knowledge, artefacts, events, and memories. It connects the reconstruction process to livelihoods, social practices, planning, land rights, ecological restoration, and a sense of belonging.

This notion frames the city, its history, and its culture as dynamic constructs shaped by people's interactions with the built and natural environment. Viewed in this light, preserving Antakya's living heritage requires the reconstruction efforts to focus not only on safeguarding its architecture but also on understanding, nurturing, and reinventing its social and cultural life in relation to the environment.

Every resident and stakeholder, from local inhabitants to professional organisations, has valuable insights to contribute to the dialogue on living heritage. This makes the idea of "living heritage" a vital entry point for fostering multistakeholder collaboration in the reconstruction of Antakya.

Exploring Living Heritage Together

In November 2023, ASF-UK, HiM, and the Chamber of Architects of Hatay hosted a Public Forum on living heritage to facilitate knowledge sharing among grassroots groups, civil society actors, and built environment professionals involved in the city's reconstruction. Over 30 participants from local civil society networks attended the two-day event, engaging in site visits, group work, and open discussions. The forum culminated in a [**Collective Statement for Community-led Post-earthquake Reconstruction**](#) in Antakya, undersigned by six local organisations and supported by ASF-UK and HiM. This document outlines key challenges facing living heritage in the city and articulates key requests from civil society regarding the reconstruction.

Importantly, the Public Forum highlighted the urgent need to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative reconstruction process that empowers Antakya's residents and their organisations to take a leading role in preserving and advancing the city's living heritage. It demonstrated that the people of Antakya possess invaluable knowledge of their challenges, are capable of formulating solutions, and are eager to shape the reconstruction of their community. At the conclusion of the forum, participants agreed that the next critical step would be to translate this potential into action, creating a tangible example of community-led reconstruction for Antakya.

Reviving Living Heritage in Antakya

Following the forum, HDD, ASF-UK and HiM initiated a collaborative project titled "Reviving Living Heritage in Antakya." This joint initiative aims to demonstrate the potential of community-led reconstruction and influence formal policy and plans.

The partners bring diverse perspectives to the project. HDD, established immediately after the earthquake, is now an association working across the province through education, cultural events, and advocacy. ASF-UK is a UK-based charity promoting community-led design and planning processes, grounded in international solidarity. HiM is a non-profit organisation focused on promoting socially oriented architectural practice in Türkiye.

Bringing these areas of knowledge together, "Reviving Living Heritage in Antakya" consists of three main activity packages. The first two focus on establishing a precedent for community-led reconstruction in the neighbourhood of Çekmece (Defne). The first package, centred on Community Architecture and led by HiM, involves constructing a shared space for information and gathering, designed and built with resident involvement. The second package, focusing on Community Planning and led by ASF-UK, utilises community-led methods to develop an action plan for reconstruction and the preservation of living heritage. The third package, led by HDD, concentrates on enabling, documenting and disseminating these initiatives to advocate for community-led reconstruction with key stakeholders.

The Potential of Community Planning

This report centres on the work involved in the second activity package, focusing on testing community-led planning approaches to repairing Antakya's living heritage. A core component of this activity package was an intensive two-week community planning workshop in Çekmece in June 2024, which included five facilitators, over 25 built environment students and practitioners from across Türkiye, along with more than 50 local residents who were interviewed or participated in co-design activities. Representatives from local authorities participated in the workshop at key points.

The workshop tested practical methods for participatory planning and explored pathways for community-led development in Antakya, emphasising an inclusive and collaborative reconstruction process.

The objectives of the workshop can be summarised as follows:

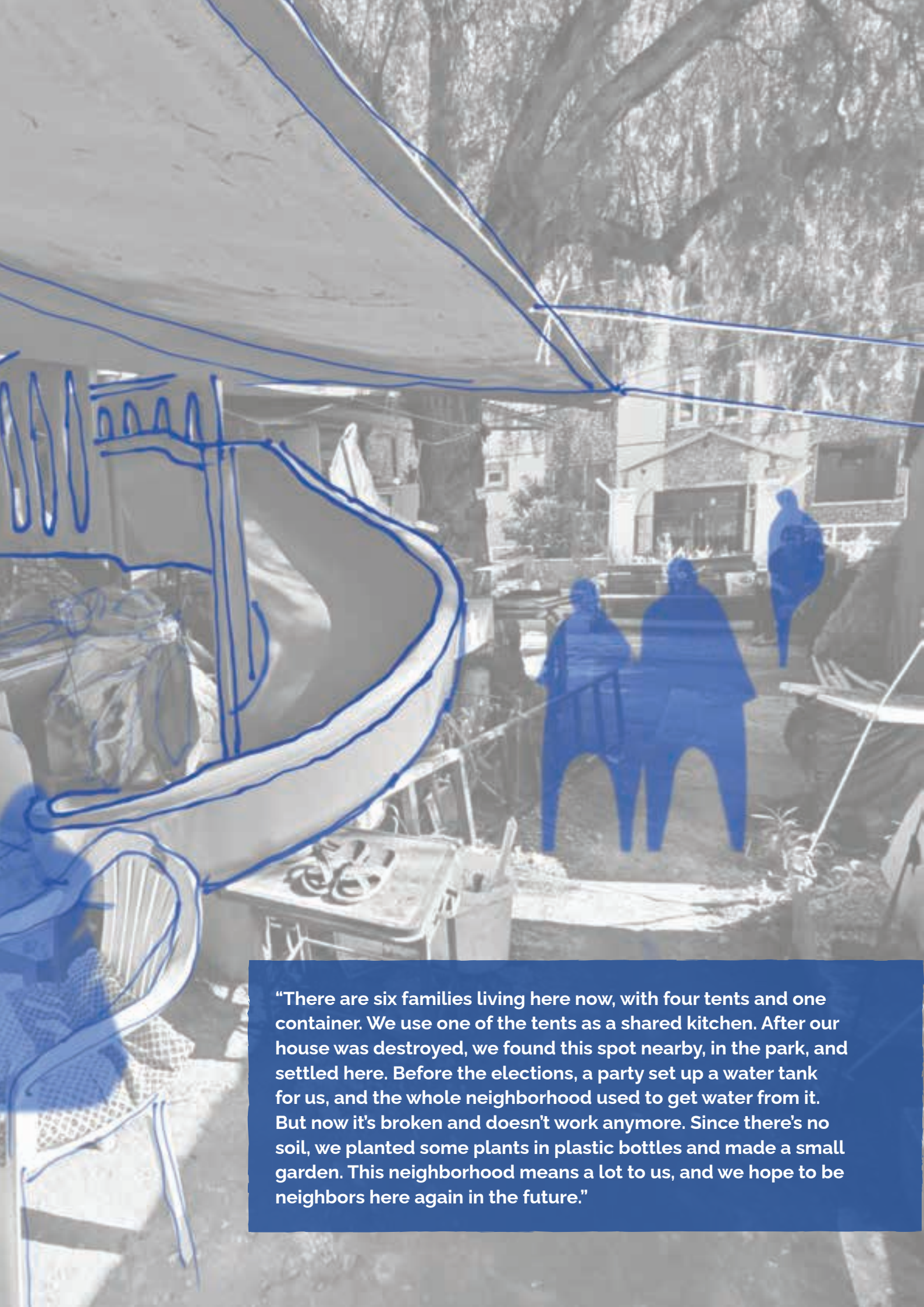
Precedent-Setting: To demonstrate the potential of community-based planning processes in post-earthquake Antakya, establishing a solid neighbourhood-based precedent for future initiatives.

Capacity Development: To identify learning needs and enhance the capacity of grassroots activists, local residents, technical professionals, students, and local authorities in addressing planning issues and engaging in participatory processes.

Community Action Plan: To develop a community-based 'Living Heritage Action Plan' with active participation from Çekmece residents, outlining principles and options for reconstructing the neighbourhood and preserving its living heritage.

Advocacy: To establish mechanisms that support existing rights-based activism in the city and to create a collaborative space for engagement between residents and decision-makers.

The following sections explore how community planning can serve as tools for recognising and harnessing the agency of Antakya's residents and their organisations, ensuring that their voices and experiences shape the future of their city.



“There are six families living here now, with four tents and one container. We use one of the tents as a shared kitchen. After our house was destroyed, we found this spot nearby, in the park, and settled here. Before the elections, a party set up a water tank for us, and the whole neighborhood used to get water from it. But now it’s broken and doesn’t work anymore. Since there’s no soil, we planted some plants in plastic bottles and made a small garden. This neighborhood means a lot to us, and we hope to be neighbors here again in the future.”

2. Our Methodology

The workshop adapted ASF-UK's Change by Design methodology for community-led design and planning. This approach fosters collaboration and mutual learning about urban space among diverse stakeholders, helping to develop flexible principles and guidelines for improving local living conditions. Recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for coproduction, we tailored the methodology in Antakya to align with the area's unique conditions.

Change by Design consists of four stages: diagnosis, dreaming, developing, and defining. The diagnosis stage assesses local situations, while the dreaming stage identifies residents' needs and aspirations. The developing stage outlines potential pathways for change, and the defining stage creates concrete plans for action. These stages involve co-design activities at three scales: micro (dwelling), meso (community), and macro (city). In addition, the approach involves conducting around formal and informal urban policy and planning systems. In the later stages, findings from these activities are combined through co-design exercises to explore interactions and assess trade-offs between scales.

In Antakya, we employed this open framework to engage with the area of Çekmece, addressing the diagnosis, dreaming, and development stages across the dwelling, community, and city scales. Given the scale and diversity of the Çekmece neighbourhood, we centred our work around three focus areas, which served as representative sites for reflecting on both the neighbourhood and the city in a grounded manner. Site-based activities were conducted by groups of workshop participants, supported by facilitators from ASF-UK and HDD.

Workshop activities



City Dialogue

A forum where we discussed the policy framework and stakeholders involved in Antakya's reconstruction and how Çekmece fits within these broader plans with lawyers and residents.



City Walk

An itinerary from Çekmece to Köprübaşı and Eski Antakya, to develop a shared understanding of Antakya and place Çekmece in its urban context,



Dwelling scale fieldwork

We conducted in-depth interviews in 21 households across Çekmece, producing "dwelling histories" and diagrams.

'LIVING HERITAGE' WORKSHOP IN ÇEKMECE
1-12 June 2024



Final Event

A public event to present the workshop results to residents, civil society actors, and local authorities, gathering feedback and exploring potential collaborations and obstacles.



Community scale fieldwork

We mapped the neighborhood and documented the reconstruction of "living spaces" by residents through sketches and transects.

Action planning

A workshop with activists, practitioners, and civil society partners to review findings from fieldwork and develop actionable strategies for Çekmece.



'Dreaming workshop'

A workshop with Çekmece residents to collaboratively model their living spaces and identify collective aspirations for the future of the neighbourhood.

Two groups worked concurrently in each area. The first group concentrated on the dwelling scale, conducting in-depth interviews with individual households to uncover the personal histories, experiences, and aspirations of residents. The second group focused on the community scale, mapping the neighbourhood and documenting residents' ongoing reconstruction of their living spaces through photography, observational drawings, and maps.

Our work at the city scale involved analysing stakeholders involved in Antakya's reconstruction, as well as the ongoing policies and plans influencing this process and the potential for more community-based decision-making. This analysis commenced during the Public Forum in November 2023 and was further developed through several public events, including a City Walk and a City Dialogue with key stakeholders.

The findings from the three scales were integrated into a community planning event designed to help Çekmece residents visualise their future neighbourhood and collaboratively explore potential pathways for shaping the reconstruction process from a small-scale perspective. This initiative generated a list of "collective aspirations" from residents for the future of Çekmece, which were subsequently presented to a broader audience during a closing Action Planning Workshop and Exhibition. Throughout these activities, we transitioned from diagnosing current conditions in Antakya to proposing actionable pathways for collaborative change.

“After the earthquake, the city became desolate. There are almost no social activities left to do. In the evenings, we walk along the Hanna River because it’s the only place left for us to get out. But it’s not ideal—there’s a bad smell from sewage being dumped into the river, and garbage piles up along the roadside. We worry about our kids walking there alone because there are too many stray dogs and it just doesn’t feel safe anymore.”



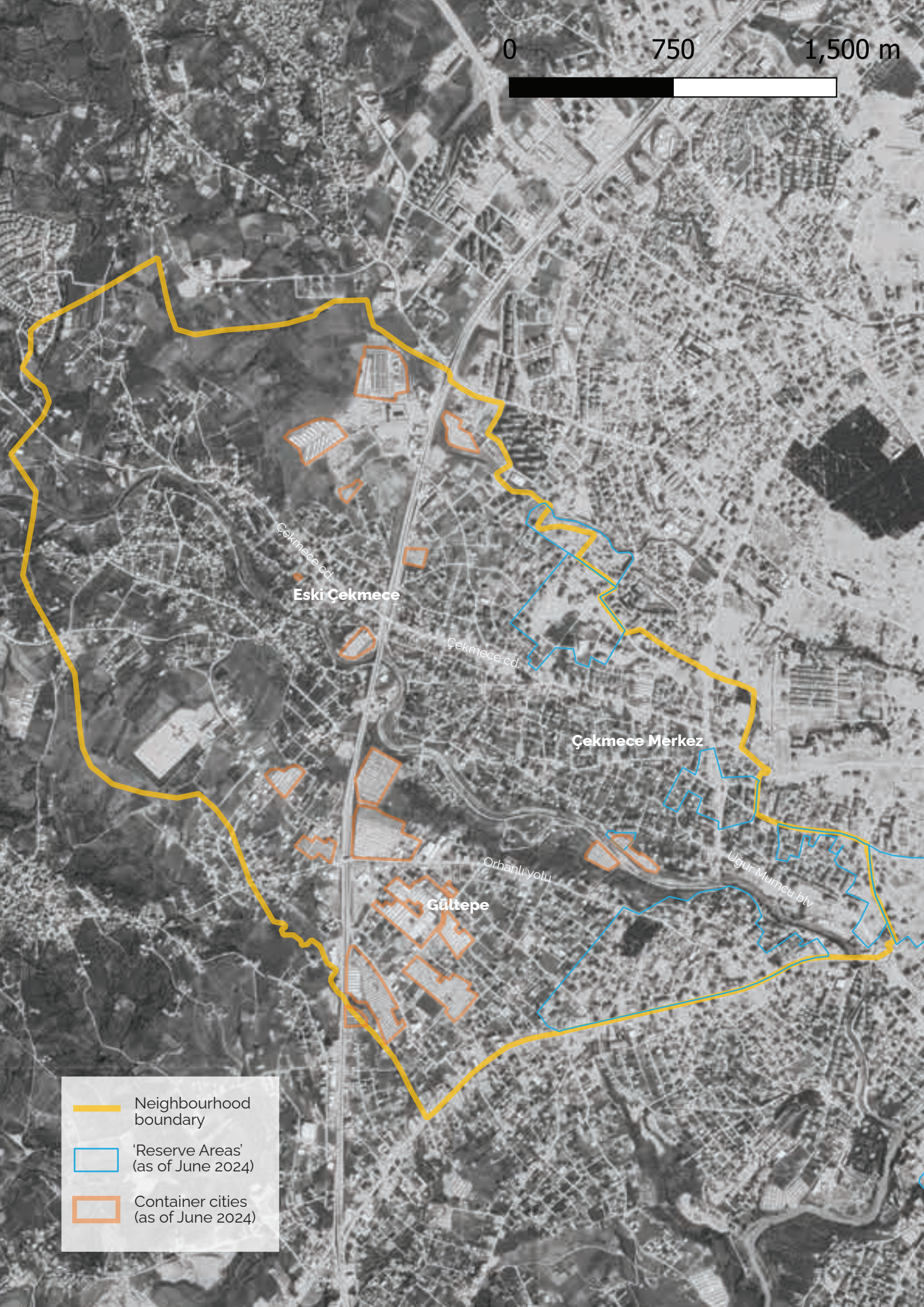
3. Çekmece in Context

The workshop centred on the neighbourhood of Çekmece, located in the Defne district of Antakya's urban area. Originally a village, Çekmece attained town (*belde*) status in 1989. Following the designation of Hatay as a Metropolitan City in 2013 and the establishment of the Defne district, Çekmece became an urban neighbourhood (*mahalle*) in the 2014 local elections. The vast majority of Çekmece's residents are Arab Alawi. The neighbourhood has undergone rapid urbanisation since the 2000s, largely due to migration from surrounding rural areas. Its population, which stood at 19,282 in 2013, doubled to 40,226 by 2022. However, following the 2023 earthquakes, the officially registered population decreased to 32,025.

We focused our pilot work in Çekmece for several key reasons. Firstly, the area covers 8.5 square kilometres and includes a mix of densely populated sections near the city centre, rural zones beyond the beltway, and sparsely populated areas in between. This diversity reflects the various urban conditions and challenges faced in the wider Antakya region following the earthquakes. Secondly, Çekmece has a strong history of activism and political mobilisation, which is crucial for testing new approaches to community-driven reconstruction. This activism is further bolstered by HDD's presence in the area.

Finally, despite significant destruction, many residents of Çekmece continue to live close to their former homes, allowing them to actively participate in revitalising their community. However, large sectors of Çekmece have been designated as "reserve areas," granting the government the authority to expropriate and demolish buildings while implementing its own projects, often disregarding local plans. With ongoing updates and revisions creating widespread concern and uncertainty, Çekmece has become a focal point in the backlash against this policy, which affects the entire Antakya region.

0 750 1,500 m



- Neighbourhood boundary
- 'Reserve Areas' (as of June 2024)
- Container cities (as of June 2024)

To reflect the diversity of situations and conditions within Çekmece while enabling in-depth engagement with local dynamics, our fieldwork concentrated on three distinct focus areas:

Eski Çekmece (Old Çekmece), primarily situated beyond the beltway, is the heart of the original Çekmece town that was incorporated into the metropolitan area in 2014. This area sustained relatively less damage compared to other parts of Antakya, and its main thoroughfare, Çekmece Road, has become a focal point for activity following the earthquakes, featuring numerous business ventures and heavy traffic. The road also leads to a mass-housing complex currently being developed by housing agency TOKI in Toygarlı.

