



# Tracing What Remains Behind the Natural Coastline: Unpacking the Delivery of Land Reclamation in Yeşilköy through Lot 5

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## Abstract

Landfill practices, which have gained momentum within the scope of global urbanization, have drawn attention to coastlines. Presenting opportunities for legitimate urban growth, altering the coastal edges redefines not only the physical split between land and sea but also the social life it engenders. To address this challenge, this article aims to reveal the socio-spatial dynamics of reclaimed urban coastlines, exploring both macro and micro perspectives and their interplay, ultimately proposing a novel methodological approach by employing a narrative lens. Applying this methodological framework, the article traces the historical trajectory of the Yeşilköy coastline in Istanbul, scrutinizing its macro dynamics through the microcosm of Lot 5. The narrative lens of the study is formed by archival sources, including visual and written texts about the Yeşilköy coastline and Lot 5, and semi-structured interviews. Adopting Lot 5 as a micro perspective, the study sheds light on the crucial role it plays as a critical witness to the evolving winds of change in the social and cultural environment, along with the concurrent urban political tendencies that accompany this transformation. Lot 5's significance lies in its connection to Motel Yeşilköy, a renowned mid-20th-century architectural landmark, situated in the same parcel. By acknowledging its association with Motel Yeşilköy, articulating Lot 5 together with the urban context in which it inhabits offers a nested perspective for deciphering the reclaimed coast of Yeşilköy. The paper concludes that the Yeşilköy natural coastline, despite being subjected to landfilling, perpetuates both in urban memory and as a physical boundary. The findings of this paper, therefore, suggest the coastline reclamation to be evaluated within the intricate nature of intertwined spatial narratives at multiple scales, rather than as an expansion of an urban edge isolated from its context.

**Keywords:** Coastal edges, Land and sea, Reclaimed urban coastlines, Spatial narratives, Yeşilköy coastline

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## INTRODUCTION

On his last sea voyage from Constantinople to the Vatican, the ship carrying Saint Stephanos' holy relic was forced to dock in the bay of a small fishing village due to a violent storm in the Sea of Marmara. Only after ten days was the case able to set off again for the Vatican, keeping the Saint's name alive in this fishing village. Yeşilköy<sup>1</sup>, formerly named Ayastefanos after Saint Stephanos was once enshrined in the urban memory as a refuge for saints, a stormy coast, a lush green landscape, and a fishing village. Over time, it has ultimately had its share of urban growth (Figure 1). Today, with its remarkable history, ethnic and cultural diversity, and strategic location as the home of the first aviation base, Yeşilköy has grown from a suburban neighborhood to one of the important polycenters of Istanbul. While these multiple layers contributed to Yeşilköy's prominent position within the urban context, its growth was further legitimized through the reclamation of its coast in the late 1980s.

<sup>1</sup> Yeşilköy, called Ayastefanos until 1924 (Başgelen, 2011, p. 7), is translated as "Greenvillage" in English.



**Figure 1.** Miniature of Ayastefanos depicted by Sabriye Şeker. Source: Tuna, 2006, p. 14.

What makes this growth more compelling is that the land reclamation not only changed the confines of the Yeşilköy coast but also had inevitable consequences for the built environment, everyday life, and cultural practices. This story is indeed neither unique to Yeşilköy nor the other coasts of Istanbul, as rapid urbanization practices across the world put pressure on the natural coastal boundaries of the urban, and the rising need for urban space is met by growth toward the sea. Numerous instances in Istanbul, other coastal cities in Türkiye, and beyond illustrate that water-to-land transformation is a consequence of the requirements of modernization (Güner, 2017; Akcan, 2004), asserting land reclamation

as an inevitable outcome and a technical solution within the historical trajectory of urban growth. The result is the formation of a new ground, upon which infrastructure, recreational facilities, and private assets are hosted with the expansion of the urban landscape. This phenomenon has been the subject of extensive research assessing the impacts of landfill practices, raising concerns such as ecological degradation (Erten, Rossi, 2019; de Mulder et al., 1994), commodification (Erkılıç, 2021; AlShehabi and Suroor, 2016; Grydehøj, 2015; Casper, 2013), and coastal legislation (Serim, et al., 2022; Gülbitti, Özüduru, 2020). However, these studies rarely take into account the spatiality of natural borders before land reclamation, often focusing solely on post-transformation conditions. It is in this context, that the study centers around the various events unfolding in time concerning Yeşilköy coastal reclamation and comprehensively analyzes the conflicts and relationships between these events. The interest in this research was particularly aroused by the complex narrative of the Motel Yeşilköy, located on Lot 5 by the reclaimed Yeşilköy coast.

The main aim of this study is to adopt an alternative approach to analyzing urban growth by reversing the conventional focus. Instead of examining reclaimed territories to comprehend the consequences within the confines of the coastline, this research shifts the perspective to unclaimed lands, identifying the drivers and outcomes of land reclamation through the territories that were left behind. This retrospective perspective puts forward a critical methodological stance to analyze the shaping of the coastlines in Istanbul's urban geography. Specifically, the study intends to trace the legacy of the natural coastline as a tool for understanding the historical development of the coast, while also examining the delivery of land reclamation. This approach offers a unique methodological contribution to the literature by acknowledging the act of land reclamation as both an outcome and a catalyst of various political and socio-economic dynamics.

The importance of this study is two-fold: first, it represents reclamation as a socio-political phenomenon that influences urban public space and the lives of buildings adjacent to the reclaimed territory. In doing so, it explores how the reclamation of the coastline redefines the position of architectural space and public life. Second, it highlights the conflict inherent in coastal reclamation, as it envisions yet-to-exist spaces on the reclaimed territory while determining the fate of the existing building stock adjacent to natural confines. To this end, the study revolves around the following refined research question: How do the spatial narratives of Lot 5 contribute to understanding the intricacies of the reclaimed coastline?

Employing the proposed methodological framework in the context of Yeşilköy, the research argues that coastal reclamation is not only a spatial phenomenon that expands ground to make it accessible and suitable for use but also a socio-political phenomenon with significant consequences. By tracing the historical evolution of the Yeşilköy coastline at a larger

scale and concurrently reflecting on this progression through the nuanced changes and life within Lot 5 at a more localized level, the study offers a situated perspective to unravel the complexities of the reclaimed coast in Yeşilköy. Lot 5, connected to Motel Yeşilköy—a renowned mid-20th-century architectural landmark, situated in the same parcel—serves as a critical witness to the social, cultural, and urban political shifts accompanying these changes.

