INNER-CITY REGENERATION AND THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE IN ISTANBUL: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SULUKULE AND TARLABAŞI

-VOLUME I-

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Dedicated to the loving memory of **Saime Siret Bahçeli**

and

all gestures and actors of civil opposition that made **#occupygezi** *possible in Istanbul*

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Declaration

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Abstract

Territories of neoliberal urbanization have expanded as local and central governments around the world have increasingly approached and utilized urban land as a rent-generating tool that can as well reproduce the workings of advanced capitalism in full effect. It has thus been inevitable to see the expansion of the territories of urban oppositional movements in direct proportion to the globalization of neoliberal urbanism. Currently, civil, supranational and grassroots organizations are actively raising critical questions with respect to the diminishing chances of citizens to access affordable housing, public spaces, natural reserves, urban resources and services, participatory decision-making mechanisms at the level of local governance etc.

Departing from here, what is being witnessed is the reintroduction of debates on the 'rights to the city' as coined by Henri Lefebvre (1968) and further tackled by David Harvey (2008) to the agenda of contentious urban politics. However, although there is growing literature on the skillful battles of oppositional movements against the forces of capital in various cities of the world, challenges encountered by movements, or the fragilities and vulnerabilities they might experience remain relatively understudied. This poses a matter of concern regarding that it can only be through the acknowledgement and transfer of knowledge emanating from battles against such challenges and vulnerabilities that learning processes can be enhanced and more sustainable movements can be built for the future.

Istanbul's experience is not divorced from any of these developments and thus falls into the coverage of these territories of neoliberal globalization and urban contestation along the given lines. State-led urban transformation projects targeting informal housing zones, inner-city poverty areas, coastlines, large tracts of state owned, and natural and historic reserves, and oppositional views raised against these novel expressions of urban development by diverse civil initiatives can all be interpreted as narratives that reveal the contingency of Istanbul within the given territories. Yet, just as similar to the international context, the Turkish experience has not so far tackled the question of challenges to movement building in the face of such immense pressures as much as needed.

The cases of Sulukule and Tarlabaşı, however, are highly revealing of the fact that it is incredibly difficult for socio-economically disadvantaged communities to sustain their mode of mobilized resistance against forces of urban transformation since the given forces instigate imminent divides within communities based on the will to access certain securities and gains. That is, although collective resistance and opposition to urban transformation may emanate from poverty zones, a tendecy to settle for material securities and gains may also emerge depending on the individually defined capacities of residents as the fear of loss in the battle against transformation climbs. Private ownership and its impact on grassroots mobilization deserves particular attention within the given set of constellations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGFE:	Advisory Group on Forced Evictions
BA:	Beautification Association
CI:	Civil Initiatives
COHRE:	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
HIC:	Habitat International
HSA:	Human Settlements Association
ICOMOS:	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IMM:	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
IMP:	Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office
INAP:	Istanbul Neighbourhood Associations' Platform
JDP:	Justice and Development Party
MHA:	Mass Housing Administration
MHF:	Mass Housing Fund
MP:	Motherland Party
NA:	Neighbourhood Association
RttC:	Right to the City
UN:	United Nations
UTP:	Urban Transformation Project
WP:	Welfare Party

INTRODUCTION

On 11 November 2011, the Hungarian activist group 'City is For All' (AVM) organized a demonstration at the municipal office of Budapest's 8th district (a neighbourhood where drug abuse, homelessness, petty crime and prostitution has long been prevalent) to protest the government's attempt to criminalize homelessness.[1] During the protest, activists turned the building into a prison through symbolic gestures and raised both their concerns towards the criminalization of the poor, and also their demands towards formal rights to housing. However, the demonstration came to an end as all activists were detained by the police in a short while.

Similarly, on 12 July 2012, a group of civil activists from Halk Cephesi (People's Front) congregated in front of the main headquarter of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) to protest the release of the Disaster Law. This much debated code was designed in a way to allow local governments to designate parts of the city as transformation zones and implement various sorts of projects in partnership with public and/or private actors on the grounds of earthquake preparedness. Main concern among activist groups and grassroots organizations was that the use of this law would lead to the displacement and dispossession of many in the absence of welfare mechanisms that could protect communities affected by transformation. In the end, not only were eight activists detained but violent clashes took place between the police and protesting groups.

These two cases can be interpreted as the urban reverberations of the past two decades' neoliberal shift in political economic and social spheres at a global scale. Period following the oil crisis of 1970s has been witnessing an 'opening' in the many urban centres of the world to the flow of capital and investment, and also a 'closure' to all material and immaterial elements that pose an obstacle to this 'opening'. This is because urban land has increasingly become an object for the satisfaction of vast fiscal needs, and thus, the current attitude of local and central governments is based on the will to integrate each piece of land into mechanisms that can turn them into assets. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental

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[1] Local mayor Mate Kocsis had proposed to charge homeless with a 530 euros fine, or condemn them to 60 days of prison time for 'residing in public places'. This proposal eventually found approval in the parliament and For more information on this story, see http://direitoamoradia.org/?p=17711&lang=en (Accessed 12.04.2012)

reasons why each and every survey on worldwide urbanization concludes with powerful statements that draw on the shrinkage of rural terrains with the overwhelming expansion of metropolitan areas.

It is within this context that inner-city poverty zones, publicly owned land, former industrial areas, informal housing settlements, green belts, or in short, all territories that could not previously connect with the circuits of capital accumulation and investment have become exposed to large-scale urban transformation projects. Moreover, decisions and actions of local and central governments have been instrumental in the realization of such interventions. An inevitable consequence of this trend is that, citizens in need of the material and immaterial benefits of these territories are facing immense pressures in their ability to access these resources. Thus, cities have also become stages where upon those who suffer from the 'big closure' of urban land at many different levels raise opposition to and demonstrate resistance against all mechanisms that are held responsible from the mentioned closure and strive to defend their 'rights to the city'.

The aim of this thesis is to shed light on the dynamics of neoliberal urbanism, giving way to the mentioned patterns of 'opening' and 'closure', and also on oppositional voices raised against them within the specific context of Istanbul, Turkey. The larger framework is established on the grounds of the global workings of neoliberal capitalism and urban oppositional movements, and the translation of these phenomena into the Turkish experience. Empirical findings, on the other hand, are based on the investigation of grassroots movements in the two inner-city poverty areas of Istanbul - Sulukule and Tarlabaşı. Research outcomes reveal that departure from the previously existing urban regime – which particularly allowed low-income groups to survive in big cities- has exerted immense pressures on socio-economically vulnerable communities in the form of displacement, dispossession and deprivation from solidarity bound vital resources.

Within the narrower context of oppositional movements, findings suggest that mentioned pressures find immediate reflection in the workings of grassroots mobilization against state-led urban transformation. Neighbourhood associations may demonstrate almost unanimous resistance against forces emanating from policies, authorities and transformative projects they are exposed to in the initial

phase of mobilization. Yet, adamant resistance tends to evolve into a negotiation-oriented approach on the grounds of material benefits due to the diverse incapacities of communities to afford sustained resistance. Tendency towards negotiation is also triggered by the very nature of transformative processes, fundamentally defined by material gains and compensations. In other words, the way in which regeneration oriented policies and schemes -formulated upon the principle of distributing material benefits- are put into practice hold the capacity to fragment grassroots resistance that is essentially formed to come in the way of potential dispossessions and displacements.

Setting the General Framework: Urban Oppositional Movements in The Age of Neoliberal Capitalism

With the heightened transformation of urban land from the *territory* upon which advanced capitalism happens to the *tool* that actually reproduces the workings of advanced capitalism, cities around the world have increasingly become the spaces whereupon social and economic inequalities are firmly established. What is being witnessed under the given conditions is not only an intense expansion in the spaces of wealth and poverty, but also the gradual relocation of poverty from the centre to the periphery. Underlying these novel expressions of inequality on urban landscapes is the direct involvement of state-actors in the current workings of capitalism. As governmental bodies abandon their previously existing responsibilities towards the welfare state in order to pave way for the entry of capital into cityscapes, they strip socio-economically vulnerable groups of the security nets that used to protect them from the overwhelming pressures of capitalist economies. Hence, not only the city centre itself, but also many other urban resources are rendered inaccessible to the poor.

It is at this stage that debates on the rights of citizens to the city have re-entered the critical agenda of urban oppositional movements. Today, the number of civil organizations and initiatives actively struggling against the violation of people's rights to urban spaces, resources and services have not only reached a climax compared to the past, but also demonstrate a diversity which bring new definitions to the very concept of the 'rights to the city'. This diversity is not only constituted

by the range of topics that have become subjects of critical debate (i.e. rights to housing, property, environment, public spaces etc.) but also the vastness of geographies from which such oppositional gestures emerge. It goes without saying that there is a lot to learn from the contingencies of ongoing battles, share the knowledge originating from the gains and losses of each experience, and build upon the consciousness triggered by these struggles at a global scale to be able to render oppositional movements more sustainable.

Yet, although it is possible to access information on the 'gains' of such struggles, it is relatively more difficult to get hold of experiences defined by 'losses'. Better put, knowledge based on the vulnerabilities and fragilities of urban oppositional movements, which come in the way of devising winning strategies against transformative forces of both public and private forces seems to be extensively scarce. This particularly applies for grassroots organizations based in residential areas, where formal tenure structures and extreme poverty prevail. Although there is growing literature on the achievements of landless people's movements and struggles originating from informal housing areas in Latin American and Asian continents, it looks as though challenges faced by formal yet poor housing areas remain understudied. What is more, there is little said on the impact of private ownership in movement building. It is, however, of critical importance to share knowledge on potential challenges and vulnerabilities emerging from such matters for the formulation of more sustainable oppositional gestures for the future.

Turkish Experience of Neoliberal Urbanism and the Specificity of Istanbul

What makes the Turkish experience noteworthy is its contingency within the framework of global developments in neoliberal urbanism and oppositional movements. Turkish cities are often considered to be on similar pages with the cities of the global south since their development and history is very much defined by the scarcity of national resources, shortfalls in the provision of social housing, populist and clientalist modes of urban governance, and self-service (i.e. informal) tactics in the satisfaction of housing needs. However, the past three decades of Turkey have seen the formulation of new policy tools and installation of new public bodies that aim to integrate urban land and housing markets into the

workings of global capitalism in a committedly neoliberal fashion. These efforts materialized in all metropolitan areas of Turkey in the form of various infrastructural operations, development plans and private investments; yet, they have primarily concentrated in Istanbul, the financial, cultural and political hub of the country.

Istanbul has been going through diverse and intense transformative processes on the given grounds, whereby large tracts of urban land are either being expropriated, or privatized to make space for the entrepreneurial operations of public and private actors. Consequences of this extensive transformation are manifold. However, it has first and foremost led to the heightened fragmentation of Istanbul in terms of social and economic inequalities. As local and central governments unfailingly strive to make space for the expansive movement of capital investment throughout the city, they keep clearing urban land of all elements that disable its capacity to generate economic value. Informal housing areas and inner-city poverty zones that have failed to generate such value are not excluded from such clearance, meaning that their resident communities face displacements and dispossessions due to the workings of state-led urban transformation.

Aside from such sites as state-owned land, public spaces and natural reserves that are being introduced to development plans, almost all incompletely commodified parts of Istanbul are being declared as 'renewal areas' for their transformation into rent generating zones within the framework given above. Informal housing areas and inner-city poverty zones become subject to transformative processes through these mechanisms, and in the absence of social and economic policies that can be appropriated for the protection of their financially insecure inhabitants. Thus, urban transformation projects, which are guarded by sophisticated policy tools, have increasingly been triggering oppositional movements all around Istanbul that voice out objections of resident communities to potential displacements, dispossessions and the destruction of solidarity networks that have long provided communities with the essential support they needed to survive harsh conditions of urban living.

Demands and objections mentioned above can all be contextualized within the wider framework of 'rights to the city' to connote a range of issues, including

citizens' right to access affordable housing; urban services and resources; public spaces; natural reserves; sites of heritage; participatory planning schemes, and democratic and transparent decision-making mechanisms etc. It is thus important to note that oppositional movements are not restricted to informal housing zones and inner-city poverty areas, but instead are rather dispersed throughout the city and widespread among groups of diverse social, economic, cultural and ideological background in an attempt to defend all areas that have become integral to entrepreneurial operations. Urban oppositional gestures are not entirely unfamiliar to Istanbul for the 1970s witnessed civil and political struggle of *gecekondu* communities in the urban peripheries, and the 1980s saw the emergence of civil initiatives to protect authentic localities in the face of large-scale and top-down projects imposed on central Istanbul.

It is suffice to argue that urban oppositional groups and the ways in which they voice their demands and criticisms in today's Istanbul are rather vibrant, to say the least. Increasingly witnessed are also experiments on the formation of new coalitions and umbrella organizations among these groups. Yet, despite such vibrancy, emergent debates suggest that the actors of opposition suffer from an inability to stand together collectively within a sustained period of time. In other words, although oppositional groups might be able to come together promptly in acute moments and demonstrate effective performance on a particular cause, this successful performance is not sustained. This, it is argued, is predominantly caused by conflicts on ideological and methodological questions as to how the struggle for the 'rights to the city' should be executed, and also fragmentations on the definition of 'gains' that can be achieved through opposition.

Neighbourhood associations are not exempt from the given sets of controversies, yet there are additional issues that derive from their specificity within the landscape of urban transformation: Deprivation from sufficient resources (i.e. financial saving, social networks etc.) to resist in a sustained fashion, and perhaps more importantly, tendency to withdraw from collective resistance and adopt individual tactics among community members in the face of dire pressures that heighten possibilities of substantial material losses. As renewal projects of controversy overwhelm resistance in administrative and practical terms through the involvement of stately powers, resources that help communities afford

adamant objection to envisaged projects get consumed and faith in the possibility of achieving collective goals starts to fade away. What is left for community members to do, in such moments, is to devise individually oriented strategies in order to protect themselves from immense material losses that are either embodied in ownership titles, or financial savings.

Main Focus of Research: Challenges to Grassroots Mobilization

As mentioned earlier, this work focuses on neighbourhood movements originating from two inner-city poverty areas, Sulukule and Tarlabaşı, that have been exposed to urban transformation projects on the basis of the same legal code that is Law No. 5366 'Law for the Protection of Dilapidated Historical and Cultural Real-Estate Through Protection by Renewal' (Fig. 1). Despite ample distinctions between their technical details, both projects ultimately aim at the physical and economic upgrading of these two neighbourhoods through their transformation into upscale residential and commercial areas with the arguable use of conservation sensitive interventions. According to the schemes to be implemented, owners would be extended certain material compensations whereas tenants were left unrecognized - until amendments were made later in the process.

Finding the terms and conditions of proposed projects threatening of their most vital social and economic resources, residents of Sulukule and Tarlabaşı responded to the plans with strong opposition and initiated a swift process of mobilization in an attempt to protect themselves against such major downsides of state-led transformation as dispossession and displacement. Demonstrating novel forms of resistance against the plans of local municipalities with the support of various civil initiatives and professional chambers, communities representing some of the most deprived populations in Istanbul succeeded in communicating their cause at both national and international levels. However, although the movements have made very unique contributions to the agenda of contentious urban politics in Turkey, they have predominantly failed to halt demolitions, displacements and dispossessions. Whereas Sulukule was cleared almost completely by summer 2009, demolitions in Tarlabaşı started as of summer 2011.
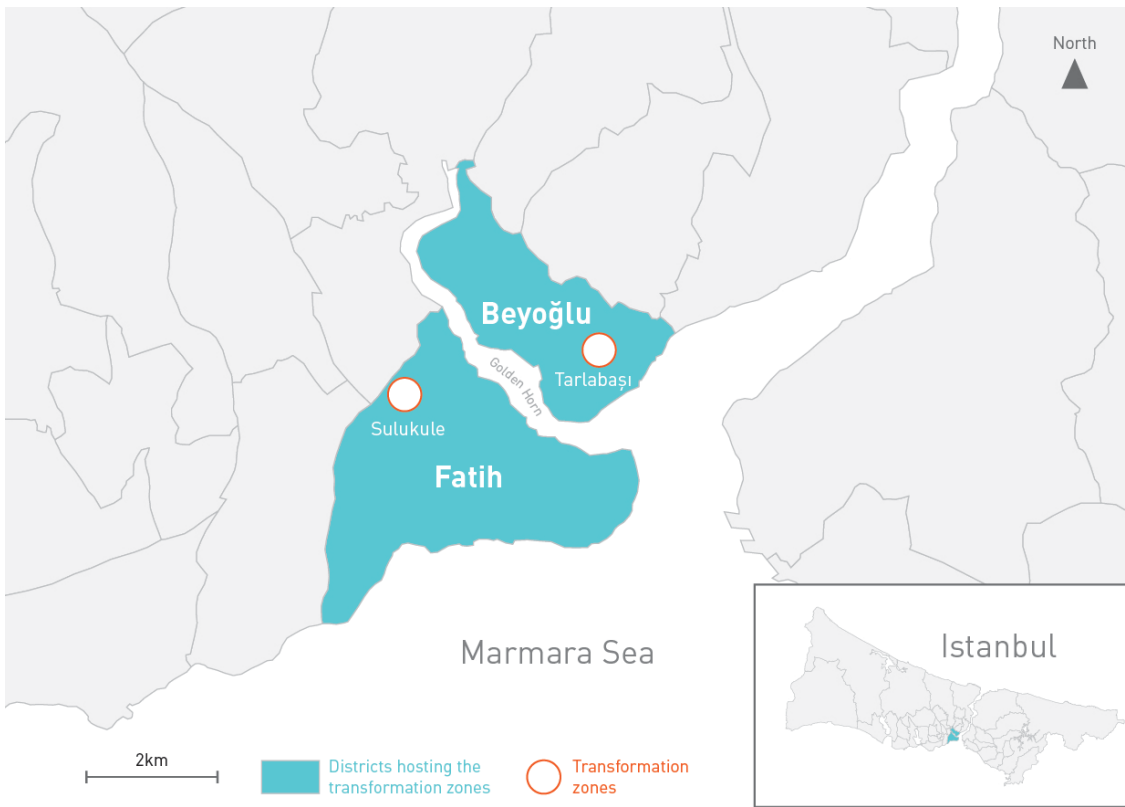
Fig.1 Map of Istanbul showing the administrative boundaries of Fatih (where Sulukule is located) to the south and Beyoğlu (where Tarlabaşı is located) to the north.

