

# CONTESTING NEOLIBERAL URBANISATION: CONTEMPORARY URBAN MOVEMENTS IN ISTANBUL

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## Abstract

The shift from Keynesian to neo-liberal economic policies, which meant the deterioration of welfare state principles and increasing policies based on competitiveness, marked the changes in the urban agenda and the nature of urban movements in the last three decades. The neo-liberal urban agenda reinforced outstanding transformations on the development, management and planning of urban space, especially in metropolitan areas, including Istanbul. The urban transformation projects, functioning as main tools of neoliberal urban development, result in serious changes in this huge metropolitan area and encounter resistances from different groups of people in the city. Two types of urban movements can be defined; the first type is highly property based and shaped around individual issues and develop as reactions of deprived groups against the effects of the transformation on their own property. The second type of mobilisation, on the other hand, has been shaped as reactions of discontent groups to neoliberal urban policies. However, urban movements of the contemporary city, in particular those of the deprived groups, do not only oppose neoliberal urbanisation, but are increasingly shaped by them. The instruments of neoliberal urban transformation projects such as urban development as a means of wealth generation and redistribution, redefine the movements both in terms of content, based on defence of individual property rights and methods used based on negotiation with the relevant authorities. As a result, a fragmented variety of urban movements occur in the city, which are far from demanding a broader social, economic and cultural transformation.

## 1. Introduction

Neoliberalisation and market-oriented policies have been affecting the way urban areas develop and function for more than thirty years now. These policies, which prioritised the market mechanism in urban development, resulted in a rapid urban change, particularly in large metropolitan areas through urban transformation projects. In this era, the role of the planning institution has changed substantially, while the commodification of urban land along with land and property development projects has become a means of redistribution of wealth among different groups. The increasing inequalities and differences in the access of different groups to this newly

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generated wealth mobilised them under neoliberal rules and new modes of governance practices emerged.

The functioning of neoliberal urbanisation has austere reflections on urban space, its users, functioning and management, as one of the most profound impacts of neoliberalism is on built environment of cities. This manifests itself in an intense and rapid urban change, which reinforces the cities as places of conflict and tension. Neoliberal urbanisation as the consequence of neoliberal forms of urban policy, transforms the built environment and the urban form in its own way by eliminating or keeping the urban public spaces under intensified surveillance and creating new privatized spaces of elite/corporate consumption. It enforces the destruction of the degraded residential neighbourhoods of low-income groups who formerly constituted the traditional working-class, for speculative redevelopment and constructing large-scale mega projects to attract corporate investment reconfiguring the existing land-use patterns, creating gated communities, urban enclaves and other purified spaces (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). These changes in the urban space encounter resistances from groups of people in the city, which are either deprived of or discontent by them. Consequently, two main types of urban movements in contemporary cities develop; urban movements of the deprived and the urban movements of the discontent groups. The former are deprived by and mobilise against the above mentioned destruction in residential or mixed-use neighbourhoods for speculative redevelopment, which are realised generally by urban transformation projects. The latter on the other hand, mobilise generally against all kinds of neoliberal urban policies including urban transformation projects in residential areas as well as special projects as a part of broader investment attraction and place-marketing goals.

The aim of the paper is to discuss the dialectical relationship between neoliberal urbanisation and both types of mobilisations that unfold against it, building upon the literature on neoliberal urbanisation and urban movements and related experiences in Istanbul. The paper defines the characteristics of both, in terms of what they are actually struggling against, what they aim to get by opposition and what kinds of relationships they form within themselves and with the external actors. To this end, the dynamics of neoliberal urbanisation is examined in the second section of the paper, showing that neoliberal urbanisation reconfigures the way the urban built environment in a creatively destructive way, which lays the grounds for a different type of urban movements. The third section analyses how the neoliberal urbanisation shape the urban movements. The fourth section, based on findings from Istanbul, including those of various case studies, introduces urban movements of deprived groups developing in a more interest-based fashion, and of discontents acting against increasing penetration of neoliberal urbanisation into our everyday lives. Finally, the paper is concluded by arguing that urban movements do not react only against neoliberal urban policies, but they are increasingly shaped by them.

## **2. Dynamics of Neoliberal Urbanisation**

Neoliberalism and neoliberal policies, as a response to the crisis of Fordist/Keynesian capitalism in the beginning of 1970s, have so far attempted to impose the market rules upon all aspects of social, political and economic life. Neoliberalism is also a restructuring strategy, having a creative destructive role on regulatory frameworks (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Brenner and Theodore, 2005), one of which is the urban change and the urbanisation itself. In parallel, cities have become ‘increasingly important geographical targets and institutional laboratories for a variety of neoliberal policy experiments...’ such as place-marketing, urban development corporations, public-private partnerships, property re-development schemes and etc., the goal of which is to ‘mobilize city space as an arena both for market-oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices’ (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Today’s urbanisation and concomitant urban development projects –referred to as ‘urban transformation projects’ throughout the paper- come to the fore as localised forms of neoliberal policies and perhaps the most evident intervention area of the neo-liberal agenda.

The different facets of neoliberal urbanism can be better understood by tracing the changes in built environment, which are connected to restructuring the urban economy, the changes in urban governance including planning institutions and practice.

*Restructuring the urban economy* and increasing importance of the services sector accompanied with the driving of the industry out of the city marks the current economy of the cities. Urban revitalisation is presented and promoted as an opportunity to change economic hierarchies and functions in the urban area, creating new jobs and empowering the city in urban division of labour (Swyngedouw, Mouleart, and Rodriguez, 2002). Parallel to this, the driving force of the global urban economy becomes the real-estate and construction sectors at the service of growing and changing demands of high-qualified workforce of the services sector. Thereby, an extensive part of the neoliberal policies are today made of urban policies, which boost the private sector, construction, finance and tourism sectors being the leading ones. These neoliberal policies aim to eliminate all kinds of barriers against the construction firms involved in the urban transformation projects, pass the needed laws and regulations as soon as possible, and change the zoning status of areas where previously no development was allowed to facilitate the operation of the construction sector.