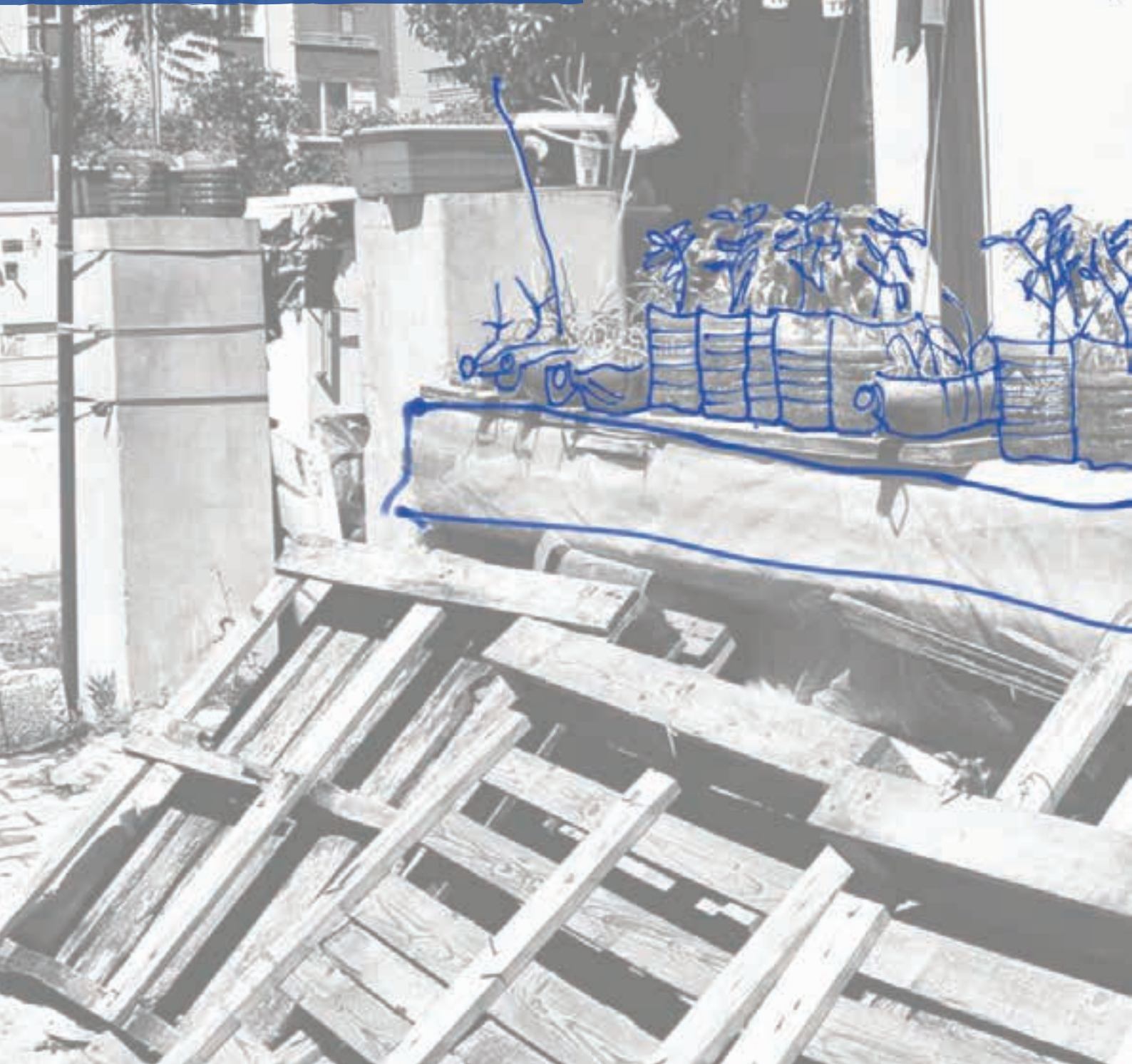
Çekmece Merkez / Aşağı Çekmece (Çekmece Centre) includes low-lying areas near the city centre. Recently, many mid-rise buildings have been built along Çekmece Road and Uğur Mumcu Boulevard, but low-rise houses with gardens and agricultural patches still dominate. The area once housed significant public buildings, including the “Old Municipality” and Yılmaz Nurlu Elementary School (now demolished), as well as a Health Branch operating from containers. Large sections of this area have now been designated as “reserve areas” by the government.

Gültepe is separated from Çekmece by the Hanna River and a steep cliff. This area has seen the establishment of numerous large container cities following the earthquakes, primarily on previously undeveloped green spaces and agricultural land. Subsequently, the vicinity around Orhanlı Road and the eponymous bridge over the beltway has emerged as a new commercial hub. A vast expanse of Gültepe was declared a “reserve area” in 2024.

Below: view over Çekmece across the Hanna river from Orhanlı yolu.



"After the earthquake, we bought a container with our own means and placed it in the park. 6 families live here. Our neighbors live in tents. Before the earthquake, we used to grow seasonal vegetables in the garden of our apartment building. Now that we don't have any soil, we used 5 lt plastic bottles and made a garden by ourselves. We settled here because it was close to our demolished house. We want our houses to be built as soon as possible and our neighbors to come back."



4. City

At the city scale, our aim was to understand the policy framework and stakeholders involved in the reconstruction of Antakya, while also considering Çekmece in relation to these policies and plans.

Our work at this level involved examining the roles of local residents, grassroots organisations, government agencies, and local and international NGOs to identify advocacy targets and opportunities for collaboration. Understanding Çekmece within a broader citywide context also involved recognising that other communities across Antakya share many challenges faced by the neighbourhood. Therefore, local solutions need to be approached from a larger-scale perspective while fostering neighbourhood-based mobilisation that expands into a broader civic network.

For this reason, throughout the workshop, we engaged a variety of stakeholders, bringing together activists based in Antakya and residents of Çekmece to analyse the urban dynamics, policy frameworks, and stakeholders shaping the reconstruction. Through a series of structured conversations, this collaborative process identified opportunities and pathways for both the neighbourhood's and the city's recovery.

Additionally, the workshop served as a catalyst to initiate dialogue with key stakeholders in the reconstruction process, including local municipalities, professional organisations, and government-appointed bodies. Establishing these connections has been a crucial step in advocating for a stronger role for the community and promoting community-led reconstruction efforts.

Methods and tools

Work at the city scale involved three main activities:

City Walk: A guided walk through key areas of Antakya—Çekmece, Gazi, Armutlu, Köprübaşı, and Eski Antakya—was conducted with HDD members. This walk helped situate Çekmece within its urban context, allowing participants to observe city-wide challenges and discuss their impacts on the neighbourhood.



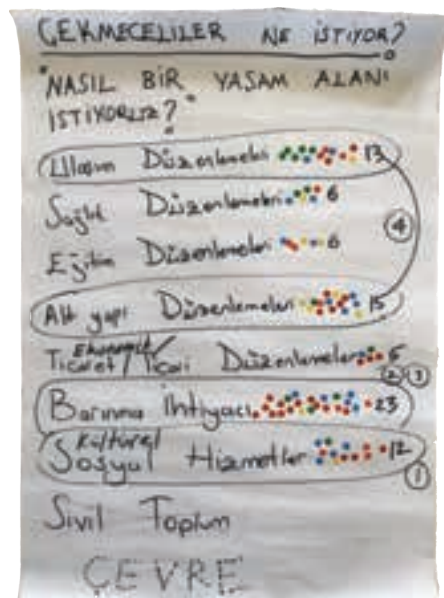
A moment of the city walk, between Çekmece and Elektrik mahallesi.

City Dialogue: A public event was held at the HDD Çekmece Centre, attended by workshop participants, local residents, HDD activists, and two urban planning lawyers. The dialogue unpacked Antakya's policy frameworks, key stakeholders in the reconstruction process, and critical social and environmental issues pre- and post-earthquake. We explored how Çekmece fits into these broader urban development processes and discussed advocacy targets for a more community-driven approach to planning.



The stakeholders map employed during the City Dialogue.

Action Planning Workshop: In the second week, we convened an event with activists, practitioners, and civil society partners to share findings from the Dwelling and Community scale and agree on next steps. Four working groups collaborated to further develop the collective aspirations identified by residents the previous day. This work is presented in chapter 7 of the report.



The main collective aspirations of Çekmece residents, on which the Action Planning Workshop focused.



QUESTION 1: What were the main issues in Antakya's city growth before the earthquake in terms of social equality and taking care of the environment?

Zoning plans in Hatay Metropolitan City were inadequate, emerging as a patchwork of uncoordinated city and town-level plans merged in 2014. Political motivations often influenced district boundaries. **Zoning infringements and plot-based modifications are prevalent** and have been further encouraged by successive amnesties. In Defne, existing zoning plans, proposed before the earthquakes, remain in effect despite widespread criticism from professional chambers. Addressing these pre-existing imbalances and unsustainable practices requires modifying these plans.

The city also suffered from **inadequate infrastructure and social services**. Even before the earthquakes, basic infrastructure and transport were lacking, and public education and health systems were insufficient and difficult to access. This deficiency **exacerbated social inequalities**, which the earthquakes further deepened, creating **new forms of poverty and dispossession**.

Social movements in Antakya have been limited and often unsupported, with some even facing criminalisation, especially following the outbreak of the war in Syria. Although local initiatives have emerged, few have evolved into sustained mobilisations, and **organised movements have struggled to find allies within institutions**. As a result, the shared demand for coordinated planning has failed to gain momentum.

Historical discrimination based on ethno-religious identity and political affiliation has significantly shaped Antakya's urban landscape. The lack of infrastructure, combined with **chronic underinvestment, is closely linked to marginalised populations**. The ongoing neglect of urban issues and residents' needs is particularly acute in areas at odds with the current Turkish government — an issue that predates the recent earthquakes. As a peripheral city, **the inhabitants of Antakya often feel excluded from national resources**, contributing to systemic discrimination against their community.

For many years, **Antakya faced underinvestment and a stagnant economy**. As agriculture declined, the state made minimal efforts to diversify the local economy, a situation worsened by the Syrian war and border closures. Consequently, **residents increasingly turned to real estate** as one of the few available livelihood sources. Corruption and nepotism marred urban planning, leading to **rapid, unchecked development over the past two decades**, particularly evident in Çekmece. Rebuilding the city to address socioeconomic and environmental imbalances requires rethinking the urban economy and residents' livelihoods.

Antakya has lacked a comprehensive urban governance framework, resulting in **clashes and poor coordination among various institutions** involved in planning. Responsibilities are often unclear, and sectors operate in isolation, with little connection between them. The earthquakes exposed and exacerbated these issues.

Various frameworks and processes are influencing urban development in Antakya post-earthquake, though coordination among them is lacking. Key ongoing processes include:

Central Government Leadership:

The Central Government, led by the **Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation**, the **Mass Housing Administration (TOKI)**, **Emlak Konut**, and the newly established **Urban Transformation Directorate**, is spearheading post-earthquake development. Many decisions made under the **State of Emergency** lack oversight. TOKI, in coordination with AFAD, is advancing mass-housing projects on agricultural land, while the Ministry has designated heavily damaged areas as “**reserve areas**” for government-led redevelopment.

Hatay Masterplan:

The **Türkiye Tasarım Vakfı** (Turkish Design Council, TTV) has been tasked by the government with creating the “Hatay Masterplan” for the metropolitan region. Collaborating with **DB Architects**, **Foster + Partners**, **Buro Happold**, and **Keym**, among others, the plan currently lacks a legal foundation, and its implementation remains uncertain, likely limited to the “**Risk Area**” of Old Antakya and a “**pilot area**” in New Antakya.

On the next page, you'll find a stakeholder map displaying how these processes and actors are related >>>

QUESTION 2: What plans and projects for urban development affect Antakya and Çekmece, and who plays a role in developing and implementing them?

Local Zoning Plans:

Urban development in Türkiye is generally managed through local zoning plans (1/100,000 ÇDP, 1/5,000 NİP, 1/1,000 UİP), developed by the **Hatay Metropolitan Municipality** and **district municipalities**. These plans remain in place post-earthquake despite widespread acknowledgment of their inadequacy.

Temporary Settlements:

Many displaced residents are now in emergency shelters, including **tent and container cities**, which have altered Antakya's geography. These settlements are administered by the Central Government through the **Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD)**, alongside **local and international NGOs**, and are often built on green or agricultural land far from residents' original homes.

Self-Built Solutions:

In response to the crisis, residents are creating their own solutions using available resources. Across Antakya, people are erecting **self-built structures**, placing **containers and tents** on vacant land, and constructing **prefabricated buildings**. Although these efforts lack coordination and support, they collectively contribute to reshaping the city.

QUESTION 3: What are the obstacles and potential openings for addressing ongoing issues of unfair and unsustainable development throughout Antakya's reconstruction?

The planning process is often conducted behind closed doors in a top-down manner, involving numerous competing stakeholders. This lack of transparency, combined with a constant deluge of information, presents significant challenges for residents, professionals, activists, and municipal officials. The uncertainty surrounding future developments hampers residents' ability to plan and rebuild, complicating efforts for social movements to coalesce around clear objectives.

The designation of "reserve areas" undermines participatory processes and disregards local communities' understanding and emotional connections to the land. Defined by the Ministry of Urbanisation under the 2023 amendment to Law 6306, these reserve areas grant the government and TOKI the authority to expropriate properties, demolish buildings, and implement projects that override existing zoning plans. This centralised approach to post-earthquake planning diminishes the authority of local governments and communities, further alienating residents from the decision-making process.

Engaging across multiple levels is crucial for securing support and resources, establishing exchange networks, and advocating for change. Many issues faced by residents of Çekmece are shared throughout Antakya, necessitating a city-wide mobilisation. Furthermore, Antakya faces challenges common to the 11 provinces affected by the earthquakes, making certain issues—such as the designation of reserve areas—relevant on a national scale. There is now potential to leverage regional, national, and international support channels in a way that can amplify community-based mobilisation and strengthen residents' claims.

Establishing a city-wide network of neighbourhood associations is essential for building a critical mass of support. This collective action is vital for opposing unsuitable development plans and pressuring authorities to facilitate public participation. The recent formation of the Antakya Right to Shelter Platform (ABHP), which unites over ten diverse neighbourhoods, marks a positive step in this direction.

Something to add?

What have we learned in summary?

CITY

Legacy of Discrimination

Our analysis of Antakya's urban development reveals critical challenges rooted in historical discrimination based on ethno-religious identity and political affiliations. This legacy has resulted in underinvestment and a stagnant economy prior to the earthquake.

Unchecked Growth

As agriculture declined, residents increasingly turned to real estate for income. However, corruption and nepotism obstructed effective urban planning, leading to unchecked growth. The city's inadequate infrastructure and social services deepened social inequalities, which have been exacerbated by the recent earthquake.

Planning Bottlenecks

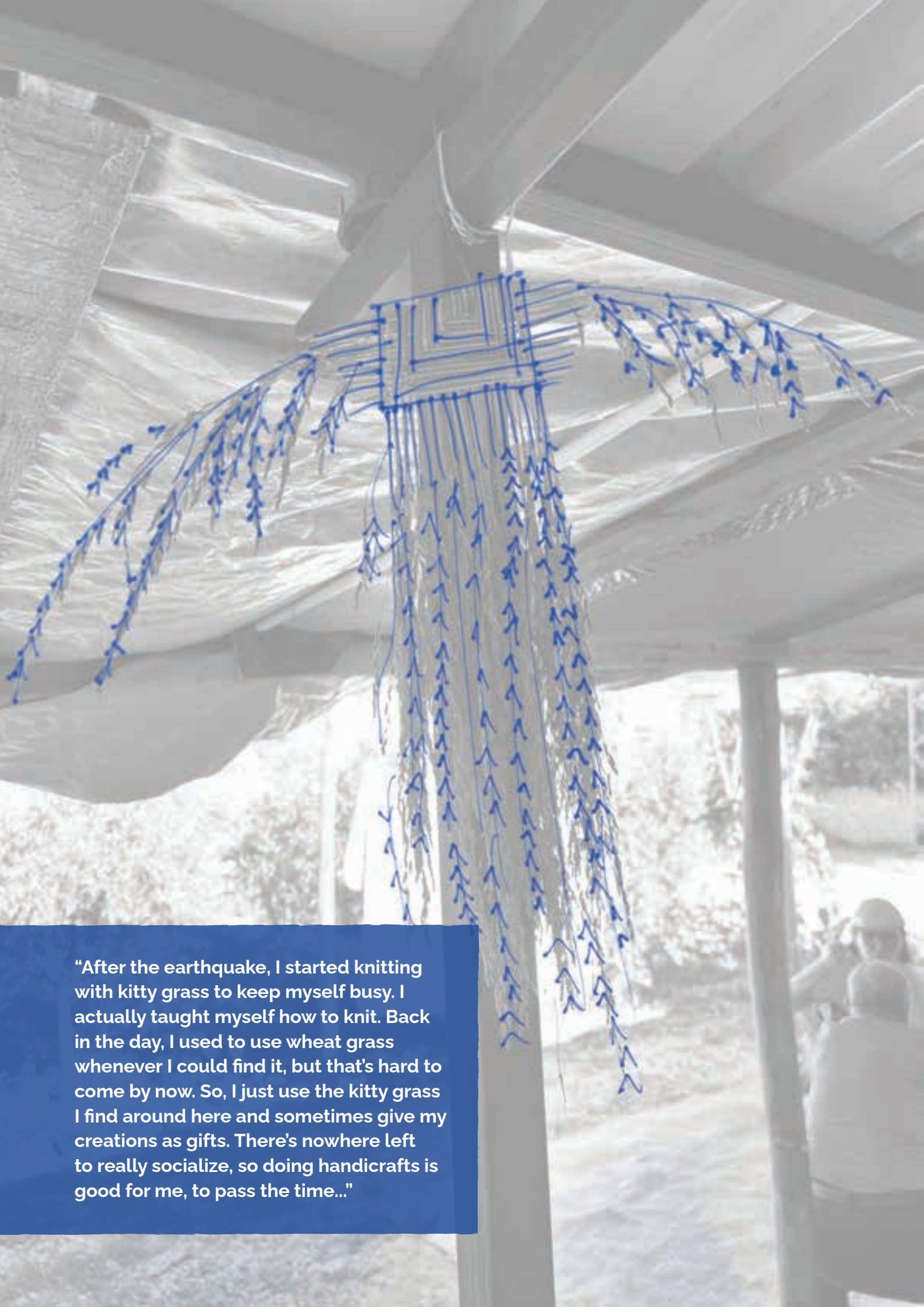
In the aftermath of the earthquake, urban development is primarily driven by central government entities, such as the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation. Unfortunately, many decisions lack oversight and coordination. Mass housing projects are encroaching on agricultural land, and the Hatay Masterplan, developed by the Türkiye Tasarım Vakfı, lacks legal backing, limiting its effectiveness. Local zoning plans remain unchanged despite criticism, while temporary settlements for displaced residents have altered the city's landscape.

