



# Reflection

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## EMBRACE FUTURE WITHOUT ERASING THE PAST

Linking historical aspects with  
modern needs

June 2025



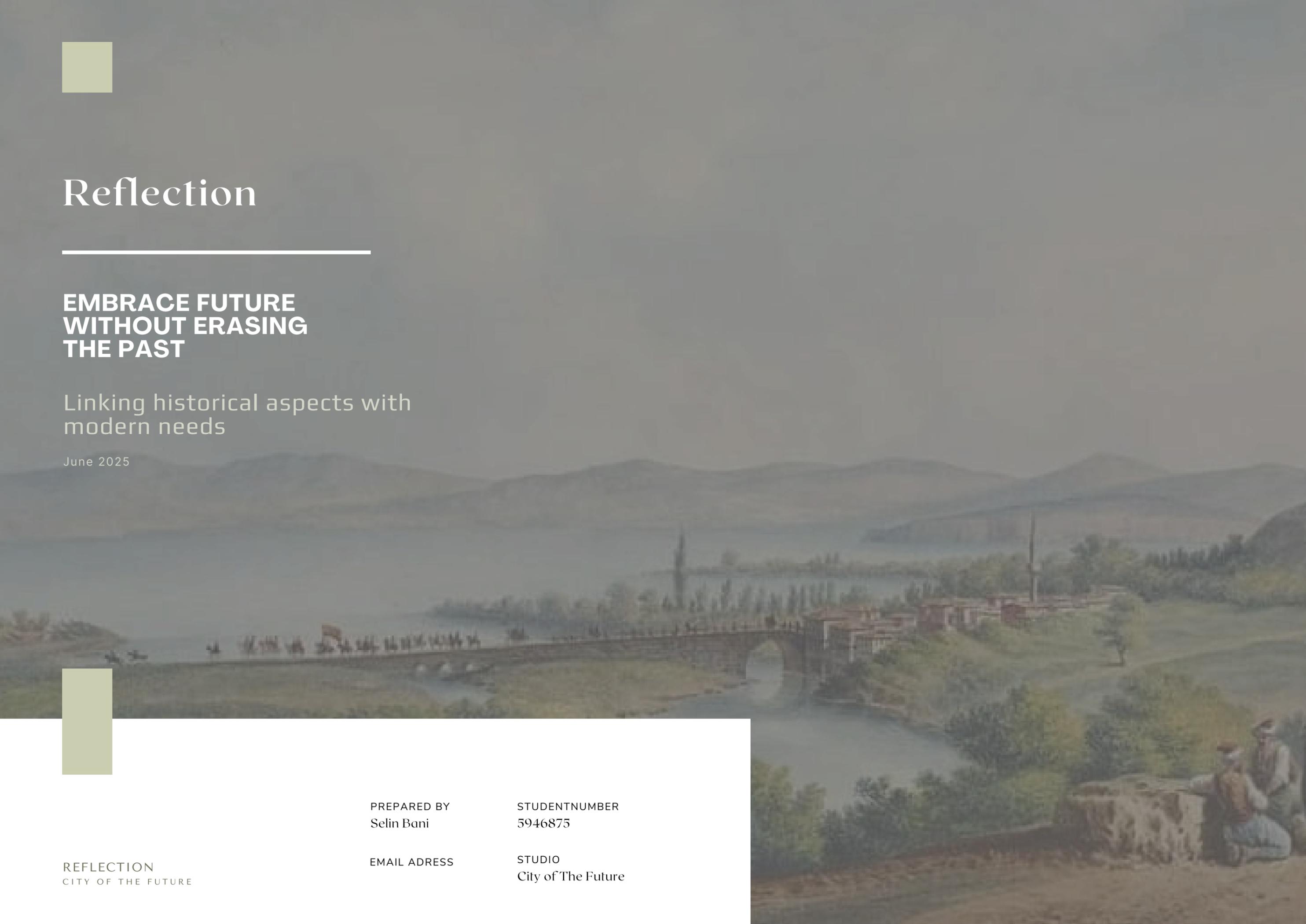
REFLECTION  
CITY OF THE FUTURE

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## Reflection

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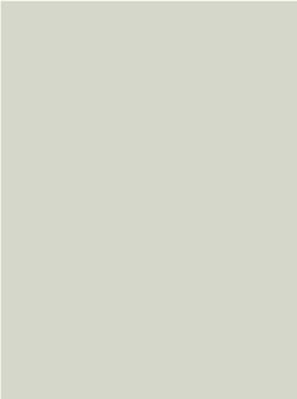
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# 01. INTRODUCTION

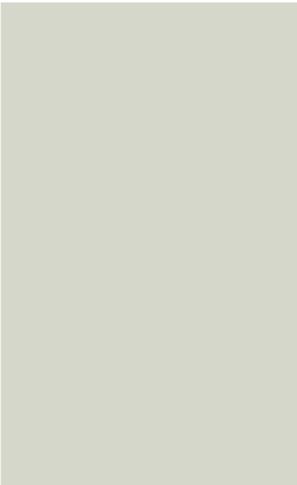
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## REFLECTION

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The urban identity of Küçükçekmece is under pressure due to the impact of urbanization and large-scale urban developments. In my graduation research, I focus on how these transformations affect the historical and cultural identity of the district. Through a combination of research and design, I explore how urban design can contribute to preserving and strengthening urban identity in times of change.



This reflection serves as an evaluation moment within my graduation process. I analyze the results of my research and design, assess the effectiveness of my methodological approach, and reflect on the interaction between research and design. Additionally, I discuss how I have incorporated the feedback received and the insights I have gained throughout this process. Finally, I reflect on the final phase of my graduation project.



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## 02. ANALYSIS ON MY APPROACH

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### Start of project

At the beginning of my project, I initially focused on the Istanbul Canal as a central element of my research. However, as my study progressed, I realized that my core interest lay in understanding how rapid urbanization affects the historical and cultural identity of Küçükçekmece. This shift in focus allowed me to investigate the broader urban dynamics shaping the district, rather than centering my research around a single large-scale project.