Reading the reflection of macro-level global and national events and urban agendas through the micro-life of Lot 5 enables a deeper understanding of the reclaimed coastline, viewing it not merely as an urban edge but rather as a socio-spatial phenomenon. This critical stance illustrates that the natural coastline, despite being transformed by land reclamation, perpetuates both in urban memory and as a tangible physical boundary. In this regard, our goal in this study is to both incite and simulate a new insight when examining the notion of land reclamation, engaging simultaneously with the variety of tangible and intangible dimensions of urban space.

### STUDY AREA

The study area of this research is located in Yeşilköy, situated along the northern coast of the Sea of Marmara on Istanbul's European side (Kurt, et.al. 2010). Yeşilköy has gone through significant transformations, particularly in its coastline. This study further zooms in on Lot 5, located at coordinates 40.956571, 28.819916 (Figure 2), a plot of land once distinguished by the Yeşilköy Motel, a notable landmark of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of this analysis undertaken in the study date back to the early 20th century, a period when no development has yet taken place on or around Lot 5. Thus, in this study, the history of Lot 5 traces its origins back to an open green field that was later split leading to the construction of a mansion on the land. Nevertheless, the earthquake in Adapazarı, the enactment of laws prompted by the expansion of motorways and the increasing reliance on automobiles resulted in the demolition of the mansion and the subsequent construction of a motel. The dynamics of the coastal landscape took a significant turn in 1982 when a large-scale land reclamation project filled the shore, distancing the subdivision from the sea. To compensate for the loss of proximity to the beach, a pool was constructed on the newly filled land, which had once been a picturesque pebble beach. Consequently, Lot 5 found itself situated far away from the sea it once bordered, altering its relationship with the coastal environment. Subsequently, the subdivision of the motel was eventually demolished, and in its place, a gated community housing project emerged. With this new development, the lot completely lost any remaining connection to the seaside, further highlighting the impact of coastal reclamation on the transformation of the coastal landscape. Against this backdrop, both Yeşilköy, in terms of its exposure to reclamation, and Lot 5, in terms of witnessing reclamation and beyond, mark a critical area of study in this paper.





**Figure 2.** Study Area of Research. Left below; Lot 5 from the original title deed. Right middle; 1:5000 map showing property before splitting.

## A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO TRACE THE MAKING OF RECLAIMED COASTLINES

Amidst the discussions surrounding globalization and urbanization, it is widely acknowledged that the concept of a unitary city is inadequate to capture the intricacies of our complex world. However, a fundamental paradox lies at the heart of these debates: while spatial strategies aim to control, plan, and administer the essence of a city, there exists an ambiguous succession of interpretations and representations of its attributes (Vigar et al., 2005). Recognizing this perspective requires looking beyond the dominant - in other words, top-down - representations that constitute the city, while at the same time incorporating the portrayal of bottom-up experiences. Consequently, to cultivate a more democratic, pluralistic, and inclusive urban imaginary, Bloomfield (2006) suggests that cities should actively engage with a diverse range of perspectives, thereby incorporating multiple urban narratives. Narratives assume a critical role in this endeavor, acting as a documentation of "spoken or written accounts of connected events" (Niculae, et al., 2021, 4), that contribute to the construction of urban and architectural space.

Embracing the narrative method, the study focuses primarily on archival resources including visual and written text on the Yeşilköy shoreline and Lot 5, and secondarily on semi-structured interviews with people who witnessed the transformation of the coastline. While the visual materials relate to old photographs, land titles, municipal records, and urban plans before and after land reclamation, written documents include regulations, policies, and correspondences with architects and urban planners. These collectively illuminate the evolving social and cultural landscape of Yeşilköy, as well as the effects of urbanization and coastline reclamation.

The study adopts a multi-scalar analysis to explore the intricacies of coastal reclamation and urban transformation in Yeşilköy. This multi-scalar analysis approach intertwines with the personification of Lot 5, a specific lot that has undergone significant transformation over time. This approach allows for a witness firsthand and more nuanced examination of the local implications of coastal reclamation. It further enables a comprehensive examination of the evolution of Lot 5 and its surroundings, considering the socio-political implications of spatial changes across macro, urban, local, architectural, micro scales. As such, it enables the socio-political implications of spatial transformation to be explored at various levels, providing a palpable account for understanding its effects.

As mentioned earlier in the study, since an alternative historical account of the coastal reclamation cannot be realized solely from the perspective of Lot 5, in order to fully understand this polemic spatial transformation, it is necessary to outline the designations of various scales upon which the methodological framework of this research is built, including macro, urban, local, architectural and micro scales (Table 1). At the macro scale, we identify the consequences of global urban growth, recognizing the broad aspects such as infrastructure, transportation systems, and land use planning of the 20th century. It also takes into account contextual factors like wars, disasters, and climate conditions beyond human control. At the urban scale, we specifically analyze the events that unfold in the urban narrative, recognizing the factors in the urbanization of Yeşilköy. Moving to the local scale, we zoom in further to the specific sites within or at the periphery of Yeşilköy. In contrast, the architectural scale focuses on the design and function of structures, interpreting the contextual implications of broader scales. Finally, the micro-scale in the study corresponds to the life of Lot 5. While readings at multiple scales may at first glance appear unrelated and therefore disconnected, positioning these different events across scales according to a timeline becomes a tool for deciphering coastal reclamation, revealing the complexity behind it. In addition to the methodological framework conveyed through Table 1, the following accompanying figures in the article can be considered both as visual tools constructing a visual narrative that bridges the different layers behind this complexity. These layers, corresponding to different archival elements such as coastal reclamation plans, aerial views, ownership status certification, photos approaching the shore, etc., emerge and somehow merge to suggest an alternative historical visualization. In this context, a series of chronologically ordered visuals depicting the dynamic interplay of different elements that shaped the evolution of Lot 5 in relation to Yeşilköy coastline reclamation are presented to illustrate its transformation over 84 years, until it became home to a residential gated subdivision in 1996 (Figure 10).