This is not to suggest that these movements have entirely *failed* in their struggle against the forces of state-led urban transformation. As mentioned above, campaigns, protests and legal procedures initiated by these groups have not only brought them some legal victories, recognition by public authorities, (inter)national attention of non-governmental and supranational organizations and last but not least, an awareness in the wider public sphere with respect to what is happening in some of most central parts of the city and the main controversies posed by them. Yet, it goes without saying that communities also faced certain unendurable pressures throughout the process leading to demolitions. Among these, translation of policies at work into real life, practices and attitude of local authorities and private developers within the given context, and methods adopted in the implementation of projects at administrative and physical levels take the lead. Although steps taken by neighbourhood associations and civil initiatives in their struggles might have brought about certain winning results, the capacity of authorities and their tools to bypass, or overwhelm these efforts is an immense challenge for communities in their commitment to full resistance.

In its attempt to analyze these two neighbourhood movements, this work will try to reveal the dynamics that have both weakened and strengthened the movements throughout their sustained resistance. My primary argument, however, is that it is very difficult for communities suffering from dire conditions of poverty to develop entirely winning strategies against the sophisticated forces and tools of transformation due to the interaction of poverty with pressures emanating from these forces. As community members lose faith in the capacity of resistance to overcome the forces of transformation, they tend to withdraw from collectively driven struggles and shift on to individually oriented tactics in order to protect themselves against dispossessions at various levels. These individual tactics also fragment in line with the distinctively defined capacities of community members on the grounds of material, or financial possessions, and their ability to negotiate with the terms and conditions of projects dependent on the availability of these resources.

It is important to note here that the fragmentation under question finds its most visible expression in a divide between property owners and tenants. In the initial phases of grassroots mobilization, these groups can meet at a common ground quite easily since the primary demand at the given stage is the termination of the project and thus, the prevention of displacement and dispossession at all possible levels. Yet, as the project progresses despite adamant resistance, property owners lean towards ways of securing themselves in financial terms by striving to 'maximize their gains' from the renewal process. Withdrawal of property owners from collective resistance in such manners inevitably triggers its weakening since owners represent the stronger actors within neighbourhood movements. Thus, similar to property owners, tenants also step back and try to 'get the most' out of the renewal process. Here, of course, gains that can be achieved, or securities that can be maintained by tenants are relatively minimal, or riskier in terms of affordability. What is more, other divides and fragmentations which already existed within communities can gain emphasis under the pressures of transformation.

These are to suggest that sophisticated strategies and tools of urban transformation work in a way to trigger, or reinforce emergent and already existing divides and fragmentations within communities, which leads to the

eventual weakening of resistance. That is, although it is certain that the policies at work create an inevitable divide between property owners and tenants, they also bring elements of conflict to fore when the residents turn to what they can demand from the renewal schemes. Resistance movements are not only significantly hampered by socio-economic fragilities in the face of strict policies, but also by divisions within the communities in relation to what they might expect from the gains of resistance.

One can argue that all sorts of gains that can be achieved under the given dynamics can be considered as the victories of grassroots mobilization within the context of their evolution. That is, resistance is not necessarily a prerequisite for achieving gains, however they might be defined by community members. Yet, this study has also revealed that majority of materials gains secured within the context of renewal schemes are highly unsustainable. What might seem like the rewards of state-led transformation boil down to short term privileges only with little lasting effects; moreover, what follows the expiration of these rewards is heightened social and economic deprivations. It can thus be argued that current modes of urban transformation in Istanbul do not only cause extensive forms of dispossession and displacement, but are also far from producing sustainable results in social and economic terms.

Perhaps the victories of neighbourhood associations in legal contexts, or at the levels of campaigning and advocacy throughout the process of committed resistance are the only positive elements that can sustain in time and remain as a gain for grassroots mobilization in the long run. It is in fact due to these successes that a learning process is still at work, guiding emergent, or existing neighbourhood associations in their efforts to adopt new tactics, or experiment with new forms of mobilization. Yet, in order for these tactics to achieve more sustainable standards, it is of great necessity to grasp the importance of ownership and the tendency to secure material gains as defining elements in the course of mobilization and resistance, and tackle it with attention. Findings of the case studies confirm this statement.

Why Inner-City Poverty Zones?

The past decade has seen a fair increase in the number of studies, investigating the effects of urban transformation on the many neighbourhoods and communities of metropolitan centres in Turkey. Among these, Istanbul takes the lead as a matter of research since it is where the processes at work have concentrated and gained intensity. However majority of these studies seem to focus on *gecekondu* areas, that is, informal housing zones. This can be explained with the prime curiosity, or need to comprehend how these areas defined by complicated and problematic tenure structures are being affected by the current logic and mechanisms of urban transformation. This is because, state led urban transformation is substantially defined as a major tool in formalizing informalities in a city whose development predominantly relied on the expansion of *gecekondu*, or self-service housing.

Studies mentioned above have also demonstrated that when urban transformation projects are imposed on areas defined by the mentioned complexities and problems in tenure, they trigger stark divides between *de jure* and *de facto* owners and no title holders. This is because, transformation is negotiated with resident communities on the grounds of material compensations to be offered by public authorities, and these compensations differ according to the tenure status of residents: Those who hold full titles to their properties end up being more privileged than others who hold semi-legal, or no titles within the context of transformative schemes. Studies have confirmed that these divisions have inevitable weakening impacts on the modes of oppositional grassroots mobilization, and moreover, that being a full title owner does not always guarantee winning results for residents. Same studies also make assumptions on the potential distinctions between the experiences of *gecekondu* areas and inner-city poverty zones undergoing regeneration. According to these, *gecekondu* areas are more advantageous than inner-city poverty zones due to their skills in grassroots mobilization and strong sentiments of belongingness with respect to the neighbourhood.[2]

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[2] *Gecekondu* neighbourhoods were highly politicized in the 1970s and thus, grassroots mobilization emerged and developed in some of these neighbourhoods to an extent that it has stayed as a learnt skill. Further details on this will be provided in Chapter 4.

Comparatively speaking, number of studies that focus on inner-city poverty zones are far more limited for they do not contain the complexities and controversies that *gecekondu* areas do. General assumption is that these areas are populated by recent migrants, who are not as bonded as *gecekondu* communities to their *neighbourhoods*, and that transformation in these areas will take place with relative ease since grassroots mobilization will be much weaker due to fragilities in sentiments of belongingness. However, there are a number of good reasons, which render inner-city poverty zones deserving of critical attention within the context of contemporary urban transformation in Istanbul:

(a) Since the 1980s, inner-city poverty zones of Istanbul have become the settlements of Istanbul's new urban poor, experiencing harsh conditions of housing and socio-economic deprivation. Whereas it has been possible for the residents of *gecekondu* areas to transform their conditions of poverty through amnesty laws, which retroactively provided them with formal ownership to their previously informal units (thus making it possible for them to access redistributive mechanisms established upon urban land markets), residents of inner-city poverty zones have been deprived of such transformative capacities. These neighbourhoods deeply suffer from poor building conditions (triggered by the ineffective workings of conservation norms in heritage sites), insufficient infrastructure, and criminal activities to a considerable degree with little attention paid by their respective local authorities in the elimination of these problems – since they have long been considered 'hopeless' areas in terms of economic rent generation. Rather, inner-city poverty zones have been treated as shelters where the most deprived can satisfy their housing needs at minimal costs. It is thus of critical importance to look at the consequences of urban transformation when they are coupled with extreme conditions of poverty and deprivation.

(b) For inner-city poverty zones have predominantly been populated by the latest wave of migrant groups, they do not share the same history of grassroots mobilization with *gecekondu* areas, whereby communities comprising of early migrants mobilized around their demands for fair access to urban land and housing with the support of radical political

groups back in the 1970s – nor did they suffer from conditions that were present in the 1970s as will be explained later. To the contrary, these neighbourhoods are defined by a mix of settled and on-the move migrants from a diversity of backgrounds who grant inner-city poverty zones a certain quality of constant circulation and movement. Thus, conditions for the emergence and development of grassroots mobilization never existed for these areas, and this element makes inner-cities deserving of attention in order to observe how urban transformation materializes in areas where grassroots oppositional mobilization has never been a tradition.

(c) As mentioned earlier, it is argued that formal housing areas cannot be considered as advantaged as they are presumed to be in the face of urban transformation since transformative processes are guarded by immense policy tools and powerful public actors for their implementation at ease. Being a formal property owner can only guarantee better compensational returns but not an opportunity to escape the ill effects of transformation necessarily. However, inner-city poverty zones provide contexts within which advantages and/or disadvantages of formal ownership in the implementation of transformative schemes can be understood in tandem with dire conditions of poverty. An assessment as such may both present us with findings on how ownership can strengthen one's hand in escaping the ills of transformation, and also how it can represent a gain for a resident in an attempt to try his/her luck at achieving mobility via transformative processes. Another significant question here relates to the sustainability of such gains.

(d) Last but not least, inner-city poverty zones are worth looking at through investigative glasses since majority of them stand on the critical intersection between poverty and heritage. Whereas Sulukule is situated on the historical peninsula and hosted some of the most authentic houses and monumental structures of their kind under the protection of conservation norms until they were (partly) demolished, Tarlabaşı with its architectural structure dating back to 19th century's first apartmenticization experiments in Istanbul was declared an urban

conservation site by the Board of Conservation in 1994. Majority of inner-city poverty zones are thus exposed to regeneration with the use of a particular policy tool, that is Law No. 5366, 'Law for the Protection of Dilapidated Historical and Cultural Real-Estate Through Protection by Renewal', released in 2005. Here, as mentioned earlier, the main rationale is argued to rest on the attempt to 'renew' these sites in line with 'conservation norms' and reshape them according to their 'development potentials'. Often interpreted as an attempt to turn spaces of extreme poverty trapped in central Istanbul into rent generating territories by lifting existing building restrictions on them (embodied in the form of conservation norms), Law No. 5366 is seen as a threat by civil experts and activists to urban heritage that calls for effective conservation. Focusing on the transformation experience of inner-city poverty zones thus provides an opportunity to understand how previously existing laws might have contributed to the physical, social and economic deterioration of heritage sites, and whether Law No. 5366 (and the way in which it is put into practice) can cater both for effective modes of conservation and/or economic regeneration.

Nevertheless, findings of this research have shown that despite the absence of prior experience in mobilization, communities of inner-city poverty zones have demonstrated a fair degree of competence (with the guiding support of civil initiatives) in taking grassroots action with certain winning results – e.g. advocacy at national and international levels, legal victories, recognition by public authorities etc. However, it has also revealed that poverty plays a defining role in the potential sustainability of resistance, if this is what grassroots mobilization is aiming for. In the face of dire socio-economic conditions and the inevitability of transformation, residents of inner-city poverty zones tend to withdraw from collective resistance after a certain stage and turn to their existing assets in order to achieve certain securities and gains in their dialogues with authorities. Moreover, experience so far has shown that conservation does not go beyond the retention of facades, or other ornamental elements within the context of Law No. 5366 based transformation. Both Sulukule and Tarlabaşı are undergoing schemes that entirely restructure their plot structure through a demolish and rebuild

method, hence destroying all assets that were meant to be protected by law on legal yet illegitimate grounds.

Why Sulukule? Why Tarlabaşı?

What makes the particular cases of Sulukule and Tarlabaşı deserving of attention is primarily the fact that they have become exposed to state-led transformation on the grounds of the same legal framework, Law No. 5366. Both sites are representative of what heritage might mean in a city like Istanbul, with a past of more than 4500 years: As mentioned earlier, whereas Sulukule is situated on the historical peninsula right beside the ancient Teodosius Walls and had been inhabited by a Roma community for the past thousand years –making it the oldest Roma settlement in Europe- Tarlabaşı is an urban conservation site crowded by 19th century buildings that showcase some of the finest examples of *levantine* architecture. Studying these two areas with distinct heritage characteristics in both tangible and intangible terms provides an opportunity to understand how diverse definitions of heritage are currently approached by local authorities.

It is also important to note that although both cases are established upon the same legal framework, methods adopted for their implementation are fairly distinct. Sulukule's renewal process, for example, has been shaped by a public initiative on the grounds of a partnership between the local government, Fatih Municipality, and the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey. It relies on a demolish and rebuild method whereby the new spaces to be created aim to 'revitalize civil Turkish and Ottoman architecture in the form of an authentic neighbourhood.' Tarlabaşı's renewal, on the other hand, is grounded upon a public-private partnership between the local government, Beyoğlu Municipality, and a private developer, GAP Constructions, in order to turn Tarlabaşı into a mixed-use space comprising of upscale residential units, office blocks, shopping malls and various eateries and cafes. The conservation element comes into effect with the retention of facades only, since the buildings will completely be demolished from within for the creation of more spacious environs. To this end, more than 250 buildings will be clustered into 9 individual building blocks with the use of the mentioned method.

Perhaps more importantly, there is a temporal gap between the two projects which has been rather meaningful in the shaping of this research: When the project envisaged for Tarlabaşı was publicly announced by Beyoğlu Municipality, the renewal process of Sulukule was already at the stage of demolitions. This meant that the fieldwork took place at a time when the residents of Sulukule were experiencing demolitions on an everyday basis and neighbourhood associations had almost expired, whereas Tarlabaşı's residents were enjoying the peak moments of resistance in their intact neighbourhood. This temporal gap has helped me observe how the case of Sulukule might have made an impact on the case of Tarlabaşı both at the project implementation and grassroots mobilization level.

STRUCTURE

Chapter 2: Chapter following the introduction starts with an overview of how the logic of advanced global capitalism has led to the accumulation and unequal distribution of 'wealth' in cities – paving way to the spatialization of social and economic inequalities and the urbanization of poverty. This overview will then be followed by an explanation of how the emergent 'urban regime change' (founded upon the initiative of central state authorities and demands of private capital groups) has reinforced the already existing inequalities by posing heightened pressure over the urban citizens' –and particularly of the urban poor- 'right to the city' at many levels. It is within this context that the way in which various oppositional groups from around the world have discussed and reintroduced the Lefebvrian term 'right to the city' to the agenda of contentious urban politics will be investigated. Questions that will be answered within the given context are as follows: what is the potential of RttC debates to generate substantial solutions to and measures against climbing inequality and urban rights violations? How do these debates influence the ongoing struggles of grassroots movements at practical levels? What are the weaknesses of existing debates?

Chapter 3: The aim of the third chapter is to analyze the 'two rounds of urban globalization' in Istanbul (i.e. the period between the 1980s and 2000s, and the

period starting from 2000s); the impact of these rounds on the shifts in urban governance, planning and policy making strategies; the consequences of these shifts on the urban landscape, and the ways in which the evolution from the first to the second round has contributed to the heightened fragmentation of the city on the basis of socio-economic inequalities. The analysis will start with an evaluation of how the will to lay the foundations of a free market economy by state authorities has contributed to the commodification of urban land in Istanbul between the mid-1980s and late 1990s, or during the 'first round of globalization'. Following this, particular focus will be given to the 'second round of globalization' starting with the early 2000s, when an increased effort emerged, towards the further extension of capitalist market dynamics into the 'making of the city'. Both of these analyses will be concluded with a depiction of the urban landscape that has formed both in a way to reveal the sort of development that Istanbul has gone through and the way in which socio-economic inequalities have surfaced, built-up and evolved as a result of these two rounds.