*Large-scale urban development schemes* are one of the important features of neoliberal urbanisation, with the objective to turn the city into a global competitor in line with the aspirations of the elites. Parallel to globalisation and increasing mobility of capital, large-scale capital investments are oriented into cities usually in the form of large-scale property development projects, as a target for capital investors, instead of small-scale property developers as in the past. The production of urban rent as well as profitable economic activities is the central goal of these projects. They are implemented as a part of place marketing strategies by urban elites in search of economic growth and competitiveness. They usually take the form of meeting the

inner-city land demand for business or tourism centres, housing complexes for high or middle-high income groups or 'gentrification' projects in degraded areas of especially inner city, where rent has considerably decreased. They are legitimized through a neo-liberal discourse as the renewal of cities and revaluing the city by attributing new functions to areas, which have lost their functions. However, they are criticised for laying the ground for privatizing the already valuable public land, rather than revaluing it. Furthermore, urban land and property development through these projects also constitute a new type of income transfer mechanisms when implemented for redevelopment in degraded residential areas of the low income groups and have therefore, increasingly become means of wealth generation (Eraydin, 2012).

With regards to planning and policy procedures, these urban transformation projects, or urban development projects as used in western literature, are implemented as exceptional measures, such as the freezing of conventional planning tools, bypassing statutory regulations and institutions, creation of project agencies with special powers of intervention and a change in national or regional regulations (Swyngedouw, et al, 2002). In this process, the zoning regulations of historical and archaeological sites, green areas and forest areas are changed and urban transformation projects proposing housing areas, hotels, shopping malls etc. are implemented by large-scale firms, usually as a part of public-private partnerships. In parallel, these areas have evacuated from their residents. Therefore, these projects accentuate socioeconomic polarisation through the working of real-estate markets that results in price rises and displacement of lower-income groups (Swyngedouw, *et al*, 2002). Furthermore, this type of project-based urban policy does not treat the neighbourhoods as a unity, which results in proliferation of self-contained and isolated islands in the city, created through special plans having special construction rights that are completely disconnected from the rest of the city. Consequently, 'urban islands and a patchwork of discrete spaces with increasingly sharp boundaries' in a physically and socially fragmented city are produced (Swyngedouw, *et al*, 2002).

*Changing role of the planning institution enforcing the change in statutory planning* is another outcome of neoliberal urbanisation. At this point, the planning institution is not totally displaced, since it still is the prerequisite of neoliberal urban development (Taşan-Kok, 2012), yet acquired new goals and tools incorporating more flexible intervention mechanisms. The above mentioned urban transformation projects come to the fore as important new tools of planning. Thus, it can be argued that it is now project-based urban planning, in which projects precede planning and the planner becomes the agent of neoliberal urbanisation. The process therefore of the planning as an institution going through is called 'neoliberalisation of planning', in which the planning process itself becomes not only 'more flexible and negotiable strategic one', but also a mere corrective mechanism, attempting to 'introduce changes without formulating an overall policy to regulate new development' (Taşan-Kok, 2012).

*The new urban governance in this era supported neoliberal urbanisation, defined by Harvey (1989) as a change from managerialism to entrepreneurialism. Entrepreneurial forms of governance began to be adopted by local governments, as territorial competitiveness has become priority for them (Eraydin, 2012). Project based urban interventions brought together a more assertive and entrepreneurial style of urban governance, while formal government structures are subordinated to new institutions, which are highly autonomous organisations that compete with and even supersede local authorities as managers of urban renewal (Swyngedouw, et al, 2002). Especially after 1990s, neoliberalisation process itself has been subject to restructuring giving way to “emergent combination of neoliberal economic management and authoritarian state forms (Peck and Tickell, 2002). In practice, it has entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose the market rule in all aspects of social life (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Furthermore, entrepreneurial forms of urban governance have a significant deficit in terms of accountability, transparency and representation. ‘A system of representative urban government has been turned into stakeholder urban governance that is centred on newly established institutional arrangements, lacking formalized mechanisms of representation’ (Swyngedouw, et al, 2002). Important decisions are made in closed and mostly elite circles including government representatives, excluding the urban citizens. Local authorities gained a more proactive role, playing the role of an enabler, client or partner.*

In sum, neoliberalism creates its own city, by causing dramatic changes in the way urban built environment is planned and managed, though without making the state institutions and its instruments obsolete, but reconfiguring them. This situation nurtures and defines the oppositions against itself, which constitutes the subject of the paper.

### **3. Urban Movements Shaped by Neoliberal Urbanisation**

Urban oppositions and mobilisation processes of different social groups against urban policies in general or their outcomes are defined as urban movements. In more precise words, they are ‘processes of purposive social mobilization, organized as in a given territory, oriented towards urban related-goals’ (Castells, 1997:60). From 1980s onwards, as the neoliberal paradigm began to dominate, a transformation occurred in the way urban movements develop. As the surrounding context changed and issues like ethnicity, gender and local autonomy came to the fore, urban movements began to develop less as parts of broader class-struggles. Today, they are not necessarily or essentially class-based; class cleavages have long not been the motivation factor behind urban movements. In parallel, non-class factors such as identity defined in cultural autonomy, gender and ethnicity are among the motivational elements. Secondly, and more recently, they moved even more away from its conflictual character to co-operation and consensus seeking with different stakeholders and the government. Thirdly, before 1980, urban social movements were much more homogenous, involving social interests groups, namely social NGOs. However, from late 1980s onwards and in 1990s, ‘the social composition and

the political orientation of the urban movement milieu have become increasingly heterogeneous, manifesting more and more polarizations, cleavage and also forms of implosion' (Mayer, 2006a, p.138). They get fragmented and gained heterogeneity in terms of social composition and political orientation parallel to the erosion of Welfare state and rise of neoliberal policies instead. Neoliberalisation has changed people's motivations in such a way that no broad-based or strong grassroots contestation occurs. The project-based urban restructuring policies 'prevent these movements from transcending the localized issues associated with a project's implementation' (Swyngedouw, *et al*, 2002, p.574), since project-based urban development appears 'too divisive for the local populace to provide a basis for widespread collective mobilisation' (Loopmans and Dirckx, 2012, p.112).

