



2025 RSA Annual Conference

How can Labor-intensive Manufacturing Zones in Metropolitan Cities be Upgraded? The Case of Bagcilar, Istanbul

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Istanbul is the city where industry is most concentrated in Turkey. Despite its advantages, industry within the city also brings numerous economic, social, and physical challenges.

One of Istanbul's strong manufacturing districts is Bagcilar. The district experienced rapid industrialization after the 1980s. In 1990s, the service sector began to develop. Since the 2000s, zoning plans have aimed to decentralize manufacturing in some sub-areas of the district while allowing it to remain in others. As a result, since the 2010s, some manufacturing firms have left the area, while others have remained due to advantages such as know-how, labor pool, and supply chain. Today, nearly 2,000 manufacturing firms operate in Bagcilar, with 70% of them in the textile sector. The coexistence of industry, housing, and services in the area negatively impacts both residents and workers.

A key issue for the sustainable development of the region is under what conditions and how manufacturing can continue to exist in the area. Mixed-use decisions in zoning plans have led to various development and transformation scenarios for the district. One such scenario involves upgrading manufacturing and transitioning toward research and design-oriented production. However, policies and tools to facilitate this upgrade are insufficient. Historically, decentralization policies have been predominantly applied to labor-intensive manufacturing in the city. Despite these policies, 70% of manufacturing has remained in the area, leading to discussions on the on-site transformation of manufacturing zones.

This study aims to explore how labor-intensive manufacturing zones in a major city can be upgraded and what policies and tools can be developed in this context, using the case of Bagcilar. The study is based on findings from a TÜBİTAK 3501-funded research project focusing on the sustainable development and



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