At this stage of my graduation research, I have gathered preliminary findings on the impact of urbanization on Küçükçekmece's identity. My research has shown that rapid urban transformations are reshaping both the physical and social structure of the neighborhood. Key elements of Küçükçekmece's identity, such as its waterfront, historical buildings, and community dynamics, are undergoing significant changes, raising concerns about the preservation of the district's local character.

By employing a methodological approach that combines theoretical research, site analysis, and interviews, I have identified critical factors influencing urban identity. The collected data has provided insights into how residents perceive these transformations and the role urban design plays in shaping their sense of place. Additionally, my initial design explorations suggest that strategic interventions in the built environment can help strike a balance between development and heritage conservation.

The interaction between research and design has proven to be particularly valuable. My research findings have informed my design decisions by highlighting which aspects of Küçükçekmece's identity should be emphasized or safeguarded. Simultaneously, the design process has allowed me to test different strategies and evaluate their feasibility in the context of ongoing urbanization. This iterative relationship between research and design has deepened my understanding of how design can actively contribute to shaping urban identity in times of change.

#### REFLECTION ON RESEARCH APPROACH

At the start of my project, I was highly focused on the Istanbul Canal, pushing myself to explore its details in depth. However, this narrowed perspective made it difficult to properly position my research within my broader project, ultimately hindering its development. One of the main challenges was the limited availability of data regarding the canal's impact, which restricted my ability to form well-supported conclusions.

As my research progressed, I realized that my primary focus should not have been the Istanbul Canal itself but rather the broader issue of how rapid urban development disrupts Küçükçekmece's urban identity. This shift in perspective allowed me to refine my approach, and after my P2, I redirected my focus toward the district's urban growth as a whole. This adjustment provided much clearer insights and a stronger foundation for my research.

