

# Urban Justice and the City: Perspectives from İstanbul and Madrid

27-29 March 2025

27th of March	Session 1	14:00 - 15:30	MAD - Ömer Abed Han
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## On the Notion of Urban and Environmental Justice

Francisco Colom (URBS/CSIC)	Sinan Erensü (MAD/Boğaziçi Uni)
<p>The right to the city, now a viral political slogan, emphasizes the urban condition as something other than a passive container of natural constraints and social relations. Since urban space is a social construction, the idea of urban justice must be able to identify the normative dimensions of life in cities and the qualities that make their habitat a social good. This requires a conception of justice that is more sensitive to space than has been the case in mainstream political philosophy.</p> <p>Cities are a relevant unit of justice because the organisation of their space is inextricably linked to social inequalities. Urban justice must include a perspective that links the urban habitat to the ability of its inhabitants to live a dignified life. Understanding the city as a right also underlines that some social goods are inherently urban and related to human agency. The capabilities approach, taken from a spatial perspective, can be particularly fruitful in outlining a theory of urban justice, as it can illustrate the relationship between the development of life competences, the physical structure of the city and the social relations created around it.</p>	<p>There is a spatial aspect to all issues of social justice such as poverty, housing, education, health, discrimination. In addition, social injustices manifest themselves through spatial relations in urban and rural spaces. Contemporary techniques of capital accumulation increasingly rely on spatial transformation and interventions. This leads to legal and administrative structures that have centralized monopoly on spatial governance.</p> <p>Through these two interrelated phenomena, we claim that spatial justice is a social demand, a political vision which has an aspect of distribution (of resources, services, spaces, hazards), and an aspect of recognition of differences (differences between individuals and groups with different spatial needs and demands). We believe that a form of struggle that highlights society-space relationships is one of the most effective ways to address contemporary problems. Spatial justice is not only connected with various disciplines including planning, architecture, design, urban sociology, urban ethnography, environmental studies, urban studies and so on, but there is also a crucial legal dimension to it.</p>

## Discussion Session

27th of March	Session 2	16:00 - 17:30	MAD - Ömer Abed Han
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## Historical Perspective on Cities and Justice

Ángel Rivero (URBS / UAM)	Jean-François Pérouse
<p>Ángel Rivero will speak about the idea of the "common good" as a normative inspiration for the idea of the "good city" in the Western tradition, especially in Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages. He argues that the type of urban community that sustained such a normative reference is no longer possible in today's heterogeneous, complex megalopolis. This should lead us to ask ourselves what we mean by a 'city' in our time in order to deal with it.</p>	<p>The neighborhood instead of the metropolis"? Forced rescaling of the just city frame of reference in a metropolitan context: the case of İstanbul, XX<sup>o</sup>/XXI<sup>o</sup>.</p> <p>If the notion of the "just city" has little resonance in Turkey - except in a religious sense (adil düzen), which had its moment of glory in the 1990s, when political Islam parties began to take over the local political arena - we may well wonder about the effects of whole İstanbul's dilution on the spatial frames of reference of spatial justice. Our hypothesis is as follows: as a result of dizzying metropolitan urban sprawl - and the loss of meaning for citizens of the metropolitan frame of reference,</p>

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which has become increasingly abstract and elusive in everyday life - the neighborhood tends to become the territorial and lived scale of reference to be invested in, at least by default. This frame can be directly connected to the national and universal frame, as the metropolitan scale has lost its practical relevance. It's as if it were only possible to form an active political community on the much more manageable scale of the neighborhood. Finally, can the articulation of all struggles on a neighborhood scale – still to ensure ! -enable us to rediscover the lost metropolitan dimension?

## Discussion Session

27th of March

Session 3

18:00 - 19:30

Sen Piyer + Postane

### On Shared Memory of Galata Through Sen Piyer Han and Postane

Luca Refatti (DOST-I)  
Gökberk Tezer

Liana Kuyumcuyan  
Murat Tülek

The Dominican Friars arrived in Galata in the XIII century and in 1475 moved from what is currently the Arap Mosque to the current location under the shadow of the Galata Tower. Since then they have been part of a lively and culturally diverse Catholic community, to whom they provided religious services. Legal, political, and economic hurdles have challenged the presence of the friars throughout history. The friars tried to overcome these difficulties, resorting to the support of the local Catholic community and diplomatic authorities.