By giving prominence to the micro-scale through the examination of Lot 5 while simultaneously considering multiple scales, our research not

only adopts but also applies a methodological framework to trace the interconnected, overlapping, or conflicting narratives, hence providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and nuances inherent in the process of urban growth and coastal reclamation. Similarly, Gökçen Erkiş (2021, 119) emphasizes that the coastline should be considered a social and cultural phenomenon, departing from the traditional representation of the coastline as more than a physical line:

*"... [U]rban edge, as a demarcation between the urban and its exterior, becomes more valid in such intriguing contexts of urbanization and ecological crises... [U]rban borders can now only be assembled in multiple scales, with multiple human and nonhuman actors, and within broader temporal frameworks. The urban edge condition is shaped by the entanglements of the political with the ecological; the small and regional; and the historic process with the present day. Beyond the cartographic image of the line, I would prefer to see the coastline as a site for the production of meaning. Presently, the interest in the material agency of the processes that shaped the coastline follows the material flows and their political ecologies. I would argue that the coastline itself, as a materially produced body, holds records, upon which new relations can be deciphered. As long as coastlines demarcate destinies, give birth to stories, and retain mysteries, they remain a subject worthy of further research."*

Such a view confirms that a better understanding of the coastline as a social and spatial construct rather than just a physical boundary can be obtained by looking at Lot 5's micro life. Yeşilköy's natural coastline continues to have a profound impact on their lives and is still remembered fondly despite the changes brought about by landfilling. Thus, the article brings together materials from a variety of sources to produce a distinct portrait of land reclamation. We acknowledge the rising interest in a repository of narrative methods inspired by a shared fascination with urban narratives. These methods celebrate the diversity of thoughts and perspectives, gathering not the most established and conventional approaches to interpreting, experiencing, or documenting urban spaces, but a range of innovative and imaginative techniques stemming from various backgrounds. Thus, such a perspective aims to reveal the multitude of ways in which the urban can be understood and expressed, ultimately contributing to its multifaceted nature and ongoing evolution (Machado e Moura et al., 2023, 10).

Following the methodological approach, the next section is structured around three major phases for deciphering the reclaimed coastline of Yeşilköy, each of which is presented by employing a multi-scalar approach discussed throughout the events unfolding over time. Consequently, aligning with the narrative structure, the paper expounds on the subject of coastline reclamation from several directions. Making connections across these fragmented spatial narratives allows for recording the causes, processes, and consequences of the coastal



reclamation, thus offering a comprehensive reading that relates to the making of the Yeşilköy coastline reclamation. By uncovering bottom-up narratives that explore the ramifications of spatial transformation, as well as elucidating top-down visions of transformation in the urban landscape, such an interpretation offers another historical account of the prevailing narratives surrounding the reclamation of the Istanbul coastline. This comprehensive approach sheds light on the complex interplay between individual experiences, community perspectives, and broader urban development agendas, providing a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of coastal reclamation.



**Table 1.** Chronological aspect of multi-scalar socio-spatial analysis of the research

Micro Scale (Lot 5)	Architectural Scale	Local Scale	Urban Scale	Macro Scale	Function	Scales ----- Dates	
		Hospitals were established in Ayastephanos.	Deportation to the periphery has begun.	Balkan War and Pandemic outbreak.	The Mansion	1912-13	
The mansion was purchased.		Displacement from Yeşilköy took place.				1913	
WWI							
Soldiers occupied the area surrounding the lot.	Sea Baths started ceasing		Sea baths transformed into beaches.	The occupation took place throughout Thrace and Anatolia.		1919	
			Sea baths are replaced by mixed-gender beaches.	Motel Typology appeared in the US.		1920	
				The definition and protection of coasts in Turkish law was published for the first time.		1926	
The adjacent two 2 acre divisions were consequently sold to Hilmi Naili Barlo and Fehmi Simsaroglu. Two parcels housed the Tanaçan and Falez subdivisions.	The motel typology started to evolve in parallel with the development of highways and the increase in automobile use.	Istanbul beaches underwent modernization.	Democrat Party (DP) governance has been elected (1950-1960).	Motel typology became widespread globally and nationally with the vehicle-oriented urban development.		1950	
	Local incentives for tourism investment have been encouraged by the government.		The Law on Promotion of Tourism Industry was published.			1953	
	The modernization of Florya Beach (1956-1959) was led by the famous architect Sedat Hakki Eldem. Ataköy Beach has also been developed (1956-1957) as part of the Ataköy Housing Project.		Article 4 (f) of the Municipal Building and Roads Law No. 2290 was promulgated. This Law remained in force until the Land Use Law No. 6785 of 1956, which stipulated that "On the waterfront, a 10-meter wide area from the dock or the point where a dock can be built shall be left free for the benefit of the public. The area up to 10 meters inland from the shore is considered the coastline and is protected".			1956	
The construction of Gazi Evrenosoğlu Mansion took place.		Yeşilköy Airport has been opened for international air traffic.				1957	
	The construction of Ataköy Beach took place.		Decentralization of industry and residence has been suggested by Piccinato.		1958		
	The construction of Ataköy Beach Motels took place.				1959		
	Motel A and Motel B were established within the Florya and Kilyos facilities. They are the local equivalent of the motel typology, which dates back to 1956 as the first facility of the Tourism Bank, a state institution established in 1955.				1960		
An earthquake occurred in Adapazarı.							
Construction of Motel Yeşilköy has begun.					Motel Yeşilköy	1967	
		Popular sea baths in Istanbul remained intact along with city beaches.				1969	
		It has been forbidden to build closer than 10 meters in the coastline.	Law No. 1605 and Additional Article 7 added to Law No. 6785.			1972	
Military coup attempt realized.							
		Coastal reclamation by natural means, such as aluminum brought in by rivers, or by artificial means was considered to be equivalent.		The coasts became under the sovereignty and savings of the state.		1982	
A swimming pool has been built on the reclaimed coastline.	Land Reclamation of Yeşilköy coastline took place.				1984		
Motel Yeşilköy remained disfunctional.	Designed by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu on 50 hectares of land on the site of Ataköy Beach, the Ataköy Tourism Complex consisted of a shopping mall, an international marina, hotels and other commercial, food and beverage and entertainment units and included a sea bus pier.			Vested rights introduced through Coastal Law No. 3086 to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.	Disfunctional	1987	
	The Yeşilyurt-Yeşilköy Coastal Arrangement, a 3 km coastal project, was designed and implemented by EPA Architecture + BAYTUR Construction.					1988-1989	
The Yeşilköy Motel has been demolished.					1992		
Gazi Evrenosoğlu Konakları was constructed.					Gazi Evrenosoğlu Konakları	1996-97	
	The request to declare the Ataköy coast an "urban protected area" was rejected in 2009. Subsequently, motels A, B and C, which were part of the touristic facilities, and the recreational facilities and camping used by the bank in the past were demolished. Today, they are replaced by different housing and touristic facility projects.					2009	
		"The integrated management and planning of coastal areas, studies, works and procedures for the regulation of coastal areas and geological and geotechnical studies related to these areas, the determination, approval and registration of the coastal boundary line" and "the preparation, preparation and ex officio approval of surveys, maps and plans of all types and scales related to coastal and filling areas and back areas that are functional and physical continuation of these areas and ensuring their implementation" have become among the duties of the Ministry of Environment and Planning.				2011	

## FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

Motel Yeşilköy used to be a bustling tourist destination once, attracting crowds of vacationers to enjoy the coastal experience in the 1960's. However, Motel Yeşilköy's popularity ended due to the political circumstances of that period, ultimately leading to its demise caused by the landfill. While at first glance this narrative may seem to offer a limited perspective, the depiction of the building's history through the simultaneous juxtaposition of different narrative layers implies a multifaceted way of examining the consequences of land reclamation, suggesting an alternative historical account that goes beyond a one-dimensional perspective. In other words, this study opts for in-depth exploration, avoiding shortcuts, to unravel how the lifecycle of Lot 5 serves as a methodological gateway for examining the broader political climate, which exhibits parallel characteristics.

### State of Being an Edge to the Urban

Although the narratives traced in the article primarily span from the 1850s to 2006, it is important to acknowledge that in 1793, as noted by Guillaume Antoine Olivier, there were "three or four farms in Ayios Stefanos", Yeşilköy (Tuna, 2006). However, entering the late 19th century, the district's connection with the center was strengthened with the arrival of the train line, and the settlement of Yeşilköy expanded further north due to the immigration of foreign migrants resulting from the wars (Aydın, Eres, 2018, p. 38). In the 1870s, notable urban growth was witnessed when the neighboring suburb of Bakırköy was connected by train to Yedikule, followed by railway connections to Yenikapı, and eventually to Yeşilköy and Florya in 1871, which then extended further in consecutive years to Sirkeci and Küçükçekmece (Karıptaş, Güney, 2018, p. 52). Among the newcomers was Salih Efendi, an urban designer at Istanbul Şehremaneti (Municipality), who proposed transforming the coastal center of the town into a main road and planting acacia trees for afforestation purposes (Tuna, 2006). The establishment of the train network encouraged rich families to start building second homes or permanent residences in and around Yeşilköy, thus transforming the neighborhood into a thriving seaside town. This flow, observed not only in Yeşilköy but also throughout Istanbul, is evidenced by the construction of sixty-two sea baths on the shores of the city, as regulated by a set of rules (nizamname) dating back to 1875. Among these, thirty-four were designated for men and twenty-eight for women (Gürel, 2021). According to historical records (Fikriyat, 2018), together with the neighboring suburb of Bakırköy, there were more than ten sea baths in and around Yeşilköy by 1884; yet these were predominantly private rather than public amenities (Tuna, 2006) (Figure 3). The tradition of sea baths by the water continued until the 1920s when mixed-gender beaches with facilities gradually replaced the concept of segregated sea baths. This shift was particularly evident following WWI, as the soldiers of the occupation forces began swimming en masse in the non-Muslim

settlements of Bakırköy and Yeşilköy (Kaya, 2023). This has exemplified how the built environment enabled the access and use of the coastline while shaping the relationship of the neighborhood dwellers.



**Figure 3.** Sea baths in Yeşilköy depicted on an old postcard. Source: Tuna, 2006, p. 255.

Tracing the cultural life along the Yeşilköy coastline, the transformation of the coastline from a humble fishing village into a thriving seaside town is evident as urbanization and tourism practices expanded during the late 19th century. Indeed, the maps from 1909 and 1912 provide additional evidence of Yeşilköy being on the periphery of the urban center, with Lot 5 depicted as a vague structure, blending in with the surrounding green fields that border the city of Istanbul. Nevertheless, the suburban territory of Yeşilköy, with its leisurely atmosphere, played a significant role as a critical backdrop for the political events of 1909, particularly during the "March 31" uprising. The mandate for the settlement's presence on the periphery also continued during the Balkan War, as hospitals were set up in Yeşilköy due to the pandemic while the casualties deported from Istanbul to the periphery were buried in the ever-growing green fields of Yeşilköy. Once again, Yeşilköy's existence on the urban fringe positioned it as a protective barrier for the city of Istanbul. In the following years, around 1913, when Yeşilköy was on the verge of abandonment as the majority of its residents, except for approximately 15-20 local families, had left the settlement, the structure on Lot 5 (Figure 4) was purchased from its Bulgarian owner, Mihail Stavro. The building, which featured thirty rooms split into haremlik (women's quarters) and selamlık (men's quarters), suggests that the original owner may have been Muslim. The mansion was occupied and served as a residence from 1912 to 1966 until it suffered damage because of the Adapazarı earthquake (Evrenosoğlu, 2022).