The urban restructuring boosted by neoliberalism resulted in further changes in urban movements. Urban transformation projects aiming at and successfully result in the increasing values of urban land and property, induced 'urban movements' as reactions directed towards this transformation and the consequent uneven distribution of the benefits. However, it also gave rise to a dualism in urban movements. Accordingly, building upon Castells' (1977, 1983, 1996) and Mayer's (2000, 2003, 2006b) frameworks and employing Marcuse's (2009) analysis distinguishing the demands of those deprived of certain basic material and legal rights and those who are discontent with life, two main types of urban movements can be defined; movements whose main mobilisation factor is deprivation and movements whose main mobilisation factor is discontent. First type of movements is those who mobilise against the effects of urban transformation projects on their own property or land and the unequal distribution of the newly generated rent increase. They arise out of dissatisfaction and a sense of deprivation out of the functioning of urban property markets. They are therefore built more around individual-property based concerns. The second type of urban movements has more transcendental goals. These are movements whose main motivation is some kind of discontent with the spatial developments in neoliberal urbanization. The characteristics of each type of movements will be elaborated in the next sections based on Istanbul case.

#### **4. Neoliberal Urban Development in Istanbul**

As discussed in the preceding section, cities are today perhaps the most evident intervention area of the neo-liberal agenda. The rapid urban change, particularly in large metropolitan areas, which has begun earlier in advanced capitalist countries and sprawled later to the peripheral ones, comes into being through urban transformation projects. Accordingly, what is experienced in the new neo-liberal era is a project-based urban development. A project-based approach in urban development has also begun to dominate the current urban planning practices of Turkey (Eraydin, 2012), Istanbul being the paramount area of its exercise.

In Turkey, urban transformation process has gained momentum in 2000s. It started with the excuse of protecting the old settlements and cultural heritage areas and reached its current state by projects introduced in almost all metropolitan areas of

Turkey. One reason for this rapidly gained momentum is the high demand for urban land bringing pressure on the low amount of publicly owned urban land. In most Turkish metropolitan cities, pressure on land is so dramatic due to very high population and economic growth rates, that urban transformation projects proliferated. The legal amendments for the empowerment of the authority of the public institutions including municipalities and Turkish Housing Development Agency (HDA) as important actors of such projects, has been predominant in the urban transformation process. It gives the relevant public authorities the rights to planning, making expropriation and implementation and leaves the rest to negotiation and bargaining.

The effects of urban development through neoliberal transformation projects are particularly intensive in Istanbul due to its high rates of economic and population growth as well increasing global functions. Since the 1980s, the importance of the global economic functions in the economy of Istanbul increased substantially, supported by the increasing flow of foreign investment. Its large economic hinterland and its proximity to the European market strengthened the role of Istanbul as a city that can host some global functions. Several studies (Beaverstock, et al., 2000; Taylor and Walker, 2001; Taylor, 2001 and 2003; Beaverstock, et. al., 1999) indicated that Istanbul takes place within the second tier 'important centres' in certain global functions and in the third tier of global cities. In the study by Taylor (2003), Istanbul took the 7<sup>th</sup> place in finance and banking sector and 14<sup>th</sup> place in services sector among the European cities. This role is accelerated by the increasing inward foreign investment, especially after Turkey became an accession country to the European Union.

Increasing competitive advantages and attraction of Istanbul for global market players prevail, similar to the other metropolitan areas of the Central Eastern European countries. The increasing attractiveness of Istanbul both for foreign and domestic firms as well as migrants both from rest of the country and abroad increased the pressure on the different levels of the metropolitan government, which have rights to plan and approve<sup>3</sup>. This induced further changes in the legislation on planning, housing and urban land market and enabled the different central government institutions to have power to shape metropolitan development<sup>4</sup>. This changes stimulated the increasing interest of central government becoming a main decision maker on certain parts of the Istanbul metropolitan area, via the activities of Privatisation Agency and HDA, which are functioning under Primeministry. Moreover, Turkish Maritime Enterprises, General Directorate of State Railways,

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<sup>3</sup> Metropolitan Municipalities (1/25000 and 1/5000) and district municipalities (1/1000) have rights to plan, which approved by Metropolitan Municipal Councils and District Municipal Councils respectively.

<sup>4</sup> New laws were adopted to create new mechanisms to transfer major spending powers to Special Provincial Administrations, Metropolitan Municipalities and other Municipalities and redefined the roles for metropolitan governments in the provision of services. The new legislation that was adopted in 2005 also increased the financial resources of local governments, especially in Istanbul and introduced participatory processes, which should be evaluated as a first step towards the participation of the different social groups.

State Railways, Harbours and Airports Construction began to act as entrepreneurs to transfer the ownership rights of their existing facilities.

Therefore, beginning from the 2000s onwards Istanbul became a playfield of different actors that have different interests. The new entrepreneurial urban land regime and struggles around property and collective consumption which translate into territorial projects leading to different governance practices. The urban transformation projects in Istanbul can be grouped into two. First group is territorially-based urban transformation projects, which are named as ‘urban renewal projects’ in planning terminology that are implemented in a certain territory for new housing and additional urban services, which lead to gentrification of these areas. Second is projects developed as a part of broader policies for global competitiveness and place-marketing. They are in the form of ‘special projects’ which may be territorially-based or urban infrastructure projects. These projects are distributed all over Istanbul metropolitan area and their high quantity, which is not even exactly known by the authorities of Metropolitan Municipality, indicates the dominance of entrepreneurial urban land regime in Istanbul. The most prominent examples that draw media attraction and trigger opposition are described below and mapped in Figure 1.

#### **4.1 Territorially-based Urban Transformation Projects**

There is a long list of territorially-based urban transformation projects in Istanbul that are mostly related to housing, but also to provision of cultural and touristic facilities. As neoliberalism, began to penetrate into the areas where low income groups settled after 1990s, Turkey’s and especially Istanbul’s urban development got its share from this trend, though at a later stage. The illegally developed areas as well as the low quality deprived historical neighbourhoods began to be new attraction points of such transformation projects, a result of a set of concerns related to crime, welfare dependency and social breakdown; also for rent generation through revaluing the urban land and wealth transfer. Therefore, the primary method for urban transformation in Istanbul became ‘urban renewal’, which is in essence a complete pulling down of the existing building stock and reconstruction. This is particularly implemented in ‘gecekondu’<sup>5</sup> areas. In the course of these urban renewal projects, as in most of the Turkish cities, many of such gecekondu neighbourhoods are being evicted for developing luxury housing, tourism, trade and etc. Units of apartments to be constructed during the course of the transformation projects are assigned to land owners<sup>6</sup>, in return of their land/property by HDA (Eraydin, 2012), which is a public agency established for housing supply for low- and medium-income groups. The remaining apartment units are sold in the market, primarily to those who do not own a housing unit in the same city.