If I had defined my focus more clearly earlier on and identified the core problem, I could have approached my research differently from the start. This does not mean that my initial approach was wrong or that everything went poorly as a result. In fact, the process of navigating this uncertainty has taught me the importance of positioning myself clearly within my project. It has shown me how to transition more effectively from research to design. By refining my approach to research, which now aligns more directly with the problem at hand, I have gained much deeper insights and have been able to take more ownership of the project.

### **Overall reflection on approach**

Overall, my approach has been effective, but like any research and design process, it has come with both strengths and challenges. The combination of theoretical research, field analysis, and interviews with residents has allowed me to develop a deep understanding of Küçükçekmece's urban identity and the impact of urbanization. The methods I employed to analyze urban transformations and residents' perceptions have provided valuable data, forming a strong foundation for my design.

Field analysis, where I specifically examined spatial conditions and interactions between people and their environment, proved to be an effective way to map the changes in the urban landscape. Additionally, conducting interviews with local residents gave me direct insight into their concerns and expectations regarding urbanization, which was crucial for further refining my design.

However, limitations also became apparent. The complexity of urban development and its broad impact on the district made it difficult to capture all relevant factors within a single design. This led to continuous adjustments of my design concepts, where I adapted my approach based on new insights.

Nevertheless, this process of adaptation and refinement has been a valuable aspect of my research, helping me remain flexible and engage more deeply with the issue.

## 03. EVALUATION OF THE CHOSEN METHODS

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My approach evolved as my research progressed, allowing me to assess the effectiveness of the methods I selected. Initially, I chose a combination of qualitative research and design methodologies, including field analysis, resident interviews, and the collection of secondary data. These methods provided valuable insights, particularly regarding how urbanization influences the identity of Küçükçekmece.

Field analysis was especially valuable, as it enabled me to observe the direct effects of urban changes on-site. I was able to see how residents interact with their changing environment, which was crucial in understanding their perspectives and concerns about future developments in the area. Additionally, by studying the history of Küçükçekmece, I gained a clearer understanding of how the district has evolved over time and how these changes have shaped its identity.

Interviews played an essential role in my methodology, as they brought forward personal stories and local knowledge, complementing the objective data and helping me grasp the human aspect of urban transformation. Conversations with residents provided insights into their pride in the past, as well as their uncertainty regarding the rapid urban growth. This not only helped me understand the impact of these changes but also revealed how residents feel connected to their neighborhood and which aspects of urban identity they consider important to preserve.

Moreover, the design process of continuous refinement was crucial. It allowed me to adjust my approach based on the data collected and the feedback received throughout the process. I tested various design concepts and evaluated how they aligned with the unique characteristics of the district, such as its historical buildings and natural landscape. This process provided valuable insights into how urban developments should be carefully integrated into the existing identity of a neighborhood without erasing its defining elements.

Despite these strengths, I encountered some limitations in my methodology. It was sometimes challenging to obtain detailed data on specific aspects of urban transformation, such as the long-term effects on residents and the neighborhood's social structure. This affected my ability to quantify certain changes. Nevertheless, qualitative methods, such as interviews and field analysis, helped me understand the broader context of urban transformation and highlight its human impact.

Overall, I believe my approach was effective in providing the necessary context for the research. However, I now recognize the importance of a more systematic approach to data analysis. My focus was primarily on residents' subjective experiences, but a broader collection of quantitative data could have further strengthened the analysis. Combining both qualitative and quantitative research would have provided a more comprehensive picture of how urbanization affects urban identity.

In the future, I would consider a more balanced use of both approaches and refine my methods to obtain a more complete and multidimensional understanding of Küçükçekmece's urban transformation.

# 04. REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK AND LEARNING PROCESS

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Throughout my graduation research, I received valuable feedback from my mentors, which was crucial in advancing and refining my project. This feedback covered various aspects, including the focus of my research, suggestions regarding methodology, and ways to structure and present my findings. The purpose of this reflection is to evaluate how this feedback influenced my work and how I translated it into concrete improvements in both my research and design.