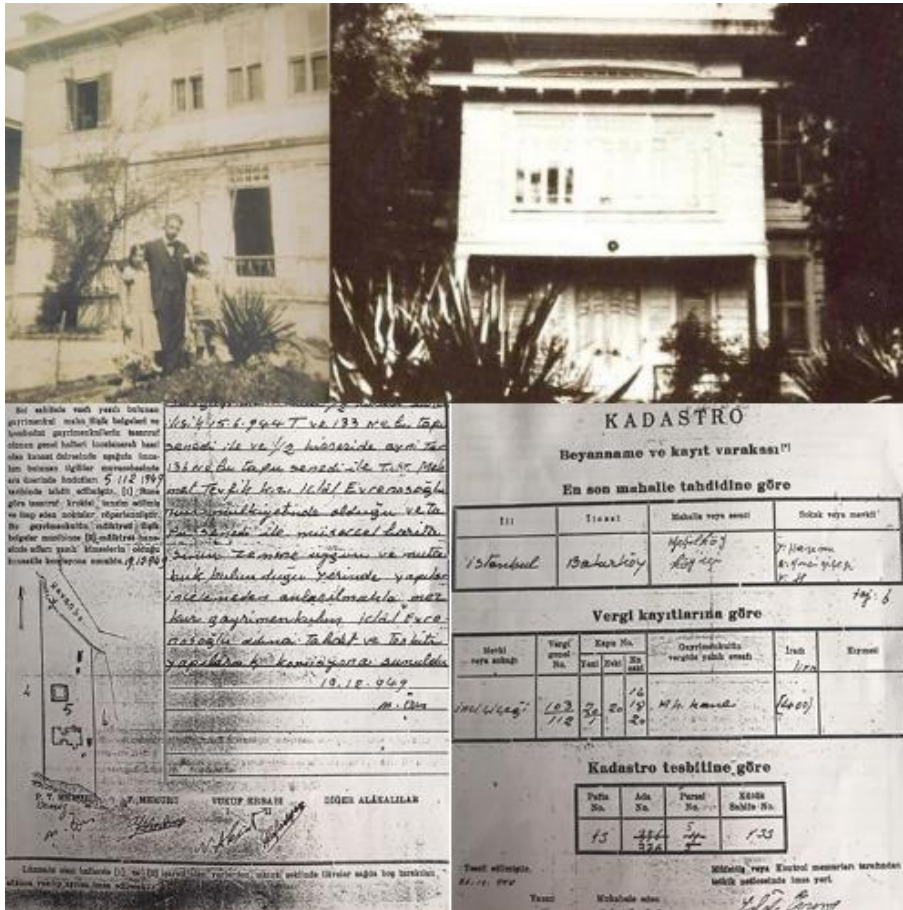


Figure 4. The title deed of Lot 5 split and formed a bigger green field. Courtesy of Özer Gazievrenosoğlu

Over time, the coastal layout transformed, with the green field being replaced by private mansion buildings that defined the coastline. As sea baths were subsequently introduced, this transformation continued, gradually leading to the privatization of the coastal area. Thus, taking a closer look at the extensive history of Yeşilköy reveals a recurring duality between the periphery and the center, marked by a divide between urban and rural. This duality is manifested through Yeşilköy's role as a peaceful refuge during times of war, as well as periods of abandonment and subsequent reclamation. Cultural evidence of this duality can also be observed along the coastline of Yeşilköy, where the presence of both public and private sea baths, as well as gender segregation, is prevalent. By acknowledging the profound impact of the surrounding context on the attributes of buildings and, reciprocally, the influence of buildings on their environment (Latour, Yaneva, 2017), it becomes clear that the buildings effectively mirror their surroundings. This is illustrated by the division of the mansion in Lot 5 into *haremlik* and *selamlık*, providing a clear demonstration of the context of its architectural form and function. The relationship between content and context, as observed in the case of Lot 5, proves that they are not mutually exclusive but rather interconnected elements, reflecting a dynamic and fluid complexity instead of a static state.



### **Transitioning From Periphery to Urban Integration**

During the latter half of the 20th century, urban waterfront development processes emerged globally, leading to the allocation of diverse functions to coastal territories. However, this transformation brought about several challenges, including limited interaction with the water, reduced physical accessibility, and a loss of historical identity, ultimately impacting the availability of open spaces (Seçmen and Türkoglu, 2021). Türkiye has also experienced its share of this development, and since the 19th century, the alteration of Istanbul's waterfronts has occurred concurrently with urban growth. However, the absence of a comprehensive planning strategy in Türkiye has led to common challenges in the country's coastlines, including unregulated construction, environmental degradation, and a lack of public access to the sea.

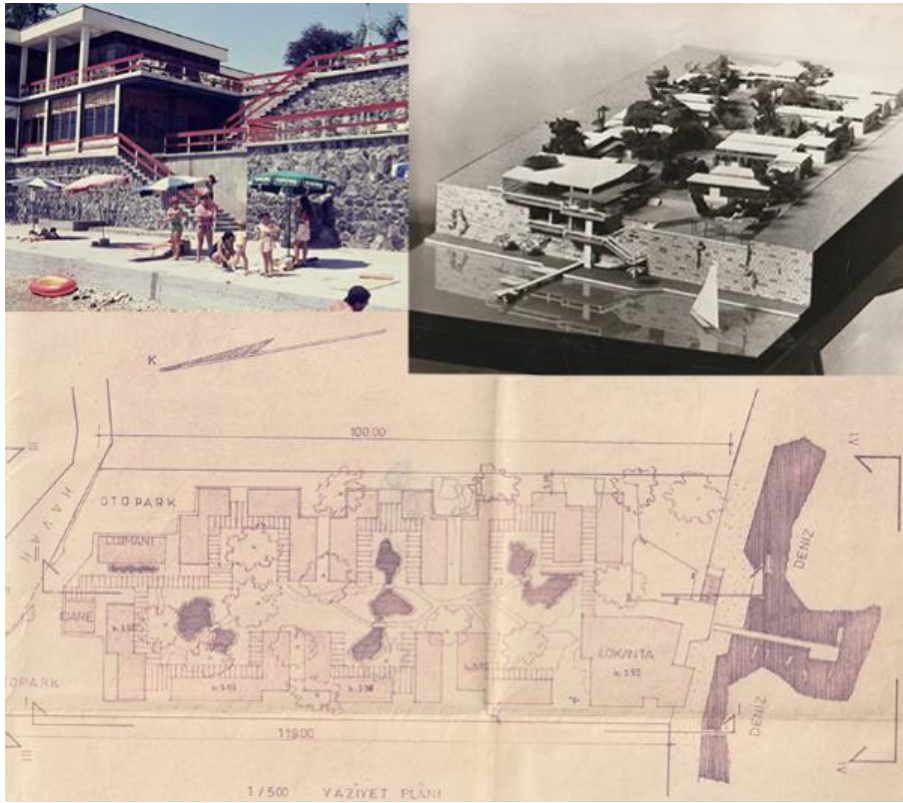
To address these issues, Turkish law established regulations to protect the coasts. The Civil Code No. 643 in 1926 stipulated that "unclaimed things and goods whose interests belong to the public are under the jurisdiction and disposal of the state," highlighting the state's role in coastal protection. Further reinforced in 1956 with Article 6785, the principle that the coast is public property was established, reserving a 10-meter-wide space along the water's edge for public benefit (Serim, et al., 2022). These protection regulations designated coastal areas as preserved, prohibiting private property establishments within this zone.

However, contradicting these legislations, a series of economic incentives were introduced in 1953 to investors who intended to construct "tourism establishments" such as hotels, motels, and camping sites, under the Tourism Industry Encouragement Law (Sağlam, 1995, p. 128). The tension between economic development and legal measures played an important role in shaping Türkiye's coastal architecture in the 1960s. The politics of tourism had a significant impact as the government aggressively encouraged the development of contemporary, western-style structures to appeal to foreign tourists. The government encouraged tourism as a means of boosting the economy and enhancing the nation's urban image globally. This emphasis on tourism led to the transformation of many coastal areas into tourist destinations, often at the expense of local communities and traditional ways of life. Consequently, the prioritization of the politics of tourism at the national level led to the gradual disappearance of traditional waterfront housing structures, including the mansion located on the coast of Yeşilköy in Lot 5.