Chapter 4: The aim of this chapter is to analyse how the two rounds of globalization have contributed to the formation of urban oppositional movements with specific reference to grassroots organizations that have been referred to as neighbourhood associations (NAs), critical of the policies and practices of recent metropolitan governance in Istanbul. The analysis will start with a depiction of the origins of urban oppositional movements in Istanbul; conditions under which they have evolved to date; continue with an investigation of different actors involved in it, and finalized with emergent criticisms towards the logic and patterns of resistance. These criticisms will particularly address the following questions: What are the challenges encountered by current oppositional groups in Istanbul? What can be said on the capacities of these groups to stand and act together? What does the existence, or absence of these capacities imply for the sustainability of movements?

Chapter 5: This chapter reflects on the methodological aspects of the research under question, which is based predominantly on an ethnographic investigation in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı. For the purposes of this research, I partnered up with another researcher to do in-depth interviews with the representatives of NAs and

residents between 2008 October and 2009 February. In this four months' period, I and Tolga Islam, a doctoral researcher in urban planning at the Yıldız Technical University (Istanbul) at the time, paid daily visits to the neighbourhoods and interviewed 35 property owners, 35 tenants and 8 NA representatives in the local coffee-shops, NA headquarters and private homes. The results of the fieldwork both provided me with the data that I present here and also with the knowledge that urban transformation zones are sensitive places to tackle, requiring carefully built trust relations to be able to 'get in' and 'get on'.

Chapter 6 & 7: The aim of sixth and seventh chapters is to lay out the historical, social and economic background of Sulukule; explain the process that started with the designation of the neighbourhood as a renewal zone; touch upon the aims and methods of renewal as identified by the local government; the way in which progress of the project gave way to the emergence of civil and grassroots movements, and the impact of these movements' struggles on the transformation project. Within the given framework, the sixth chapter will focus on the reflections of NA leaders on the many aspects of the renewal process and their experiences of grassroots mobilization. These leaders, who represent both the pro and against views on the project, will highlight the intricate dynamics that have shaped the community response in Sulukule and led to the eventual clearance of the neighbourhood. The seventh chapter, on the other hand, will rely on the *residents'* perception of the impact of both the renewal process and grassroots mobilization. It will thus be possible to observe that whereas some of the reflections of community members will overlap with those of the leaders', some others will provide a completely different take on how leaders' perceive certain matters. The reason behind covering the leaders' and residents' experiences in separate chapters rests on the wish to deliver these distinctions more clearly.

Chapter 8 & 9: Similar to that of the sixth and seventh chapters, the aim of seventh and eighth chapters is to delve into the historical, social and economic background of Tarlabaşı; explain the process that started with the designation of the neighbourhood as a renewal zone; touch upon the aims and methods of renewal as identified by the local government; the way in which progress of the project gave way to the emergence of a grassroots movement, and the impact of this

movement's struggle on the transformation project. Within the given framework, the eighth chapter will focus on the reflections of the NA leader and the spokesperson of the organization on many aspects of the renewal process, and their experiences of grassroots mobilization. These leaders will highlight the intricate dynamics that have shaped the community response in Tarlabaşı and led to the eventual start of demolishments in the neighbourhood. The ninth chapter, on the other hand, will rely on the *residents'* perception of the impact of both the renewal process and grassroots mobilization. It will thus be possible to observe that whereas some of the reflections of community members will overlap with those of the leaders', some others will provide a completely different take on how leaders' perceive certain matters. My analysis, as mentioned earlier, has confirmed that such key matters as poverty, state-approach to communities, survival strategies of the poor and the significance of inner-city zones within these strategies, trust relations between property owners and tenants, and the residents' perception of the entire renewal and grassroots mobilization set the grounds for the explanation of how the movement gets structured, functions, secures certain gains and then dissolves.

2. Reapproaching Neoliberal Urbanization and Rights to the City: How to Tackle Urban Social Movements?

The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements (2003) has long provided researchers in urbanization, poverty and development studies with striking numbers on the evolution and patterns of world wide urban change. Overall, data here suggested that "poverty in urban areas has been increasing for some decades and there are now higher numbers of the 'poorest of the poor' in urban centres throughout the world than at any previous time" (2003, p. 23). That is, the locus of global poverty was swiftly moving to cities, a process which has been coined as the 'urbanization of poverty'. It is still difficult to generate concrete estimates on urban poverty, yet findings on slum settlements are indicative for they can be considered as visible expressions of escalating inequalities and socio-economic deprivation among urban communities. Numbers from 2001, as put in *State of the World's Cities 2006/2007*, reveal that 48 per cent of the world population was urbanized already; however, 32 per cent of this population was settled in slums. This 32 per cent has remained stable through 2005 but the actual number of slum dwellers jumped from 913 in 2001 million to 998 million in 2005 (2006, p. 17). According to the report, "if current trends continue, the slum population will reach 1.4 billion by 2020" (ibid, p. vi).

The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements (2003) and *State of the World's Cities 2006/2007* (2006) are among many reports, which state that social and economic inequalities among and within countries and cities are predominantly driven by the extended adoption of liberalized market regimes by central governments since the late 1970s.[1] While urban land has increasingly become the *territory* upon which the restructuration of global capitalism found physical reverberations, it has also become the very *tool* that is utilized both by public and private actors for the transformation of cities into wealth-generating

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[1] *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements* proposes that "inequality between countries and within those countries that adopted liberalization regimes increased very rapidly [between 1978 to 1993" (2003: 2). Milan Koothari (Rapporteur of the UN-HABITAT for Adequate Housing) on the other hand, puts that "time has come to rethink current global economic and social policies, and the perverse nend brutalized neo-liberal logic that underpins them, and reaffirm our commitment to the human rights principles and standards that offer the only real paradigm for improving the lives of millions of the poor" (2006: 82) in the *State of the World's Cities 2006/2007*

machines (Logan and Molotch, 1987). These two complementing depictions of urban land only point at the way in which global capitalism has advanced and its impact on cities have evolved: Cities are not only places where financial centres, gated communities and shopping malls 'pop-up' as a result of the politico-economic system at work, but also terrains where investment oriented transformation schemes, landmark projects and demolish-rebuild plans are actively 'engineered' by public and private actors only to render urban land a catalyst for the reproduction of the system.

It goes without saying that the environmental, social and economic consequences of these developments have direct impacts on urban communities. As state authorities have assumed increasingly entrepreneurial roles in central and local governance, and welfare mechanisms of the state eroded in tandem with the given shift, urban citizens have proportionately become vulnerable to the myriad forces of neo-liberalization: Pressures on access to housing, employment, resources, services etc. are climbing at an intensified fashion. It has thus been inevitable for the reintroduction of 'right to the city' (hereafter, RttC) debates – as proposed by Lefebvre (1968) and furthered by Harvey (2008)- into the agenda of basic human rights. Currently, supranational, civil and grassroots organizations of diverse origins are aspiring to develop working strategies to fight against pressures on and violation of urban rights in question, and force governments to adopt policies that prioritize public good and social equity. These groups have therefore become focal points of potential hope in the maintenance of 'spatial justice' (Soja, 2010) at many different levels.

However, the degree to which RttC debates translate into practice remains as a matter of critical curiosity within the current scholarship. Proliferation of initiatives and tactics that actively demand the right of citizens to take part in the making of the urban face fierce criticisms, raising questions as to the potential of current struggles to achieve sustainable goals. Case studies from around the globe have so far shown that grassroots movements are capable of demonstrating skillfull battles against top-down decisions imposed on cities –thus contributing to the development of RttC struggle. Yet, aside from the fact that none of these movements have so far managed to achieve what Harvey calls 'systemic change', there is insufficient data on the defining vulnerabilities of these movements. In the

given respects, existing literature falls short of providing information that can reveal the soft spots and improve the strategic skills of bottom-up initiatives. In light of the given arguments, this first chapter will provide an overview of how the logic of advanced global capitalism has given new directions to the spatialization of social and economic inequalities, and thus catalyzed the reintroduction of RttC debates to the agenda of contentious urban politics. This will later be followed with the potential challenges encountered by urban oppositional movements in the current times.

2.1. Urban Land as the *Territory* of Change: On Spatial Reorganization and Fragmentation

Much of the literature on urban social and economic change takes the post-1970s as a departure point in an attempt to narrate the spatial reorganization of cities following the adoption of neoliberal capitalism as a remedy for the crisis of Fordism. In this outlook, the shift from manufacturing to service industries, transnationalization of capital; decentralization of production, labour and economic control, and the further dissemination of liberal policies have become the defining terms of not only a 'new societal organization' but also an urban reconfiguration (Castells, 1991, 1996; Friedmann, 2002; Harvey, 1989, 2001, 2006; Lash and Urry, 1994; Massey, 1988, 1999; Sassen, 1991, 1994, 1998). The impact of given dynamics on the nature of business transactions; class hierarchies; the mobility of people, culture and commodities, and the meaning and shaping of cities has been inevitable, turning them into territories where the social, economic and physical implications of global capitalism have come to reverberate.[2] In this respect cities transformed into the spaces of *new forms of accumulation and agglomoration,* marked by their extensively defining consequences.

The way in which cities came to be addressed as the 'command centres' of the new economic world system is perhaps one of the primary signifiers, implying the multiple ways in which urban centres have adapted to the forces of advanced

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[2] This is not to suggest that there has been a uniform similarization of cities around the world from this period onwards. As Sassen put it, one should look for the individually defined responses of cities to the dynamics given to be able to understand what sorts of patterns the so-called process of globalization is creating at local levels (1991: 4). However it would not be wrong to suggest that the new 'societal organization' has paved way for the 'spatial reorganization of cities' at a global scale.

capitalism. As Sassen put it, the new economic order has predominantly been defined by "the spatial dispersal of economic activities", in need of "new forms of territorial centralization" where the operations of the emergent system can be managed (Sassen, 1998). This is how certain cities have become the 'production sites of our time' – spatially fragmented at a global scale but densely interconnected through the flows of capital - where the servicing and financing of international trade and investment have come to be concerted (Castells, 1996).

Spatial reorganization along the given lines has progressed at two parallel levels: Purposeful engineering of urban space according to the demands of advanced capitalism and consumerism constitutes the first level. In turn, "a new landscape of economic power" has come into being based on "changing patterns of capital investment, and new relations between investment, production and consumption" (Zukin, 1991: 214). Development of new business districts to accommodate the workings of transnational finance and specialized service industries has been accompanied with the heightened installation of spaces of consumption (restaurants, cafes, malls etc.) and recreation (hotels, exhibition centres, art galleries, congress halls etc.) to respond to the needs of the rising white-collar work force and international tourism. These profound changes have most times found expression in ambitious efforts to create new landmarks, attract the attention of (trans)national capital and investment, and boost up the symbolic economy of host cities (Lash and Urry, 1994). Turning into hubs of economic, social and cultural networks, cities became "focal points of high speculation and spectacle" (Stevenson, 2003: 93).

What underlies the second level of spatial reorganization is the formation of new class allignments, triggered by the ongoing shift in the scales of economy. Not only has the concentration of emergent industries in major cities boosted the (trans)national movement of work force towards cities but the integration of emergent industries into the existing labour markets has given way to a radical reshuffling in the recomposition of urban class hierarchies. The result has not only been an extensive redefinition of what the urban elite, middle-class and poor stand for, but also the way in which they spatialize in cities. Environs resulting from the 'purposeful engineering of the city', for example, can also be addressed as the new habitats of the urban elite and middle classes, aiming to satisfy the professional,

residential and leisurely demands of these groups. In other words, diverse lifestyle needs of this new social and economic legion played a determining role in the spatial rearrangement of cities (Zukin, 1982 and 1995). Emergence of new residential patterns has been a part of this process, leaving its mark both in the city centre and the suburbs: Whereas gated communities have come to dot the urban periphery (Low, 2004; Blakely and Snyder, 1997), waves of gentrification have transformed the socio-economic, demographic and physical landscape of de-industrialized and formerly abandoned inner-city areas (Ley, 1996).

Very same dynamics that led to the redefinition and spatialization of elite and middle class groups have had inevitable and radical impacts on the socio-economic and physical living conditions of the urban poor. Diverse opportunities offered by the new urban condition has attracted waves of blue-collar as much as white-collar force, paving way for a new stage in the crystallization of class inequlaities on urban landscapes. Options available for former groups, however, have been much more constrained compared to what the privileged latter could access due to the dynamics of emergent job markets: At best employed in the lowest ranks of service industries and at worst engaged in the operations of informal economy, the urban poor have been increasingly challenged by limited access to housing, employment, education, and socio-cultural spheres in the face of heightened speculation and competition in cities. Sizeable growth in slummized areas has predominantly been dependent on these challenges (Davis, 1990 and 2006). Increasingly, the urban poor's right to choose where to work and dwell came to be pressured by the imperatives and movement of capital, whether it be in the form of new housing and job markets, or investment driven undertakings of central governments. (Sassen, 1998; Caldeira 2000)

It is due to the given spatial transformation, underlined by complex forces of advanced global capitalism, that cities have become the ultimate landscapes of heightened social and economic inequality. Climbing polarization among diverse groups within the urban community gained visibility with the sustained fragmentation of cities into business districts, gated communities, slummized neighbourhoods, commercial zones and gentrified inner-city areas. For the conditions under which cities come to exist today have changed to such a significant degree, the urge to control, manage, and thus, 'make' cities has also

shifted to a new level.

2.2. Urban Land as the *Tool* of Change: On New Urban Governance and Inequality

One of the most striking elements of the past two decades' scholarship is the growing focus on urban land as the tool of economic development and change alongside its quality of being the very territory upon which neoliberal capitalism actualizes (Jessop, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Smith, 2002). What has earned particular attention within the given line of thinking, however, is the way in which governmental institutions and operations have transformed: Current times have increasingly been witnessing the evolution of central and local governments from 'regulators' to the 'consummate agents' (Smith, 2002: 427) of neoliberalism, actively preparing grounds for profit-driven and large-scale urban transformation projects (hereafter UTPs) with the use of entrepreneurial strategies and policy measures. Elaborating the way in which these transformations have imposed new pressures on the social, physical and economic make up of cities (Marcuse, 2009; Mayer, 2009), recent scholarship urges that the overall 'generalization of gentrification' have intensified the modes of segregation and inequality in cities. Economically and socially disadvantaged groups are particularly vulnerable to these recent forces since their possibility to survive in cities has radically shrunk due to the abandonment of previously existing security mechanisms, provided by the welfare state. Vulnerabilities in question can range from abject poverty and exclusion to forced displacements and dispossessions.

Explanation for the heightened transformation of urban land into an effective tool for the creation and accumulation of wealth is embedded in the further establishment of cities as the 'platforms of global production' (Smith, 2002: 434), finding reflections in their exchange value within the dynamics of neoliberalized markets. As mentioned earlier, commodification of urban land has been at work since the time when cities came to host the capitalist systems of production (Harvey, 1989). What begs attention in the current times, however, is its

transformation into a tool that is effectively utilized in order to boost economic profitability. As Brenner et al. put it,

… Capitalist cities are not only arenas in which commodification occurs; they are themselves intensively commodified insofar as their constitutive sociospatial forms –from buildings and the built environment to land-use systems, networks of production and exchange, and metropolitan-wide infrastructural arrangements- are sculpted and continually reorganized in order to enhance the profit-making capacities of capital Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009: 178).

Enabling the mentioned capacity of cities is what Peck and Tickell define as "the purposeful *construction* and *consolidation* [emphasis authors'] of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance and regulatory relations" (2002: 384). The mentioned 'construction' and 'consolidation' is explained, within the given perspective, by the insufficiency of deregulation and marketization in facilitating and maintaining economic prosperity, which calls for 'extramarket forms of governance and regulation'; engineering the system along these lines does not only secure the gains and legitimacy of the very system but also comes in the way of potential crisis, or instabilities, and manages the geographical unevenness of neoliberal development.[3] As the 'institutional hardware' required for these purposes is 'rolled-out', neoliberalism "[gets] associated with a striking coexistence of technocratic management and invasive social policies" (ibid: 389)[4]. Consequently, "while neoliberalism aspires to create a 'utopia' of free markets liberated from all forms of state interference, it has in practice entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose market rule upon all aspects of social life" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 352). In Smith's view, this is the grounds upon which 'neoliberal urbanism' gets shaped at an almost global scale, aiding both the actualization of neoliberalism and the reproduction of the system at work (2002: 435).