From the XIX century, the Dominican friars were able to engage in real estate development, which ensured a stable source of living. This effort led to the establishment of Sen Piyer Han and Sen Piyer Apartment. In particular, Sen Piyer Han, originally built between 1771 and 1775 as five adjacent masonry houses, became a commercial and artisanal epicenter during the last decades of the XIX century after the Imperial Ottoman Bank's establishment in the building. The han attracted both local and international commercial networks, hosting a wide range of professionals and businesses, from architectural offices to companies engaged in banking and international trade.

Sen Piyer Han's integration into Galata's commercial scene not only transformed its architectural setting but also initiated new dialogues between the Dominican Friars and the Han's diverse residents that introduced new contexts for the intersection of sacred and commercial spaces.

The history of a single building can serve as a lens through which we understand the transformations of a city. Our book "Postane: Archeology of a Building" examines the Postane building in Galata—originally constructed as the British Post Office in 1859—by tracing its architectural, political, and social histories. Through archival research, personal narratives, and urban analysis, the book explores how this building has reflected the changing dynamics of İstanbul for over a century and a half.

Galata, once a walled district, was home to a diverse set of communities, including the British, who established an enclave of consular and administrative buildings in the 19th century. By studying the spatial evolution of the Postane building—first as an imperial post-office, later as a school, an apartment building, a cultural hub for filmmakers, and today, a center for civic engagement—we reveal the hidden layers of İstanbul's urban and social fabric.

This research demonstrates how built environments are shaped by political shifts, economic pressures, and the everyday lives of their inhabitants. By approaching history not just through major events but through lived experiences, we present urban transformation as a continuous dialogue between architecture and society.

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During the second half of the XX century, changes in the social fabric of the neighborhood affected both the Han, which became a location for various workshops, and the Catholic community, which dwindled to a bunch of families.

28th of March

Session 1

13:00 - 14:30

MAD - Ömer Abed Han

## Migrations and Cities: Madrid and İstanbul

Ana López- Sala (URBS / Spanish National Research Council, CSIC)

Didem Daniş (GAR / Galatasaray Uni)

The aim of this presentation is to think about the role of cities in protecting the most vulnerable migrants. Until recently, the state has been the dominant framework for the normative discussion on international migration and migration policies. In the last two decades, however, this perspective has changed significantly with the so-called "local turn". The local turn is a perspective that focuses on urban and local initiatives of migration governance not only in the sphere of integration but in the sphere of migration regulation. This perspective has analyzed the governance of migration from a new scale, the urban scale, showing cities as entities that have proposed their own agenda for action, and, therefore, positioning them in the analysis of migration and justice.

Istanbul has long been shaped by diverse migration flows, shaping its social and demographic fabric. Migration policies and societal attitudes have produced a stratified system where nationality, ethnicity, gender, and class determine varying degrees of legal and social precarity. Amid rising public resentment over the deepening economic crisis, increasing controls and restrictive policies have further marginalized and invisibilized migrant groups. These dynamics shape patterns of integration and transnational connections, reinforcing broader social inequalities. Istanbul's migration regime thus reflects the intersection of policy, identity, and urban belonging within a fragmented and exclusionary landscape.

Discussion Session

28th of March

Session 2

15:00 - 16:30

MAD - Ömer Abed Han

## Housing Policies, Environmental and Urban Justice

Paz Núñez (URBS / UAH)

Aylin Topal (URBS / METU)

Throughout Madrid's history, social housing policies have had a significant impact on the territorial structure and the population's access to essential resources. However, many of these policies have failed to achieve their objective of rebalancing the distribution of the population and generating human capabilities, and in many cases have perpetuated or even exacerbated social inequalities. In this sense, this exhibition seeks to analyze how social housing policies in Madrid over the decades have influenced the creation of capabilities among its inhabitants, and how their failure to

The presentation aims to investigate the ongoing struggle of branding İstanbul by reviewing the city branding literature with a critical lens implementing Henri Lefebvre's notion of "production of space". It argues that the growing literature on cities with dozens of different adjectives -from slow to smart, from sustainable to global- is revealing the ongoing and never-ending struggle over defining the urban space. İstanbul is a paradigmatic city with regards to explicit competition over defining the city. While the Turkish state controlled by the AKP has attempted to define and consolidate İstanbul in full-force, it dialectically

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address territorial imbalances has affected the development of these capabilities.