In parallel with these challenges, the development of motorways, and the global and local expansion of the automobile industry since the 1950s gave rise to the emergence of motel typology (Savaşır and Ultav, 2020). This shift from traditional waterfront housing to motels reflects the changing priorities and values associated with coastal spaces as they transitioned from primarily residential areas to destinations for tourism and leisure. Following the damage caused by the 1969 Adapazarı



earthquake, the owners of Lot 5 demolished the mansion to build a subdivision with smaller residential versions to be shared among family members. However, the economic climate favoured capitalism, and regulations allowed only a tourist facility license. Consequently, on Lot 5, Motel Yeşilköy was built in 1969 as a 30-unit 72-bed touristic facility on four acres (Figure 5). The motel's proximity to the first airport in the country and popularity as a tourist destination were critical to its historical significance, as it served as a hub for city travellers and visitors.

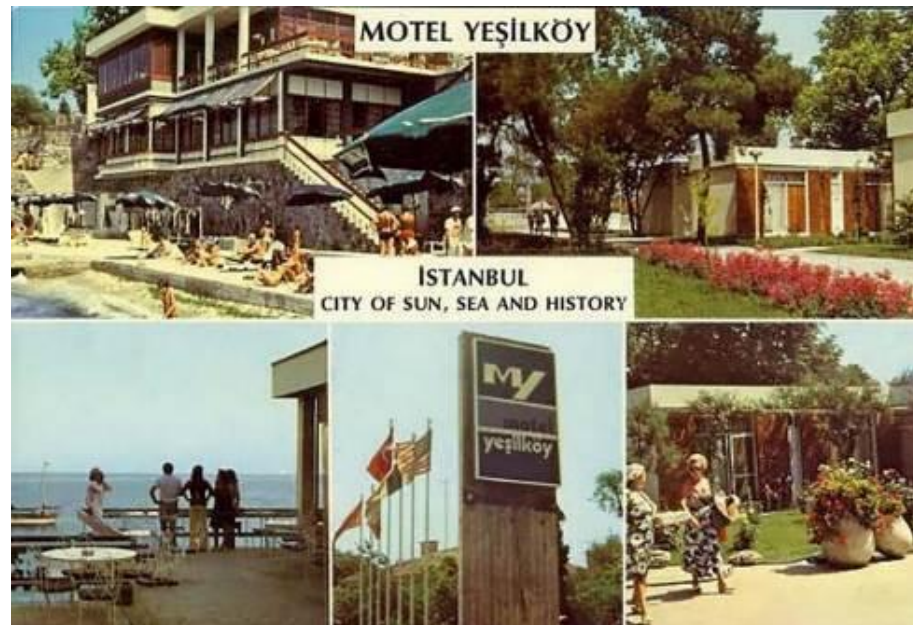


**Figure 5.** Motel Yeşilköy of Lot 5. Upper left: Cliff stairs. Upper right: Architectural Model Lower: Site Plan. Source: Collection of the Architect, Öztürk Başarır, 1966.

The architectural style of Motel Yeşilköy aligns with mid-20th-century Turkish hotel architecture, featuring unique characteristics, including the fragmented style and incorporation of brutalist elements. The fragmented style was born in opposition to the "single block" style in the period between 1950 and 1980 in Türkiye, but it is an approach that is rarely seen in tourism structures. Buildings such as the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, the Tarabya Hotel, and the Büyükkada Anadolu Club are among the important examples of the singular mass approach in Turkish hotel architecture in Istanbul. In the fragmented approach, the primary goal is to establish a more balanced relationship between dispersed masses and spaces, and to ensure that the building blocks receive sunlight and air from all sides. When we look at the settlement plan of Motel Yeşilköy, we see that functions such as accommodation, restaurant and administration are handled in separate blocks, and especially L-shaped accommodation units are arranged on both sides of a circulation axis to create small courtyards. Therefore, Motel Yeşilköy can be considered one of the first examples of the fragmented approach of its period. It stands out for its

unconventional motel typology, emphasizing human scale by staying limited to the ground floor—a rarity for its period in the country. The structures provide information about the structural contributions of architectural elements (load bearing, cladding, masonry, opening, etc.) thereby reflecting the brutalist style, material, and construction technique on the barely exposed exterior. The load-bearing blind surfaces with vertical brick panels and the masonry stone retaining wall along the coastline are what distinguish Motel Yeşilköy as brutalist. Non-load-bearing window openings also make the brutalist style easier to read, as they are mostly placed without lintels, horizontally or vertically (Pasin, 2023).

Originally, motels were designed to be affordable, practical, and straightforward, resembling suburban bungalows. Unlike upscale hotels near railroads and urban business hotels that primarily served male guests, motels had different locations, parking arrangements, and services. All units had fully equipped parking spaces and access to shared facilities like kitchens, laundry areas, drying spaces, and playgrounds (Savaşır & Ultav, 2020). Motel Yeşilköy's communal atmosphere was further enhanced by its proximity to the beach, which welcomed visitors with a picturesque view accessible via stairs. Additionally, the structure's architectural and cultural significance is further amplified by its appearance in various films, serving as a film set for many Turkish movies still shown on TV today. Before the boom in summer resorts as second houses in the 1990s, the motel hosted well-known families from Istanbul throughout the summer seasons of the seventies (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Motel Yeşilköy. Restaurant, Motel room, Sea view from terrace level, Entrance, Room at terrace level. Source: Collection of the Architect, Öztürk Başarır, 1975.

This significance corresponds strongly with the experience depicted by one of the locals of Yeşilköy remembering from his childhood:

*“Motel Yeşilköy... They say it's indescribable, you have to experience it, and it's exactly like that, especially in the evenings. As soon as we entered the motel, we were surrounded by flowers. The scent of the jasmine trees and the blooming flowers filled the air as we made our way towards the stairs. Right at the beginning of the stairs, we would look out at the sea, witnessing its pristine and calm state. We would descend the stairs, two or three steps at a time, eagerly anticipating the magnificent taste of the sea as the sun set... Then we would take a shower, completing our delightful evening.”*

Closed Facebook Group

The concise historical account of Motel Yeşilköy confirms that coastlines saw heightened utilization due to the rise of mass tourism, and the post-1960s era of prosperity bolstered the capacity of urban communities to allocate more time and resources to recreational activities (Eke, 1995). As a result, rapid urbanization has emerged due to the clustering of the global population in a small number of locations, while at the same time, as in Yeşilköy, districts on the outskirts of cities have also witnessed increased connectivity with the center.