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<sup>5</sup> The term *gecekondu* derives from the Turkish words “gece”, meaning “night” and “kondu” – meaning “placed” or “landed” (infinitive: konmak) and can thus be translated as “placed overnight”.

<sup>6</sup> They are generally former squatters of public land, emigrated from rural areas of the country, but later acquired their title deeds after certain of laws in 1984 and 1985 allowed up to four-storey buildings on such land.

The user profile is aimed to be completely changed in these areas through increase in rents. These renewals are legitimized by highlighting two aspects; first, these areas are informally built on public land and existing property rights are unjustly acquired, and second, they have become criminalized. On the other hand, in neighbourhoods of cultural and historical value, which have a more mixed usage rather than only residential, the transformation project meant gentrification in order to create vivid areas for touristic, commercial and cultural activities.

There are said to be more than a hundred such urban transformation areas (neighbourhoods) in Istanbul, some of which are Gülsuyu-Gülensu, Başbüyük, Tarlabası, Sulukule, Bağcılar, Derbent, Aydınlı, Fikirtepe, Tozkoparan, Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray and etc. Some of these projects are implemented in areas of cultural and historical value, such as Sulukule, Tarlabası and Fener-Balat-Avansaray. The opposition and collective action that arises as a response to these projects form mainly the 'urban movements of the deprived' in Istanbul. However, 'urban movements of the discontent' also mobilise against these projects at least as external actors in the case of pure residential areas, or as main actors in areas having historical and cultural value.

In most of these urban renewal projects, HDA, the Metropolitan Municipality and the District Municipality as well as the construction firm are engaged in. HDA is a critical actor in these projects for it has the power to execute the projects as well as to revise planning and zoning regulations in 'transformation' zones. Using these powers, HDA can intervene in any area it deems distressed or obsolete, evict the residents to its public housing and regenerate and market the area to economically more powerful customers. Together with the municipality, HDA also negotiates with land/property owners residing in the area, on property rights they will acquire at the end of the project. In this sense, it became a rival against the old small-scale real estate developers that had long established their hegemony in the city (Erder, 2009).

#### **4.2 Projects for Global Competitiveness: Prestige and Urban Infrastructure Projects**

One of the new types of entrepreneurial governance relations in Istanbul have been shaped by projects 'towards competitive regionalism' which characterises entrepreneurial mode of governance in urban land and property markets. Special projects such as Haydarpaşa Redevelopment Project, project for the demolition of a theatre building named "Emek" in Beyoğlu for reconstruction, Beyoğlu Demirören Shopping Mall Construction, the so-called 'crazy project' that envisages a huge canal that would run parallel to the Bosphorus Strait and Taksim Project (Pedestrianisation of Taksim Area) show how different sites in the urban areas became the core of interest of different groups. Especially the ones developed under the privatisation schemes stimulated open and formal negotiations between public and private parties, which resulted in both collaboration and conflict among the existing and new actors of the urban land and property markets. However, the collaborative relations denote

only one part of the relations due to the change in how central and local governments perceived urban areas. This also led to conflicts among public institutions, namely central government departments, metropolitan municipalities and district municipalities. Thereby, Istanbul became a playfield of power struggles between central and local governments. Different ministries wanted to use their legal rights and to intervene in a number of policy areas, especially in infrastructure and land use development, sometimes contrary to the interests of Metropolitan Municipality. Haydarpasa Redevelopment Project, where the Ministry of Public Works wanted to regenerate the existing harbour and very large areas at the back of it for a commercial property development project is one of the examples of conflicting interests. Other prominent examples of urban infrastructure projects on the other hand are, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge over the real Bosphorus, Haliç Metro Bridge Project, and Bosphorus Highway Tube Tunnel Project for enabling vehicle traffic under Bosphorus.

The contestations and collective action against these projects are usually carried out by discontent groups.

##### **5. Opposition, Resistance and Mobilisations against Neoliberal Policies and Practice: Contemporary Urban Movements in Istanbul**

There is an increasing number of research made on urban development in Istanbul, ranging from studies gecekondü and the urban poor focusing on the changing meaning of gecekondü after 1980s and changes in the position of and perception about gecekondü population in the city (Erder 1996, 2009; Erman, 2001; Erkan 2009; Senyapili, 2004; Isik and Pinarcioglu, 2001; Altinok and Enlil, 2008; Pinarcioglu and Isik, 2008), to more recently emerging studies of urban restructuring in the city under neoliberal policies with a view to its socioeconomical and spatial outcomes (Genis, 2007; Eraydın, 2008; Ercan, 2010; Gunay, 2010; Dincer, 2011; Enlil, 2011; Eraydin, 2011; Lovering and Turkmen, 2011; Oktem, 2011; Ozus, Turk and Dokmeci, 2011; Turkun, 2011; Aksoy, 2012). There is on the other hand limited research on grassroots resistances against this restructuring. They generally focus on the deprived groups and usually take a supportive stance towards their struggle (Ozdemir, 2005; Bozkulak, 2005; Celik, 2008; Kuyucu and Unsal, 2010).