New Decision- Making Processes

Addressing these issues is hindered by a lack of transparency and centralised decision-making that marginalises local communities. However, opportunities for solidarity exist, exemplified by initiatives like the Antakya Right to Shelter Platform, which advocates for participatory decision-making and challenges unsuitable development.

The Role of Professionals and Professional Organisations

There is potential to enhance collaboration between professional organisations and grassroots groups in engaging with community-led processes. Given the widespread consensus that reconstruction plans are being developed without local input, bodies such as the Chambers of Architects and City Planners could take on a larger role in supporting initiatives for community involvement. Mobilising professionals in future efforts is essential to amplify community voices in the reconstruction process.



"After the earthquake, I started knitting with kitty grass to keep myself busy. I actually taught myself how to knit. Back in the day, I used to use wheat grass whenever I could find it, but that's hard to come by now. So, I just use the kitty grass I find around here and sometimes give my creations as gifts. There's nowhere left to really socialize, so doing handicrafts is good for me, to pass the time..."

5. Community

Our aim at the community scale was to map the “living heritage” of Çekmece, focusing on the places, practices, and networks that sustain collective life. We sought to envision ways to carry this heritage into the future by identifying shared challenges and documenting residents' ongoing responses to revive their collective identity, while also considering interventions to support their efforts.

To achieve this, we observed and identified significant places, communal practices, and social networks within Çekmece. Our focus was on shared spaces and infrastructure, as well as the forms of association and solidarity that have emerged in response to common problems.

During this mapping process, we employed transect walks, mapping workshops, and sketching to identify challenges, ongoing responses, and potential paths forward. We examined how living heritage is at stake, explored the ways in which residents repair, adapt, and advance their heritage, and identified necessary interventions to help revive it.

The information gathered was then linked to a broader analytical framework developed during our previous engagement in Antakya, as detailed in the Collective Statement document mentioned in the Introduction to this report. This framework encompasses six key elements: lack of basic infrastructure, ecological destruction, encroachment on communal spaces, loss of memory and vernacular heritage, displacement, and concerns for personal safety.

By utilising this framework to analyse the mapping exercises conducted during the workshop, we gained a clearer understanding of the specific manifestations of these challenges in Çekmece. This approach also allowed us to highlight the ongoing responses from residents as they collectively navigate these issues.

Methods and tools

In the first week of the workshop, participants took part in various activities aimed at documenting shared spaces and facilities in Çekmece.

Participatory mapping sessions were organised at local open venues, where residents pointed out important focal points in the neighbourhood and shared their experiences, both positive and negative, about these spaces. The resulting maps were combined to show the specific challenges facing Çekmece.



Map of Eski Çekmece focus area.

In addition, they conducted **transect walks** and created **observation sketches** by combining spatial observations with residents' insights. These sketches represent the collective living spaces and show how residents are actively maintaining and rebuilding them through forms of association and



Transect sketch from Gültepe focus area.



Observational sketch from Çekmece Merkez focus area.



Table of “challenges” and “ongoing responses” in Çekmece



1. Lack of basic infrastructures and increasing depopulation

- Inadequate public transport
- Bad road conditions, lack of pedestrian pavements
- Accessibility issues for individuals with special needs
- Limited access to clean drinking water
- Limited access to electricity and internet
- Lack of sanitation and sewerage infrastructure
- Lack of education facilities
- Lack of repair and maintenance
- Economic hardships and loss of employment
- Encroachment on parks, gardens and playgrounds

- Collective water distribution & common treatment tanks
- Hitchhiking and carpooling
- Solidarity organisations and collective actions
- Support from NGOs and political groups
- Economic downsizing, belt-tightening and job change
- Subsistence gardens



2. Ecological destruction and public health hazards

- Insufficient number of toilets
- Destruction of sewerage network and emptying of mobile toilets into the stream
- Insufficient garbage collection system and improper disposal
- Hazardous rubble removal
- Air pollution caused by dust and demolition
- Allergic reactions and respiratory problems
- Damage to endemic fish species
- Conversion of agricultural land and olive groves into container cities
- Uncontrolled increase in disease-spreading pests

- Pouring sulphur and lime on container edges
- Watering with a hose to prevent dust
- Self-arranged roadblocks
- Temporary sewerage solutions



3. Encroachment on natural and collective spaces

- Concretization of agricultural land and olive groves
- Scattered squatting on parks and agricultural land
- Conversion of kindergarten and basketball court into police headquarters

- Community mobilisation and protests
- Creating common and shared spaces in the neighbourhood
- Home gardens and seasonal planting in pots



4. Loss of sense of place, memory and vernacular heritage

- Loss of reference points
- Demolition of older buildings and minor architecture



5. Displacement, gentrification and touristification

- Confusion and uncertainty related to the declaration, scope and implementation of "reserve areas"
- Fear of dispossession and displacement
- Change in demographic structure
- Integration problems arising from the forced integration of different cultures
- "Post-disaster tourism"



6. Personal safety and security

- Traffic accidents
- Insecurity in walking areas due to darkness
- Alienation and sense of unfamiliarity
- Harassment and theft

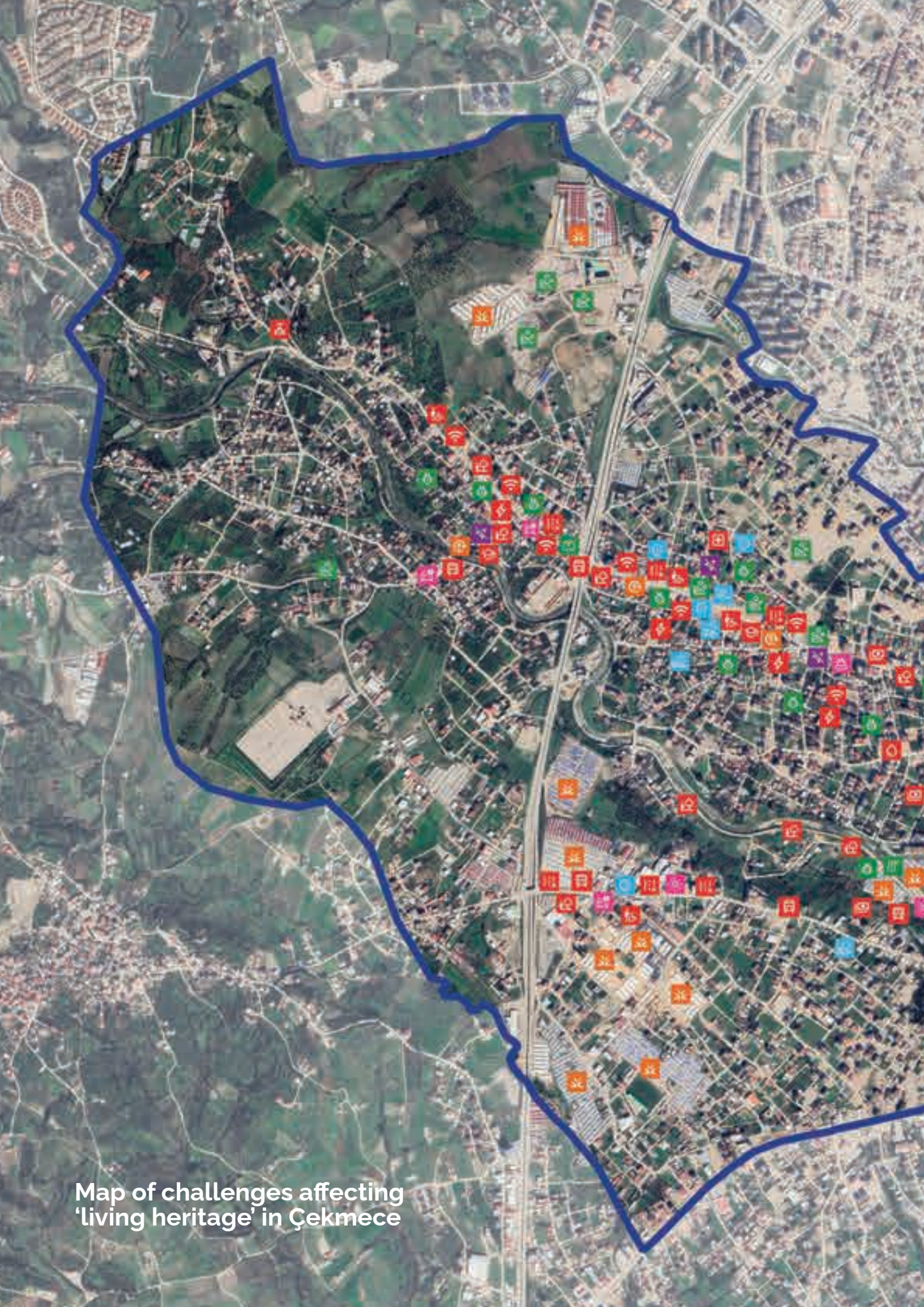
CHALLENGES

- Graffiti writing and stencilling to retain memories
- Pressure from the neighbourhood for the return of old shopkeepers
- Prioritisation when shopping
- Creating makeshift socialising areas

- Neighbourhood solidarity, community organisations
- Self-repair of damaged buildings
- Placement of container, tents or prefabs to remain in the area near to their houses
- Individual and collective legal opposition
- Re-opening business and activities

- Self-imposed lockdown
- Coordinating opening and closing times


ONGOING RESPONSES







Map of challenges affecting 'living heritage' in Çekmece





LACK OF BASIC INFRASTRUCTURES AND INCREASING DEPOPULATION

-  TRANSPORT
-  ELECTRICITY
-  ECONOMIC
-  SEWERAGE
-  INTERNET
-  ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES
-  SANITATION / ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER
-  ACCESS TO EDUCATION
-  ACCESSIBILITY / PAVEMENTS
-  PARK


ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARDS

-  RUBBLE
-  RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS
-  PESTS
-  ODOUR




ENCROACHMENT ON NATURAL AND COLLECTIVE SPACES

-  LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND
-  FUNCTION CHANGE




LOSS OF SENSE OF PLACE, MEMORY, AND VERNACULAR HERITAGE

-  LOSS OF REFERENCE POINTS

DISPLACEMENT, GENTRIFICATION AND TOURISTIFICATION

-  CHANGE OF DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE
-  INSECURITY
-  DISPOSSESSION / CONFISCATION

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

-  RISK OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS
-  LIGHTING
-  RISKY BUILDINGS

Challenges and ongoing responses in Çekmece

1. Lack of basic infrastructures and increasing depopulation

Infrastructural Struggles. Çekmece has long struggled with infrastructural issues, which were significantly exacerbated by the recent earthquakes. Many residents now face harsh living conditions and receive little to no assistance from the government. Accessing specialists for the repair and maintenance of basic infrastructure in temporary shelters has also proven difficult.

Response: In the aftermath of the earthquakes, there has been a notable increase in membership in solidarity organisations and collective actions aimed at addressing the hardships faced by Çekmece residents. These efforts are sometimes supported by NGOs, aid organisations, and political groups.

Inadequate Transportation. Public transportation is inadequate, and the roads are in poor condition, riddled with potholes and cracks. Many roads lack pedestrian pavements and adequate lighting, making mobility particularly challenging, especially for disabled individuals, whose numbers have increased since the earthquakes.

Response: The Defne Disabled and Volunteers Association, the only remaining association and gathering point for disabled residents, is located in Çekmece and remains very active in supporting those in need. In response to transportation difficulties, a hitchhiking culture has also developed, and carpooling is commonly used.

Limited Access to Clean Water. Access to drinking water is limited. Residents often have to travel long distances and wait in line for free water or purchase it from shops.

How are living heritage elements in Çekmece currently at risk?

In what ways are these elements affected by the earthquakes, reconstruction policies, and broader dynamics?

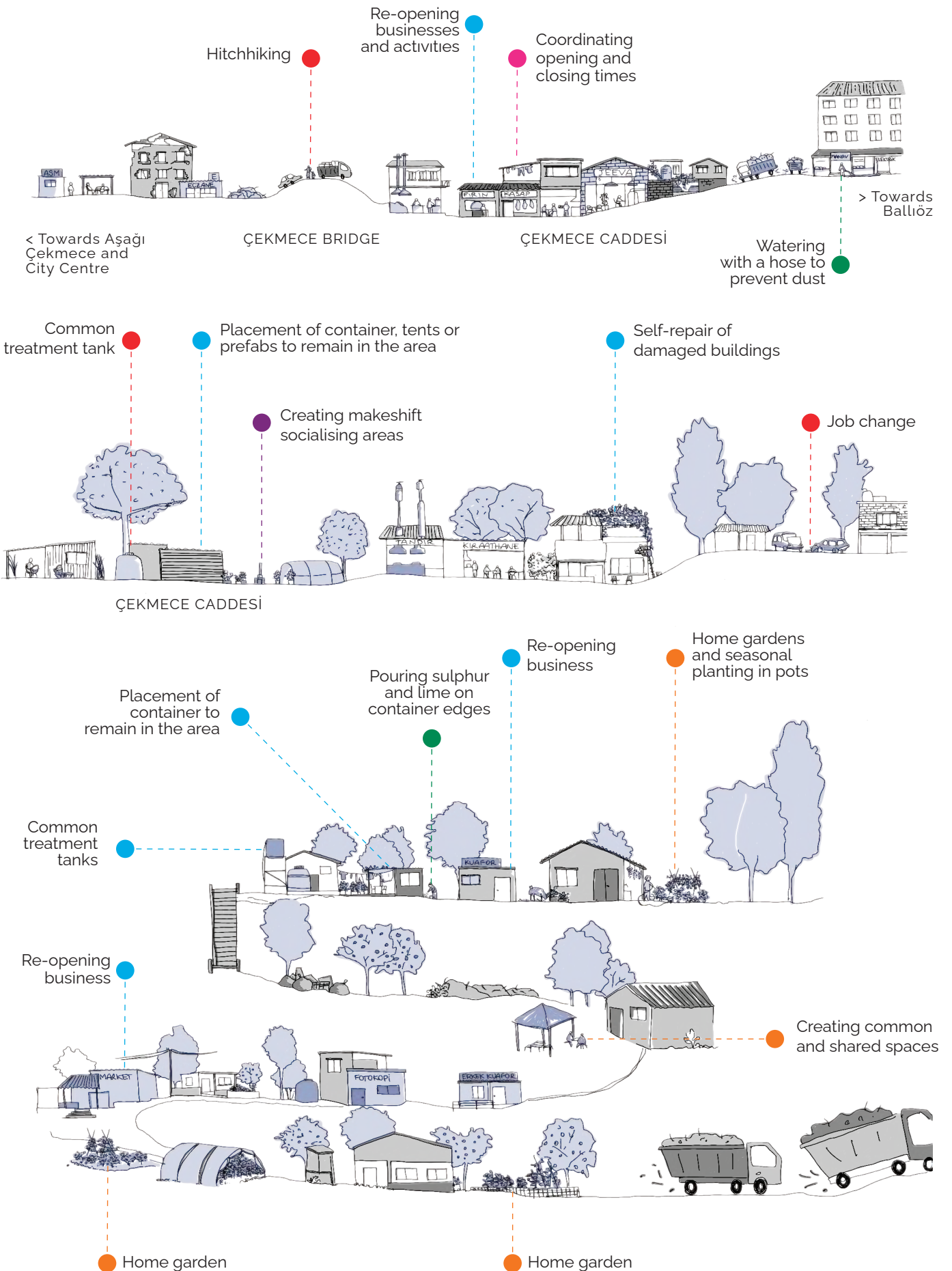
Response: Some residents have organised collective water distribution, transporting supplies from the chieftain's office using privately-owned vehicles. In some instances, residents have been supported by NGOs in installing common treatment tanks in the neighbourhood.

Insufficient Provision. Electricity and internet services are unreliable, and there is a shortage of green spaces and educational facilities. Many schools that survived the earthquakes have been repurposed for government use, further restricting access to education. Sanitation has become a critical issue due to the collapse of the sewer system and limited garbage collection. Overflowing cesspools and insufficient shared toilets and showers provided by NGOs have resulted in unhygienic conditions. The only public health centre, now operating from temporary containers, was already inadequate before the earthquakes.

Economic Hardships and Employment Challenges. Livelihoods and employment opportunities have significantly decreased while prices have skyrocketed. The few functioning markets are generally overpriced, leaving residents with little choice, especially without access to their own transportation.

Response: Many have had to make significant economic adjustments, switching to lower-skilled, fast-paced jobs to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the importance of subsistence gardens, a common practice in Antakya, has increased as many residents turn to it to offset rising living costs.

Focus area 1: Eski Çekmece



2. Ecological destruction and public health hazards

Environmental Degradation and Sewerage Issues.

Çekmece has long faced environmental degradation and unchecked urbanisation, but the earthquakes have greatly worsened these conditions. The destruction of the sewerage network has caused widespread sewage overflows, and the insufficient number of toilets, including mobile units, exacerbates the issue. Many of these mobile toilets are emptied directly into the Hanna stream, causing odour problems and endangering the endemic fish species living in the water.

Response: Some residents have resorted to makeshift sewerage solutions, such as reclaiming water pipes from demolished houses and connecting them to the sewer system using 20-meter long extensions.

Inefficient Garbage Collection and Air Pollution.

Garbage collection remains a critical issue as well. The neighbourhood lacks sufficient garbage collection areas, the collection system is inefficient, and idle plots and rubble sites are used as dumping grounds. As elsewhere in Antakya, the air is polluted by dust from ongoing demolitions and heavy vehicle traffic. This, along with the unsanitary conditions in containers, has led to a rise in allergic reactions, bronchitis, and respiratory issues due to dust and mould. In the long run, chemicals in the dust may lead to more severe long-term health complications.