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[3] This is in a way to suggest that cities become the objects of reproducing the already existing system while at the same time developing a certain weakness against it. As Cochrane, Peck and Tickell (1996) note, "in selling themselves, cities are (…) actively facilitating and subsidizing the very geographic mobility that first rendered them vulnerable, while also validating and reproducing the extralocal rule systems to which they are (increasingly) subjected." (qtd. in Peck and Tickell, 2002: 393).

[4] This requires an 'institutional fix', whereby regulatory frameworks of the former politico-economic regime are dismantled to make way for the establishment of new institutional infrastructures in tune with the emergent regime (Jessop, 1994; Liepietz, 1994). However, resulting from this is often a highly charged atmosphere, whereby "newly emergent 'projected spaces' [of the institutional landscape] interact conflictually with inherited regulatory arrangements, leading in turn to new unforeseen, and often highly unstable layerings of politico-economic system" as Brenner and Theodore (2002: 366) put it.

Large-scale urban transformation projects (hereafter, UTPs) are perhaps the boldest expressions of rescaled ambitions in urban rebuilding regarding the above given constellations, hence the brick stones of the way in which gentrification gets generalized in cities (Smith, 2002).[5] Connoting integrated and state orchestrated strategies that aim to trigger economic growth in and boost the competitive advantage of metropolitan centres at a global scale, generalization of gentrification gets actualized with the implementation of UTPs that lead to diverse examples of 'creative destruction' in cities.[6] The term is often used to address the sort of spatial transformation whereby "the configurations of territorial organization that underpinned the previous round of capitalist expansion are junked and reworked in order to establish a new locational grid for the accumulation process" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 355); what is particularly striking about the resulting form of gentrification, however, is that

[it] weaves global financial markets together with large- and medium-sized real-estate developers, local merchants, and property agents with brand-name retailers, all lubricated by city and local governments for whom beneficient social outcomes are now assumed to derive from the market rather than from its regulation (Smith, 2002: 443).

It is within the given framework that public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become one of the most frequently adopted strategies in opening highly profitable -yet not fully commodified- urban areas to investment. Often in such cases whereby central governments lack the financial, or entrepreneurial capacities, and private actors need the support and backing of governmental resources, PPPs come into effect as the driving forces of urban development (Miraftab, 2004: 91).[7] Consequently, as creative destruction crystalizes in the form of new urban landscapes -integrating the spaces of recreation, consumption, production,

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[5] Smith provides five explanatory and interrelated dimensions for the generalization of gentrification: "the transformed role of the state, penetration by global finance, changing levels of political opposition, geographical dispersal, and the sectoral generalization of gentirification." (2002: 441)

[6] Smith also argues that, "the strategic appropriation and generalization of gentrification as a means of global interurban competition finds its most developed expression in the *language* (emphasis mine) of 'urban regeneration'" (2002: 443). This 'talk' of renegeneration comes forward particularly within the context of international meetings and conferences on local policy making, which frequently finds voice at big organizations and events.

[7] Although the main principle which underlies PPPs is 'power-sharing' among private actors, central/local governments and communities (together with NGOs), many cases have proven that "once the process is in motion, the interests of the community are often overwhelmed by those of the most powerful member of the partnership—the private sector firms" (Miraftab, 2004: 89).

pleasure and residence into 'attractive' territories- on the grounds of direct state initiative, the state becomes the leading gentrifying actor of current times.

Underlying such immense scales of territorial reorganization is often the promise of "[generating] societal benefits through the impact of 'trickle-down' economics" (MacLeod, 2002: 604). However, contrary to the given assumption that such schemes will ensure job securities, or lower taxes at a wide scale, current modes of spatial transformation and "the neoliberal shift in government policies has tended to subject the majority of the population to the power of market forces whilst preserving social protection for the strong" (Gill, 1995: 407) only. Recent scholarship has consistently depicted contemporary cities as arenas of intensified polarizations and contradictions on the grounds of material inequalities and social insecurities (Davis, 2004; Lehrer and Laidley, 2009; Harvey, 2008; Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002; Leitner, Peck and Sheppard, 2007). Today, what explains this landscape is the strong commitment of both local and central governments to deregulation, privatization, liberalization and fiscal austerity which inevitably translates into the retrenchment of national welfare state regimes and intergovernmental systems. Resulting from the 'dismantling of state responsibilities' has thus been a severe crisis in the reproduction of the social. As Brenner et al put it,

Strategies to commodify urban space often fail dismally, producing devalorized, crisis-riven urban and regional landscapes in which labour and capital cannot be combined productively to satisfy social needs, and in which inherited socio-spatial configurations are severely destabilized, generally at the cost of considerable human suffering and massive environmental degradation (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009: 178).

Reverberations of the given crash are diverse, the US based sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2008 marking its pinnacle. In addressing the consequences of the crisis, Marcuse addresses the foreclosures, rising unemployment, shrinkage in local tax revenues and governmental resources, and threats on public education and security of retirement (2009: 188). That is, the remaking of market rules, property relations and place making strategies in line with the norms of neoliberalism have startled an alarming process of displacements, dispossessions and various other cases of injustice and exclusion especially on the part of socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Cases from around the world demonstrate that as the

exchange value of urban land dominates its use value, properties and spaces of particularly the underprivileged get transferred to more powerful groups at an increased rate (Roy, 2004; Sajor, 2003; Thirkell, 1996; Lehrer and Laidley, 2008; Blomley, 2004; Weber, 2002).

In other words, as urban space continues to be one of the most profitable sources of investment both for private and public actors, it becomes increasingly difficult for the poor to survive in urban centres. These, althogether, point at heightened pressures exerted by the system on the rights of urban citizens to access myriads of resources and services, paving way for "gross material inequality, and at the same time gross insecurity and emotional discontent." (Marcuse, 2009: 187).

2.3. Urban Social Movements and Spatial Justice: Reintroducing 'Rights to the City'

'Inequalities', 'insecurities' and 'discontents' caused by the overarching impacts of neoliberal urbanization have been met by the fierce reaction and criticism of civil oppositional groups at local, regional and international scales. Underlying these reactions and criticisms is the development of what Soja calls a 'spatial consciousness' which has come to "enter into public debates on such key issues as human rights, social inclusion-exclusion, citizenship, democracy, poverty, racism, economic growth, and environmental policy" (2010: 15) as the forces of 'new economy' began to overrule broad mechanisms of social reproduction and the spatial organization of everyday life. Mobilized in various structural fashions and defined by divergent strategic visions, these bodies have firestarted a vigorous 'geographical struggle' for 'spatial justice' and 'democratic rights to urban space', and become the building blocks of contemporary urban social movements.

It goes without saying that reactions given and criticisms raised by the mentioned oppositional groups will be as contingent as the way in which neoliberalization actualizes in urban space. As Brener and Theodore emphasize "the contextual *embeddedness* of neoliberal restructuring projects" (2002: 349) in an attempt to address the contingency in question, they aim to draw attention to the "national, regional and local frameworks", and "legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices and political struggles" that

shape neoliberal experiences over extensive geographies. It can thus be argued that the same rule will apply for the driving motives and defining logics of opposition in distinct localities, helping in a way to explain the current divide in literature between the global north and south.

However, this is not to suggest that there is no recognizable pattern to urban change as it currently unfolds: Large scale UTPs initiated, entrepreneurial policies formulated and profit driven strategies adopted by pubic/private actors of diverse international background generate certain commonalities, which find reflections in their social, economic and physical outcomes. Emergence of oppositional fronts that actively protest the given outcomes, and thus, share equally recognizable commonalities becomes inevitable: As the logic of neo-libeal governance paves way for evictions, displacements, dispossessions and other forms of injustice in the vast territories of the urban world, diverse groups around the globe get mobilized for protest.

Here, it is important to clarify what the mentioned 'diversity' of these groups connotes: Bodies concerned with the heightened pressures of new economy on social everyday life, environment and human settlements, and missioned to promote spatial justice in the face of these pressures are not limited to civil and grassroots initiatives, but also include supranational and international non-profit organizations. The past three decades have seen the intensified mobilization and emergence of such institutions, dedicated to "[building] a sustainable model of society and urban life, based on the principles of solidarity, freedom, equity, dignity, and social justice" (*World Charter for the Right to the City*, 2005: 1). Perhaps the primary contributions of these have been the production of some of the most significant documents and guidelines that have prepared grounds for the potential definition, discussion and practical achievement of RttC, together with the organization of various international meetings and events that brought many constituents of the oppositional coalition together. Such United Nations (UN) related organizations as UN-HABITAT, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) have played initiating roles in the given attempts and events.[8] Today, these organizations are accompanied by

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[8] *World Charter for the Right to the City*, for example, was first released at the Social Forum of the

influential civil and grassroots initiatives of varying scales and structure among which are the Right to the City Alliance (USA), The Abahlali baseMjondolo (South Africa), the Shack Dwellers Association (India), and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. Year 2001 also saw the institution of the novel City Statute in Brazil, "a legal framework governing urban development and management, which recognized the 'right to the city' as a collective right" (Fernandes, 2007: 201).

Conditions that have given way to the emergence of such bodies are not the sole elements of their commonality. Added to these is their departure point for the development of potential solutions that is the 'right to the city'. Uttered first by Lefebvre in *Le Droit a la Ville* (1968), RttC was formulated as the means to putting an end to the 'subordination of urban life to industrial growth' and 'immiseration' of the working class in the wake of the crisis of Fordism, and making way for the 'realization of an urban society' true to its 'spirit' (Lefebvre, 1996: 177-179). In the past four decades the concept has attracted critical attention and become the centrepoint of heated debates on social and spatial justice within the larger framework of contentious urban politics.

Among others, Harvey's (2008) reflections deserve particular mentioning since they have helped situate the term in the political, social and economic climate of post-2008 sub-prime mortgage crisis. In his view, RttC should currently function both as a 'working slogan and political ideal' that calls for a scrutiny of 'who commands the (...) connection between urbanization and surplus production and use', and thus helps the dispossessed take back their control over the city - to 'institute new modes of urbanization' (Harvey, 2008: 40). In other words, both scholars have fundamentally conceptualized RttC as a tool that can help instigate an overall societal change, or an 'urban revolution' as Lefebvre put it.

Americas in Quito (July 2004) then revised at the World Urban Forum in Barcelona (October 2004) and the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (January 2005). These events were the results of collaborations between the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana (FNRU) and ActionAid. Following to this, a discussion paper was produced by the UN-HABITAT, titled *Urban Policies and the Right to the City* (2005). *Cities for All: Proposals and Experiences Towards the Right to the City* by HIC, *Urban World: Bridging the Urban Divide, Why Cities Must Build Equality* by UN-HABITAT are the two other documents both of which were issued in 2010. The latest among these is an e-debate, titled *Taking Forward the Right to the City* (2010) issued by the UN-HABITAT.

A close look at some of the key matters that shape Lefebvre and Harvey's approach provides enough evidence as to why the term has served as an almost universal departure point for the struggles of diverse movements, originating from diverse geographies. The two scholars' reflections on the consequences of the relationship between forces of capital and the making of the urban; the significance of RttC as a tool for reclaiming the urban, and the specificity of 'the city' within the given frameworks are among some of the few matters that are worthy of discussion. A critical analysis of these may not only help create grounds for a better understanding of the main motivations of current movements, but also can point at issues whose importance has sustained throughout the three decades' urban development and change when RttC was first uttered and then revisited.

- To start with the first, one can propose that both Lefebvre and Harvey are fundamentally concerned with the state of the post-capitalist city for in their view the production and accumulation of surplus in urban centres have had dramatic social, economic and political costs that the urban citizens had to pay for. In doing so, Lefebvre concentrates on the transformation of the 'urban' in response to the *industrial logic* of capitalism in an attempt to unveil the destructive influence of the crisis of Fordism in the late 1960s. In his view, the 'rationality of industrial production' caused an irreversible 'rupture' in the ancient morphologies of the city, which stagnated the realization of an urban society where satisfaction of social needs constitute priority (1996: 177-178). The working class, which fell victim to the 'class based strategy caused by this rupture', suffered from the new urban conditions at its peak and ended up being "rejected from the centres towards the peripheries, dispossessed of the city, expropriated thus from the best outcome of its activity" (ibid: 179). The overall result of this transformation, thus, has been the 'death of the city' as it were according to Lefebvre:

The city historically constructed is no longer lived and is no longer understood practically. It is only an object of cultural consumption for tourists, for estheticism, avid for spectacles and the picturesque. Even for those who seek to understand it with warmth, it is gone (ibid: 148).

Lefebvre's statement puts a certain emphasis on the commodification of urban life in an attempt to explain the supposed disintegration of the city. Harvey departs from a fundamentally similar perspective and points at the transformative impacts

of *neoliberal* capitalism by drawing from the consequences of 2008 sub-prime mortgage crisis. In his view, 'capital absorption through urban redevelopment' has given way to new and more radical forms of inequality and vulnerability, which he defined under the umbrella of "a process of displacement and (…) 'accumulation by dispossession'" (Harvey, 2008: 34). Lying at the core of neoliberal urbanism, the process is explanatory of both the economic and social costs of the system: On one hand, as both urban life and the city itself have become assets within the current logic of surplus production and accumulation, "a 'Financial Kathrina' is unfolding which (…) threatens to wipe out low-income neighbourhoods on potentially high-value land" (ibid.: 39). On the other, "the neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism and its cognate of political withdrawal from collective forms of action [has become] the template for human socialization" which makes it increasingly 'implausible' to imagine the city as a 'collective body politic'. Altogether, both scholars argue that the way in which the capitalist system reproduces itself has resulted in the destruction of social, economic and physical structures that establish the foundations of the urban, and the diminishing control of an underprivileged majority over the course of this evolution.

- Moving on to the second issue, that is the significance of RttC as a tool for reclaiming the urban, both Lefebvre and Harvey propose that any attempt to change the course of capitalism requires the urban citizens to reclaim their democratic rights and licence to determine the social and political (re)production of space. The proposition is based on the conviction that rights to command the production of space have been restricted to stronger actors, drawing attention to heightened disparities between the more and less privileged. In the writings of Lefebvre, this conviction reveals itself in his reflections on the 'negative situation of the proletariat', resulting from its subordination to industrial rationality overruling the city, and thus, the imperative of bourgeoisie whom he considers as the system's driving agency (1996: 106-107). Harvey, similarly and perhaps more explicitly, puts that "the neoliberal turn has restored class power to rich elites" (Harvey, 2008: 32), leading to the marginalization of the poor and underprivileged from political power.[9]

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[9] In fact, what leads to the marginalization of these groups is not limited to 'developers, who are backed by finance and capital' but also include the 'increasingly entrepreneurially minded local

The right to the city, under the given circumstances, is primarily 'a cry and a demand' (Lefebvre, 1996: 158) for 'an urban life that is yet to begin' (ibid: 150), inscribed by codes that will cater "greater democratic control" over both the production and utilization of surplus, and thus, the shaping of the city (Harvey, 2008: 37). This requires 'a new humanism, a new praxis, another man' (Lefebvre, 1996: 150), or a 'radical metamorphosis' (ibid: 156) that will help trigger a societal change -inscribed by new codes, instrumental to the accomplishment of a more democratized urban life- and recreate the city from anew. RttC, in these respects, "is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: It is a right to change ourselves by changing the city." (Harvey, 2008: 23)

Triggered by this demand are two questions of primary importance: Who are those to reclaim these rights, and what sorts of methods should be utilized for their acquisition? It goes without saying that both Lefebvre and Harvey place the low-income, or working class communities who are considered as the actual 'sufferers' of the system to the forefront of potential struggles. Yet, it is more in the writings of Lefebvre that there is an emphasis on the 'social' as a force that is integral both to the shaping of potential struggles and the 'new city' to emerge. In addressing the double crisis of the 'traditional city' and 'the world crisis of agrarian civilization', Lefebvre says "it is up to *us* [emphasis mine] to resolve this" and then follows:

The use of we in the above sentences has only the impact of a metaphor to mean *those concerned* [emphasis mine]. The architect, the planner, the sociologist, the economist, the philosopher or the politician cannot out of nothingness create new forms and relations. More precisely, the architect is no more a miracle worker than the sociologist. Neither can create social relations (...) Only social life (praxis) in its global capacity possesses such powers – or does not possess them (Lefebvre, 1996: 150-151).