In the following, urban opposition and mobilisations in Istanbul are tried to be described and analysed as regards to the movements of both the deprived and the discontent, also referring to the findings of certain case studies. The information used to make the analysis is gathered through textual analysis including researches, reports, and media resources; interviewing the activists of each type of movements as well as municipality staff; attending the meetings of urban movement fractions and following their activities through e-mails by being a member of their e-mail group. In this respect, three meetings were attended, which are a two-day meeting of activists, residents and professionals from different movements named 'Urban Movements Forum' held on 26-27 June 2010, two half-day workshops on urban development and urban opposition organised during 6<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum held in Istanbul on 1-4 July 2010 and a one-day meeting with the participation of deprived groups from

mainly gecekondu areas of Ankara as well as representatives from Istanbul under the title ‘Sheltering Rights Congress’ held on 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2011. Interviews were made with one architect/city planner from Chamber of Architects Istanbul Branch on

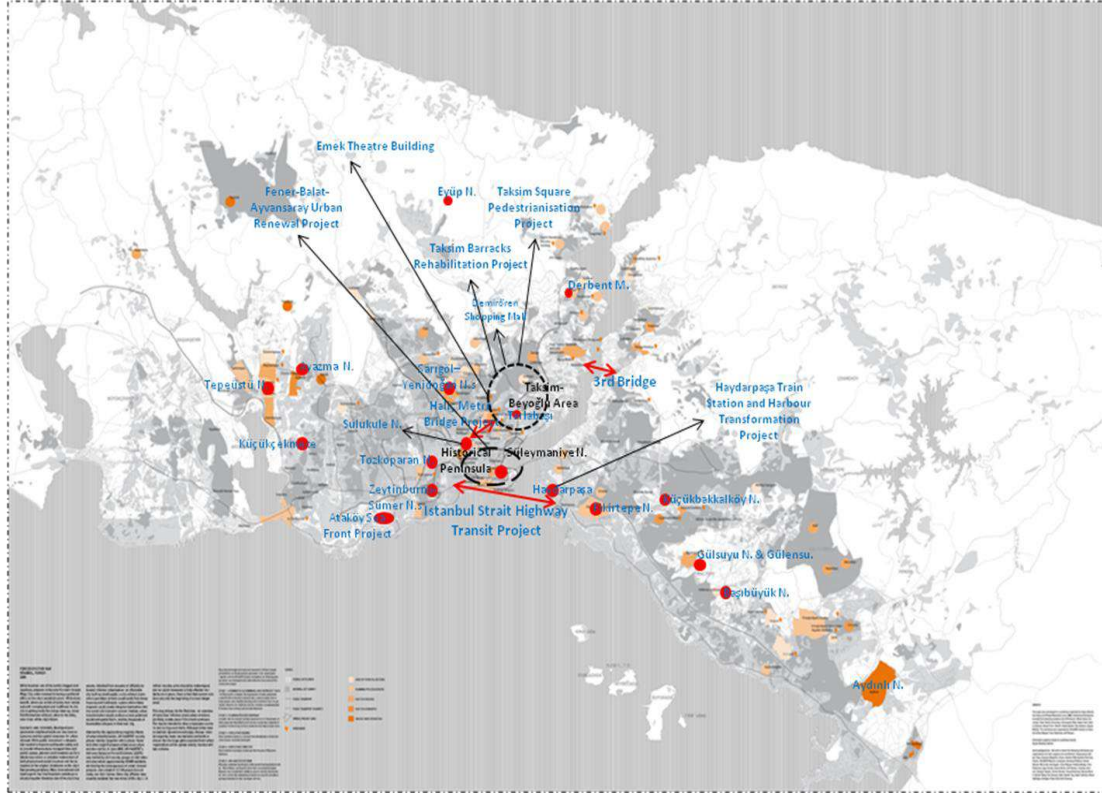


Figure 1. Map of Main Urban Transformation Projects in Istanbul

10<sup>th</sup> of November 2010, a resident and an activist from Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhoods on 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012, a private architect acting as a voluntary supporter of the movements of the deprived and two urban planners from Maltepe District Municipality on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2012. During the course of the Urban Movements Forum, an ‘urban movements forum e-mail group’ was set up to exchange information and opinions with the members and to carry on more frequent discussions. Soon after its first large meeting mentioned above, this forum began to organise more regular meetings in smaller groups and shared and even continued the discussions made during these meetings via e-mails. As a member of the e-mail group, all these discussions and information shared could be followed.

The two year work following the urban movements summarised above enables us to scrutinize the two main urban movement categories and their subcategories based on Istanbul case.

## 5.1 Urban Movements of the Deprived

Urban transformation projects in Istanbul generally result in the destruction for speculative redevelopment of the degraded, mainly old working-class

neighbourhoods or neighbourhoods of degradation with cultural and historical assets in basically inner-city areas. Before elaborating on this category, it should be noted that, urban transformation projects do not necessarily give rise to mobilisations. In fact, mobilisations against projects develop as exceptions. Reactions of certain disadvantaged groups have been stabilized through the urban land and property regime, by which low quality or informal housing is transformed into new housing units, especially through HDA and new property rights in the form of apartment units are assigned to land owners in return of their existing land or property. Many of the residents are satisfied through such wealth transfers by rent generation, functioning as a new means of income redistribution. As a result, many of the residents in gecekondu areas move out, having their share from the urban rent and do not get in any contentious action.

A major type of urban movements in Istanbul are mobilised by social groups who are unsatisfied with the aforementioned wealth transfer and thereby find themselves in a deprived position as a result of the neoliberal urban transformation projects. The movements reacting against these projects generally struggle against the negative effects of the urban transformation on their own property or land, and try to reverse these effects as much as they can. As shown in Table 1, two sub-categories of such movements develop.

*First sub-category*, movements against projects implemented in degraded residential areas of low-income groups, is the predominant type in Istanbul. Such movements develop when the residents are unsatisfied with the compensation they get out of the rent generated by the transformation project based on their existing property rights, or get no share at all as in the case of tenants and squatters. They spend most of their resources for counteracting this deprivation; claiming ‘right to the city’ usually remains as a discourse, rather than a motivation factor behind concrete actions. It is even perceived as a romantic slogan within the movements whose target is their own neighbourhood, rather than the whole city (Turkmen, 2011). Accordingly, these movements develop around individual property motives and effects of the projects on the exchange value of the land or property possessed or used by the residents. Moreover, as Kuyucu and Unsal (2010) showed in their study on Başibüyük and Tarlaşa in Istanbul, this appetite for personal gain weakens the movements turning them into bargaining processes resulting in more residents agreeing with the offer of the project. In this, these movements do not aim at a broader socio-cultural transformation, although they stem from traditionally working-class areas. As an activist from Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood stated, they are not against urban transformation – which might have negative effects on the built environment as a whole-, but they just claim their rights. In other words, they oppose their dispossession and demand their share out of the newly generated wealth through rent increase, or at least a ‘fair distribution’. In this, satisfaction of material/ economic demands becomes their priority.