Response: Individually and in groups, Çekmece people have been watering the areas around their homes and businesses with hoses to prevent dust from spreading. Some have even blocked roads near their homes to stop heavy vehicles from passing and stirring up dust.

Loss of Agricultural Land and Pest Infestation.

Additionally, the conversion of agricultural lands and olive groves into container cities has devastated the local environment. There has also been an uncontrolled rise in disease-spreading pests, such as mosquitoes and cockroaches.

Response: To combat this, residents have been pouring sulphur and lime around the edges of containers as a makeshift pest control method.

3. Encroachment on natural and collective spaces

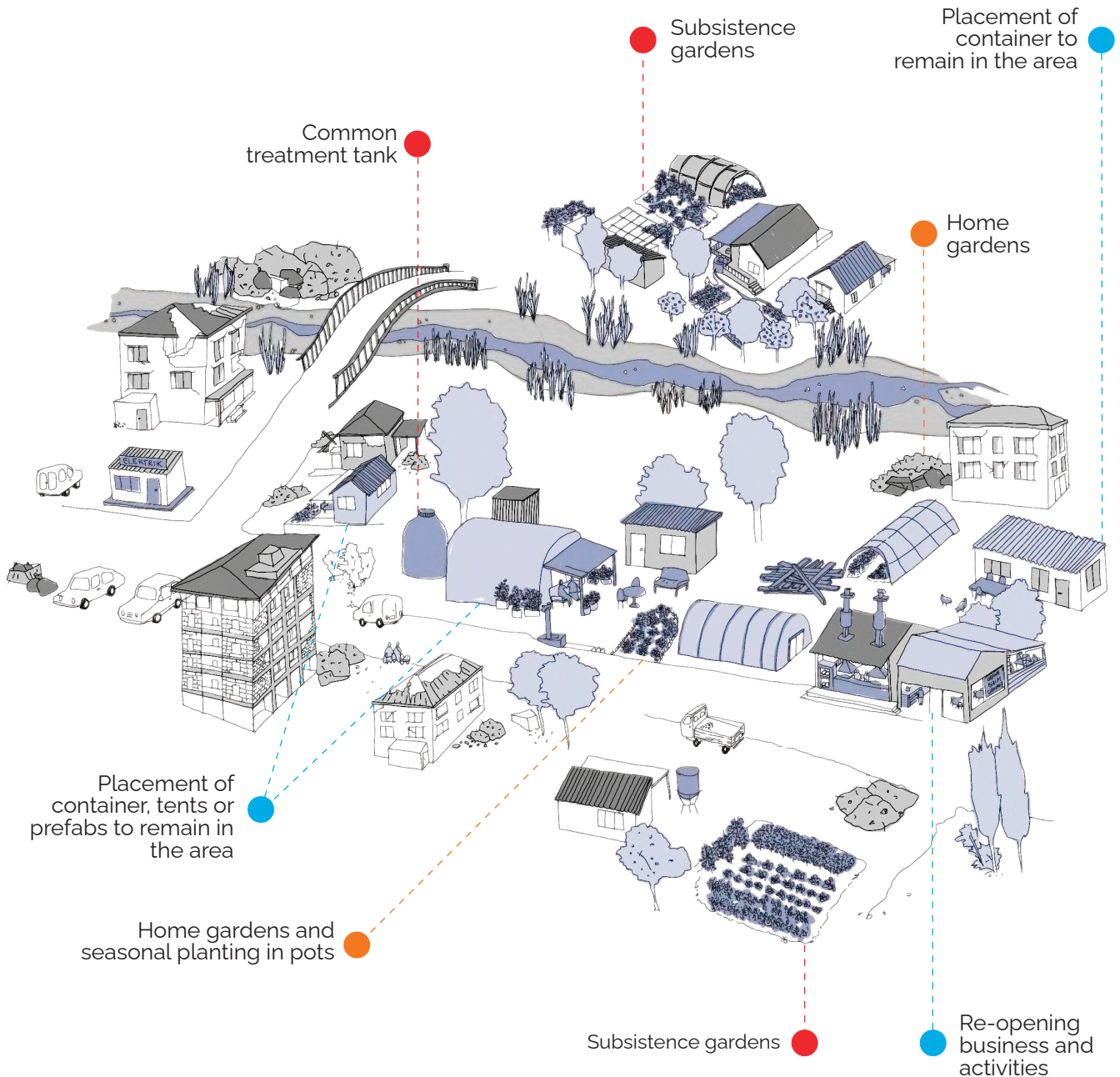
Loss of Agricultural Lands and Green Spaces.

The earthquakes have led to the loss of agricultural lands and green spaces in and around Çekmece. Many container cities have now been erected on agricultural lands, such as olive groves. Beyond the neighbourhood's boundaries, the construction of mass-housing developments and new roads has contributed to the destruction of even more agricultural areas and ancient olive groves. For many residents who chose to remain in Çekmece, there were few options but to set up tents or containers on unbuilt plots, including public parks and green areas. This further strained the already limited communal spaces. Additionally, social spaces have been repurposed: for instance, a kindergarten and basketball court in Eski Çekmece has been turned into a police station. Adding to these pressures, the declaration of several areas as "reserve areas" poses a significant threat of state expropriation, with the potential confiscation of private property and public lands within the neighbourhood.

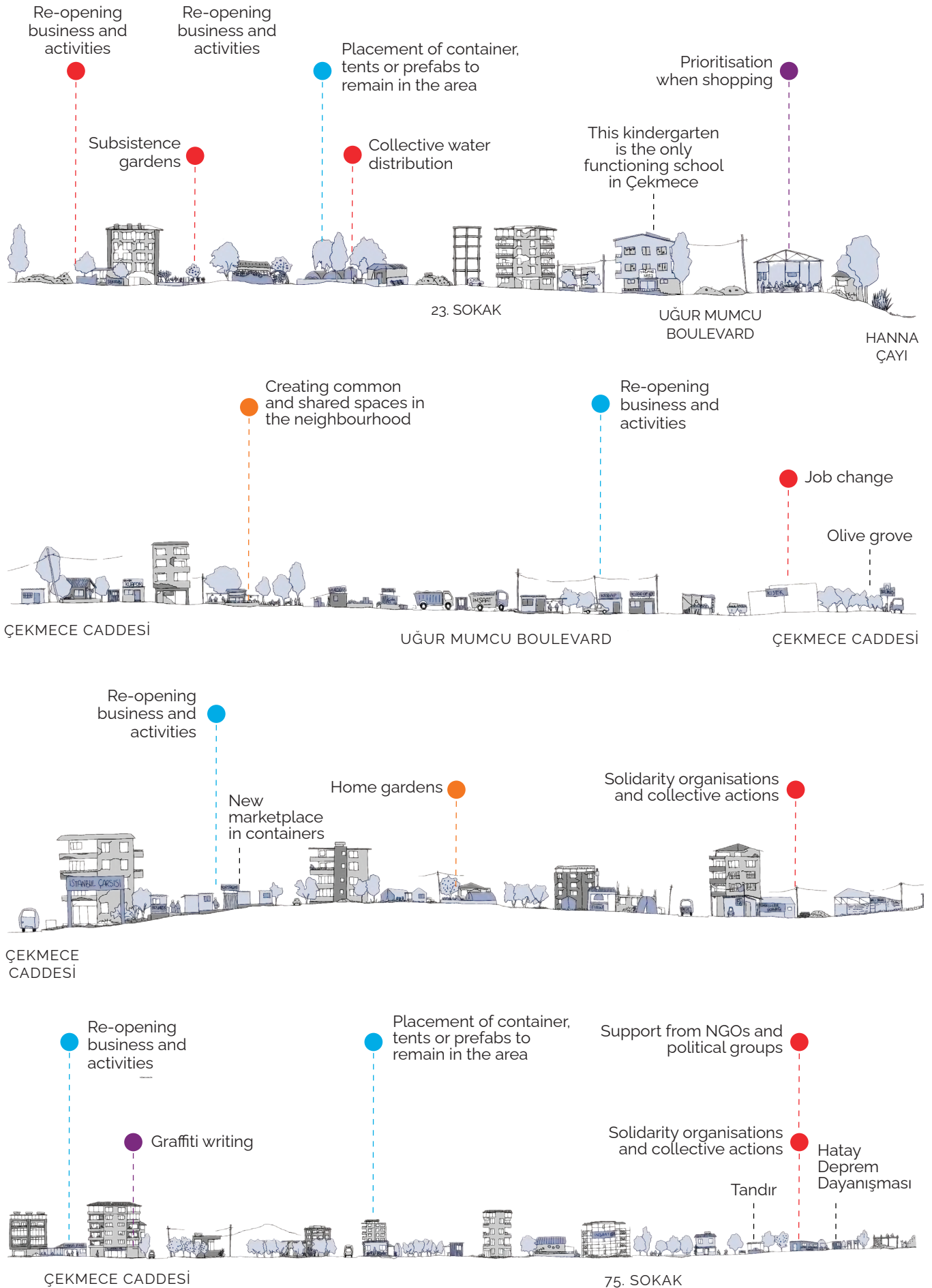
Response: Residents of Çekmece and Antakya have mobilised and organised protests against the ongoing encroachment on their natural and collective spaces. In parallel, there have been grassroots efforts to reclaim and create shared spaces within the neighbourhood. Many residents, even those living in temporary shelters, have been recreating gardens and growing vegetables in pots. Home agriculture is widespread in Antakya's culture, and people have been using every available space to cultivate gardens and contribute to their own food supply.

The area beyond the Hanna stream in Eski Çekmece

The elevated area of Çekmece beyond the Hanna stream still retains its agricultural character, with many home gardens and greenhouses. Many people decided to set up tents and containers on these lands, originally used for farming, in order to remain within the neighborhood. Commercial activities resumed quickly, as most are small shops whose owners live in the neighborhood. They either repaired the premises or replaced them with containers. Tandır ovens have also reopened, and those that were damaged are being repaired by residents, creating an opportunity for a shared, community-managed space.



Focus area 2: Çekmece Merkez



A cluster of relatives coming together after the earthquake in Çekmece Merkez

After the earthquake, families who lost their homes gathered around a few slightly damaged, low-rise houses owned by relatives. They refurbished these buildings and set up containers in a nearby field and olive grove, creating vegetable gardens. Together, they formed a cluster of nine households, transforming the alley between them into a shared social space for drinking coffee, organizing celebrations, and spending time together. Some also set up makeshift shops in prefabs and shacks at a nearby junction, generating some income.

Job change: a woman set up a watermelon stall at the junction

Re-opening business

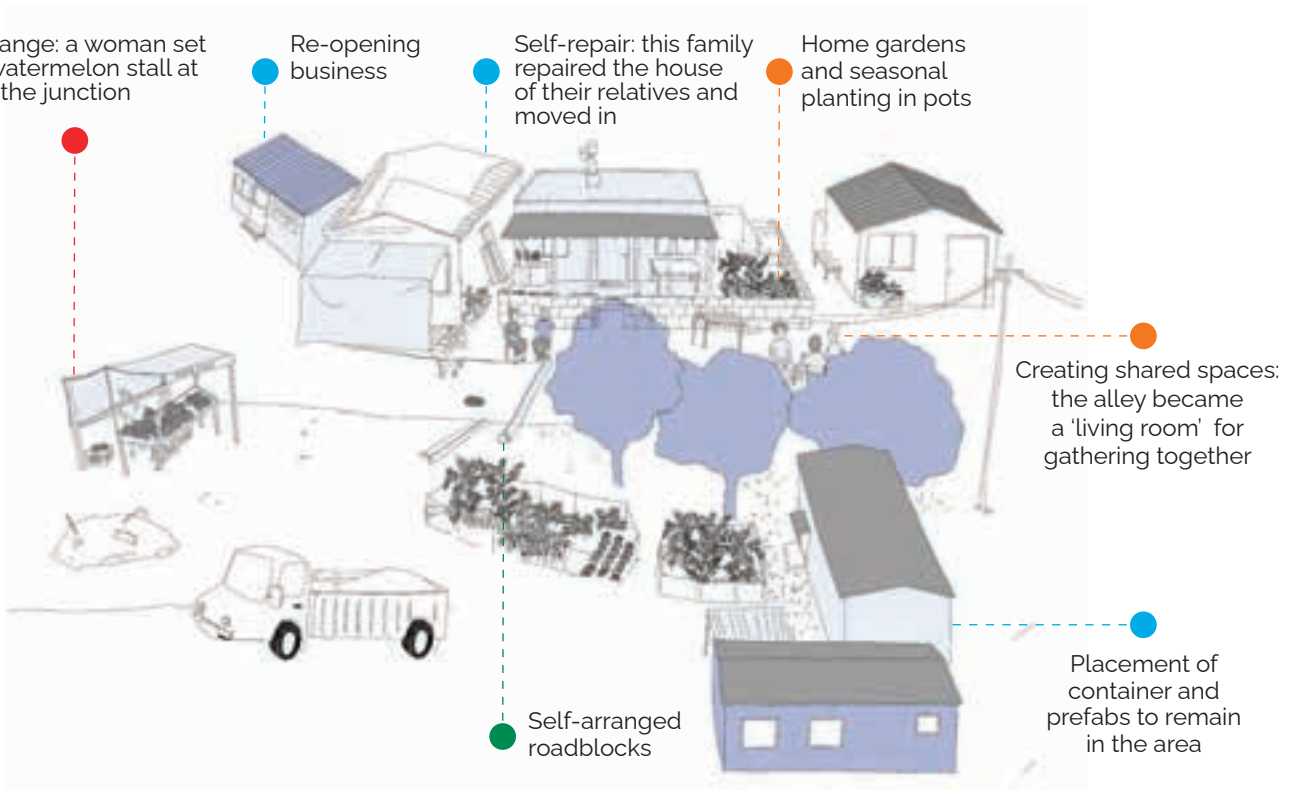
Self-repair: this family repaired the house of their relatives and moved in

Home gardens and seasonal planting in pots

Creating shared spaces: the alley became a 'living room' for gathering together

Self-arranged roadblocks

Placement of container and prefabs to remain in the area



A cluster of households building a temporary living space in a public park

A couple of households who chose to remain in their neighborhood rather than move to container cities settled in a small local park. They combined self-purchased containers, relief organization-provided tents, and built their own outdoor spaces with seating and greenery. This formed a cluster of five families, with different economic conditions supporting one another. They received some assistance from NGOs and a political party to install shared showers and a water distribution tank, though the tank broke down shortly after.

Placement of container, tents or prefabs to remain in the area

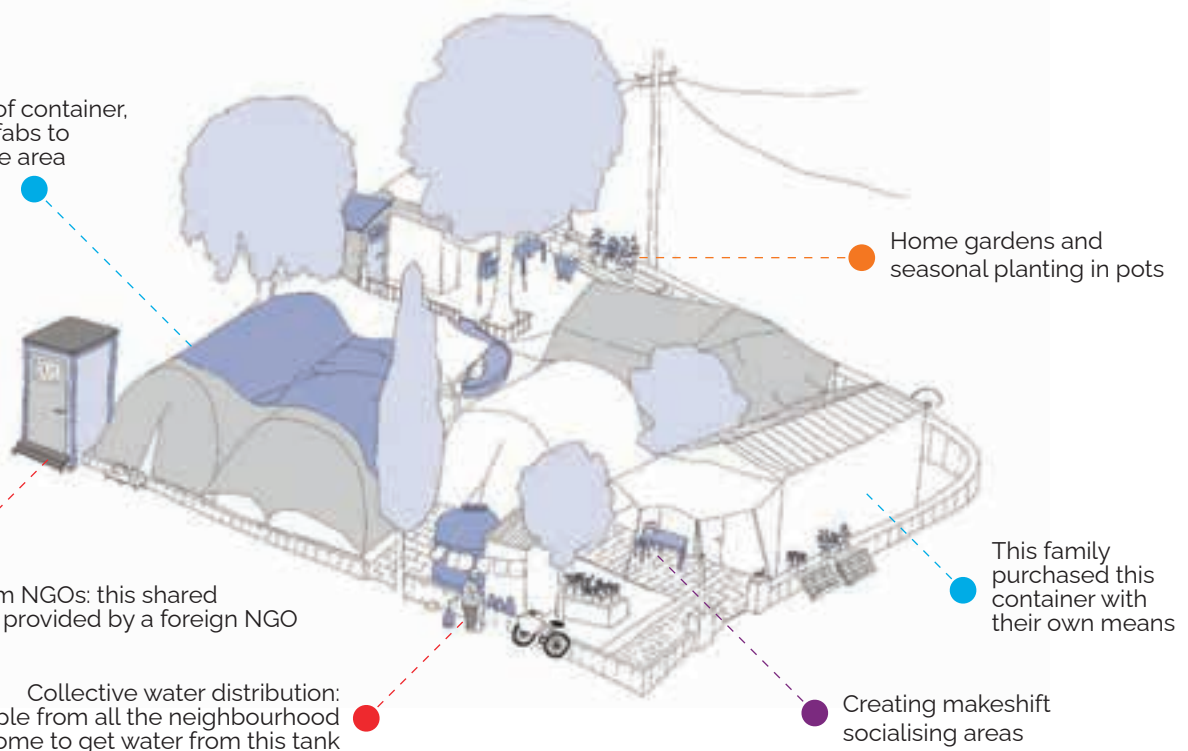
Home gardens and seasonal planting in pots

Support from NGOs: this shared shower was provided by a foreign NGO

This family purchased this container with their own means

Collective water distribution: people from all the neighbourhood come to get water from this tank

Creating makeshift socialising areas



4. Loss of sense of place, memory, and vernacular heritage

Erosion of Community Identity and Memory. The destruction of key landmarks in Çekmece has led to a significant erosion of the community's sense of place and memory. Well-known structures like the Olympic swimming pool and the prefecture, along with older buildings and minor architecture, have been razed. The disappearance of these reference points has disrupted residents' connection to their surroundings, contributing to a growing sense of dislocation and cultural loss.

Response: In response, the community has found creative ways to preserve and express their memories. Through graffiti writing and stencilling, residents have been leaving marks on the walls in public spaces, referencing what has happened and expressing the will to return and remain. There has also been pressure from the neighbourhood to bring back old shopkeepers, and residents make a point of prioritising these shopkeepers when they shop.

Loss of Social Gathering Spaces. As several gathering points have been destroyed, people have adapted by creating new social spaces in parks, on the streets, or in commercial hubs.