In order for the 'social' to take the initiative of reclaiming rights to control urban space, Lefebvre argues that there is a need to utilize 'urban citizenship' as a title of enfranchisement. His emphasis on citizenship, here, goes against the grains of the

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state apparatus' (Harvey, 2008: 33) which confirms Smith's aforementioned statement with respect to the dismantling of the welfare state.

'conventional' –i.e. national citizenship- and prioritizes urban inhabitance. Yet, Lefebvre is clear that any attempt to change the course of capitalist domination will be *dependent* on the 'presence' and 'action' of the working class for it is the only class that can "decisively contribute to the reconstruction of centrality destroyed by a strategy of segregation" (ibid.: 154):

Only the working class can become the agent, the social carrier or support of a [practico-material] realization [as such]. Here again, as a century ago, it denies and contests, by its very existence the class strategy directed against it. As a hundred years ago, although under new conditions, it gathers the interests (overcoming the immediate and the superficial) of the whole society and firstly of all those who inhabit (ibid: 158).

When it comes to the methods of an undertaking as such, Lefebvre urges that "there is a need to change intellectual approaches and tools" (ibid.: 151) in engaging with the making of cities. He provides the reader with two exemplary suggestions –transduction and experimental utopianism- but more importantly puts that it is the utilization of multiple methods that can make a real contribution rather than 'privileging' one over the other. From Lefebvre's perspective, sticking with a single approach results in the formation of "an ideology, that is, a closed and dogmatic system of significations: structuralism, formalism, functionalism" (ibid.: 152).[10] When it comes to naming these methods, Lefebvre's ideas remain abstract.

Harvey, on the other hand, concretely addresses urban social movements as the agencies that can formulate potentially winning strategies. However, he also argues that the movements "are not strong enough or sufficiently mobilized to force through [solutions]" (Harvey, 2008: 39) as yet. In explaining this insufficiency, Harvey makes reference to the (current) inability of movements to converge on a unified, or 'singular' aim in reclaiming control neither over the use of surplus, nor the conditions of its production. That is, Harvey hints at a problem of fragmentation within the landscape of oppositional movements which comes in the way of devising winning methods and strategies: "Unlike the fiscal system (…) the urban and peri-urban social movements of opposition, of which there are many around the world, are not tightly coupled; indeed most have no connection to each other" (ibid.: 37). The only road map which Harvey prescribes to this potential connection, or unification, is to "adopt the right to the city as both working slogan

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[10] Lefebvre finds this specific sort of formalism and functionalism in urban policies and architecture, which he provides criticizes a criticism of at length.

and political ideal."

Last but not the least, it is crucial to understand that the main motivation behind Lefebvre and Harvey's engagement in above given matters is strongly related with the meanings and values they attach to what they define as the city, or the 'urban'. In Lefebvre's writings, the city repetitively appears as the *oeuvre* -and not a product- that can only be achived though a 'renewed' right to the city. The *oeuvre*, here, represents an emancipatory opening that can satisfy the social, anthropological and creative needs of its citizens, and the 'urban', or the city, will only transform into a source as such as the long denied control over its making is reclaimed by the 'social'. In short,

It does not matter whether the urban fabric encloses the countryside and what survives of peasant life as long as the 'urban', place of encounter, priority of use value, inscription in space of a time promoted to the rank of a supreme resource among all sources, finds its morphological base and its practice-material realization (ibid.: 158).

Harvey departs from a similar perspective when he borrows Robert Park's words in order to depict the city as "the man's most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in after his heart's desire" (Harvey, 2008: 23). Here, 'desires' correspond with the 'needs' that Lefebvre underlines and thus, the city becomes the realm where the desires get fulfilled –just like the way previously mentioned needs get satisfied. In Harvey's words, "the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire" (ibid.). Looking at these two reflections over the ideal of the 'city', one can therefore argue that it is an idealized plane of collective being where the most fundamental rights of citizens, and thus, the emancipatory foundations of democracy should be rooted.

2.4. Translating 'Right to the City' into Practice: A Frame of Analysis for Urban Social Movements

Points highlighted by Lefebvre and Harvey have become of utmost significance at a time when the current models of development are "characterized by the tendency to concentrate income and power, generating poverty and exclusion, contributing

to environmental degradation, and accelerating migration and urbanization processes, social and spatial segregation, and privatization of common goods and public spaces" (*World Charter for the Right to the City*, 2005: 1); it has thus been inevitable for diverse groups of organized and civil opposition in search of social justice and equity to depart from the consequential grounds of neoliberalism. Although urban social movements have been the subject of critical attention since the 1970s, when the crisis of Fordism spurred the reaction of civil groups particularly in the global north (Castells, 1983), radical shifts in the regimes of political and economic governance have transformed both the grounds upon which movements appear and inevitably the dynamics giving them shape.

In defining the neoliberal process, Brenner and Theodore draw attention to its ability to "enforce market rule over an ever wide ranging social relations" (2002: 361), be it the labour markets, housing programmes, infrastructural services, ecological resources, food supplies etc. Thus, compared to the 1970s, the current landscape of contentious urban politics is composed of a diversity of actors, mobilized to struggle for a wide array of causes and identified by contingent strategies and tactics at a global scale. However, this dynamism is not without its weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and active resistance against urban transformation is not exempt from the given fragilities. Currently, movements of various scales fighting to halt, or counter balance the negative impacts of urban renewal, transformation and gentrification are often confronted by questions of 'success', or 'failure' in translating discourse into practice, and achieving the goals set by debates on rights to the city.

As mentioned earlier, urban social movements have been under intellectual scrutiny since the late 1960s when cities of the global north, in particular, were hit by the crisis of Fordism, causing disruptions in such vital arenas of socio- economic life as housing, education, transport, health etc. Castells' *Grassroots and the City* (1983) is highly reflective of pressures building up on the terrains of collective consumption and social democracy in this period due to the economic and political openings of the time's governments, and the way in which these pressures triggered active opposition and resistance to the system at work. Although these accounts are fundamental to understanding the motivations and mechanisms of

contemporary urban social movements, they remain relatively 'normative' (Mayer, 2009) in an attempt to provide a critical analysis of current movements. As Mayer also puts it, movements of the post 1980s mirror the overarching impacts of advanced capitalism on the many aspects of social and economic life in evolutionary stages, rendering the landscape of urban social movements much more fragmented and thus, the analysis of urban social contestation much more complex.[11]

In addressing the most recent of these evolutionary stages, starting with the post 2000s, Mayer argues in detail that mobilization has continued to form at least along three fault lines. These are roughly constituted by movements that 'challenge the forms, goals and effects of corporate urban development', 'mobilize against the neoliberalization of social and labor market policies' and those that can be identified as 'transnational anti globalization movements that have discovered 'the local', their city, as place where globalization (…) materializes'. It is within the context of these fault lines that currently it is possible to see various groups, actively fighting against 'the commercialization of public space'; 'intensification of surveillance and policing of urban space'; 'entrepreneurial ways in which cities market themselves'; 'concomitant neglect of neighborhoods falling by the wayside of these forms of growth politics'; 'dismantling of the welfare state', and 'social and environmental [in]justice' (Mayer, 2009: 366). Departing from these, it can be proposed that,

… While the neoliberalization of the city has in many ways created a more hostile environment for progressive urban movements, it has also allowed for a more global articulation of urban protest, and it has spawned a renewed convergence of some of these strands under the umbrella of the Right to the City slogan (ibid: 367).

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[11] Mayer asserts that, "the movement terrain became [rather] complex due to the entry of a panoply of middle-class based movements embracing a variety of concerns, and locating themselves across the political spectrum, from NIMBY to environmental, from defensive, even reactionary to progressive, from [No speed control for free citizens!] to less possessively individualist froms of self-realization (…) In sum, cities experienced in this second phase more varied and more fragmented forms of urban protest, the movement milieu had split into distinct components, and there were no overarching battle cries or convergence in joint action." (2009: 364-365). It can thus be proposed that Marcuse's categorization of the 'deprived' who are "those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled", and the 'discontented', who are "thoe superficially integrated into the system and sharing in its material benefits, but constrained in their opportunities for creative activity, oppressed in their social relationships, guilty perhaps for an undeserved prosperity, unfulfilled in their lives' hopes" (2009: 190) is indicative of this fragmentation between these distinct realms.

It is for this reason that the post-2000s have been witnessing the emergence and coexistence of activist collectives from broad backgrounds upon a shared platform, shaped by the forces of heightened neoliberalization. Currently, the presence of anti-Walmart struggles in the United States and anti-nuclear collectives in Turkey are ideologically integral to each other as never been experienced before. Non-profit, civil and grassroots organizations that seek to defend urban spaces and communities against the ill effects of economic, social and physical restructuration of cities represent just one of the many categories that constitutes this broad spectrum of movements. Yet, even within this category one can observe a degree of diversity, either with respect to the scales of groups in protest, or the causes around which they mobilize. For the given reasons, it is important to emphasize here that,

... Profit-oriented strategies of urban restructuring are intensely contested among dominant, subordinate and marginalized social forces; their outcomes are never predetermined through the logic of capital. Urban space under capitalism is therefore never permanently fixed; it is continually shaped and reshaped through a relentless clash of opposed social forces oriented, respectively, towards the exchange-value (profit-oriented) and use-value (everyday life) dimensions of urban sociospatial configurations (Brenner et al, 2009: 178).

Perhaps one of the most striking documents that confirm the statement above is the report on *How People Face Evictions* prepared by the Development Planning Unit of University College London (UCL). Focusing on cases from Buenos Aires (Argentina), Porto Alegre (Brazil), Durban (South Africa), Hangzhou (China), Istanbul (Turkey), Karachi (Pakistan), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and the rural villages of Mirshāq and Sarandū (Egypt), the report reveals the experience of people-led initiatives and struggles against forced displacements and evictions. The analysis includes strategies adopted by communities of varying scales to 'secure rights to adequate housing', 'legal security of tenure' and 'freedom from arbitrary destruction and dispossession', while at the same time "giving voice to people who are active on the ground and providing an opportunity for exchange and mutual learning" (2010: 3). In the accompaniment of vivid details from the grounds of struggle, the document shows that all cases are born out of pressures posed by the dynamics of growth; that communities do not refrain from reacting to top-down decisions of local/central governments; that they tend to demand *in situ* relocation as compensation for displacement; that attempts for relocation almost

always fail, and last but not least, that the nature of urban contention is highly complex.

This final point deserves particular attention in order to stress one of the main arguments of this chapter. The report is striking for it portrays examples of struggles from geographically diverse territories, adopting various strategies to reach distinct targets; yet, it is also striking for it provides insight into the complexity of what can be achieved, or cannot be achieved all at the very same time: The fact that there will be victories (i.e. *in situ* relocation, accession to housing, reclaiming land etc.) does not necessarily mean that undesired situations (i.e. evictions, demolishments, expropriations etc.) will be prevented completely, or conversely, that undesired situations will come in the way of victories. These experiences are predominantly intertwined, taking shape throughout an evolutionary process and constantly interacting with each other. What is more, the document delivers this point of view with a hint of optimism:

Forced and market-driven evictions are increasing dramatically worldwide, with devastating effects on millions of children, women and men across the globe. Despite this negative trend, however, many people led initiatives have been *successful* [emphasis mine] in addressing this issue and reducing the number of evictions, developing new policies and proving that alternatives to forced eviction can be found (2010: 3).

The word success is crucial here, since –more than anything- the report tries to communicate what 'winning' strategies can be utilized by civil initiatives in the face of top-down operations that can affect communities negatively. However, as it also happens in the wider literature on urban social movements, there is hardly any explanation to what might cause undesired outcomes, or what might weaken movements and collective action in their battles. Cases from the report effectively demonstrate that mobilized communities of the global south can experience demolishments, displacements, expropriations and dispossessions despite the support of rather influential slum dwellers associations and similar coalitions. (…) Similarly, examples from the global north -such as Stuttgart 21 (Germany) and Dale Farm (United Kingdom)- have shown that movements do not always reach their targets, or achieve their defined goals. Reasons that might give way to such 'misfortunes'/'failures'/'shortcomings' will be myriad, among which overwhelming pressures exerted by public and/or private actors within the realms of contestation will undoubtedly take the lead. However, scarcity of available data

does not only pose limitations to broader perspectives, but also allows one to question whether movements themselves might be marked by certain fragilities, or weaknesses that can prepare the grounds for undesired incidents.

Having gestured towards this possibility, there is substantial conviction among critical circles that *debates* on RttC are defined by certain vulnerabilities that render movements prone to 'failure' (Mayer, 2009; Unger, 2010 Purcell, 2002; de Souza). Purcell takes note of the 'theoretical and political underdevelopment' (2002: 99) of RttC discussions in the existing literature, which may lead one into proposing that the underdevelopment of debates might have inevitable impacts on their translation into practice. Brief overviews on some of the mentioned vulnerabilities are given below, as they appear in the literature:

1) *Ambiguities with respect to the definition of 'urban inhabitants' and 'rights to the city'*: The use of such key terms as 'urban inhabitants' and 'rights to the city' without providing content to them is considered a fundamental problem within ongoing debates for at least two main reasons. First, insufficient specification to what 'urban inhabitants' might stand for holds the danger of creating a homogeneous impression of urban communities and ignoring latent divides (social, economic, political etc.) embedded in them. Debates revolving around RttC within the past decade tend to deem all 'urban inhabitants' as the 'bearers of the rights to the city' (Mayer, 2009: 368) without noting distinctions between diverse groups whose needs and interests inevitably vary on the grounds of their socio-economic and political distinctions. In Mayer's words:

The problem with the generic category of urban habitants is that it reflects a view of civil society as basically homogeneous and, as a whole, worthy of protection from (destructive) neoliberal forces – as if it itself did not encompass economic and political actors who participate in and profit from the production of poverty and discrimination; it thus obscufates the fact that this entity is itself deeply divided by class and power (ibid.).

Secondly, addressing the 'rights to the city' with a similar stance of ambiguity does not only obscure the specific needs of specific groups –as mentioned above- but

also makes it difficult to envision the diversity of potential strategies and forms of mobilization that can be devised for the acquisition of certain rights. Whereas some movements might demand access to housing specifically, others might focus on the defense of public spaces against privatizations, meaning that they will develop distinct strategies to be able to achieve their specific goals on the grounds of their needs. Thus, unclarities to the content of who is demanding what sort of rights within what specific conditions and on the grounds of what types of needs come in the way of addressing problems and masks both the diversity and contingency of subjective situations.

2) *Prioritizing the 'urban' while trying to achieve radical transformations in the structures of political power may cause scalar tensions within the particular contexts of citizenship and territorial organization:* Since Lefebvre's primal elaboration into the term, RttC discussions have predominantly revolved around the responsibility of *urban* citizens in reclaiming the rights to the *city* for a *societal* transformation to take place and meet democratic demands. Purcell (2002), however, suggests that narrowing the scale of a broad project as such to that of a strictly *urban* territory and assigning *urban* citizens to the accomplishment of the task may result in the formation of certain scalar problems. First, Purcell takes the example of a hypothetical plan that might put pressures on a *neighbourhood* and asks how the degrees of participation can be negotiated if pressures are exerted upon more localized territories; in other words, questions of 'who can participate' in specific processes 'to what degree' become problematic within a logic that grants precedence to the urban (ibid: 104).[12] Secondly, he argues that the given outlook creates an 'urban-hegemonic vision' (ibid: 105) which subordinates other scales of community and territory (i.e. national, regional, political etc.) to that of the urban and thirdly, in his view, the definition of the city remains extensively unclear within the vision under question – i.e. how to tell the 'inside' from the 'outside'?

One might argue that the given criticisms might contradict the first set of problems given above. However, the problem which Purcell points to has got more to do

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[12] He brings the 'neighbourhood' to attention as a sub-scale upon which decision-making mechanisms can become problematic and asks whether "those living in the neighbourhood have a *greater* right to participate centrally than those who live outside the nighbourhood and within the city?" (Purcell, 2002: 104).

with the 'strictly *urban*' substance assigned to the subjects and spaces of struggle. Departing from the three major scalar problems that he finds in RttC discussions, Purcell notes the politically contested nature of social space and its parameters, and deems pregiven, or self-evident approaches to defining the boundaries of both urban citizenship and territory a dangerous one. This danger, in his view, is the potential of RttC to breed an inward-looking political vision:

As with all politics of scale, the struggle to define the urban scale and its inhabitants would be contingent; its actual impact on the enfranchisement and the production of urban space cannot be assumed. While defining political membership at a smaller scale give urban inhabitants greater control over the space of their city, it also encourages them to be more insular in their political world-view. On the one hand they are more fully empowered, on the other hand that empowerement can tempt them to withdraw them from their responsibilities to national, continental, or global political communities. Such potential for insularity certainly raises the question of just how democratic the rights to the city would be (ibid: 105).