Parallel to developing around individual property rights, what movements also resist in is displacement and dispossession as shown by Kuyucu and Unsal (2010).

Residents who do not agree on their property rights given by the transformation project or those who have no rights at all are forced by the municipality, mostly by police force as well, to evict their homes, which is called ‘forced evictions’. Moreover, as these projects usually have no social or economic programmes for the residents, they result in some kind of a social exclusion (Kuyucu and Unsal, 2010). Moreover, exclusion from decision making (especially in the processes while the neighbourhood was declared as urban renewal area) as a concern of the residents is another aspect of these movements, as stated by an activist in Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood and by an urban planner working for a district municipality, since exclusion may result in more dispossession. As claimed by Erder (2009), such exclusion can also hinder the formation of opposition as people are not sufficiently informed about their rights.

The actors of these movements are mainly residents (property owners and tenants) and supporters as external actors like academics, students, professionals and their organisations, platforms bringing together these different actors. Academics from especially Istanbul Technical University, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and Yıldız Technical University, students, professionals such as city planners, architects and lawyers, and their organisations like Chamber of City Planners, Chambers of Architects and platforms of different actors are involved in the movements as external actors. They basically provide technical and logistical support to these movements and help them in communicating with different movements of the deprived in the city. Moreover, as discussions in meetings and e-mails among neighbourhood residents and external actors show, the latter encourage the neighbourhoods to unite and act together, claim their sheltering rights as a basic human right and contest their exclusion in decision making regarding the redevelopment in their area. For example, a group of academics together with volunteer professionals work together with the residents of Gülsuyu and Gülensu neighbourhoods and support them in their negotiations with the district municipality which is responsible for and intends to soon start the preparation of 1/1000 implementation plan of the area. In addition, academics and students of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University City and Regional Planning Department carried out a workshop with the residents, called ‘Solidarity Workshop’ (‘Dayanımcı Atölye’) to prepare an alternative plan for the neighbourhood as stated by the activist in the area and the private architect. By this way, these external actors aim to somehow bring the ‘right to the city’ into the agendas of these movements, which is characterised as a more proactive involvement as opposed to the reactive actions of the residents of the neighbourhoods (Turkmen, 2011).

As discussed intensely in meetings and e-mail discussions, there are three types of oppositional ways of action movements under this sub-category apply to; institutional, legal and street struggle. As a part of their institutional struggle, which is the dominant one, they usually adopt negotiational tactics with the municipalities, relevant public agencies and businesses that take part in the project, by sitting around the same table and bargaining on their returns from the redevelopment, with the help of the external actors, particularly at the stage of assignment of new property rights.

They are engaged in this institutional struggle through their neighbourhood associations bargaining with the municipality. These are newly established associations or remobilised existing ones, aiming to defend the residents' rights in front of municipalities, public agencies or businesses involved in the urban transformation. In almost all such project areas, an association is established by volunteer residents, as the driving force of the movement; Başbüyük, Derbent, Tarlabası, Gülsuyu-Gülensu, Tozkoparan being examples. Legal struggle is on the other hand carried out through grating petitions or taking the case to the court. The bargaining process between the association and the municipalities are so determining that Aksoy defines this in her analysis of recent urban trends in Istanbul as the reduction of citizenship into a bargaining process (Aksoy, 2012).

Legal struggle is usually applied to, when the residents are totally unsatisfied with the plan/project in general or what is offered by it. For example in Gülsuyu- Gülensu neighbourhoods, 6500 petitions were given against the master plan including the neighbourhood. Against the 2004 'Urban Renewal Plan', 4.600 signatures were collected and the plan was sued twice. But they did not produce any result. As for the street struggle, demonstrations and building barricades to impede the intervention of police are among the actions. In meetings participated, the residents of most of the project areas as well as external actors claimed that they did not deny the need for legal struggle, but contended that street struggle was inevitable for them to protect their houses. Legal struggle is also sometimes criticized for not being sufficiently representative with regard to the respective neighbourhood as a whole. Moreover, as discussed in such meetings, legal struggle is considered to be possibly difficult, whereas street struggle is always there as an option to be utilized. In general, movements use a mixture of these different struggle methods, including more innovative ones. In Ayazma for example, as a response to demolition and evictions, 18 families who had no property rights began to keep guard in front of the Municipality and remained there more than 35 weeks. They also established Ayazma Mağdurları Derneği (Association of the Deprived People of Ayazma) and carried on their struggle with the help of different external actors, mainly the Association named '1 Umut. 1 Umut, together with the association, organised a solidarity day with the families of Ayazma with the participation of different activists who are member of fractions of urban movements, prepared a letter in English for international support and an 'anti-commercial' video as opposed to the famous commercial of Ali Ağaoğlu on the transformation project in the area. They also organised evening meals during Ramadan with the families to show their support.

On the other hand, there may be certain tensions among the adherents of these movements. Since the movements under this sub-category are area-based, there are residents with different priorities, anticipations and at times conflicts among themselves. Accordingly, one type of adherents is property or land/property owners in areas where urban transformation has began or will begin; another is those with no property rights who are actually under most severe risk in similar areas. The former here tend to behave more with individual property based interests and thereby form the core of the movements of the deprived. The latter on the other hand are usually

offered subsidized houses by HDA, which they rarely can afford. This situation results in segregation between the property owners and the tenants during the mobilisation (Turkmen, 2011). Moreover, as argued by Kuyucu and Unsal, the tenure structure may become the most important determinant of the form and the strength of the resistance; as formal property owners, contrary to tenants and occupiers, tend to finally agree with the offer of the municipality pursuing their individual interests. There are even reported cases of serious tensions between those who agree with the offer and agree to evacuate their houses and those who are not satisfied. For example in Derbent, 14 activists were taken under custody for death threat against residents who agree with the municipality (Bianet, 2012). Moreover, the activist from Gülsuyu-Gülensu has stated during the interview, that there have been certain divergences in the neighbourhood due to ideological reasons. Groups with radical leftist ideologies did not want to act with the rest and left the movement accusing them of negotiating with the system.