Response: In some cases, residents have self-constructed spaces or adapted containers and prefabs for socialising and spending time together. Outdoor areas, such as the space in front of a barber shop, a few shaded seats in an alley, or a communal area between containers and tents in a park, now serve as venues for community bonding and fostering a sense of togetherness. Reopened cafés and restaurants are buzzing with activity, while the long-standing Sosite Pazarı continues to take place every Tuesday.

5. Displacement, gentrification and touristification

Displacement and Demographic Changes. Many residents of Çekmece have been displaced after the earthquakes. They fear that this will not be temporary but may lead to dispossession and permanent displacement, significantly altering the demographic structure of the neighbourhood. In container cities, where residents from different neighbourhoods and cultural backgrounds are residing side by side, integration problems have arisen.

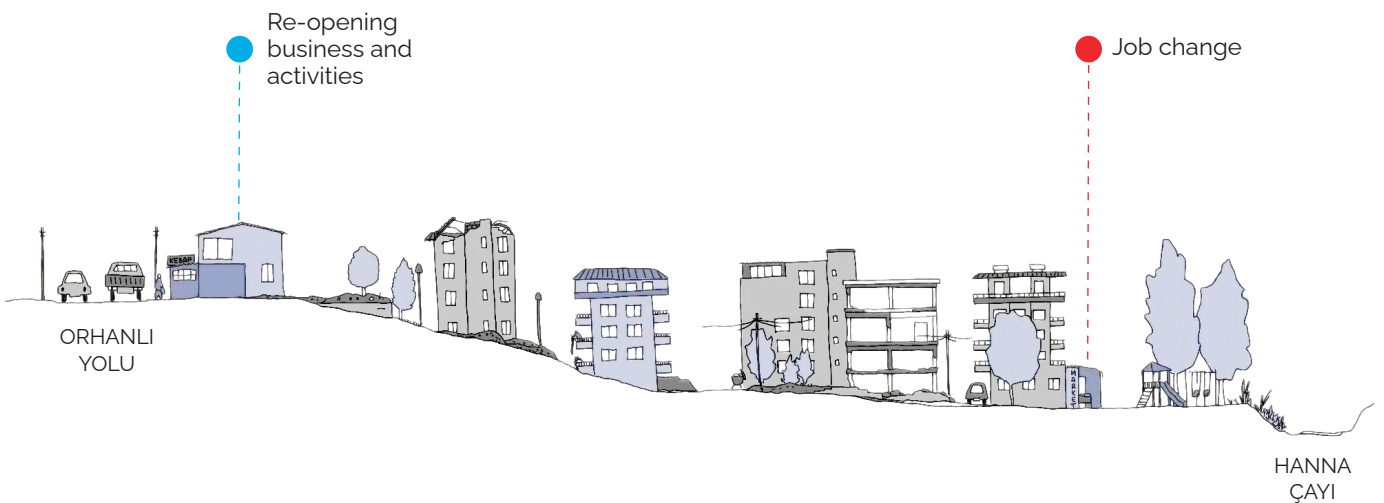
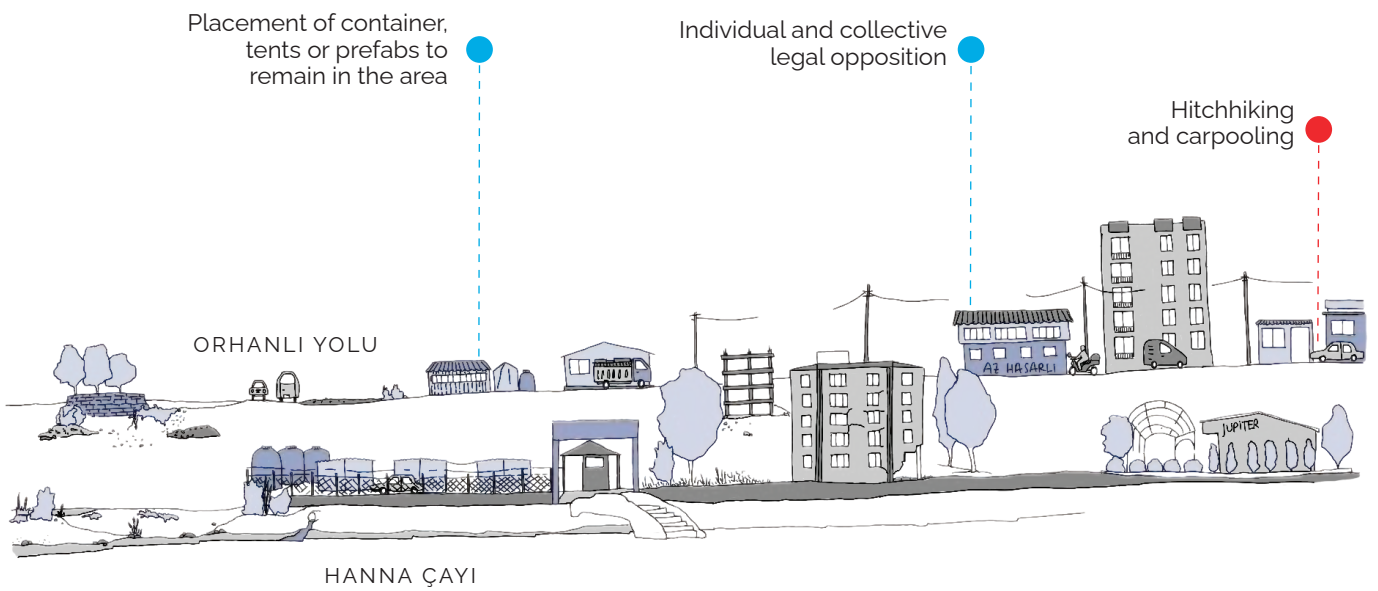
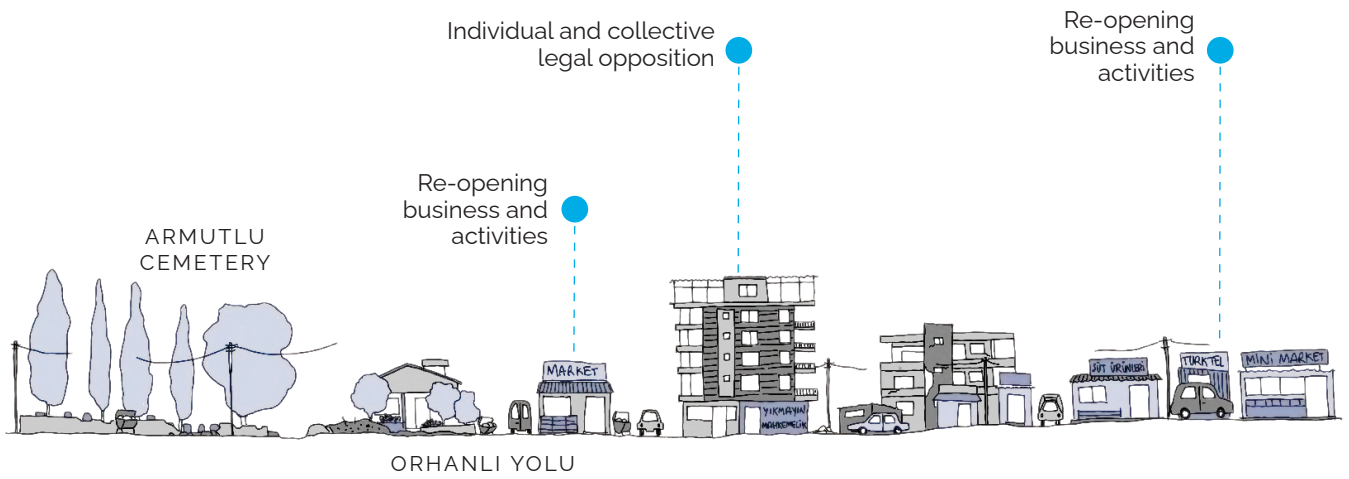
Response: The will to continue living in the neighbourhood and the fear of dispossession motivate many residents to cling to their living spaces by setting up tents, containers, and prefabs on their premises or on available plots as close by as possible. Even though they receive minimal assistance—and despite the potential risk of eviction and demolition—many residents have been investing in repairing their own houses and rebuilding their living spaces. Many expressed the desire to continue living in Çekmece with their long-time neighbours rather than relocating to far-away temporary shelters. Neighbours, relatives, and friends have been supporting each other during this challenging time.

Government Policies and Uncertainty.

There is great confusion and uncertainty about the scope and implementation of "reserve areas" by the government. Even undamaged houses and buildings with minor damages, in which residents have already invested for repair and consolidation, risk being confiscated and demolished.

Response: Solidarity among residents is reflected in the establishment of community-based commissions and organisations, which seek to develop solutions to people's most immediate needs while pressuring decision-makers. One avenue to contest the government's plans has been through legal means, with many individual and collective court cases initiated by residents.

Focus area 3: Gültepe



6. Personal safety and security

Personal Safety and Urban Infrastructure.

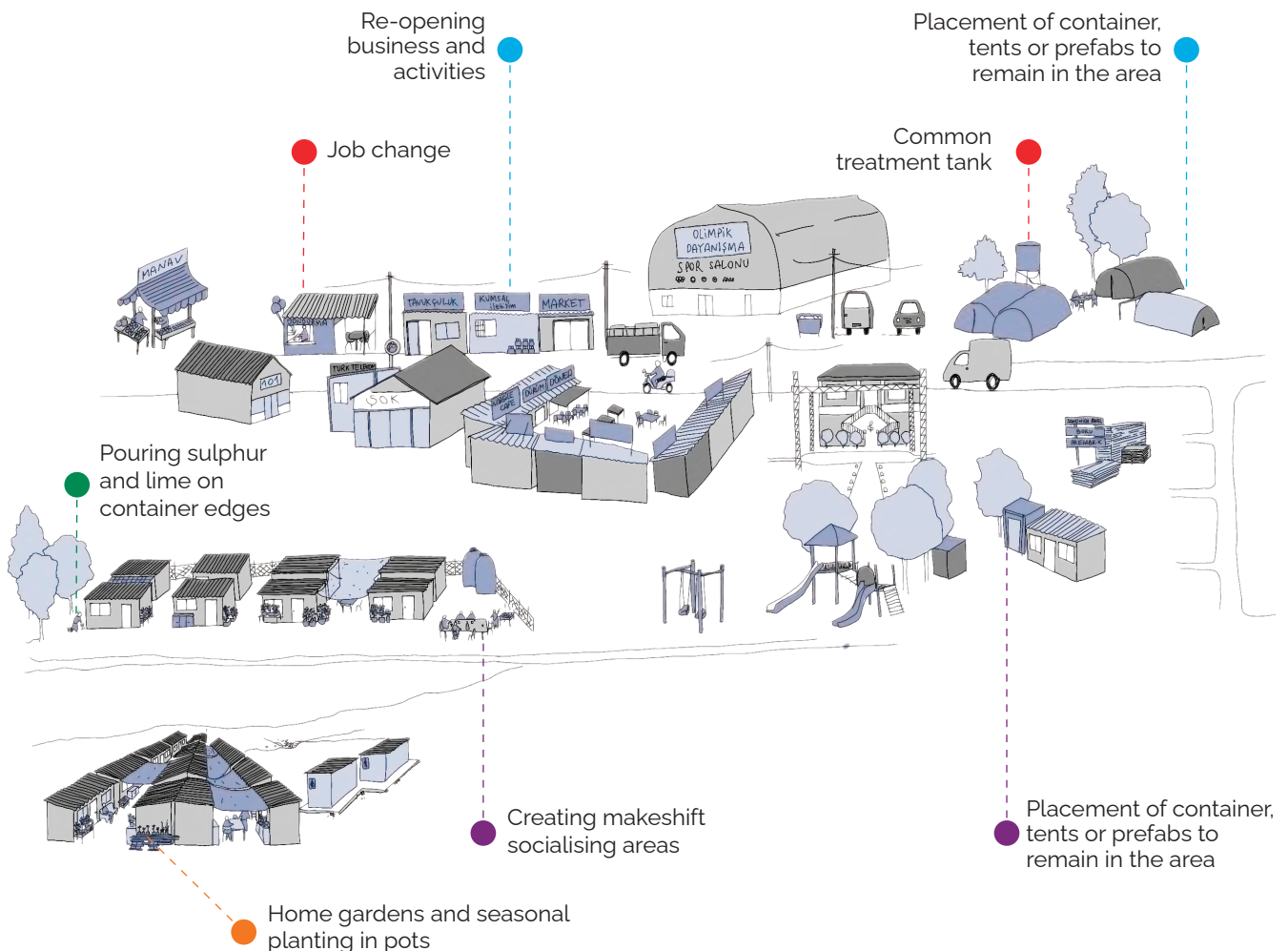
In Çekmece, personal safety has become a pressing concern, exacerbated by the earthquakes' aftermath and the degradation of urban infrastructure. Traffic accidents, particularly involving overloaded lorries and motorbikes, have become more frequent, worsened by the lack of pedestrian pavements and the poor condition of roads. Walking in the neighbourhood has also become risky due to inadequate street lighting, leaving many areas in darkness and contributing to feelings of insecurity, especially for women and vulnerable residents. Widespread destruction has

disrupted people's relationship with their surroundings, leaving a sense of alienation and unfamiliarity. The deterioration of the urban and social fabric has led to an increase in problems like harassment and theft, further threatening the sense of security.

Response: In response, residents have resorted to measures like self-imposed lockdowns, choosing to remain indoors to avoid dangers outside, and walking together in groups to avoid being alone. Some shopkeepers now open and close their shops together as a way to increase safety. This collective approach not only enhances personal security but also fosters a sense of community amidst ongoing challenges.

The area around Orhanlı bridge

The Orhanlı Bridge over the city beltway became a new hub after several container cities were established around it, mostly on unbuilt and green land. Some businesses reopened in the government-built open-air market, while others set up their own prefabs, containers, and makeshift structures along the road.



Lack of Basic Infrastructures and Increasing Depopulation

Çekmece faces severe infrastructural struggles worsened by the earthquakes, leaving residents in harsh conditions with little government support. In response, solidarity organisations have gained membership, advocating for residents' needs and sometimes receiving NGO assistance.

Ecological Destruction and Public Health Hazards

Environmental degradation has intensified post-earthquake, with sewage overflows and inadequate sanitation posing health risks. Residents have implemented makeshift sewerage solutions and taken measures to control dust and pollution in their environment.

Encroachment on Natural and Collective Spaces

The earthquakes have led to the loss of agricultural lands and green spaces, with container cities replacing these areas. In response, residents have mobilised protests and engaged in grassroots efforts to reclaim and create shared spaces within the neighbourhood.

Loss of Sense of Place, Memory, and Vernacular Heritage

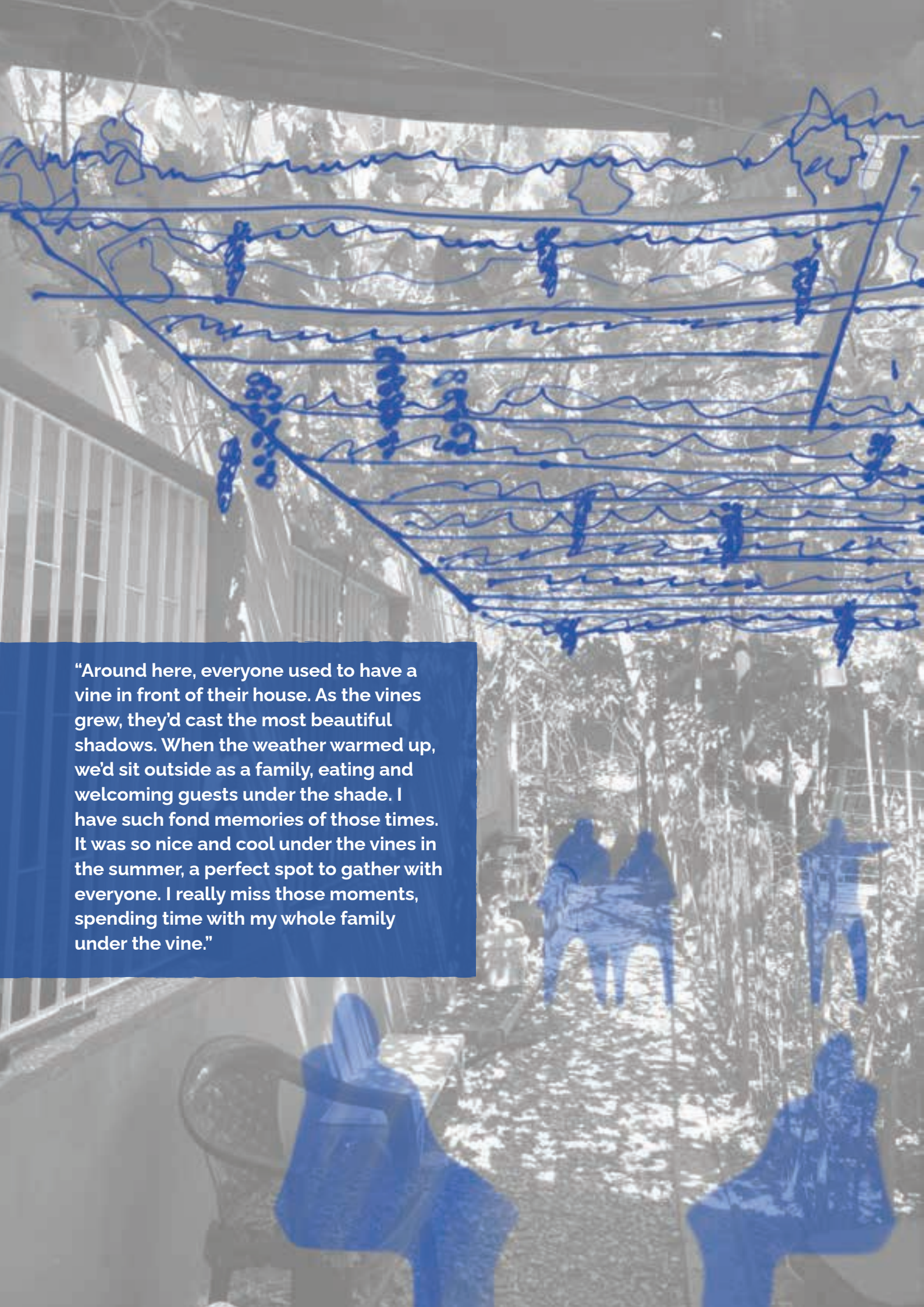
The destruction of key landmarks has eroded the community's identity and memory, disrupting residents' connections to their surroundings. In response, residents have begun creating new gathering spots in parks, streets, and commercial areas, often self-building spaces for socialising.