3) *Charters and documents prepared by supranational organizations work in a way to institutionalize radical ideas:* As mentioned earlier, the past decade has seen the production of a good number of charters, statutes and agendas by international NGOs, transnational policy networks and at times municipal authorities that seek to guide the institution of 'good urban governance' through relevant policies that will prioritize social equity and justice. Also supported by international aliances and coalitions of resistance, these documents have been particularly instrumental to the development of such 'tool kits' on participatory decision-making, transparency in local governance and participatory budgeting (Mayer, 2009: 369). However, the very same documents prepared by the given actors bear the risk of taking the radical edge off the philosophy of RttC and its institutionalization in a top-down manner (Mayer, 2009; Unger, 2010). As Mayer puts it,

While the public recognition through governmental and UN insitutions obviously enhances the relevance and influence of these demands and of the movements raising them, it is also the case that these charters as well as the coalitions devising and promoting them, in the process modify the political content and meaning of the contested right to the city. They shift the nuances of the political stances and tend to dilute some of the radical demands of transformative movements (2009: 369).

From a similar perspective, Unger (2010) argues that the given texts serve to dilute some of the core arguments of RttC -although not deliberately- as they get translated into other languages. Conclusively, Unger notes that the documents do not only help debates get institutionalized by ripping them off from their radical and political character, but also they end up transmitting confusing messages as it happened in the two different versions of the HIC report:

As a result you even will read two quite different concepts of convergence: The one is somehow a top down agenda agreed on by some NGOs networks who already know what the rights are, but want to build a larger alliance for improved power for which they need a name and branding. In a second meaning convergence always would mean some convergence of the movements in itself, movements of desire and need, which associate in an objective process, the association of producers of the city.

4) *When the movements and initiatives prioritize the satisfaction of their demands, they face the risk of abandoning the ultimate goal of the fight for RttC - that is, systemic change.* Mayer notes that another drawback of the mentioned charters, statutes and agendas is that they boil rights down to demands for the citizens' inclusion into the existing system without making an attempt for systemic change, which is what Lefebvre stated as the ultimate goal (Mayer, 2009: 369). Similarly, de Souza (2010) draws attention to approaches that tend to translate RttC into rights to *access* urban land, housing, basic infrastructure, transport and all sorts of public goods and services, and disregard the fact that current violations and injustices are the very symptoms of the political and economic system at work. De Souza argues that any perspective that aims towards the formulation of new governmental forms –and not the abolishment of the system- bears the risk of turning RttC into a hollowed-out concept, or a slogan that can contain just any debate relating to freedom and democracy. For the given reasons, De Souza proposes that the concept faces the risk of becoming meaningless at a time when it is so popular (de Souza, 2010).

It is important to note here, again, that weaknesses briefly listed above (which represent only a selection of ideas in circulation) predominantly address the way in which RttC is *debated* within oppositional circles and *not* how it is being translated into struggles. Purcell puts it very clearly that his criticisms are directed at the *literature*, which takes RttC debates as central (Purcell, 2002: 99). Yet, the ultimate suggestion embedded in the attempt to identify these is the concern over

their possibility of affecting *practice*, and most importantly, the potential unification of RttC struggles from across the globe on a shared platform.[13] As noted earlier, currently it is possible to pinpoint many movements operating within urban, national and regional territories. It is also possible to observe the many achievements of these movements. However, these individual efforts have not so far succeeded in joining their forces at a global scale, as aspired by their advocates.[14] Issues elaborated above, thus, are considered to explain some of the reasons behind their failure to do so.

2.5. Private Ownership as Impediment to Collective Action?

Despite attempts towards comprehending the setbacks in unifying urban social movements at a global scale, challenges faced by initiatives on *individual* basis in the effort to achieving their goals remains substantially understudied. International reports do inform us on the various abilities, capacities and achievements of diverse civil collectives, fighting for rights to access housing, resources and services. However, information on hardships experienced by movements within the context of mobilization, development of tactics and strategies, achievement of defined goals and confrontations with powerful actors is extensively scarce. Departing from here, it can be argued that absence of data on the given matters constitutes a gap that needs to be filled. Tackling the challenges and hardships faced by grassroots organizations might not only provide a worthy contribution to existing literature on urban social movements but can be vital for improving the skills of grassroots and civil initiatives in developing tactics and

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[13] With this in mind, it is important to note two other arguments that are integral to this concern: For example, Walton (1998) stresses that strategies, goals and priorities of movements will differ depending on the socio-economic and political context they emerge from. In his view, this makes it particularly challenging for movements from the global north and south to connect at a global scale. What also makes a difference is the way in which distinct political structures respond to and transform, or reproduce movements (Marcuse, 2009 and Busa, 2010). That is, the sort of relationships movements might have with governmental authorities –either central, or local- will have inevitable impacts on their constituting features, strategies and goals. For example, some movements might form unique alliances with local governments as a consequence of their struggle and transform the approach of central governments to certain issues in this way round (Mayer, 2009); in a situation as such, the causes of movements also end up being legitimized. On the other hand, others' actions might not translate into solid results in the political arena since local authorities might not be empowered enough to form such relationships with alternative movements (Purcell, 2002).

strategies for the future.

Departing from the given argument, I would like to propose that lack of critical attention paid to disputes and controversies emanating from issues of private ownership can hamper collective action against regeneration and pose an impediment to the achievement of goals set by grassroots movements. This statement, needless to point out, predominantly applies for struggles focusing on residential areas. When cities of what is considered as the developing world fall under critical scrutiny, it is often assumed that informality in housing is the main element, constituting the leading vulnerabilities of citizens against the forces of state led transformation. Thus, it is also often assumed that citizens who hold formal titles to their properties will be protected by legal mechanisms that are not available to the appropriators of informal properties. However, contrary to such assumptions, property owners can become fragile under the weight of neoliberal urban governance and market mechanisms *as much as* citizens who do not hold any legal titles to their properties when ownership is coupled with social and economical disadvantages. That is, in situations whereby property owners suffer from conditions of severe poverty, they will become as insecure as others (i.e. low-income tenants, informal settlers etc.) in the face of pressures emanating from the workings of neoliberal urbanism.

It goes without saying that the degree to which private ownership might become a formative factor in the fight for RttC is dependent on the contingencies of legal and political structures, defining ownership. In other words, while private ownership might not constitute an element of fragility in some national/regional frameworks, it might set grounds for certain drawbacks in others when civil unrest transpires. Turkey is one of those countries where the latter scenario applies as many case studies have demonstrated since the operations of neoliberal urbanism have taken hold. Extensive research based on such neighbourhoods as Basibuyuk (Istanbul), Ayazma (Istanbul), Dikmen (Ankara), Mamak (Ankara), Kadifekale (Izmir) (Kuyucu, 2010; Deniz, 2010; Baysal, 2010; Poyraz, 2011; Demirtas-Milz, 2013; Aksumer, 2010), that have either gone through, or about to become subject to state-led transformation support this view: *Gecekondu* neighbourhoods, where tenure structures are marked by precarities on the grounds of informality, face

severe risks of forced eviction, dispossession and displacement once declared as transformation zones by central and local governments. (…) This makes it inevitable for struggles emerging from these neighbourhoods to get affected by the interaction between existing precarities and forces of transformation. In the following chapters, it will be demonstrated that inner-city poverty zones, where informality does not prevail, are equally affected by such risks in the face of state led transformation.

The important question here is as follows: If ownership can affect the sustainability of movements in negative terms, then why is it not addressed? The answer to this question may be hidden in the ideological premises of RttC debates, which tend to prioritize the achievement of '*collective* rights' to housing, urban resources and services, public spaces, decision making processes etc. Any attempt to discuss *individual*, or *private* rights to ownership may, thus, put the value system of RttC at risk for it can integrate elements of commodification and exchange value into existing debates. However, refusing to tackle issues of private ownership leaves exceptionally defining dynamics that might weaken grassroots action against urban transformation/renewal and/or gentrification out of the framework of analytical efforts, aiming to reveal the vulnerabilities of current struggles. Moreover, it dismisses the opportunity to understand the interaction between ownership and poverty under the pressure of powerful mechanisms that can erode the savings and possessions of many. Studies mentioned above have all demonstrated that legal parameters have been unable to protect many of the formal property owners in urban transformation zones; that is, they were not only displaced but have also become severely dispossessed to the point that they have lost both their homes and savings. Most interestingly, these losses have sometimes occurred under circumstances whereby owners had negotiated with authorities and expected positive returns from their negotiations.

Departing from these, it can be proposed that as the pressure of urban transformation rises and finds expression in the form of governmental decisions and operations with impacts on communities, private ownership may fail to function as a protective shield against the forces of dispossession and displacement. Moreover, this fragility hampers collective mobilization in the

defense of housing rights by causing rifts among resident communities (i.e tenants, illegal settlers and owners). Another important element here is, of course, the degree of poverty: It is the interaction between the varying degrees of poverty and the status of ownership, which determines the will power of collective action against its object of protest. Fearful of losing their possessions in return of minimum, or no compensations, owners can show tendency to withdraw from collective action that aims to stop demolitions and secure housing rights for all, and opt for individually driven strategies to protect themselves aganist dispossessions, or furtherly deprived socio-economic conditions. It is also possible to witness situations whereby owners try their luck at achieving upward socio-economic mobility by securing maximum returns from emergent urban rent. The experience of neoliberal urbanization in Istanbul presents scholars with cases whereby these patterns become visible, as it will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Altogether, it is important to understand what the forces of neoliberal urbanism put pressure on and how communities might get affected by these forces so that required tactics for collective action may be developed accordingly.

Conclusion:

The past thirty years in the field of urban studies have been marked by a consistent interest in the reverberations of advanced global capitalism on the urban environment. Here, the urban environment connotes the social, economic, cultural, political and natural spheres of contemporary living. On the given grounds, one of the most striking findings of ongoing research has revealed that constant engineering of cities as the centres of wealth and capital accumulation has led to detrimental shrinkage in the spaces of justice; disruptions in social and economic equality, and erosion of various securities that were once made available to all by welfare states. Whereas this trend has initially demonstated itself in the form of 'fragmentations' in the urban landscape, increasing adoption of neoliberal practices by central governments has led to the ineavitable intensification of fragmentation. Currently, millions of citizens at a worldwide scale face forced evictions, dispossessions and displacement at an increased rate as the territories of capital accumulation expand.

One of the many consequences of these tensions has been the emergence of various oppositional groups in protest of injustices, inequalities and mistreatments resulting from the current governmental and entrepreneurial operations. Perhaps one of the key contributions of discussions and criticisms circulating within these circles has been the reintroduction of RttC debates to the agenda of contentious urban politics. Uttered first by Lefebvre in 1968 at the start of the Fordist crisis, and then revisited by Harvey in 2008 as a response to the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008, the term has become a useful tool in tackling the intricate relationships between the forces of capitalism and production of urban space, and the spatial rights of urban citizens. Definition of rights, here, falls into a wide scope, among which access to housing, public space, urban/natural resources, and participation in local decision-making mechanisms take the lead. On the given grounds, the term has provided a meaningful departure point for labourers, environmentalists, grassroots organizations and supranational bodies of various backgrounds, which both make individual statements and collaborate upon shared platforms to actively demand stern measures against the violation of rights to urban and rural living.

The combination of demands, made particularly by urban oppositional groups and grassroots organizations, ultimately seek to grant citizens with a degree of power to control the making and development of their habitat at policy and planning levels. This, it is argued, is fundamental to the creation of a democratic urban setting and here, special emphasis is made on the way in which socio-economically disadvantaged groups are affected by the system at work. Urban oppositional movements and grassroots organizations worldwide have come a long way in devising strategies for the achievement of RttC. However, ideas, strategies and practices to date are still not without ambiguities with reference to how they address collective action, develop sustainable tactics and meet their defined goals for qider communities.

I argue that the existing literature lacks substantial focus on challenges encountered by civil and grassroots initiatives on the way to building collective action. Critical opinions that address potential vulnerabilities and weaknesses

embedded in RttC debates do exist; these opinions also suggest that the mentioned vulnerabilities and weaknesses are the main reasons for the failure of movements to unite at a global scale. Still, however, hardships experienced by inidivual initiatives remain fairly understudied. In an attempt to develop a vision in the given direction, I propose that private property ownership can pose impediments to collective action within the context of neihgbourhood organization against state-led transformation. General assumption rules that it is only informal settlers who face evictions, displacements and dispossessions. However, as the case of Turkey also reveals, formal owners can become as insecure against the forces of urban transformation as informal settlers when the conditions of ownership are not divorced from conditions of poverty. These insecurities inevitably make an impact on the building of movements.

3. The Two Rounds of Urban Globalization and Spatial Fragmentation in Istanbul

Growing literature on the recent history of urban change in Istanbul typically takes the mid-1980s as the grounds for starting a critical assessment. This is predominantly because the 1980's mark the period when spatial consequences of the big shift from state protectionist to a free market economy surfaced in very dramatic and organized fashions on the landscape of Istanbul, and determined its transformation in the years to come irreversibly. The consequences of these changes have been manifold; yet, overall, they have primarily contributed to the 'fragmentation of the city' at large in socio-economic and physical terms, showcasing the escalating inequalities between the new urban rich, middle-class and the poor (Kurtuluş, 2005 and 2003).

What makes the changes mentioned above 'dramatic' is primarily the swiftness with which they have arrived. On the other hand, what renders the very same changes fairly 'organized' is their formulation within the context of a certain vision, which aimed at the transformation of Istanbul into a 'global city'. It has been within the framework of this vision that the past two decades have seen an intensification in the number, variety and scale of renewal, regeneration and flagship projects taking place in the city, and also in the attempts of local and central governments to devise new programmes, policies and institutions to secure privatizations, encourage public-private partnerships and offer various incentives for (inter)national capital to invest on urban land.

Vey first steps in the given direction were taken starting from the mid-1980s when integrated policies were developed in a way to transform Istanbul from an industrial to a post-industrial centre of services, tourism and international finance, and to ease the penetration of national and international capital into urban land and housing markets. The following fifteen years have not only seen the continuation of this trajectory, but also attempts on the part of coming governments to extend the rewards of this emergent liberalization to almost all segments of the society through

populist strategies.

It has however been with the post-2000s that efforts to boost the capacity of Istanbul to attract and contain the flow and accumulation of capital have been enveloped within a much more integrated economic, political and legal system, and guarded by powerful actors. Other than paving the way for the initiation of a series of 'urban transformation projects' along the given lines, the novelty of a 'fully capitalist urban regime' as such lies in its eradication of previously existing redistributive mechanisms, which helped keep emergent inequalities at a certain balance.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the 'two rounds of urban globalization' in Istanbul (i.e. the period between the 1980s and 2000s, and the period starting from 2000s); the impact of these rounds on urban governance, planning and policy making strategies; the consequences of these shifts on the urban landscape, and the ways in which the evolution from the first to the second round has contributed to the heightened fragmentation of the city on the basis of socio-economic inequalities. Both of these analyses will be concluded with a depiction of the urban landscape that has formed both in a way to reveal the sort of development that Istanbul has gone through and the way in which socio-economic inequalities have surfaced, built-up and evolved as a result of these two rounds.

3.1. Commodification of Urban Land Markets in Istanbul: The First Round of Urban Globalization (1980-2000)

The military coup of 1980 represents an end and a beginning within the social, political and economic solve context of Turkey. Primarily, it denotes the collapse of the previous three decades' national-developmentalist programme, based on a state protected import-substitution model of industrialization.[1] The coup, in this sense, also

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[1] This model was adopted as a remedy for the late 1950s economic crisis, as advised by the State Development Agency, and focused predominantly on an inward looking mode of industrialization to "accelerate growth rates, resolve employment problems, achieve balance of international payments and reach all these goals in line with the principles of social justice." (Kepenek and Yenturk, 1998: 148). By the late 1970s, however, the model reached a stagnation point due to failures in the balance of

represents a beginning since it marks a new phase, defined by the introduction of an orthodox liberalization programme under the auspices of the army and international monetary organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. Prioritizing export-led growth, deregulation of state control, privatization and eventually, full integration with global capitalism (Arıcanlı and Rodrik, 1990; Boratav, 1991) for the liberalization programme to commence implied that national developmentalist ideals of the previous era were to be replaced by others which prioritized a certain opening up to the world.