### **Shrinking Use Value of Lot 5 with the Expansion of the Urban Coastline**

The interaction of Yeşilköy Motel with the sea and its urban surroundings has evolved, marked by the expansion of the urban coastline and the truncation of its beach through landfilling in 1982. The process of land reclamation not only affected Motel Yeşilköy but also the destiny of the long strip of coast that has a long history of interaction with the sea (Figure 7).





**Figure 7.** Aerial Photo of Motel Yeşilköy after reclamation. Source: WowTurkey.

However, the public interest was considered much later than the act of landfilling, and 5 years after, between 1988 and 1989, the three km coastal strip project, initially conceived as a vehicle road between Yeşilyurt and Yeşilköy, was designed and implemented as a recreation area for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (Gürsel, 1988). The representative designer from *Etüd Proje Araştırma* (EPA-acronym for the Study-Planning-Research) Architecture and Urbanism Workshop, who advocated for the creation of a significant green space in the landfill area, mentioned that there was a lack of preliminary information regarding the potential usage of this landfill space. Thus, the envisioned green public space was intended to serve as a communal area, enhancing the overall arrangement and organization of the area (EPA Interview, 2022). In this public space, the design office proposed a pedestrian path that continued along the coast, a coastal promenade starting from Yeşilyurt and continuing to Florya toward the west. As a result, the initial coastline, which had existed as a narrow and abrupt cliff before the landfill, allowing individuals to easily access the sea and unite with it from the shore, was indeed disrupted by the landfill. As confessed by the EPA planner himself, "this modification has cast doubt upon the waterline" (EPA Interview, 2022), a concern that has been substantiated by the enactment of Coastal Law No. 3086 (Ay, 1996). The law has allowed for the creation of landfill areas along the coast, resulting in reclaimed land from the sea, and endeavours to expand coastal recreational spaces. This expansion of coastal recreational spaces reflects the increasing demand for access to the coast and the growing recognition of its importance for leisure, tourism, and environmental conservation. The influence of urban

policies, resulting in planning constraints, is not only apparent in the written content but is also visually manifest. As a visual material, the site plan underscores the intention to restrict the design to the reclaimed land, while disregarding the area extending beyond the natural coastline (Figure 8). The site plan incorporates the zoning layout, yet it does so vaguely, seemingly fading into the backdrop, aided by the similar background tones that contribute to its diminished visibility. A fragmented urban vision is also discernible as the connotations dissect the coastline into segments and analyze them in a piecemeal fashion.

The urban planner in charge of the reclamation project, mentioned in the interview that "the green spaces in this region might be some of the first instances in Istanbul's history of creating public areas along this coastline through this project," which, as seen in Figure 9, introduces a contrasting perspective to the life of the coastline before reclamation. This prompts us to question whether land reclamation implies an effort to make all shores accessible to the public, or under the claim of making public, turns into a new threshold that disregards the history, culture, and everyday life of Yeşilköy. The way context is understood shapes what is included in new phases or undertakings; however, there is some uncertainty as to whether this was the case during the reclamation of the Yeşilköy coast.

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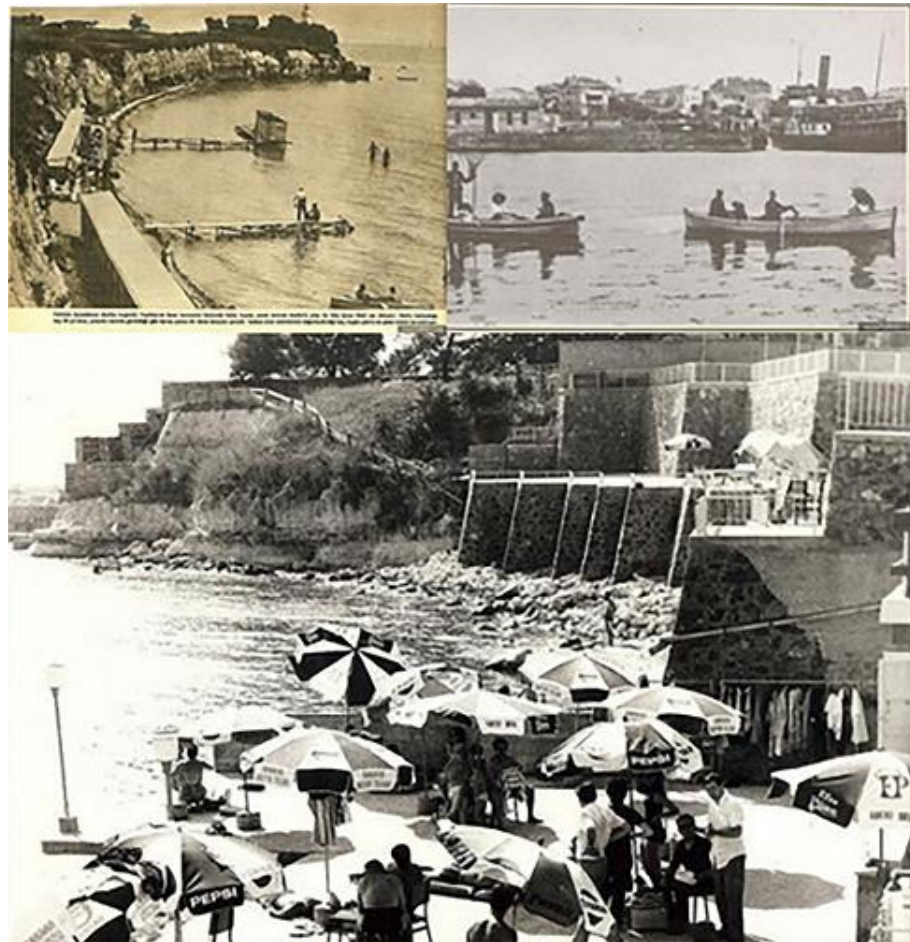


**Figure 8.** Yeşilköy master plan designed by EPA Architecture Office. Source: Collection of the Planner, Ersen Gürsel, EPA.