Displacement, Gentrification, and Touristification

Post-earthquake displacement has raised fears of permanent dispossession and demographic changes, leading residents to cling to their homes. Community solidarity has emerged, with residents investing in their living spaces and supporting one another amidst uncertainty.

Personal Safety and Security

Personal safety concerns have escalated due to infrastructure degradation and increased traffic accidents, leaving many areas unsafe, particularly for vulnerable residents. In response, residents have adopted self-imposed lockdowns and group walking for safety, fostering a sense of community.



“Around here, everyone used to have a vine in front of their house. As the vines grew, they’d cast the most beautiful shadows. When the weather warmed up, we’d sit outside as a family, eating and welcoming guests under the shade. I have such fond memories of those times. It was so nice and cool under the vines in the summer, a perfect spot to gather with everyone. I really miss those moments, spending time with my whole family under the vine.”

6. Dwelling

The dwelling scale aimed to investigate the daily living heritage in Çekmece, focusing on two primary objectives. Firstly, we sought to understand the conditions and daily routines in Çekmece both before and after the earthquakes through observations and interviews, as well as the prevalent uses of space and the meanings that residents attached to them. Secondly, we aimed to explore residents' preferences and aspirations regarding their future homes, including their 'dream homes' and the values they associate with them.

Over two days, four teams of two workshop participants conducted interviews in Gültepe, Çekmece Merkez, and Eski Çekmece. The information gathered was recorded in diagrams illustrating residents' dwelling histories, the facilities that meet their needs, and their daily routines—before the earthquakes, in their aftermath, and looking ahead. Questions about the past focused on uncovering living spaces and activities, as well as understanding the meanings and values attached to them. Conversations concerning the present aimed to comprehend residents' current living conditions, the challenges they have faced since February 2023, and the solutions they have implemented. Discussions about the future sought to clarify the needs and aspirations residents hold, along with their priorities moving forward.

This information was then analysed and translated into a series of personas that reflect the shared dwelling histories and housing types in Çekmece. These personas served as a crucial starting point for the community planning workshop documented in Section 7 of this report. Furthermore, we visualised the "living heritage" elements of home through postcards accompanied by narratives. These images depict activities and locations in Çekmece, capturing the living spaces that residents are rebuilding and maintaining, alongside the cherished memories and values they hold dear.

Methods and tools

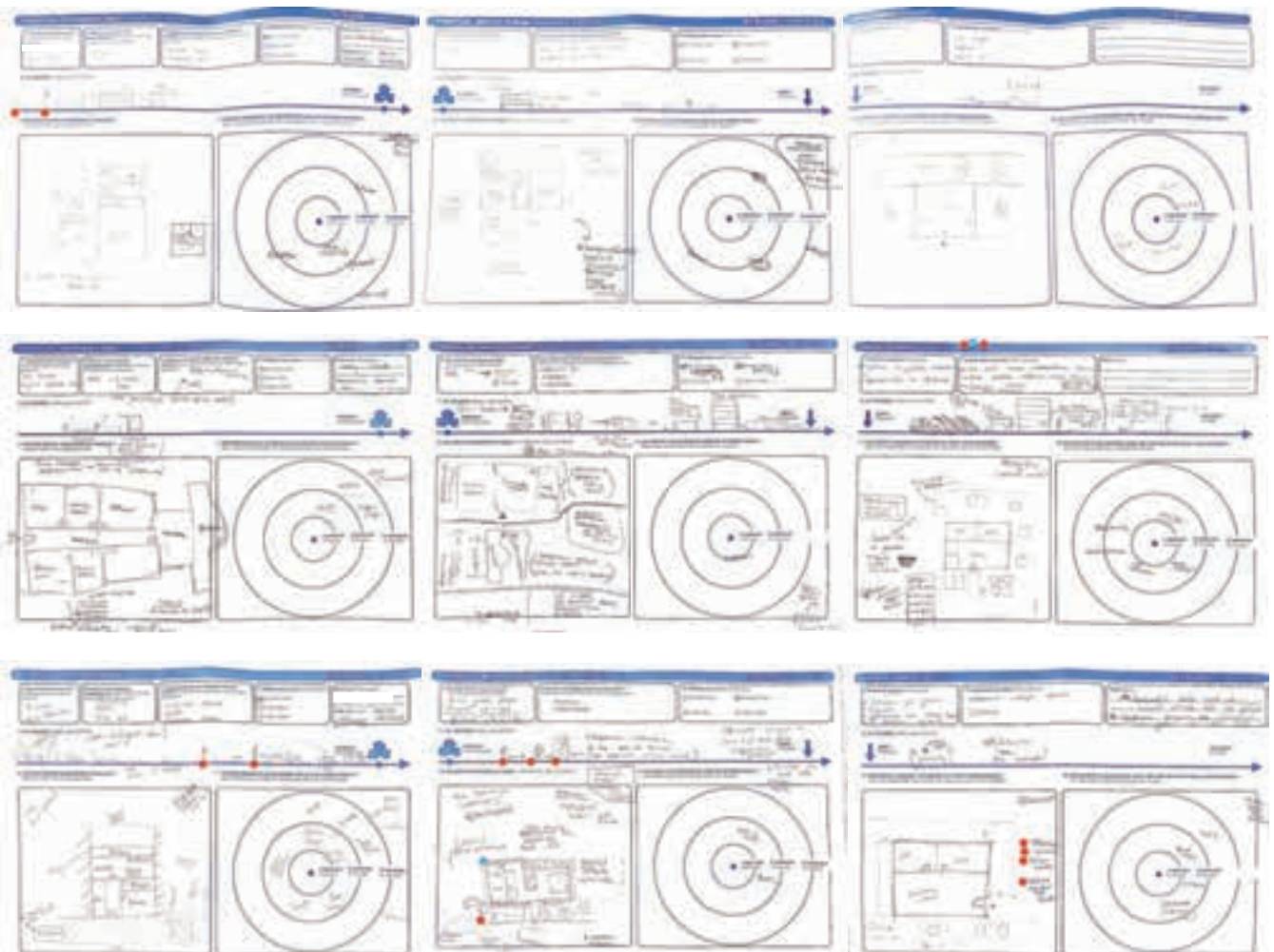
During the two-day period, teams conducted semi-structured interviews using guides and visual worksheets to facilitate discussions. These conversations aimed to capture valuable insights into participants' housing experiences across the past, present, and future.



Worksheet 1: 'Past' – This worksheet gathers information about pre-earthquake household conditions, including housing history, daily routines, and ownership status.

Worksheet 2: 'Present' – Focusing on current living conditions, this worksheet emphasises changes since the earthquakes, featuring questions similar to those in the previous worksheet to ensure continuity in responses.

Worksheet 3: 'Future' – This worksheet invites participants to envision their ideal future dwelling and daily routine, highlighting their priorities and aspirations for their living space.





Dwelling Stories

During the workshop, we collected approximately 25 dwelling stories. Below are two examples.

The Story of Sibel

I'm a housewife with three sons. We have been living with my family in the same neighbourhood for six years. We have always resided in the family apartment building, and in 2017, we built a new apartment on the same land and began living there. Fortunately, our building sustained only slight damage in the earthquakes, and we can still use it.

Before the earthquakes, my days were generally filled with household chores and time spent with friends in the neighbourhood. We were like a family with our neighbours; we would visit each other for coffee and spend time in our gardens or balconies. My house featured a long corridor and four rooms, which was important to me as I have three children and wanted a spacious home. There was a grocery store, pharmacy, and health centre within a five to ten-minute walk, although the school was a

Our apartment was only slightly damaged in the earthquakes, but we were frightened and hesitant to enter the building. For this reason, we bought a container and placed it in the backyard for sleeping at night. During the day, we use the living room, kitchen, and bathroom of the apartment. To facilitate easy access to the container, I had a ladder installed from my kitchen balcony, which opens to the backyard, down to the garden. This way, we believed it would be easier to exit in case of danger. The weather is warm and the transition between the two spaces has become simpler during the day.

In the future, I would like to build a single-storey house with a large kitchen on the same parcel in this neighbourhood. I envision a home for my family of five, surrounded by a garden where I can plant flowers and my children can play. Another reason I wish to remain in this neighbourhood is the familiarity I share with my neighbours; I do not want to lose my supportive social environment.

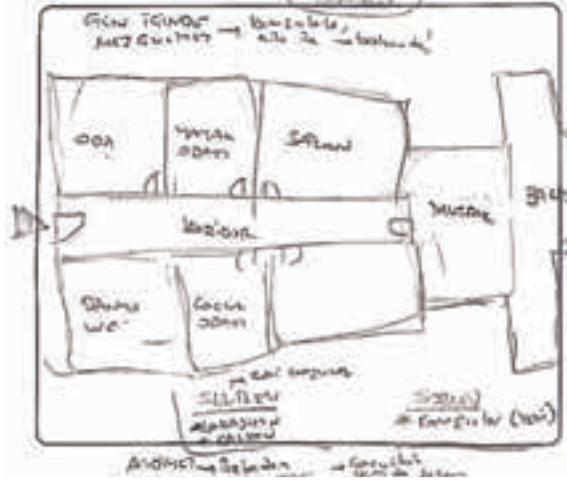
1. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY

Allı gençliğe gelmiş (Allı yaş)

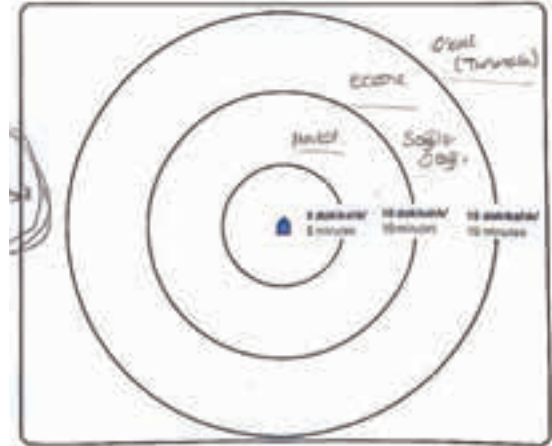
DEPREM / EARTHQUAKE



6. DEPREM ÖNCESİ YAŞADIKLARI EVİN HAYATINI / WHERE HAVE YOU LIVED BEFORE?



7. DEPREM ÖNCESİ EV ÇEVRESİNDEKİ GÜNLÜK DİJİTALİZASYON / DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE



11. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY

30. yaşta → Deprem / EARTHQUAKE

Yeni ev / New house



Yeni ev / New house

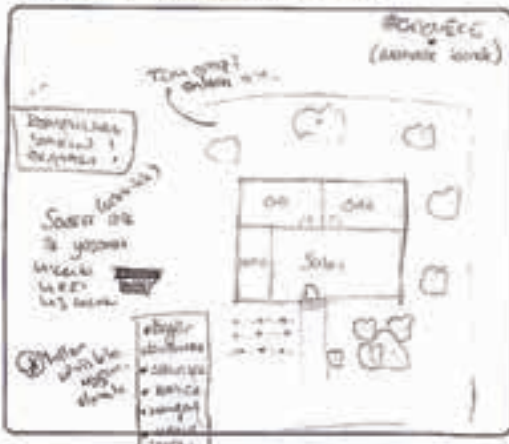


Yeni ev / New house

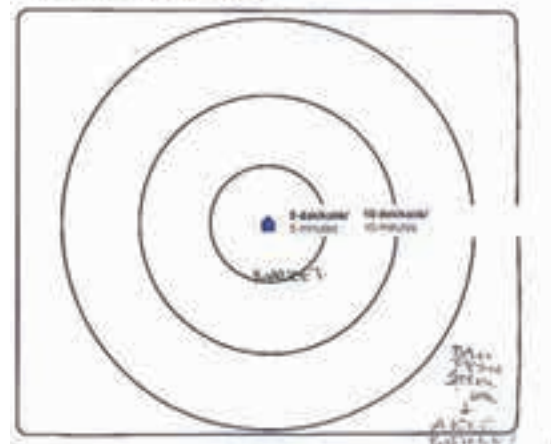
Yeni ev / New house

Yeni ev / New house

11. DEPREM ÖNCESİ YAŞADIKLARI EVİN HAYATINI / WHERE HAVE YOU LIVED BEFORE?



12. DEPREM ÖNCESİ EV ÇEVRESİNDEKİ GÜNLÜK DİJİTALİZASYON / DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE



16. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY

Şimdi / Present



Yeni ev / New house



Yeni ev / New house



Yeni ev / New house

Yeni ev / New house

Yeni ev / New house

Yeni ev / New house

17. BU ANDA YAŞADIKLARI EVİN HAYATINI / WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW?



18. BU ANDA EV ÇEVRESİNDEKİ GÜNLÜK DİJİTALİZASYON / DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE



The Story of Yesim

I had a detached house on the site of this container house where my husband and I are currently staying. Years ago, we built it as a single-storey home. Later, we decided to enlarge it by adding another floor. I designed the house both inside and out according to my own taste. My children studied outside the city, and my grandchildren often visited during the holidays. I had access to many services in the vicinity of my home, except for a hospital, but since my acquaintances lived in the neighbourhood, we supported one another.

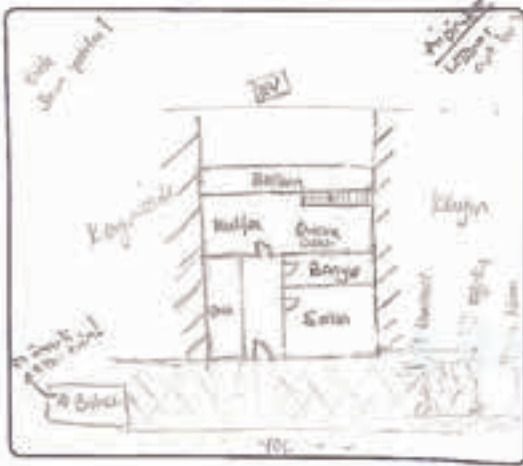
After the earthquakes, our house had to be demolished due to severe damage. We first rented a house in Mersin with a few close relatives. Later, my husband and I moved to Istanbul to live with our children, but our hearts remained here. As I have always loved gardening, I planted mint in front of this container. We continue to take care of our trees. Since it is very hot inside the container, we created a sitting area in the garden, where we spend most of the day. With neighbours and relatives nearby, I always wish to live here.

However, we face challenges accessing clean water in the neighbourhood. We cannot trust the local supply, so we obtain it from elsewhere. The high temperature inside the container makes cooking difficult, which is why I had to move the oven to the garden. What we have now suffices for us; I cannot dream of more than this, but I long for my little house back, where my children and grandchildren can come and enjoy holidays.

8. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY



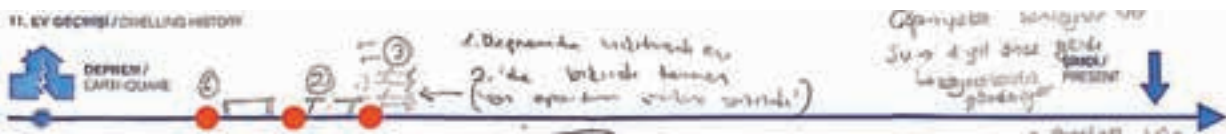
9. DEPREM ÖNCESİ YAŞADIĞI EV NERELERDE? / WHERE HAVE YOU LIVED BEFORE?



10. DEPREM ÖNCESİ EV ÇEVRESİNDEKİ GÜNLÜK RUTİN NERELERDE? / DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE



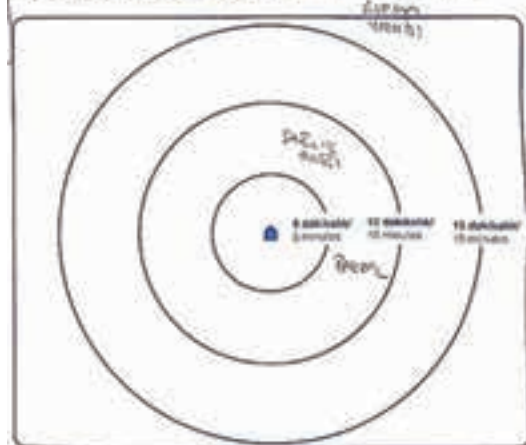
11. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY



12. BU ANDA YAŞADIĞI EV NERELERDE? / WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW?



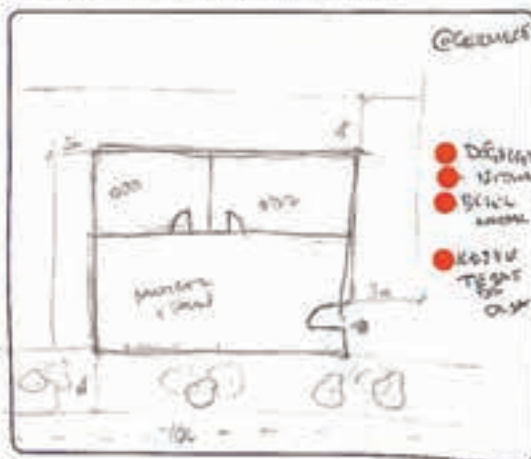
13. BU ANDA EV ÇEVRESİNDEKİ GÜNLÜK RUTİN NERELERDE? / DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE



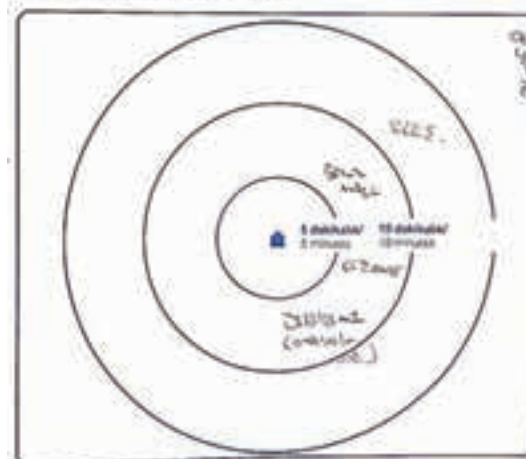
14. EV GEÇMİŞİ / DWELLING HISTORY



15. GELECEKTE YAŞAMA İHTİYACI? / CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE HOUSE YOU WOULD LIVE IN THE FUTURE?



