

Re-positioning of the key actors in the context of mega projects: canal Istanbul

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Mega projects are described as large-scale and high-cost infrastructure investments which have single purposes (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Lehrer and Laidley, 2008) either provide transport options or connect megaprojects and mega-events to each other (Kennedy, 2015). Mega project theme is being criticized in the literature from different aspects; however, complexity, risk and uncertainties are always parts of its critiques. Giezen (2012) claims that mega-projects are usually full of political procedures. Risk and uncertainties might be averted in infrastructure phases, and he phrases that idea as 'keeping it simple'. Nevertheless, as he admits this is not possible for political perspective of mega-projects. Due to this awareness in the literature, one of the example of political complexity is key actors' positions through the project.

Political environment and key actors' relationships between each other are diverse considering countries institutional structures. When we look at Turkish system, political environment always has strong influence over institutional framework. Neoliberalism restructuring in Istanbul has been started since the mid-1980s with flows of capital from global into Turkey (Keyder, 2005) and European integration which is a consequence of global tendency to be part of an inter-governmental network (Keyman and Koyuncu, 2005). These inter-governmental and global policies have triggered to include mega-projects on politicians agendas (Candan and Kolluoglu, 2008). This influence can be seen most of mega projects which are started and used as buzzword in Turkey after 2010. Currently, Istanbul has twenty-one mega transport projects either planned, on-going or under construction. In order to comprehend the dynamic of changes, as a case study, one of these twenty-one mega transport projects of Istanbul is chosen; Canal Istanbul.

Canal Istanbul is a 42 km artificial waterway that is located on parallel to Bosphorus strait on the European side of Istanbul. The Canal is a part of an urban regeneration project; the New Istanbul project, which is consisted of residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational type of developments. Even though, the construction of the Canal has not been started yet, there are legal changes for implementation the before starting to its construction.

In this research, secondary data analysis is the main source. New laws, acts and orders which passed after announcement of the mega project are studied to understand the change of actors' positions and power relations among them. Changes in legal system from the decision-making to construction phase are investigated to reveal the modifications of key actors' role over time through the Canal Istanbul project. According to these changes over time, re-positioning is interpreted to reveal reasons behind them.

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