*Second sub-category* is movements that mobilise against urban renewal in mixed-use areas having historical and cultural values. These are generally inner-city areas such as Sulukule, Tarlabası and Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray, where rents and demand for extra land have risen too high. They are surrounded by more prestigious areas specialised in business, touristic and commercial facilities. These movements are highly similar to the first sub-category as shown in Table 1, and they go through very similar processes. However, as these movements mobilise in areas with cultural diversity and historical buildings, collective interests against the loss of quality of space as well as cultural and historical values gain importance. Thus, the movements under the second sub-category defend also certain collective rights and use value against exchange value, though to a lesser extent. Moreover, the projects contested by these movements attract more attention from the urban 'elites' such as academicians, politicians, NGOS and the media as argued by Erder (2009). In parallel, the above mentioned external actors become the internal actors of these movements making them relatively more effective. For example in Sulukule Platform or Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray Association, many activists act as residents of the area in street struggle and legal struggle, right reports, make interviews with the media as a part of the movement. There are also channels for alternative planning, though in a weak form. 'Illimitable Autonomous Planers' initiative is an example for this, who has prepared an alternative plan for Sulukule, in 'Sulukule workshop' in cooperation the community (Sulukule Blogspot, 2008). This also helps them gain even more media and public attention and support. However, they are still regarded as individual property based, since the determining motivational factor is deprivation based on property rights. Therefore, they are similar to first category in all other aspects.

In sum, the movements under this category are mainly concerned with what they are offered in return for their property or land for redevelopment; in other words with their individual property rights and its exchange value rather than use value. Thus, it can be argued that they mobilise and are engaged in collective action based on more individual interest-based concerns and less on collective ones. As a result, and also

because they are territorially-based stemming from distinct areas of the city, they develop as various weak components of urban movements in the city, without becoming a mass movement. In this, they demonstrate that neoliberal urbanisation today shapes its opposition based on its own rules and accordingly, it redefines the agendas and ways of action used by urban movements in line with its own rules. Thus, urban movements are now reconfigured by what they actually oppose, namely the system itself.

## **5.2 Urban Movements of the Discontent**

Whatever changes are brought by neoliberal urbanisation, political action and oppositions are still significant. Thereby, urban movements with more transcendental goals and ideological backgrounds also develop. These are urban movements whose main motivation is some kind of discontent or dissatisfaction with the spatial developments in neoliberal urbanization. Three widely different sub-categories of this category can be observed in Istanbul.

First sub-category is the movements opposing, based on specific cases, the unjust rent generation on urban land, at the expense of alienation and impoverishment of the urban residents in general. Non-material demands are more prominent in their agenda compared to the movements of the deprived. They feel a need to reclaim and redefine the public space as both a dimension of democratic participation and a field for use. They can be defined as marginal movements against loss of urban values and assets. In these movements; academics, students, lawyers, professionals and their organisations such as professional chambers, community based organisations and platforms bringing together these different actors take part. As mentioned above, these actors may constitute external actors for the movements of the deprived, in terms of providing technical expertise and logistical support or even active participation in their actions. These discontent movements are at times so heavily engaged with the problems of the deprived that they can even be regarded as by-product of the movements of the deprived.

On the other hand, movements under this sub-category may also engage in solely generic issues. For example, against 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge project, a platform named 'Life Platform Instead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge' is organised by a group of volunteers. According to their own blog, the Platform gave out a notice in front of the General Directorate of Highways against the project on the same date as the tendering process began. There are also ad-hoc platforms where different neighbourhood associations can come together such as 'Beyoğlu Platform of Neighbourhood Associations'. IMECE, as an organisation mostly of urban planners, also acts in this sphere by carrying out studies and organizes events to promote 'a more social approach to urbanism in Turkey that goes beyond marketism and narrow professionalism' according to the information give at their web site. They produce reports and organize meetings to inform and support the struggle of urban movements.

There are other initiatives like, ‘Istanbul S.O.S’ and Social Rights Association, who work on different issues, but on similar terms in that they all mobilise against issue-based projects and support neighbourhoods in their struggle against urban transformation projects. However, there is no established cooperation among these different fractions; not even between neighbourhood organisations as stated by two interviewed people -one from Chamber of Architects and the other from Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood- as well as during meetings organised/participated by movements. There is no unified movement, but movement fractions for both categories of movements. Therefore, the urban movements of the discontent are at the stage of asking questions of what organisational practices they should develop, and what kinds of real relations they should build in between the different fragments. In last couple of years, they have managed to come under an Urban Movements Forum and hold meetings where they discuss urgent matter as regards to neighbourhoods or broader issues like a mass demonstration on 1<sup>st</sup> of May. However, they are still far from constituting a broad-based urban movement that can bring a change, as they also admit.

The last two sub-categories of movements of the discontent are minor and weak movements in Istanbul. *Second sub-category* is the movement led by elite middle or upper-middle classes who are not content with the redevelopment in their neighbourhoods for it worsens living conditions and they were not involved in decision-making. These movements are in fact built around collective interests, which are confined to the well-being of the community only, but not the whole city. They correspond to the elitist and defensive movements in the West, the so-called NIMBYs in Mayer’s terms (Mayer, 2003). They are generally mobilised by loss of quality in their own neighbourhood and consequent worsening of living conditions, an unwanted development in the area that affects their quality of life or lack of decision making regarding the development in the area. The actors of these movements are usually middle or upper-middle class citizens and neighbourhood associations they have established. Mobilisations against the planned redevelopment in Ataköy coastal area is an example in Istanbul for this sub-category. *The third sub-category* is conservative individual property based movements of mainly those who are dissatisfied with the rent generated in the area and struggle for more rent-generating urban development. They support the redevelopment projects that will increase the value of private. In this, they are built around individual interests, seeking to extract the maximum profit from the newly generated urban rent out of redevelopment. The movement in Beyoğlu initiated by The Beyoğlu Beautification Association including the private entrepreneurs in the area is an example of this sub-category in Istanbul (Erman and Coskun-Yildar, 2007).

## **6. Conclusion**

The already weak redistribution mechanisms in Turkey coupled with the increasingly depriving functioning of the neo-liberal policies, the uneven distribution of the property rights that have been increased or produced by urban transformation projects constitute the main motivational factor behind the urban movements in

Istanbul. Other possible motivational factors such as identity and claims for democracy and local political autonomy are not neglected, but come out as concerns in the lifespan of the movement. They feed and enrich the movement, but do not trigger it.