The new logic of capital accumulation, forged by the army, was taken over by the Motherland Party (MP) following the general elections of 1983 and steered by its leader Turgut Özal, 'an economic miracle worker' (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002: 46). Following a sustained period of economic stagnation and isolation, Özal aimed to maintain a liberal economic rationality to ensure Turkey's rapid integration with the emergent dynamics of global capitalism. This necessitated the further opening up of Turkish markets to the dynamics of free trade and foreign competition, diminishment of extensive entanglements of the state in the economy, minimization of the state apparatus for improved efficiency, privatization of state enterprises, and decentralization of public services (ibid.). Consequently, within a span of 15 years, Turkey saw the entry and enhanced mobility of foreign capital, expansion of foreign trade, liberalization of imports and reorientation towards finance and service sectors at never before seen rates (Sönmez, 1996: 102). These steps can be considered as Turkey's initial steps in connecting with international markets and economy.

Emergence of these 'global visions' for Turkey paved the way for the materialization of new 'urban visions' for Istanbul and bred the will to "[transform] Istanbul (…) into a metropolis full of promise for the twenty-first century" (Keyder and Öncü, 1993: 29). With the acknowledgement of the growing significance and function of cities as the command centres of the 'new world system', Istanbul came to be pushed into a

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payments, accelerating inflation, rising unemployment, absence of funds from the central government, disintegration of land and housing markets and the influence of international recession (Baysan and Blitzer, 1990; Boratav, 1991). Cumulative consequences of these macroeconomic problems led to civil unrest and political instability to be halted by a military intervention.

process of strategic restructuring by an elite coalition for its transformation into a gateway through which Turkey's integration to the global capitalist system could be enabled. The collapse of the USSR towards the end of 1980s also heightened the expectations for Istanbul to play a central and commanding role in the Eurasian region (Keyder, 1999: 23). For these reasons, not only has Istanbul become exposed to radical interventions to prepare grounds for the inflow of inter/national capital and investment starting from this period, but also these entrepreneurial activities have increasingly and irreversibly been guarded by a range of legal and administrative frameworks.

Many outcomes of the extensive readjustment programme and organized efforts to solidify the urban vision at work found their inevitable repercussion on the social, economic and urban structure of Istanbul. Part of these resulted from the immediate consequences of the shift in the scales of economy: In the words of Ercan, "Istanbul transformed into a city where traffic (image-commodity-money) born out of the workings of world capitalism concentrated and spatialized" (1996: 85). The formerly industrial landscape of Istanbul came to be dotted by banks, trading and insurance companies and creative industries with the adoption of a tourism, export-import, finance and real estate based services economy (Sönmez, 1996; Keyder and Öncü, 1994; Aksoy and Robins, 1994). Consequently, the post-liberal era saw the rise of a new white-collar work force attracted to these emergent sectors and industries (Kozanoğlu, 1995; Bali, 2002; Gürbilek, 1998). New spaces of work hosting what was coined as the 'new urban Turkish middle class' were coupled with new spaces of leisure in the most central parts of the city. Five star hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, bars and cafes flourished to attract consumers, constituted not only by the new meritocrats of Turkish liberalism but also by tourists and traveling professionals.

On the other side of the coin of transition was the arrival of new migration flows from eastern and south-eastern Anatolia, and such international destinations as the Balkans and the Caucausus. Whereas rural migration was underlined by the stagnation of agricultural and industrial production in the rural hinterland and the

concentration of new employment opportunities in Istanbul (Erder, 1995; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2003), international migration was predominantly triggered by the collapse of the Soviet regime (Yükseker, 2003). In the scarcity of job availabilities within the emergent sectors, the newly arriving work force was absorbed both by the lowest ranks of the service economy and diminishing vacancies in the industrial arena, but mostly by informal sectors that experienced sizeable growth (Yükseker, 2003 ; Sönmez, 1996a; Keyder, 1999; Güvenç and Işık, 2002). By the late 1980s, these groups would be joined by the forcefully displaced Kurds of South Eastern Anatolia -as a result of the growing conflict between the Turkish army and Kurdish militia- and international refugees, arriving predominantly from the African continent. Deprived of immediate job and housing availabilities, these groups came to represent the new urban poor of the same regime that triggered the formation of the new urban middle class.

The third constituent of repercussions triggered by the re-adjustment at work, was underlined by big infrastructural and entrepreneurial projects implemented by the metropolitan government, which aimed to improve the 'pull factors' of the city and thus, attract inter/national investment (Öktem, 2005; Uzun, 2007). Highway projects were launched to enhance connectivity within the city; new office and commercial buildings were constructed to re-organize the central business district, and tourism-led revitalization schemes were initiated within the historic-urban core as will be explained in detail.

All in all, the combined pressure of changes and dynamics in the socio-economic sphere of Istanbul quickly translated into heightened demand for urban land in the effort to meet entrepreneurial, residential and commercial needs. Since demand was accompanied with escalating scarcity of space, however, a speculative rise emerged in real estate values, leading to the swift transformation of urban land into a commodity (Baharoğlu, 1996). Acquisition of urban properties -whether in the form of empty plots, or built structures- suddenly became a valuable tool of investment and a good financial resource for all major socio-economic segments. It is due to this shift in the meaning, value and function of urban land that MP's stance towards cities and their governance solidified. The two sections to follow will first depict the legal and

administrative reforms that established the foundations of this new mode of governance, and the urban landscape, resulting from the interaction between liberalized markets, everyday life and new urban governance.

3.1.1. Engineering The Space of Flows: Legal, Administrative and Institutional Grounds

Starting from the mid-1980s extensive legal, institutional and administrative reforms were introduced that would redefine diverse parameters of metropolitan governance and planning (Heper, 1987; Tekeli, 1994;). These reforms had three inter-related aims: First, to grant metropolitan authorities the required and sufficient tools and capacity to act autonomously in deciding for the future use and governance of urban land. Second, to lift building restrictions imposed by specific laws (e.g. natural and historical conservation) on various parts of the city to prepare the ground for entrepreneurial projects; and third, to formalize illegal housing units through the extension of title deeds.

The cumulative goal of these reforms was to pave the way for the spatialization of international capital in Istanbul and the distribution of the 'rewards' of invigorated urban land markets among all segments of the society. 'Fuelling the rent economy' (Keyder and Öncü, 1993: 40) through the adoption of such populist and clientelist redistribution strategies would not only serve the interests of the better-off, but also protect the socio-economic well-being of relatively less privileged communities from the shortcomings of the shift in the scales of economy.[2] In the scarcity of public financial resources to eliminate rising inequalities in the economic sphere, low-income communities –the majority of which were settled in *gecekondu* areas- would be extended a share of rising urban rents through the formalization of their illegal

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[2] Whereas the restructuring process at work had given way to a significant rise in the earnings of middle to upper middle classes, drastic cuts had occurred in real wages, which particularly affected the lower middle to low-income groups.

units.[3] At the same time, new incentives were created for middle to upper middle class groups to invest in urban land. It was assumed that a potential economic crisis could be prevented by transforming *gecekondu* occupiers into formal homeowners while providing opportunities for wealthier groups to invest in urban land (Öncü, 1988; Buğra, 1998).

3.1.1.1 Restructuration of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM)

Administrative, legal and financial restructuring of IMM stands for one of the most groundbreaking changes, which signalled the materialization of new approaches to urban governance along the given lines. With the release of Law No. 3030, Municipality Law, not only was the single-tiered municipal governance of the three largest cities – i.e. Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir- transformed into a two-tiered system, but also the fiscal and authoritative capacity of these governments was radically strengthened (Heper 1987; Keleş and Danielson, 1985).[4] In this way, decisions relating to metropolitan areas were significantly freed from the tutelage of the central government.[5]

These acts towards the decentralization of power were accompanied with others, aiming at the improvement of local governments' financial resources. Revenues channeled from the national budget were increased and the share of returns from local taxes was improved in remarkable proportions (Heper, 1987).[6] Additionally, the IMM was granted the authority to draft master-plans for its respective greater territory, approve physical development plans prepared by district municipalities and

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[3] According to Sönmez (1994), the number of *gecekondus* in Istanbul in 1992 was 750.000 whereas formal units counted up to 850.000. Also important to note is that 400.000 buildings were extended formal titles within this year as a result of the building amnesties (p. 32).

[4] The two-tier system implied that local governance would rely on the collaboration between greater municipality and district municipalities. Whilst the greater municipality would operate as an umbrella organization, district municipalities would be run by their own elected mayors and municipal councils, and facilitate municipal services ranging from refuse collection to detailed land use planning, but still be bound with the administrative supervision of greater municipality.

[5] In the effort to consolidate IMM's autonomy, a number of public agencies (e.g. Water Supply and Sewerage Authority) alongside the Master Plan Bureau, which was formerly tied to the central government, were also brought to the direct control and jurisdiction of metropolitan municipality.

[6] Details on the budget of local government in this period (Heper, 1987; Danielson and Keles, 1985).

supervise the implementation of all (Heper, 1987: 4). This meant that metropolitan and district municipalities would have direct control over the use of vast tracts of urban land.

The combination of all these reforms led to the emergence of what Erder and İncioğlu (2008) coin as 'project oriented municipal governance', which has been sustained to date especially within the case of Istanbul.[7] Rendered much more independent compared to the past, the IMM consumed its financial and authoritative capacities to the fullest in order to implement various large-scale operations, as will be explained below, seeking to achieve 'short-term' and predominantly 'investment' driven goals towards the internationalization of Istanbul. In the light of these developments, the IMM evolved into an "entrepreneurial local government, acting as a market facilitator" under the leadership of the time's mayor, Bedrettin Dalan (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008: 14).

3.1.1.2. Manufacturing Tourism and 'Prestige' Areas

Law No. 2634 that is Tourism Encouragement Law is a key law passed, again, in this period, first to channel investments into the tourism sector and then to restructure Istanbul's central business district in a way to host the emergent business activities and commercial operations (Ekinci, 1994: 76-77). At the outset, the law worked through the relaxation of building restrictions imposed on historical sites, green spaces and other special zones for the construction of premium tourism establishments, the majority of which were five star hotels. Limited to the scale of 'building plots', more than 40 areas in the heart of city and around the Bosphorus (with easy access to both the historic urban core and the newly developing business areas) were declared 'tourism centres' between the years 1984-1991 and on the basis of this particular law (Ekinci, 1994 and 1991). Construction permissions for such

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[7] This fits into the discussion on the transition from 'managerialist' to 'entrepreneuralist' approaches to local governance by Harvey (1989). Here, Harvey had focused on the heightened tendency of local governments to pursue economic development through negotiations with (inter)national finance capital to shape cities into lures for capitalist development (1989: 5).

luxurious hotels as the Çırağan Palace (1992) and the Hyatt Regency (1993) were issued on the grounds of this law.

Later, though, Law No. 2634 was extended in a way to allow for the construction of cutting edge trade centres on plots without building permissions along the Maslak-Levent axis, the newly emerging central business district of the time.[8] Since capital groups, demanding space around this main axis, were the major supporters of MP's liberalization programme and since they had organic relations with the party, local and central governments showed little resistance to the issuing of relevant permissions (Öktem, 2005: 47-48). To the contrary, what defined many of MP's policy decisions between the years 1984-1989 was the strong harmony and collaboration between local and central governments, and entrepreneurial groups. This is how the very first five-star hotels, office towers, shopping malls, or the 'prestige structures' of Istanbul as they were considered by the ruling elite, were built on prime-locations, marking the beginning of 'skyscraper symbolism' in Istanbul (Keyder and Öncü, 1993).[9]

The law became a magnet of criticism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and paved the way for the initiation of a series of lawsuits by the Chamber of Architects and the Chamber of Planners. According to the critical and oppositional view, Law No. 2634 transferred the power to take building and construction decisions for plot-size areas from the metropolitan municipality to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. That is, tying the authority to make decisions on partial land to a body of centralized state mechanisms posed a big threat to the unity and integrity of visions on urban planning. From this perspective, only metropolitan governments held the capacity to develop plans for their respective urban territories in a way to secure and satisfy public interests (Ekinci, 1991).

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[8] This particular axis had started to develop following the designation of its surroundings as an industrial zone by the state credentials committee in the post-1970s. (Öktem, 2005: 40-44)

[9] Among the high rise buildings of this period along the Maslak-Büyükdere axis were such office towers as the Yapı Kredi Plaza (1991), the Sabancı Centre (1992) and the Maya-Akar İş Merkezi (1991), and hotels and cultural centres as the Mövenpick Radisson Hotel (1991) and the Şişli Centre of Culture and Trade (1994).

3.1.1.3. Reconfiguring Housing Markets: Provision of Housing and Formalization of Informality

Other influential policy changes of the 1980s were linked to the direct involvement of central government in housing markets by taking concrete steps towards the provision of state subsidized housing and the legalization of informally built housing stock. The state's withdrawal from being a mere regulator in the housing sector after almost four decades was driven by the will to revitalize the industry, following the stagnation point it reached with the crisis of late 1970s. Since housing had functioned as a major channel of capital accumulation for almost all socio-economic segments up until the financial meltdown, its recovery would be crucial especially within the new environment of liberalized markets and speculative growth (Baharoğlu, 1996).

The primary indicator of the changing attitude of central government in this context has been the introduction of the Mass Housing Fund (MHF) in 1982, followed by the foundation of the Mass Housing Administration (MHA) in 1984 (Keleş, 1990; Tekeli, 1991). The main goal of the fund was to ease the access of qualifying groups to housing markets through the extension of subsidized credits. Research has shown that the introduction of fund triggered a boost in housing production to a considerable extent (Baharoğlu, 1996). However, since the cycle of increased demand and production inevitably led to an increase in housing prices, credits provided by MHA fell radically short of covering the costs of production.[10] Thus, the main beneficiaries of the fund ended up being the middle-classes who either opted for cooperative housing blocks mushrooming on the urban periphery, or privately built apartment buildings located especially in the coastal areas of Istanbul (Baharoğlu, 1996; Keyder, 1999b). These coastal areas have in time come to represent the quintessential middle to upper middle class neighbourhoods of Istanbul.[11]

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[10] According to Baharoğlu, "at 1988 market prices, the credit actually given to each family met only one quarter of the price of a social dwelling of about 80 square meters. A manual worker with a monthly income of 200.000 TL (US $160 [at the time]) would have to commit 20 years of his monthly salary in order to meet the cost of a social housing unit." (Keles, qtd. in Baharoglu, 1996: 52).
[11] As the housing tenancy map in *Mapping Istanbul* also reveals, majority of these areas were 'owner occupied' zones (Derviş and Öner, 2009: 148-149)

What complemented the changing attitude of the state in housing markets, though, was the release of *Gecekondu* Amnesty Law in 1984, which allowed for the retroactive extension of ownership rights to *gecekondu* owners and the physical improvement of buildings (Keleş, 1990; Tekeli, 1994). Building amnesties had long functioned as 'cost effective' strategies of the state in negotiating with the workings of the informal housing sector, which met the residential needs of millions of low-income groups in the major cities of Turkey since the 1940s. With the scarcity of financial resources to produce and offer public housing, central governments had preferred to rely on the informally devised solutions of underprivileged groups for the satisfaction of housing needs. Amnesties, within this context, were effective tools of both acknowledging and ignoring informality in a way to minimize national spending and create redistribution mechanisms for the socio-economically insecure. In other words, "the amnesty law, representing a negotiated settlement ending a long conflict between illegal settlers and the state, had particularly significant repercussions on property ownership, transferring a sizeable amount of public land to gecekondu dwellers and granting construction rights to unauthorized housing settlers, thus enhancing their property rights." (Gülöksüz, 2002: 475)

Law no. 2981 of 1984, however, remains exceptional among a series of amnesties that were initially released in the 1960s for at least two critical reasons: One of the main motivations behind its release was indisputably the earlier mentioned scarcity of serviceable land. Compared to drafting plans for and investing in completely underdeveloped areas, formalizing the already existing illegal settlements on the urban periphery, equipped with basic infrastructure and amenities, and diverting development towards these neighbourhoods was a more cost effective solution on the part of state in the absence of sufficient capital reserves. Secondly, 'pardoning' *gecekondus*, that is granting them formal deeds, meant providing the low-income residents of these areas with a share of the climbing rent speculation by integrating them into the formal housing markets, which they otherwise could not afford to enter. A legal recognition as such would not only 'protect' the socio-economically vulnerable households against declining wages and competition over urban land in the absence

of social housing policies, but also reduce the costs of the state in formulating solutions for the housing needs of less privileged groups.

