**Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on informal jobs and housing conditions among citizens and Refugees: The Case of Izmir, Turkey**

Turkey hosts the world’s largest refugee population: 4 million people, including 3.6 million Syrians. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Turkish government has enforced key public health measures such as lockdowns, travel restrictions and self-isolation to curb the spread of the virus. This paper aims to understand the broader socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and government responses by comparing the consequences generated by COVID-19 for low-income Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees in Izmir, Turkey. The study aspires to understand the perceptions and experiences of both groups about the pandemic, with particular reference to its effects on informal jobs and housing. The study benefits from 30 key informant interviews conducted as part of an ongoing interdisciplinary research project titled “Wellbeing, Housing and Infrastructure in Turkey”, funded by the British Academy. The paper shows that COVID-19 measures have negatively affected the socio-economic situation of migrants as well as of Turkish citizens. While the official unemployment rate stands at 12%, many reports estimate that the (unemployment) rate is higher. Moreover, almost 85% of the Syrians and a substantial share of Turkish citizens work as part of informal economy. Therefore, findings suggest that measures introduced by law aiming to prevent termination of employment contracts by the employers on unjustified grounds have not been effective on these groups. Additionally, we witness a deepening of precarious, informal housing conditions for an expanding group of under-employed or unemployed low-income Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens, generating important wellbeing failures.

**Short bios:**

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***Prof.Dr. Meltem Gürel*** is a professor and the dean of the Faculty of Architecture at Yasar University. She previously taught and served as the founding Chair of the Department of Architecture and as the Chair of the Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design at Bilkent University. Gürel received her PhD in Architecture from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She taught at UIUC’s School of Architecture as an adjunct professor and practiced architecture in the USA. Her research interests include architectural theory and criticism, cross-cultural histories of architectural modernism with an emphasis on society, gender, and culture, culture-space relationship, and design education. Gürel has published numerous articles in leading journals, including Journal of Architecture; Journal of Architectural Education; Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians; Journal of Design History; Journal of Architectural and Planning Research: and Gender, Place and Culture. Her work has also been published in many collections.

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