

Politics and planning: when planning becomes a means of political struggle

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The implications of politics on planning systems and process are a well-studied subject, which makes us to understand how politics manifests itself in the planning contents, while the role of planning in the politics deserves further attention.

The literature on politics and planning emphasises the power structures and political combinations in order to explain how decisions on urban built environment is brought about and by whom they are shaped (Savitch, 1998; Savitch and Kantor, 2002). Politicians, technocrats, other public actors and the representatives of different social groups try to reflect their discretion in what and how cities are built and who are going to get benefit from it.

Since the 1980s, the state's interest in urban land as a means of financing economic growth has resulted in increased pressure on urban management and land-use planning. Large-scale urban renewal projects and spatial plans paved the way for the development of the real estate sector, and in the 2000s, the influence of state entrepreneurialism on urban management became more evident, with urban areas transforming in line with the requirements of the global neoliberal market economy. Recently, state's increasing interest in urban regulation; the commodification of urban land in order to finance economic growth (Peck *et al.*, 2009); the increasing influence of state entrepreneurialism on urban management (MacLeod, 2002); the engagement of the governance regime in policy-making; and the controlling and articulating of the requirements of a global neoliberal market economy (Brenner *et al.*, 2012; Hilgers, 2012; Wacquant, 2012) led to increasing contestations to existing plans. Especially in Global South where urban land and real estate markets are important in distribution of wealth, the social opposition and urban movements became more widespread.

However, it may be wrong to evaluate the rise of opposition only to the planning process and plans. They have been a means of showing discontent to ongoing changes in the cities, the neoliberal urbanisation strategies and projects of both central and local governments, as well as current politics and the ideologies that are represented by existing governments. In this process, different groups have different motivations, changing from derived groups who mainly aim to get benefit from planning decisions, the ones that think that they are losing their collective memories to ones that are seeking for democratic rights. The wide spectrum of opposition, however led to fragmentations within itself, which causes urban plans and planning to become a means of political struggle.

This paper aims to discuss how and why planning became the core of expressing the discontent of different groups. The paper reviews the governance of opposition, including changing power structures, the response of politics to emerging opposition and fragmentations among the different parties that are involved in planning process as well as the ones affected by the plans. While the paper focuses on research findings on Istanbul, it will present the comparative findings from different countries.

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