16. GELECEKTE EV ÇEVRESİNDE NERELERDE GÜNLÜK RUTİN NERELERDE? / FUTURE DAILY ROUTINE OUTSIDE OF HOUSE



Dwelling Typologies

The interviews revealed significant variations in living conditions based on the resources available to individual households. Factors such as ownership, social ties, and economic status play a crucial role in shaping these conditions. Despite these differences, common challenges and responses emerged across various contexts.

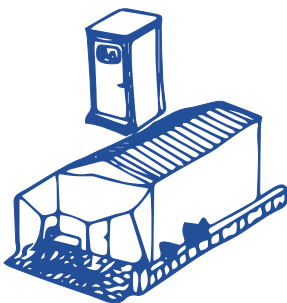
The categorisation of housing types presented here highlights the prevalent issues faced at the housing level and showcases the diverse strategies residents employ to address them. These typologies illustrate the resilience of individuals in improving their living conditions, even in adverse circumstances, through personal modifications, effective use of outdoor spaces, and community solidarity.

In the second week's community planning activity, we designed personas that reflect these typologies. This exercise helped participants identify shared challenges and envision solutions, empowering them to act as problem solvers and decision-makers.



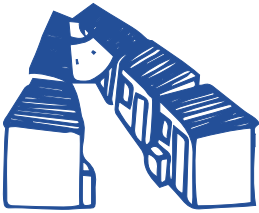
Tent or Makeshift Shelter with Scrap Materials

Many dwellings in this category are located on the occupier's own land, a neighbour's or relative's property, or public land. Typically, bathrooms and toilets are situated outside, with water and electricity supplied by neighbours when possible. Bedrooms may be in containers, while makeshift kitchens and living spaces extend outdoors. These dwellings are vulnerable to fires and flooding, although some occupants take precautions at their own expense. Outdoor spaces, especially for growing vegetables and herbs, are highly valued. The land is often shared among relatives, fostering neighbourhood bonds where residents support one another.



Self-provided Container

Occupants typically purchase containers at their own expense, placing them on their own or relatives' plots, when available, or on public land or someone else's land, with different kinds of agreements. In some cases, containers are combined with other structures, such as tents, or two containers are combined to create a larger living space. Outdoor areas are effectively utilised, with many adding seating—sometimes with pergolas—and establishing personal vegetable gardens. The outdoor living space often becomes the heart of the home.



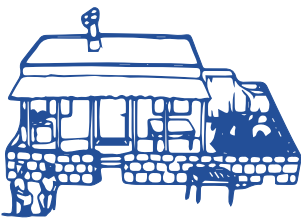
Container in Container City

This space is cramped, with air conditioning running constantly—either cooling in summer or heating in winter—resulting in poor indoor air quality and respiratory issues. There is insufficient indoor space, and despite limited options for outdoor expansion, many residents extend their living space outwards and improve outer spaces. Neighbourhood interaction is minimal; many residents do not know their neighbours. Some families, particularly single mothers, hesitate to let their children play outside, while children from working families often roam aimlessly during out-of-school hours due to a lack of activities or childcare options.



Prefabricated House

This type of housing is rare due to its cost. The family we interviewed continues to earn a salary similar to what they made before the earthquakes. While they are generally satisfied with their home's interior conditions, they express frustration with service disruptions, such as electricity or water cuts and irregular waste collection. Their primary concern is the surrounding environment, which they find dirty and unsafe.



Slightly Damaged/Undamaged House

Typically built by older generations, these houses—detached or multi-storey—remain undamaged or show only minor damage. Post-earthquake, they often accommodate multigenerational families who have lost their homes. Key areas include a large kitchen, living room, and garden. However, overcrowding limits space, particularly for school-aged children, and the outdoor environment is unhealthy and unsafe. Residents request more green spaces, nearby amenities (as local shops and services were relocated), and the return of neighbours, expressing a preference against high-rise buildings in their community.



Temporary Shelter beside Slightly Damaged/Undamaged House

In this scenario, residents prefer to remain in their neighbourhood to maintain social connections, even if their house is damaged and not suitable for living. Occupants primarily use the house for kitchen and bathroom needs while sleeping in a container or tent they have purchased or received and installed on the same land. They often emphasise the importance of having a garden. They often make modifications for better access between the apartment and the container and to facilitate emergency exits.

What have we learned in summary?

Impact of Lack of Basic Infrastructure on Daily Life

Inadequate access to clean water and functional sewage systems severely impacts daily routines and living conditions. Dust and dirt around homes raise health concerns. Residents often create their own solutions, cultivating outdoor spaces for vegetables and leisure. Post-earthquake, facilities have become more distant, and unreliable public transport forces reliance on personal vehicles.

Lack of Support for Housing Improvements

There is a notable absence of support for residents aiming to improve their own conditions. Even before the earthquakes, issues with infrastructure and uncontrolled urbanisation prompted self-building and collective financing for road and service improvements. Today, households continue to tackle problems independently, but these efforts lack regulation and support.

Housing Precarity Due to Changing Regulations

Housing precarity has increased post-earthquake, compounded by fluctuating planning laws that hinder residents from enhancing their homes. Those with minor damage hesitate to invest in repairs, fearing their self-built homes might be classified as "reserve areas" and face demolition.

Hesitation in Aspiring for Better Living Conditions

Many residents are reluctant to aspire to better living conditions due to fears of losing what little they have. However, there is a strong desire for homes with gardens rather than returning to apartment living. Outdoor spaces are essential for growing food, and nearly all interviewed households expressed a longing for familiar neighbours to restore their community.

Continuity of Living Heritage

People in Cekmece have been working together to maintain cultural practices like gathering and cooking together. Many extend their homes to create communal areas, with living rooms and kitchens serving as social hubs, fostering a sense of normalcy and continuity amidst challenges.



“We settled in the container city after the earthquake. Neighborly relations are very valuable for us here. We became a family. We stretched awnings between the containers to protect ourselves from the sun, and we have an area where we can sit outside in sunny weather. I make my own things, look, I am now painting the flower bed I created from wooden pallets. We are in solidarity here. We don't have a car, thanks to our neighbors, they buy water for us. It is not a problem for my child to stay here alone when I am not here. But we are lucky because not every container city has this safe environment.”

7. Residents' Aspirations for the Future

Following separate activities at the dwelling, community, and city levels, the workshop brought together emerging insights into a collective visioning exercise. This exercise aimed to support Çekmece residents in visualising their ideal neighbourhood and collaboratively explore pathways for shaping the reconstruction process, starting on a small scale.

Participants were organised into seven working groups and invited to adopt the roles of personas based on real-life situations observed in Çekmece. By stepping into the shoes of these personas, they could envision future possibilities and explore potential actions without the limitations of their current circumstances. This approach grounded discussions in genuine experiences and amplified the voices of residents who might otherwise go unheard.

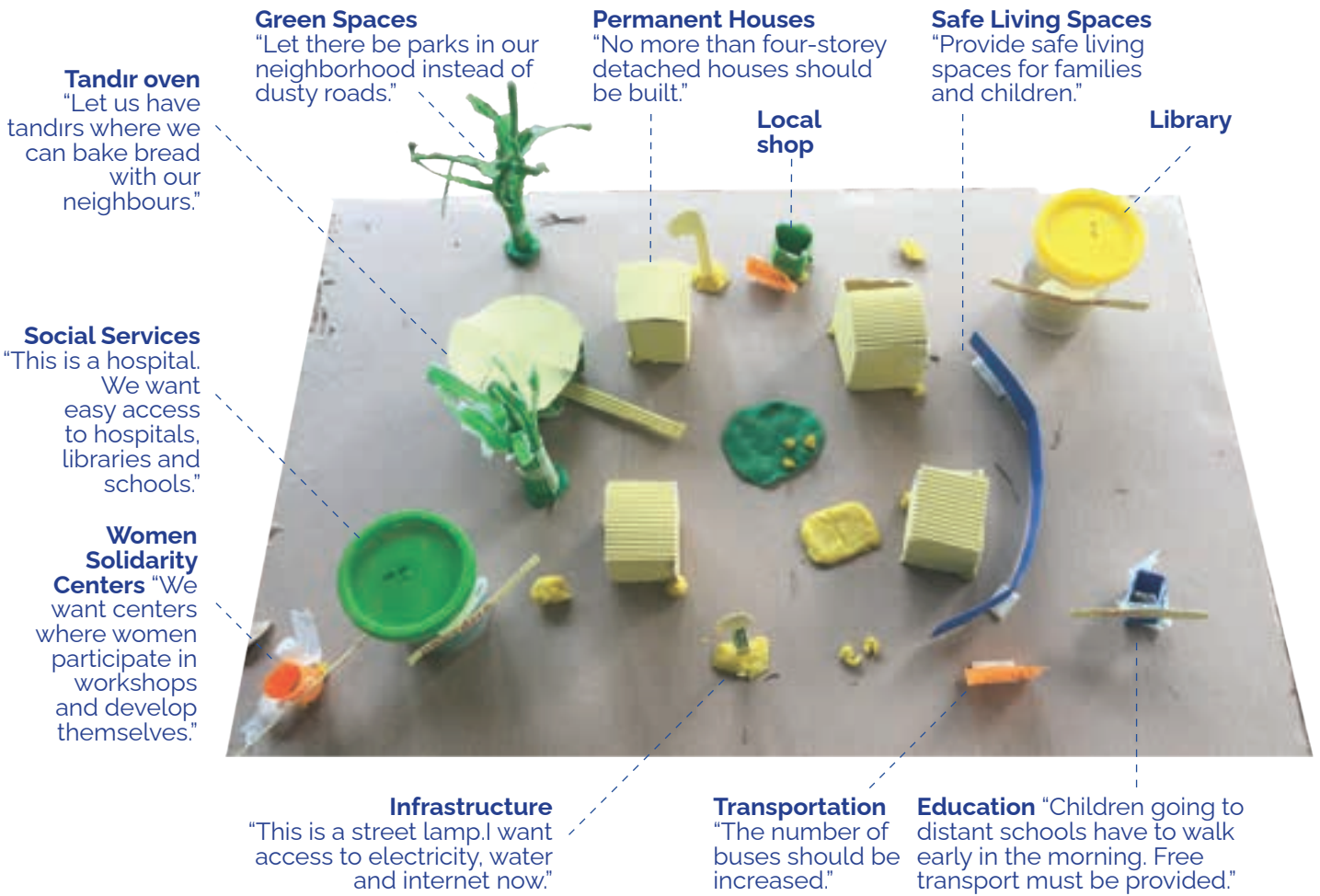
With the support of facilitators, participants engaged in modelling exercises representing their imagined characters' living spaces. They identified key challenges in their situations and explored ongoing responses. By constructing their personas' environments, residents shared the complex realities they face, including daily challenges, coping strategies, and experiences of displacement.

Each group identified aspirations for their personas and discussed actionable steps for change. The outcomes were summarised into six shared aspirations, reflecting the group's collective hopes. These were further refined with citywide stakeholders the following day, aligning local issues with broader city-scale concerns.

The aspirations and frustrations in post-earthquake Çekmece and Antakya presented in the following pages must be understood in the context of structural discrimination and the long-standing struggle for recognition faced by residents over many years. Discussions were driven by a desire for fairness, emphasising that aspirations for educational facilities, social spaces, and environmental improvements are long-standing political issues, now intertwined with the collapse of infrastructure following the earthquakes.

The Story of Sevgi: "I am a retired mother of three. My husband worked abroad for years to build our house with a garden, which we can no longer enter. After the earthquake damaged it, we set up a tent in the garden and later bought a container. Initially, we lived with 25 people in our large garden, relying on well water and the fruits and vegetables we grew to meet our needs. However, as neighbours moved to container cities or other areas, we found ourselves alone. We expanded our container area using nearby materials. I'm grateful for our garden; it has provided us with much after the disaster."

What kind of living space do we want to live in?





The Story of Merve: "I am a 33-year-old mother of two, originally from Elbistan. After marrying, I moved to Armutlu, where my husband works abroad. Before the earthquake, we lived on the third floor of a five-storey apartment building. Although our home wasn't severely damaged, we moved to my husband's family's two-storey house with a garden in Çekmece due to safety concerns. We now occupy the top floor. This house was built by my husband's family 30 years ago with their savings. I dream of building our own home together; I no longer wish to live in an apartment."

Garden & Orchard

"Let there be parks in our neighborhood instead of dusty roads."

Small Tradesman

"For economic and social solidarity, we want small shopkeepers instead of big markets. I can even entrust my son to the neighborhood grocery store when necessary, but I cannot do that in big markets."

Hygiene

"There should be hygienic toilets in public areas."

Accessibility

"Transportation vehicles should be developed with disabled people in mind."

Garage

"We need spaces to park our vehicles for the disabled."

Social Areas

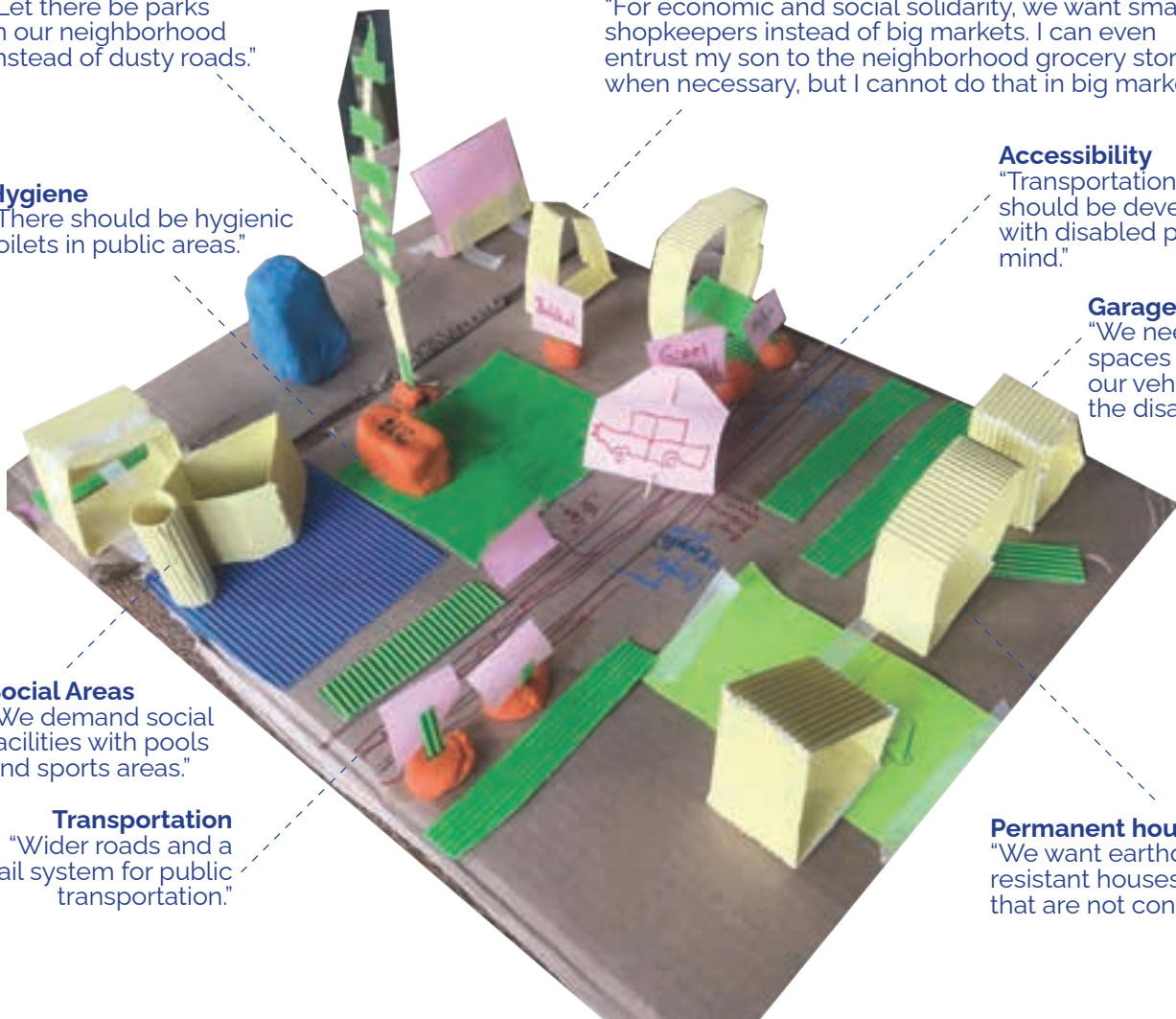
"We demand social facilities with pools and sports areas."