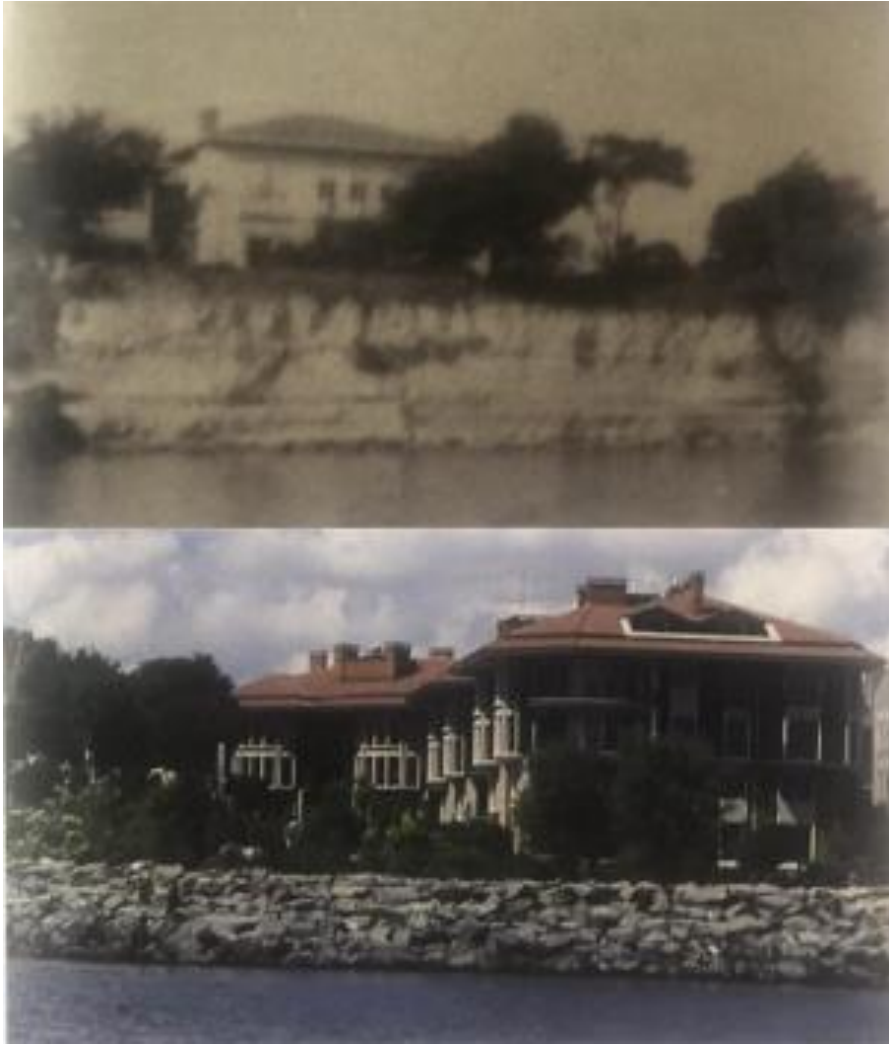
The term used for defining landfilling suggests an act of claiming back the land lost to the water, yet in the context of Lot 5, it signified the erasure of its inherent identity, defined by its proximity to the water's



edge. The coastline of Motel Yeşilköy has transformed its once-natural state of pristine beaches and clear waters into an artificial pool that has been excavated within a landfill, all to preserve its original identity (Figure 6-7). If, according to Venturi (2008), context is “what gives a building its meaning”, then context that is reclaimed has rendered the motel less accessible and less relevant to current needs, leading to a decrease in the use value of the building. This shift in context emphasizes the dynamic nature of placemaking and the importance of designing and managing built spaces with the evolving needs and values of communities in mind. Motel Yeşilköy was ultimately decided to be demolished in 1992, due to the loss of its historical significance and lack of economic viability. This led to Lot 5’s eventual replacement by Evrenos Konakları, a notable gated social housing complex.



**Figure 9.** Coastal life before reclamation at different time intervals. Upper Left: Shore of Çınar Hotel in 1920's. Upper Right Yeşilköy Pier, late Ottoman era. Lower: Motel Yeşilköy, 1969. Source: WowTurkey.



**Figure 10.** Upper: Lot 5 holding the Mansion, 1960's. Lower: Lot 5 Holding Evrenos Konakları taken from the sea, 1990's. Source: (Gazievrenosoğlu, 2017)

## CONCLUSION

The paper centred on *Lot 5*, situated in the coastal district of Yeşilköy, formerly known as Ayastefanos, as an exemplar of the transformation undergone while still holding on to its identity. Through a narrative lens, it looked into the historical trajectory of Lot 5 inside Yeşilköy, offering light on the social, cultural, and political developments that have formed the coastal area throughout time. Questioning how the spatial narratives of Lot 5 contribute to understanding the intricacies of the reclaimed coastline, the paper contends that rather than considering coastline reclamation as a disconnected extension of the urban boundary, appraising it needs an awareness of the intricate interaction of spatial narratives at various scales.

When examining Lot 5 in its present state, although it retains the same residential function after its green field status, its interaction with the sea has undergone a significant transformation. The coastal life of Yeşilköy suburban town, once bustling with sea baths in the late 19th century, has now transitioned away from its beach town character while still maintaining a semblance of coastal life through the presence of a man-made bay. While the natural shoreline remains embedded in the collective urban memory, it has transformed, shifting from a natural

barrier to a wall that segregates gated housing structures from the public. The study shows that while reclamation and landfilling may change the physical border between land and sea, the natural coastline is still present in the city's residents' collective memories as well as in the form of a tactile presence. This demonstrates the natural coastal landscape's resilience and continuing relevance amidst urban expansion (Figure 10).

While exploring the reclamation of the coastline redefining architectural space and public life through remembrance and an attempt to offer an alternative reading on land reclamation practices, we suggested an indirect lens for the coastline study. This approach presents an opportunity to navigate through the complexities of the making of a coastline throughout a brief history. By shifting the focus from direct observation of the coastline to the examination of the interconnected elements that shape it, we gain a richer understanding of the dynamic forces at play in coastal environments. Therefore, the article not only argues that coastal reclamation cannot be investigated in its current state, but it also emphasizes that this reclamation can only be truly revealed by visiting different scales and dimensions. Consequently, we attempted to address the fragmented state of the urban imaginary in this article. As emphasized by Jude Bloomfield in the introduction, the urban imaginary necessitates a comprehensive understanding that encompasses various constructs and scales, including the ghost stories of places, cultural practices, and public life that have changed and vanished over time. This interpretation of Lot 5's micro-life aligns with the larger narrative of land reclamation.

Future research can extend a similar approach to other coastal sites with reclamation histories for broader impacts on urban and social dynamics. Comparative studies across diverse regions can offer a richer understanding of transformations. Incorporating advanced methodologies such as digital spatial analyses and participatory mapping can improve insights and reveal new dimensions on urban development and narrative formation.

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### Resume

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