

Nr. and Title

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Between Two Seas

Location
Türkiye

Users
Hikers and everyone who is concerned about urban and landscape transformations in the area of Istanbul

Maintained by
Serkan Taycan and volunteers. It was initially supported by the 13th Istanbul Biennial.

Duration
2013 - ongoing

Category
urban-development, environment, social

Initiator(s)
Serkan Taycan

Description
The project consists of a four-day walking route in the near West of Istanbul, between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea. While walking, users can experience the threatening changes in the urban landscape starting from the outermost periphery of the city, passing through rural and uninhabited areas and water basins, to its centre. The route is 60-km long and it is composed of four 15-km parts, which can be covered over four days. The lignite mines are along the way, as well as the area reserved for the new airport, the road leading to the 3rd bridge on Bosphorus, excavation dump sites, industrial sites and residential areas, inner-city vegetable gardens, and sites of cultural and historical significance such as the Yarımburgaz Caves. The latter is the oldest settlement in Istanbul. The project provides a platform to witness the ongoing radical transformation of the city, which is threatening both the ecological and the social life of the inhabitants. It stimulates the perception and the understanding of the surroundings in an experience-oriented way through walking. The project was initiated in collaboration with an urban geographer (Jean-François Perouse), a graphic designer (Didem Ateş), a multidisciplinary design studio (Superpool), a trail maker (Kate Clow), and other professionals, including architects, urban planners, biologists, cartographers, and historians.

Goals
The route, as a ‘passage’ between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, is a tool that allows its users to experience the urban transformation of Istanbul in an unmediated way. Following the environmental debates which were raised during the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the project becomes a platform for the discussion of the latest developments on projects of urban transformation. The project aims at encouraging citizens to experience the city through the act of walking.
At times when being an active citizen is difficult in Türkiye, the project helps to catalyse media coverage and to link the local discussion to an international context.

Beneficial outcomes
The project keeps record of how the route is used by hikers. Maps, photographs, video footages, films and sketches which consistently record the changes in the landscape are constantly being produced. Each hiker becomes an active witness as well as a co-producer of the project. The route helps to create and expand an international network of individuals and organizations who are concerned about urban issues and consider the act of walking as a tool. The initiator created another route in Athens, Greece that was adapted to local urgencies. Between Two Seas became a member of the ‘Cultural Routes in Turkey’ Association. More than 30 group-walks have been organized, 6 of which were conceived as excursions for research groups, including KTH Royal Institute of Technology - Sustainable Urban Planning and Design, Harvard University Graduate School of Design Mellon Urban Initiative, Bergen School of Architecture, ENSA Paris-Malaquais School of Architecture, University of Minnesota School of Architecture. Individuals and separate groups have also organized their own walks using the published map - available in bookshops across Istanbul- of which 50,000 have been printed so far (the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV) published two editions of 10,000 each, and ATLAS magazine, a geographical monthly, printed 30,000 copies as a free supplement).

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