## **REFLECTION ON THE FEEDBACK**

One of the key points my mentors emphasized was the need to clarify my research focus. In the early stages, my project was too heavily centered on the Istanbul Canal, which did not fully align with my original objective: investigating the urban identity of Küçükçekmece. This was initially a challenge for me, as the Istanbul Canal project was what led me to explore Küçükçekmece in the first place. However, my mentors advised me to shift my focus toward the broader impact of urbanization on the area, as this was more relevant to my central research question. They also highlighted the importance of aligning my study with the specific social and cultural characteristics of the district and adjusting my methodology to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of its residents.

Additionally, I was encouraged to strengthen the connection between my research and the urban and design-related aspects of urban identity. This was essential to ensure that my project contributed both theoretically and practically to the development of cities undergoing similar urbanization transformations.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE FEEDBACK IN MY WORK**

In response to this feedback, I made several key adjustments. I refined my research scope by shifting the emphasis from the Istanbul Canal project to the broader urban transformations affecting Küçükçekmece. This allowed me to explore the deeper layers of urban identity and focus on how residents experience and respond to these changes. I also revised my methodology to place greater emphasis on qualitative data, particularly through interviews and field observations, to capture the nuanced ways in which urban transformation affects the district's social fabric.

To strengthen the link between my research and urban design, I integrated more analytical tools such as mapping, spatial analysis, and visual representations. This helped me better communicate the relationship between the built environment and residents' perceptions of identity. Additionally, by applying urban design theories more explicitly in my analysis, I was able to create design strategies that were more directly informed by both academic insights and real-life urban dynamics.

## **Learning Process from My Own Work**

Through my research and design work, I gained significant insights into the importance of clear positioning within a project. In the initial phases, my focus was too broad and partly directed at a large-scale development, which made it challenging to keep my research concrete and directly linked to my own project. This experience made me realize how crucial it is to define the central problem early on and determine which specific aspects of urban identity I aimed to investigate.

Furthermore, I learned that urban identity is not just a theoretical concept but is deeply intertwined with residents' experiences and perceptions. By actively incorporating their perspectives into my research, I gained a more profound understanding of how urban transformation affects daily life and cultural continuity in Küçükçekmece. This realization not only improved my research approach but also made my design proposals more relevant and impactful.

Another key takeaway was the importance of visual communication in bridging research and design. Using maps, diagrams, and sketches helped me structure my findings more effectively and present complex spatial and social issues in a more accessible manner. This reinforced the value of integrating graphic elements to enhance clarity and engagement in urban research and design.

Finally, I came to understand that flexibility is essential in any research process. While I initially felt constrained by my original direction, reorienting my study towards urban growth and identity enabled me to develop a more focused and meaningful project. This experience taught me to remain critical of my own process and to make adjustments when necessary to achieve deeper insights and stronger results.

# 05. REFLECTION ON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT

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I believe that my design has now come together as a cohesive whole. The various aspects of my research and design align well with each other and complement one another. By combining the insights from the research with my design decisions, I have developed a concept that both respects the existing urban identity of Küçükçekmece and allows space for future developments. The process was sometimes challenging, but it helped me continuously reconsider and adjust my choices, which ultimately improved the final result.

What I have achieved is not just a physical design, but a comprehensive approach that incorporates the social and cultural dimensions of the area. The identity of Küçükçekmece has been my starting point, and I feel that my design strengthens this identity in a respectful and meaningful way.

As the design took shape, I could see how the different layers and elements complemented each other and ultimately contributed to a coherent vision for the future of the area. My design is, therefore, not the endpoint but a new foundation for the further development of Küçükçekmece, with attention to both its historical context and the modern needs of its residents.