The analysis is based on a set of indicators that make it possible to objectively measure the impact of these policies. The indicators used include income inequality, the location of housing with employment centers and services, access to basic facilities and services (such as education, health, and public transportation), social and geographic mobility, overcrowding, and living conditions and lifestyles in different urban contexts. These indicators are essential for understanding how public policies have influenced the distribution of well-being within the city, and how these policies have facilitated or constrained the development of individual human capabilities.

opened a space for conflict and contradiction. The presentation offers an analysis of the recent struggles for defining urban space and competing attempts and efforts of branding İstanbul. While defining İstanbul as a global financial city with mega-projects has been one of the projects of Erdoğan, there has been a growing opposition attempting to define the city with a focus on ecological justice. These initiatives could inform environmental justice literature and other movements elsewhere.

## Discussion Session

28th of March

Session 3

17:00 - 18:30

Sen Piyer Kilisesi Manastır

## Tourism and the Right to the City

Roberto Goycoolea (URBS / UAH)

Yaşar Adnan Adanalı (MAD / Postane)

Tourism brands play a crucial role in promoting a city and shaping its perception, both in terms of its current image and how it wants to be perceived. They also have a significant impact on the city's development. The city must adapt to the expectations generated by the brand. In recent decades, Madrid's tourism brand has undergone significant changes. The most important change has been its transformation from an identification tool aimed at presenting the city and its heritage, to a marketing tool that promotes the city and its products, including the heritage that originally defined the place brand.

The evolution of the city into a consumable product, with the brand acting as a catalyst, has led to a growing disconnection between permanent residents, citizens, and the space they inhabit. In becoming a product, the city no longer embraces the lives of its citizens; it is no longer a place of shared life and experience. This phenomenon is examined here, focusing on the relationship between the evolution of the Madrid brand and the transformation of the Plaza Mayor, one of the city's most iconic spaces. This specific case highlights the new directions taken by global place brands, the consequences of which, we believe, can be applied to other heritage tourism destinations.

In 2024, Galata Tower was the most searched location on Google Maps in Turkey. This comes as no surprise to anyone who has visited the iconic landmark—its surroundings are swarmed by tourists, both local and international, all vying for the perfect selfie with the tower in the background. The streets leading up to Galata Tower are now lined with cafés serving Basque cheesecake drowned in chocolate sauce, nearly all of which have opened in the past five years. The area is also oversaturated with Airbnb rentals. Altogether, the use value of the city has been clearly overshadowed by the exchange value generated by the tourism industry in Galata. But what does this shift really mean for cultural heritage, spaces of memory, and the right to the city in İstanbul?

## Discussion Session

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28th of March	Exhibition	18:45-19:30	Sen Piyer Kilisesi Manastır
Tour on the exhibition: Urban Justice and Public Housing Policies in Madrid			
Paz Núñez (URBS / UAH)		Roberto Goycoolea (URBS / UAH)	
29th of March	Walking Tour	13:00-14:30	Sen Piyer Kilisesi Manastır
Walking and Sharing Through Beyoğlu			
José M. García Torres			

**Partner Institutions :** [URBS](#) (La ciudad justa), CSIC, Universidad de Alcalá, [Mekanda Adalet Derneği](#), [Sen Piyer Kilisesi DOST-I](#), [Depo Pergamon](#)

**Organizers:** Bahar Bayhan(MAD), José M. García Torres(Depo Pergamon), Hüseyincan Eryılmaz(MAD), Luca Refatti(DOST-I), URBS Team

## Event Venues

[Mekanda Adalet Derneği](#) - Kemankeş Karamustafapaşa Mah. Halil Paşa Sok. Ömer Abed Han No: 2/416 Beyoğlu 34425 İstanbul

[Sen Piyer Kilisesi Manastır](#) - Bereketzade, 34420 Beyoğlu/İstanbul