Table 1. Categories of Movements

Movement		Fields of conflict	Actors involved	Type of interest	Type of right defended	Action type	Type of Project and Examples
<b>MOVEMENTS OF THE DEPRIVED</b>	<b>a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- insufficient compensation of existing property rights</li> <li>- preservation of individual property motives</li> <li>- displacement</li> <li>- exclusion from decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neighbourhood organisations</li> <li>- residents</li> <li>- external actors: academics, students, professionals and their organisations like chambers of planners / architects</li> <li>- platforms of different actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual (Individual gains are the primary goal.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual property rights (to utilize the exchange value of the property / land)</li> <li>- right to housing / sheltering (in cases where the property is used for use value only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- negotiation and bargaining</li> <li>- opposition</li> </ul>	<p>Urban Renewal in lower income residential areas I(Gülsuyu-Gülensu, Başibüyük, Derbent, Ayazma, etc.)</p>
	<b>b</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- insufficient compensation of existing property rights</li> <li>- preservation of individual property motives</li> <li>- displacement</li> <li>- loss of quality of space</li> <li>- exclusion from decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neighbourhood organisations</li> <li>- residents</li> <li>- academics, students, professionals and their organisations like chambers of planners / architects</li> <li>- platforms of different actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual (Individual gains are the primary goal.)</li> <li>- collective (against loss of quality of space)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual property rights and right to housing</li> <li>- right to housing / sheltering (in cases where the property is used for use value only)</li> <li>- collective rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- negotiation and bargaining</li> <li>- opposition</li> </ul>	<p>Urban Renewal in sites or neighbourhoods of degradation in basically inner-city areas (Tarlabaşı, Sulukule, Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray).</p>

Movement		Fields of conflict	Actors involved	Type of interest	Type of right defended	Action type	Type of Project and Examples
<b>MOVEMENTS OF THE DISCONTENT</b>	<b>a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of participation in decision making</li> <li>- loss of quality of space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- academics and students</li> <li>- professional organisations like chambers of planners / architects</li> <li>- platforms of different actors</li> <li>- neighbourhood associations and local activists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collective (and social in broader terms)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- city-wide collective consumption rights, 'right to the city'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- opposition</li> </ul>	<p>Special projects (Emek Theatre Building, Beyoğlu Demirören AVM, Haydarpaşa Redevelopment Project, etc.);</p> <p>Urban infrastructure projects (3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge, Haliç Metro Bridge Project, Istanbul Strait Highway Transit Project, etc.)</p>
	<b>b</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- worsening living conditions</li> <li>- unwanted development in the area</li> <li>- lack of participation in decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neighbourhood associations,</li> <li>- planners, architects and lawyers),</li> <li>- their organisations like Chamber of City Planners, and Chambers of Architects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collective (confined to the community affected)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collective consumption rights within the community (use value is the primary concern)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-opposition</li> <li>- cooperative (but not as a part of movement activities)</li> </ul>	<p>Urban Renewal Projects in middle income residential areas (Ataköy District, etc.)</p>
	<b>c</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- maximisation of individual property rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neighbourhood associations including private entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual (Extraction of maximum profit from urban land rent is the primary goal.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual property rights (to utilize the exchange value of their property is the concern).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-cooperation</li> </ul>	<p>Any rent increasing urban redevelopment (Beyoğlu Association, etc.)</p>

As different cases from Istanbul illustrates and the theoretical review in the previous section have informed us, urban movements of the contemporary neoliberal urbanisation do not mobilise based on class-based factors, function less on antagonistic terms and can negotiate with business and public agencies, and do not constitute a homogenous entity, but are highly fragmented. Furthermore, especially in the last decade, they have become increasingly based on individual interests and begin to mobilise as a reaction to neoliberal policies' negative effects on the adherents' own property or land.

The movements of the deprived groups demonstrate this change towards mobilisation out of interest based motivations. As regards to these type of movements, which is the predominant and most vivid type in today's cities, residents do not react against transformation provided that they are satisfied with what is given to them as mentioned earlier. As a consequence, no movement occurs when there is no interest to rest it upon. However, neoliberal urbanisation creates its own kind of movement. Researches made in poor areas of urban transformation projects and interviews made with key actors by the authors themselves demonstrate that, reactions and collective action start when the residents are not satisfied with their share in the rent to be generated, having quite individualistic and interest-based concerns as discussed in the preceding. When they feel they get an unfair share from the rent that is to be generated by the project based on their already acquired property rights, and think that their property rights are seriously violated, they get engaged in collective action.

The movements of discontent groups on the other hand demonstrate that the fragmentation trend in movements still prevails and even in an aggravated fashion under neoliberal urbanisation. Since, neoliberal state is hostile towards any kind of social mobilisation and solidarity that will hinder the capital accumulation; individuals tend to build weak associations rather than broader collective institutions such as the trade-unions of the past. The end result is even more fragmented urban movements without a collective mobilisation of power. A fragmented variety of urban movement fractions that fall under either or each one of these categories appear, who are not tightly coupled and have weak connections with each other. Therefore, one cannot talk, at least for now, about the existence of a broad social movement in Turkey, not even in Istanbul Metropolitan Region. Accordingly, spatial changes brought by these movements are minimal. In other words, they are far from reshaping 'the city in a different image from that put forward by the developers, who are backed by finance, corporate capital and an increasingly entrepreneurially minded local state apparatus' (Harvey, 2008).

In conclusion, neoliberal urbanisation today redefines the opposition against itself via its own instruments like urban development as a means of income distribution. It moreover defines their content based on defence of individual property rights. Even if it retreats at some points as a result of the negotiation and bargaining mechanisms built with the movement actors, in it finally maintains its own sustainability. At this point, it is crucial to complement this analysis made in the general context of Istanbul's urban movements with more focused analysis on certain different localities, particularly in residential areas, in order to see if these urban movements have a potential to overcome their being bound by motivations based on individual interests towards more collective interests, exploring the complex relationships in the form of conflicts and alliances they develop within the movements and with the external actors. This will help us better understand whether, to what extent and under what conditions urban movements can free themselves from the rules of neo-liberal urbanisation.

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