Transportation

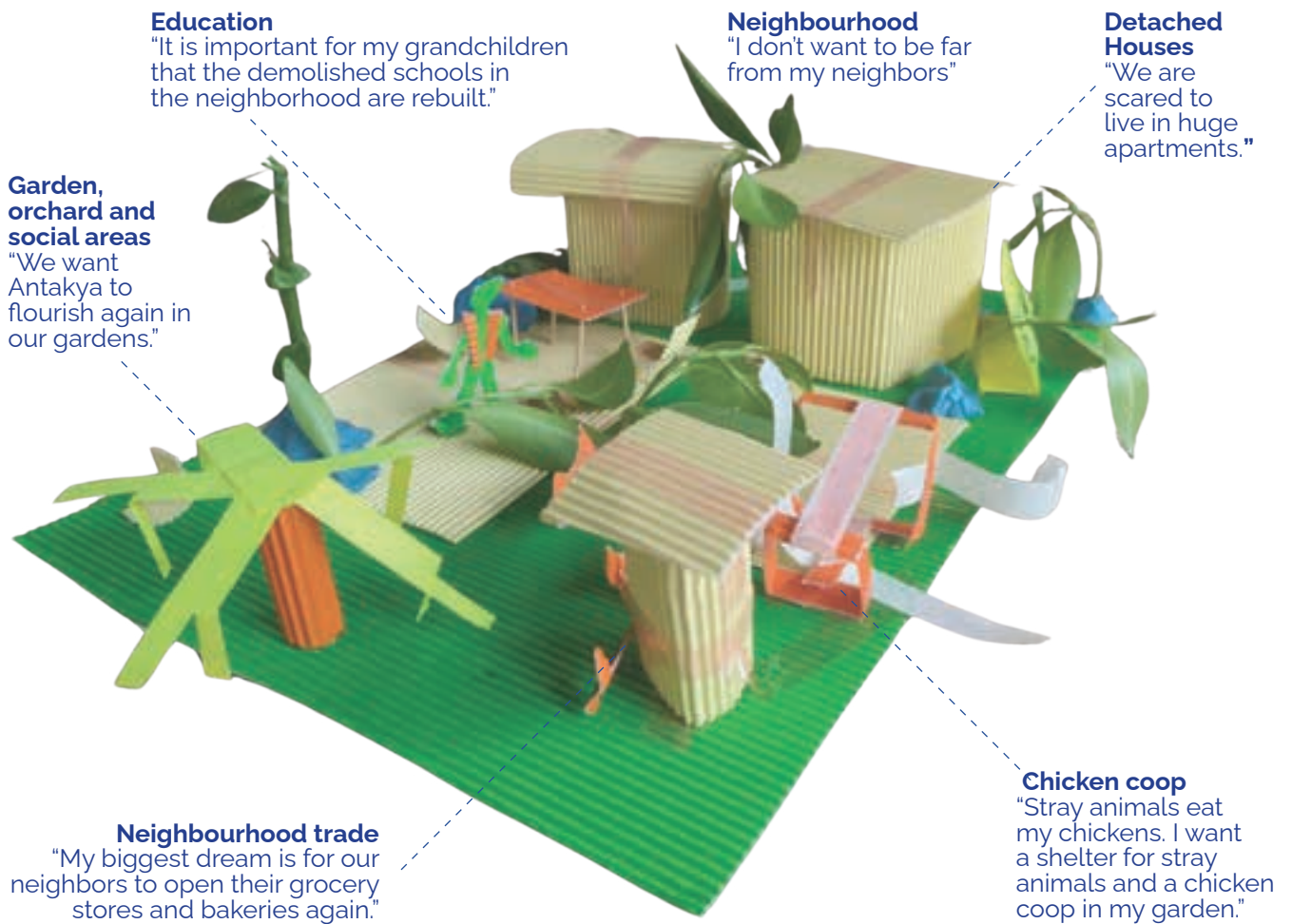
"Wider roads and a rail system for public transportation."

Permanent housing

"We want earthquake-resistant houses that are not contiguous."



The Story of Huseyin: "When our house was destroyed, my wife, daughter, and I moved in with relatives in Adana. A month later, we returned to Çekmece and began living in a tent in our garden. The winter conditions were extremely difficult, so we repaired the warehouse in the garden and settled in there. After a few months, we managed to buy a container, which allowed us to create a kitchen and living space. Since our garden was large, our relatives also set up their tents there. Initially, it was quite crowded, but as we found a place in the container city, they gradually moved out. Currently, only my cousin and his family have a tent in the garden. Together, we share the space and the blessings it offers. Despite the many challenges we face, planting and spending time together in the garden has been beneficial for us."



The Story of Meral: "I live with my husband and daughter. My husband works in construction. After the earthquake, we lived in a greenhouse for a month and then in a tent before returning to Çekmece, where schools would reopen in September 2023. Since this was the only intact house, our relatives often stayed with us, sometimes bringing our total to ten people. Although it's less crowded now, my cousin and his family still live with us, making our home unsuitable for two families and leaving us with little private space."



Vegetable garden

"There was a place in front of our house and we turned it into a garden where we planted and cultivated for our own consumption."

Temporary Sheltering

"We had to stay in greenhouses right after the earthquake."

Current Housing

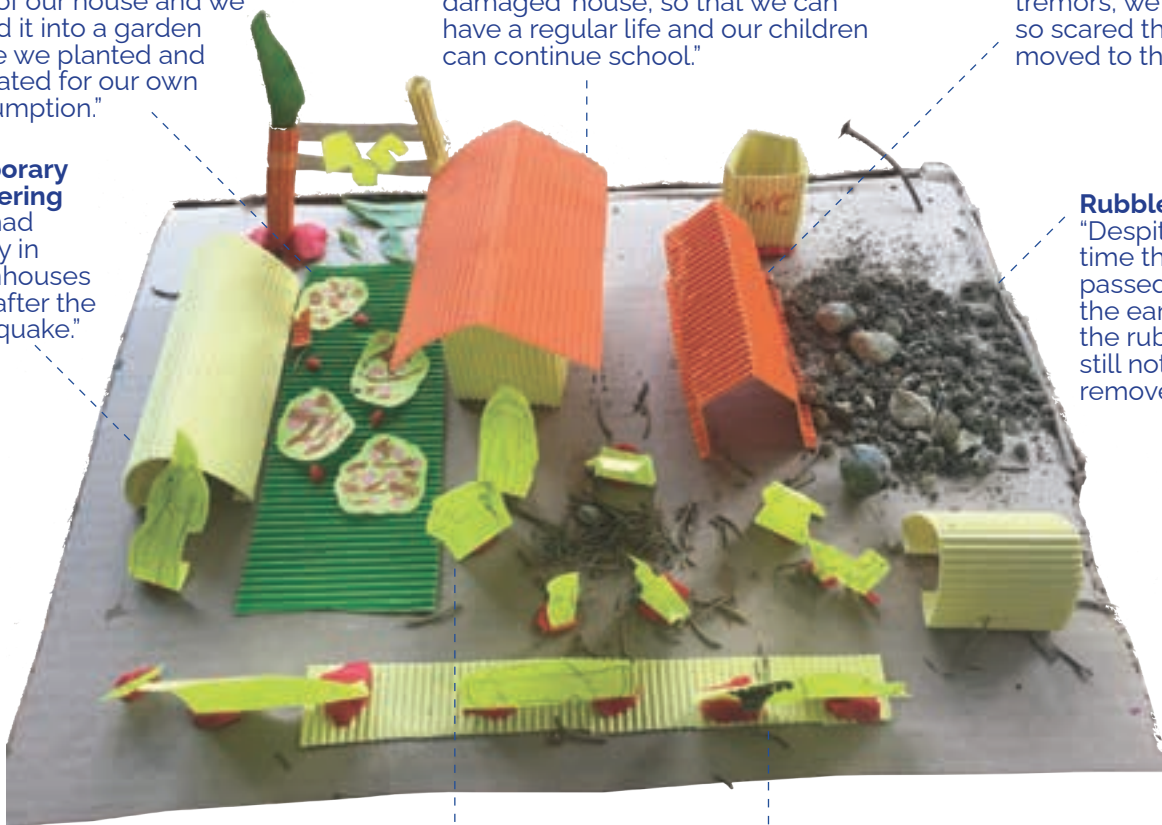
"Then we went back to our 'slightly damaged' house, so that we can have a regular life and our children can continue school."

Temporary Shelter

"After the first tremors, we were so scared that we moved to the tent."

Rubble

"Despite the time that has passed since the earthquake, the rubble has still not been removed."



Overcrowding

"Since our house was the only one left standing in the family, our relatives also started living in our house."

Safety

"It has become dangerous for us and the children to use this road because of the increase in unlicensed drivers and excavation lorries passing by."

The Story of Mahmut: "Before the earthquake, I had a shop in a central location, with easy access to schools, markets, and bakeries. Now, I live in a container with my daughter and two sons. After our apartment building collapsed, we stayed in a car for a while before going to Mersin to stay with relatives. Upon returning, we set up a tent on the road, and when the debris was cleared, we moved it to the site of our former apartment. We constructed a makeshift room and turned the tent into a kitchen. My brother and cousins have set up similar areas nearby. While these conditions are not healthy, being together allows us to share our struggles."

Small tradesman

"We want our neighbours to reopen their shops in their own business lines as before."

Permanent housing

"We want to live in horizontal houses that are earthquake resistant and respect our privacy."

Green areas

"We want the houses around us to be full of green areas."



Transportation

"We want our streets to be wide, clean and free of rubble."

Social areas

"We want areas where the neighbourhood can come together and where children and young people can spend time together."



Collective aspirations of Çekmece residents

Following the modelling activity and group presentations, the conversation explored the specific challenges faced by the personas, their efforts to rebuild their living spaces, and their visions for the future of their neighbourhood. These discussions illuminated shared experiences, needs, and desires, which were distilled into six Collective Aspirations. These aspirations encapsulate the common hopes and demands of Çekmece residents for the reconstruction process, serving as guiding principles for rebuilding a neighbourhood that better meets their needs.

Below: the presentations at the end of the Dreaming Workshop.



RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #1:

Improvement of temporary shelter areas



- **Providing comfortable living units that ensure climatic comfort and privacy.**
- **Expanding social and green areas, including children playgrounds.**
- **Improving basic infrastructure with quick repair options in case of damage.**

Residents currently living in individual containers and tents endure cramped, uncomfortable conditions, particularly during winter, facing uncertainty about their stay. Many have invested time and resources to improve their living spaces but lack external support. Children have limited space to play, while women struggle with unsafe environments. The community dreams of larger, insulated units with adequate privacy and essential amenities like proper kitchens, where efforts to create dignified homes are supported.

RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #2:

Development of Permanent Housing

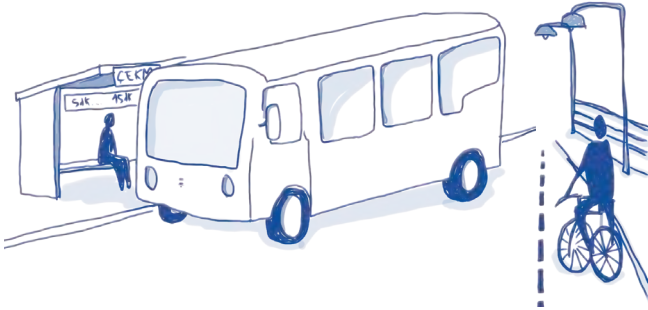


- **Offering free or affordable housing to meet the needs of residents.**
- **Providing low- to medium-rise housing solutions with access to ample open space.**
- **Building earthquake-resistant structures based on comprehensive soil investigations to ensure safety and stability.**
- **Ensuring residents can remain in familiar surroundings alongside their neighbours.**

Residents yearn for low- to mid-rise homes featuring gardens, verandas, and ample open space, rejecting high-density construction. They demand free or affordable housing and emphasise the importance of remaining in their neighbourhood alongside their neighbours. Additionally, there is a strong desire for these new homes to be safe and resilient against earthquakes and other disasters, ensuring a secure future for families in a stable community.

RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #3:

Organisation of Transport and Infrastructure



- Providing extensive public transport options to connect residents with essential services, including schools and health centres.
- Developing pavements, pedestrian paths, and bicycle lanes to promote active mobility for all.
- Establishing reliable water, sewerage, electricity, and infrastructure services to support the community.
- Ensuring uninterrupted internet access and addressing street lighting issues for improved safety and communication.

Çekmece residents envision a community with walkable and bicycle-friendly roads, supported by an efficient and affordable public transport system that reduces reliance on cars. The increase in traffic jams and chaotic driving post-earthquake has raised concerns, prompting a desire for safer roadways. Accessibility is also a priority, especially for the growing number of disabled residents, highlighting the need for inclusive infrastructure that accommodates all community members.

RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #4:

Provision of Social and Cultural Services



- Providing comprehensive psychological support, especially for women and children.
- Designing playgrounds and organising engaging activities for children.
- Establishing centres to facilitate job opportunities for women.
- Developing community areas in parks, alongside cultural and art centres, and libraries to foster social interaction.

Residents of Çekmece seek to restore their children's extracurricular activities to pre-earthquake levels, emphasising the importance of continuity in cultural and social lives. They call for support to address psychosocial needs and advocate for urban planning that considers accessibility and disability issues. The community, used to large gatherings, feels the absence of these social interactions, jeopardising the transmission of their living heritage and communal identity during challenging times.

RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #5:

Organisation of Health and Education Services



- **Removing rubble and segregation of debris from living areas.**
- **Addressing solid waste, pest and insect control issues.**
- **Establishing health and education units in accessible locations.**
- **Ensuring equality in education.**

Residents of Çekmece want their neighbourhood restored to livable conditions, with health and environmental issues addressed promptly. They call for nearby healthcare units to ensure everyone has access to medical assistance. Education for their children is also a top priority, as the lack of schools is a major reason families are leaving the city. They want their kids to have the opportunity to learn and thrive right where they are.

RESIDENTS' ASPIRATION #6:

Improving Economic Opportunities

- **Enabling the reopening of local businesses and supporting neighbourhood trades.**
- **Providing employment opportunities for residents and diversified, sustainable livelihoods.**



After many lost their jobs and businesses in the earthquakes, residents of Çekmece stress that restoring livelihoods is crucial for countering depopulation and displacement. They envision a future where local shopkeepers are central to their community, aspiring to sustain their local shops and create new spaces for arts, crafts, and cafés, while calling for economic support to help realise these dreams.



“In this land where unique olives grow, the olive tree has become a symbol for us. When the olives are ripe, we come together with our whole family and neighbors to pick them. This is a meaningful ritual that contributes to the strengthening of our culture and family ties. We prepare olive oil and winter olives from the olives we harvest, which reminds us of the value of the time and labor we spend together.”

8. Advancing Community-Led Planning in Antakya

The workshop highlighted several critical ways in which civil society, technical support, and local government can collaborate to advance a neighbourhood-based, community-led approach to planning in Çekmece and Antakya. This approach aims to prioritise the city's rich living heritage while addressing the needs and aspirations of its diverse residents.

These ways forward include:

- **Disseminating Information**
- **Supporting Immediate Improvements**
- **Expanding Capacity for Community-Led Planning**
- **Building Coalitions for Change**
- **Changing Policy**

Disseminating Information

The residents of Çekmece have endured significant trauma from the earthquakes and continue to face considerable uncertainty about their future. This uncertainty arises not only from their current living conditions but also from a lack of clear information regarding immediate actions, medium-term solutions, and long-term rebuilding plans.

To facilitate meaningful participation in the reconstruction process, it is essential to provide regular and reliable information on issues that affect residents. Given the insufficient communication from the government, proactive outreach by civil society is crucial. This outreach should inform residents about relevant laws, ongoing projects, and future developments that may impact their communities.

Accessibility is key to reaching a broad audience. Information must be conveyed in ways that consider when and where people can receive it, using languages and tools that are easily understood. This approach will encourage wider participation and strengthen grassroots efforts to mobilise local residents.

Civil society organisations, activists, and professionals in law, planning, and design must collaborate to create a trusted resource where residents can easily access vital information. Organisations like HDD, DD, and ABHP are already making significant progress in this important endeavour.

Supporting Immediate Improvements

Despite the passage of one and a half years since the earthquakes, many residents continue to live in temporary conditions characterised by uncertainty. Our fieldwork and discussions with activists and stakeholders reveal a lack of initiatives aimed at improving these immediate living situations. For residents to envision their future and engage in planning activities, it is crucial to develop a short-term plan that addresses their current hardships.

This is particularly relevant for those in self-built shelters, which, although fragile, provide residents with a level of autonomy not found in the heavily regulated, access-controlled container cities established by the government. Mid-term infrastructure interventions could focus on the existing clusters of containers and tents scattered across Çekmece, providing essential shared services such as sanitation facilities, drinking water, and waste collection.

During our discussions, residents suggested creating a neighbourhood-based maintenance unit to swiftly address issues like water and sewage failures. Securing technical support and funding for such initiatives, with eventual backing from Defne Municipality, is vital for sustaining residents' autonomy and well-being, recognising that temporary housing will remain a feature of the district for several years.

Expanding Capacity for Community-Led Planning

The workshop clearly demonstrated that the people of Çekmece are eager to engage in community-led processes. With the right support, they have the capacity to actively participate in shaping the future of their area, acting as partners rather than mere recipients of reconstruction efforts. HDD is well-positioned to serve as a catalyst for future planning initiatives. In this view, there is now significant potential to deepen HDD's roots and those of its partners at the neighbourhood level, thereby enhancing its role as a vital reference point for information dissemination and community organising.

At the same time, it is essential to expand the capacity of HDD and other community-based organisations for effective community-led planning. While there is a large consensus on the necessity of this approach, the current ability to engage with government planning processes, develop alternative proposals, and visualise different options is limited. This initiative should complement, rather than replace, the existing grassroots mobilisations, actions, and protests that have been the focus of current activities. Involving technical organisations, such as the Chamber of Architects, can provide valuable support and expertise in this area, ensuring that community voices are effectively integrated into the formal planning process.

Building Coalitions for Change

Residents of Çekmece are facing challenges that are felt across Antakya, highlighting the need for a city-wide network of neighbourhood-based groups and organisations. This network is important for building collective strength and supporting community-led planning at scale. By coming together, residents can effectively oppose unsuitable development plans and encourage local and central authorities, as well as technical organisations, to improve public participation.

A positive step in this direction is the recent formation of the Antakya Right to Shelter Platform (ABHP), which brings together neighbourhoods with varied social backgrounds.

To further support community-led planning in Antakya, it is crucial to diversify the network of partners involved. Professional organisations can help by urging government officials to recognise and prioritise community-driven reconstruction efforts. Academic institutions can also provide valuable research and data to advocate for a reconstruction process that truly reflects the needs and views of Antakya's residents.

This initiative is not just local; the scale of the challenges in Antakya calls for support from broader solidarity networks, both within Turkey and beyond. The expanded coalition should focus on centring the voice of Antakya's residents and strengthening their efforts.

Transforming Policy

The workshop clearly documented that community-led reconstruction efforts are underway in Çekmece and throughout Antakya. However, capturing and articulating the desires of the community in a way that aligns with current policy and planning frameworks remains a significant challenge. There is a disconnect between the community's aspirations, ongoing government actions, and the constraints of existing policies.

Stakeholders emphasised the need for community-based movements to advocate for local authorities to initiate the zoning plan revision process, the primary planning tool available to local government. To contribute effectively, organisations like HDD, DD, ABHP, and other grassroots groups must strengthen their partnerships and enhance their technical capacity to tackle complex issues. This will enable them to translate residents' demands into planning regulations and legal frameworks. Addressing these translation challenges is crucial, particularly when navigating the blurred lines between planned and unplanned development within which reconstruction is occurring.

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