## **What is the relationship between my graduation topic, my master's track, and my master's program?**

My research closely aligns with the core values of my master's track (Architecture/Urbanism/Building Technology/etc.), where the relationship between spatial developments and urban identity is central. Within my master's program MSc AUBS (Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences), I specifically focus on how architectural and urban design can play a role in addressing the challenges of urban transformation and urbanization, using both analytical and design methods.

## **How has my research influenced my design, and how has the design influenced my research?**

My research on urban identity has led to a better understanding of the spatial and social elements that form this identity. This has directly influenced my design, as I have focused on strategies that not only preserve physical structures but also enhance residents' perceptions and experiences. At the same time, the design process has helped me make certain theoretical concepts more concrete and test them in a spatial context, thereby sharpening my research.

### **How do I assess the value of my way of working (my approach, methods, and methodology)?**

My approach, which combines theoretical research with a design-oriented approach, has provided me with valuable insights into the interaction between urban development, urbanization and identity. The use of qualitative research methods, such as interviews and spatial analyses, has helped create a nuanced picture of the impact of urban growth on the identity of Küçükçekmece. At the same time, I have learned that a clearer focus in the initial phase could have made my process more efficient.

### **How do I assess the academic and societal value, scope, and implications of my graduation project, including ethical aspects?**

Academically, my research contributes to the debate on urban identity and transformation by linking theoretical concepts to a specific case study. Societally, the project has potential value for policymakers, designers, and local communities, as it provides insight into how urban identity can be preserved despite major developments. Regarding ethical aspects, I am aware of the need to take residents' voices seriously and to develop design proposals that are not driven solely by aesthetic or economic considerations, but also support social cohesion and cultural continuity.

### **How do I assess the transferability of my project results?**

The methods and strategies I have developed can also be applied in other rapidly growing urban areas with similar challenges. The general principles of preserving urban identity amidst rapid urbanization are relevant for many cities worldwide. The specific case study of Küçükçekmece offers valuable lessons, but the underlying methodology can be applied more broadly.

### **Two additional reflection questions:**

- To what extent can design strategies actually influence the perception and experience of urban identity?
- How can architecture and urbanism address the balance between necessary urban growth and the preservation of local identity without reinforcing gentrification?

### **To what extent can design strategies actually influence the perception and experience of urban identity?**

Design strategies play a crucial role in how urban identity is perceived and experienced. Spatial interventions can contribute to the recognizability of a place by enhancing existing cultural and historical elements. For example, preserving certain structures or designing public spaces that align with the daily lives of residents can contribute to a sense of continuity and connection.

Moreover, design can guide the interaction between residents and their environment. Through spatial planning, materiality, and programming, architects and urban planners can intentionally foster a specific experience of a neighborhood. In my project, I have explored how urban growth alters the perception of Küçükçekmece and how design strategies can mitigate or amplify this impact. By applying these insights to my design proposals, it becomes clear how physical interventions can support and preserve the identity of a place.

### **How can architecture and urbanism address the balance between necessary urban growth and the preservation of local identity without reinforcing gentrification?**

Finding a balance between urban growth and the preservation of local identity is complex, especially since large-scale urban developments often lead to gentrification and the displacement of original residents. However, architecture and urbanism can develop strategies that allow growth to happen without compromising existing social and cultural structures.

A key approach is involving the local community in the design process. By using participatory methods, such as co-design and workshops, designers and policymakers can better understand what is essential to a neighborhood's identity and how new developments can align with it.

Additionally, urban growth should proceed in phases, with attention to existing social networks. This might involve reusing existing structures instead of complete demolition, integrating affordable housing and workspaces, and developing public spaces that remain accessible to all.

In my project, I have attempted to apply these principles by analyzing which elements of Küçükçekmece are essential to the neighborhood's identity and how design strategies can support them. By developing a design proposal that not only suggests physical transformations but also fosters social cohesion, I hope to contribute to more sustainable urban growth that does not lead to displacement but strengthens the existing community.