



# THE SUBJECT'S ARCHITECTURE

## CENTER FOR SPATIAL JUSTICE



Photo: Bekir Dindar.

A ring in the chain of spatial injustices caused by the interventions of capital groups in rural and urban spaces is the informal settlements. This photo is from a *gecekondu* neighborhood in Istanbul, which has continuously faced struggles in issues such as legal assurance, municipal service, and neighborhood restoration as well as the threat of displacement and urban transformation. The dwellers, who have migrated to the city in the 1950s for work opportunities in factories, have gained access to many municipal services from sidewalks to drinking water, and from means of transport to lamp posts through their very own efforts; they have constructed their own fountains, gardens, and playgrounds together in solidarity. Today, however, the new standards of capital are threatening the dwellers to be removed from the life they built in Istanbul, which now develops mainly on real estate income.

In the photograph, it is possible to trace the makeshift state of the *gecekondu* as a result of its completion overnight and the additions made at different times, in line with various needs and as far as the materials at hand allow. This shows us that the *gecekondus* were built as a result of the spaces and spatial practices produced by the inhabitants as subjects and whose measure is the inhabitants themselves. The power of the sense of belonging in *gecekondus*, where spatial practice takes place from the bottom up—which changes and transforms according to the preferences and needs of the user—can be read from the interventions made to personalize and improve the living spaces and the struggles to protect them. As a result, the spaces formed in *gecekondus* are produced by "life" itself. They stand out with their use-value and take their "measure" from the user, that is the architect who can directly participate in the production of the space.

## About the author

Center for Spatial Justice (MAD) carries out transdisciplinary works to develop fairer, more ecological, and democratic processes/practices in cities and rural spaces. They produce, collect and share rights-based, innovative, qualified, and public knowledge. With the knowledge they produce, MAD aims to contribute to the development of policies that will make spaces of accommodation, work, and recreation more habitable for all in Istanbul and beyond.