Thus, the law instructed the improvement of building conditions in *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, the heightening of urban density on the periphery and the formation of '*gecekondu* prevention areas' to achieve planned urban growth.[12] The law was also followed by a number of 'land development and reconstruction plans' starting from 1986, which ordered the physical and large-scale upgrading of 'first generation' *gecekondus*.[13] In no time, "squatter settlements which started out as one, or two room shacks in small gardens built with mixed construction materials" developed into "several-storied cement blocks" (Buğra, 1998) and such *gecekondu* neighbourhoods as Kağıthane, Ümraniye and Sultanbeyli experienced a sizeable growth (Erder, 1996); Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). It is within the context of these developments that a particular form of power hierarchy also formed within these neighbourhoods: As formal 'ownership' came to be defined by the provision of title deeds and as extra storeys were constructed, 'tenancy rates' climbed within these previously illegal areas (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). This *post-gecekondu* phase, as it is often referred to in the literature, represents the ultimate commercialization of *gecekondus* which have produced a new cluster of more fortunate and less privileged groups within these areas (Esen, 2005).

3.1.1.4. Emergence of Middle to Upper Middle Class Housing

What is of critical importance is that new steps taken in the legal and administrative reorganization of urban planning, governance and land markets during the 1980s all developed within a culture of 'urban populism', a novel condition brought about by

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[12] Gecekondu prevention areas were designated by the Metropolitan Municipality for redevelopment and upgrading plans for the provision of social housing for low-income groups. According to regulations, "land within municipal boundaries and in designated adjacent areas which belonged to the treasury, provincial administrations and annex budgeted state organizations, or lands under state control and use would be allocated with no cost to the municipalities" (Tekeli, 1994: 181) for the given purposes.

[13] First generation, or traditional *gecekondus* as they first emerged within the 1940s were shack-like buildings limited to a single storey.

MP (Keyder and Öncü, 1993). Treatment of 'urban land market as a major distributive-redistributive arena' had already been pursued as a populist strategy during the national developmentalist era, when investments on urban land had almost become the sole channel of capital accumulation, as mentioned earlier. Urban land, as a *state resource*, was distributed among urban crowds through the relaxation of regulations and non-application of rules both in an effort to secure votes and prevent social and economic unrest at a time of limited financial resources and savings channels (Öncü, 1988; Ayata, 1994).

What made the 'urban populism' of MP distinct, though, was its focus on a "*free market* model, free of government tutelage, and likely to reward initiative and luck" especially within the context of metropolitan centres (Keyder and Öncü, 1993: 398-399). That is, the liberal shift in the populist perspective did not only appeal to socio-economically less privileged urban populations who wanted to achieve upward mobility in an increasingly competitive environment, but also to big capital groups who wanted to make use of the opportunities presented by new politico-economic constellations and their regulatory mechanisms. Thus, the populist approach of MP also led to various forms of corruption and the institution of what Buğra (1998) calls the 'immoral' aspect of urban governance in the post-1980s.

Buğra particularly makes reference to the workings of middle to upper middle class housing markets in explaining this 'immorality' and calls the Amnesty Law of 1984 mentioned in the previous section, and its effects on *upper-middle class housing production* to attention. As mentioned earlier, the Amnesty Law of 1984, and 'the land development and reconstruction plans' which followed, had made the legalization and then commercialization of informal housing units possible. Commercialization had not only become evident in the physical improvement of buildings, or the maximization of tenancy rates in formerly owner-resident inhabited structures, but also in the climbing real estate value of peripheral urban land upon which construction could take place.

The integration of the periphery into a dynamic sector as such soon overlapped with

the rising demand of middle and upper-middle urban classes to move away from the city centre and triggered the interest of large construction firms, willing to respond to this emergent demand. With the contribution of newly available MHA funds as well, the formerly squatted periphery of Istanbul came to be dotted with upper-middle class residential compounds. Moreover, 'the land development and reconstruction plans', originally devised to prevent the further construction of illegal units and the improvement of already existing ones, functioned in a way to grant building permits to large development companies to expand towards forest land, water reservoirs and other special zones which should had otherwise been protected by master plans. In other words,

Both the commercialization of gecekondu and the emergence of competing claims on peripheral land appear to be outcome of squatter regularization processes whereby the privileges accorded to the underprivileged (…) have been subverted and used to sustain diverse forms of illicit income generation (Buğra, 1998: 312).

This 'immorality', however, cannot only be understood in the mere presence of the Amnesty Law of 1984 and the enactments that followed it. It was the combined influence of all the recently released laws which widened the scope of rent seeking activity, and the powers granted to local governments which led not only to the misuse of new directives, but also to the violation of existing planning schemes and conservation rules. Many residential compounds, which came to represent the gated communities of Istanbul, were built in this period with the extension of 'land development and reconstruction plans' to natural reserve zones, and the violation of the Bosphorus Law.[14] Entry of large construction companies into the protected site had become possible with the changes that Mayor Dalan brought to the Building Development Law. Although the changes were taken to the court by the opposition party of the time, SHP, and although these changes were abolished by court decision, deliberate delays in putting the court decision into process had resulted in the provision of hundreds of building permissions to various companies for the construction of luxury villas during the time of delay.[15] Moreover, the majority of the

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[14] The law had come into effect during the military rule of 1980 in order to protect the Bosphorus, which was declared a conservation zone in 1974.
[15] Between the years 1984-1994, 3000 villas were built illegally around the Bosphorus although this

companies that acquired building permissions had organic relations with MP.

A series of incidents which involved allowing capital groups with strong links to MP to realize upscale projects in areas either with no development plans, or under protection, rendered the period between the 1984-1994 as one of the most 'corrupt' and 'scandalous' within the history of Turkish urbanization (Ekinci, 1994). It is thus no coincidence that the very first reactions from such civil groups as the Chamber of Architects and the Chamber of Planners started to be voiced in this period.

3.1.2. Istanbul in the 1990s: Landscape of the First Round of Urban Globalization

The combined impact of the shift to a free market economy; the rise of the new urban middle classes; rural and international migration; legal and institutional readjustments in the governance of urban land and housing markets, and projects initiated both by national/international capital groups and metropolitan government in the face of new socio-economic and political conditions have been the main determinants of urban change in Istanbul throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As mentioned earlier, the aim of the large-scale readjustment process was to distribute the rewards of economic liberalization as widely as possible. Thus, some of the most striking consequences of these attempts have been fundamental changes in the acquisition of wealth and the capacity of poverty to transform itself (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001 and 2003).

Noting that the capacity and mode of one social segment to access rewards would differ from another, it has been inevitable for socio-economic inequalities to surface in such ways that it has become possible to talk of the 'urban fragmentation' of the city as Kurtuluş (2003) coined it. Thus, the landscape of Istanbul in the post-1980s has gradually come to reflect emergent class cleavages, defined by the relations of different socio-economic groups to the new urban economy and the ways in which

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number only reflects the official perspective. The court had decided for the demolition of 1300 of these structures, however only 100 of them could be demolished (Sönmez, 1996). According to Sonmez, the number of illegal luxurious structures have gone up to 10.000 between the years 1986-1996.

their strategies to 'make place' for themselves within the city shifted according to these relations. *Gecekondu* neighbourhoods inhabited by low-income communities on the urban periphery; gated communities of the new urban middle to upper-middle class right beside the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, and gentrified inner-city areas of the new creative middle-classes constitute some of the most typical elements of Istanbul at the end of its first round of urban globalization, along the lines of new class constellations (ibid: 87).

Before explaining the mentioned fragmentation, though, it is useful to address Bilgin and Karaören's use of the term 'dual city' in both describing the landscape of Istanbul during in the aftermath of mid-1980s and drawing attention to the simultaneous emergence and juxtaposition of two urban layers (1993: 38): One that 'came about almost naturally' due to the immediate effects of the shift in the scale of urban economy and governance, and the other, which was 'engineered' for the much aspired internationalization of Istanbul by the metropolitan government. The former layer was mainly composed of the transformation of traditional *gecekondus* into multi-storey apartment buildings (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001), the heightened makeover of middle-class residences by small-scale producers (Esen, 2005), the mushrooming of middle to upper-middle class gated communities on the periphery (Danış and Perouse, 2005), and the unprecedented mixing together of these three residential terrains.[16] The growing attraction of creative classes to inner-city neighbourhoods that had not yet experienced a boom in real estate prices constituted another aspect of this layer. These trends, in time, led to the gentrification of such districts as Cihangir, Galata and Kuzguncuk (Behar and İslam, 2005).

The latter layer, though, can best be explained with the entrepreneurial activities of national/international capital and sweeping operations of Bedrettin Dalan. The most visible constituents of these surfaced in the form of trade and office towers, shopping malls, luxurious hotels, congress halls and cultural venues. Considered as the vital elements of attracting international attention at diverse levels (i.e. business, tourism

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[16] This pattern of growth can be interpreted as a continuation of the pre-1980s urbanization process, defined by the uncontrolled reliance of authorities on the nature and dynamics of the market (ibid.).

etc.), these new urban components also came to function as the new spaces of everyday life for middle to upper middle classes in a short span of time (Bali, 2002). What particularly distinguished this layer from the former was its aspiration to belong to a global and international terrain, rather than the very city it was emerging in (Bilgin and Karaören, 1993). Cutting edge architectural designs these structures embodied and the uncalculated impact they imposed on their surroundings marked the ambition in achieving this sort of belongingness.

Accompanying this aspect of the second layer were the equally ambitious projects of Dalan, which mainly focused on such infrastructural operations as highway constructions, aiming at the inter-connection of the thriving parts of Istanbul. To this end, Dalan even took one of the most controversial municipal actions in the urban history of Istanbul, which involved the demolition of hundreds of historical buildings in the city centre to open up a boulevard (Ekinci, 1994; Bartu, 1999). Here the aim was to connect the city centre both to the only international airport of the time and the newly developing CBD along the Maslak-Buyukdere axis. The rest of Dalan's operations, on the other hand, and quite ironically, focused on the revitalization of the historic urban core in order to adjust Istanbul to the liking of the tourist gaze. The cleansing of Golden Horn is one of the leading projects within this category, which transformed a significantly polluted waterfront site to such an extent that it managed to attract the attention of national capital. Consequently, one of the leading national business groups founded an Industrial Museum on the coastline, whereas some former industrial structures within the area were attempted to be revitalized through public-private partnerships (Bezmez, 2009).

It is within the context of the first layer of the 'dual city' that the defining dynamics of the emergent socio-economic fragmentation are embedded. As mentioned earlier, one of the many consequences of the economic readjustment programme had been the dramatic transformation of income structures at a national scale: While middle to lower-middle classes had experienced a considerable fall in real wages, middle-to upper middle classes had experienced a remarkable increase due to the significant growth of service sectors and the equally significant contraction of industrial sectors

(Güvenç and Işık, 2002). The variation of residential geographies as it is described in the former layer of the 'dual city' is a reflection of this growing inequality between urban social and economic groups within a steadily increasing urban population. Distinctions in the capacity of each group to access urban land and property shaped their 'place selection' and survival strategies within a highly complex and competitive urban environment (Kurtuluş, 2003 and 2005; Keyder, 2005).

To start with the middle to upper-middle classes, probably the most striking trend among these groups was a move towards the outskirts with the start of 1990s. At a swift pace, the outskirts of Istanbul came to be marked by upscale and gated communities, offering 'exquisite architectural design' as much as 'secure and benign living environments' (Aksoy and Robins, 1994: 67) in the face of growing complexity and social mixing in the city. The emergence of gated communities, thus, did not only gesture at the middle to upper classes' residential preferences but also the dynamics underlying these preferences. Life in these privatized and 'fortified territories', as Aksoy and Robins put it, is arranged in a way that homogeneity in terms of socio-economic status and lifestyle patterns are maximized and, encounters with 'others' are minimized.[17] The period, which has seen the popularization of gated communities, also marks the period when the 'fear of the other' also climaxed. The term *varoş* emerged in this period to refer to parts of the city that were not only physically run down but were also considered as 'cradles of crime and social deviance.'

Coming to lower income groups, and especially the communities of former *gecekondu* areas, what has been witnessed is a new hierarchical situation forged by the impact of amnesty laws. As mentioned earlier, legalization of *gecekondu* areas had given way to the commercialization of *gecekondus* and the formation of a new landlord class among the socio-economically less advantaged urban communities. "[Playing] the card of the real estate market in an attempt to offset what they had lost in the economic arena" (Güvenç and Işık, 2002: 211), it became possible for these new landlords to build

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[17] This talk became particularly visible in the way these areas were 'marketed' as 'commodities' in visual media. Emphasis on such elements as 'exclusive worlds', 'away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre', 'peaceful environs', 'in the company of elite crowds' came forward in these narratives, and altogether formed the package if a new lifestyle specific to the Istanbul of 1990s (Bali, 1999).

extra units and rent them out to less privileged groups, majority of which were newly arriving rural migrants. This created what Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2001) call 'poverty in turns' in a way to describe the new power constellations within post-*gecekondu* areas whereby the former illegal occupiers become the new landlords and the new tenants represent the less privileged – only until they accumulate enough to become owners. What is more, tenancy within these areas became increasingly dependent on solidarity networks of ethnicity, origin and political orientation, which functioned in a way to provide the newcomers with job opportunities. That is, the social and economic integration of the new migrants became increasingly dependent on their capacity to access housing and job markets through these networks (Keyder, 2005).

Those who could not connect with any of the mentioned networks have come to represent the most disadvantaged of the poor in Istanbul, living in the deprived conditions of slummized inner-city areas. These groups were not limited to the forcefully displaced Kurds of South Eastern Anatolia –who were the latest arriving of all rural migrants- but were also joined by such marginalized groups as Southern African refugees, Roma communities and transvestite sex workers. Filling the gaps in the abandoned historical urban core through tenancy at minimal rates, or in worst-case scenarios squatting, these communities have been addressed as the new under class of Istanbul (Erder, 1995; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). Yet, it is not very easy to align these groups with the western definition of the underclass since the urban poor of the inner-cities were not entirely 'hopeless' crowds. As Yılmaz put it, "even the poorest groups take place in the socioeconomic (and political) structure without falling out of it thanks to the networks of solidarity which still are efficient, although it is not sure that they would last forever." (2003: 7). It goes without saying that there is relative difference between the workings of solidarity networks in *gecekondu* and inner-city poverty zones. However, as fieldwork for this research has also revealed, despite harshest conditions, it is the power of solidarity that keeps life going on in the poorest heart of the city.

3.2. The Ultimate Urban Transformation of Istanbul: 'The Second Round of Urban Globalization (2002 – …)

The year 2002 represents a turning point in the political, historical and urban trajectory of Turkey for the Justice and Development Party's (JDP) landslide victory resulted both in a single party rule, and an ideological harmony between the central government and the metropolitan government of Istanbul for the first time in eleven years. A successor of the Islamic Welfare Party (WP) and the Virtue Party (VP), what brought JDP to power in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in 1999 and two consecutive economic crisis is a combination of diverse dynamics among which three come to fore, according to Öniş (2004): The party's success in forming a cross-class electoral alliance which embraced both the winners and losers of the neo-liberalization process; the 'strong track-record' of JDP's predecessors in local governance; and the failures of centre left and right wing parties in 'achieving sustained and equitable growth, avoiding costly financial crises and tackling the problem of pervasive corruption' (Öniş, 2004: 1).

What gained particular emphasis within the political discourse of JDP was the equal distribution of material benefits among the 'more dynamic and prosperous segments of society benefiting from the globalization process in material terms' and 'the more disadvantaged and underprivileged sections of society (…) that failed to participate effectively and benefit from the operations of the global market' (ibid.). This outlook, which addressed issues of rising poverty in a way that was not previously intended by either left, or right wing governments, was already put into effect at the level of local governance during the rule of WP. During its office, WP had demonstrated that connecting with constituents at local levels -especially in low-income neighbourhoods- would return winning positions in political terms (Çakır, 1994; Atayurt and Çavdar, 2009).[18] Claiming this legacy, JDP "displayed a high degree of

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[18] The Welfare Party (WP) had achieved a sweeping success in the general elections of 1994, showcasing a strong national and Islamic background, dedication to an anti-capitalist and anti-EU agenda, and commitment to the achievement of a pluralistic democracy (Özbudun, 2006: 544-545). With an emphasis on the establishment of an 'honest government' against fraud and corruption, and the institution of a 'just order' in economy, WP had developed mass popularity and established a loyal constituency first and foremost amongst *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, where the erosion of economic

mobilization at the local level and also capitalized on the dense networks of informal relations that helped to mobilize the local community in addressing the problems of poverty and deprivation" in its early years (Öniş, 2004: 34). On this basis, JDP had ideologically filled a gap, which derived from 'the melt down of conventional politics in Turkey' (ibid.).[19]

Another novel aspect of JDP was its approach to economy and EU relations. Unlike its predecessor, JDP did not reject adjusting to the workings of neo-liberal capitalism, or stand against the EU membership process. Instead, "the new party's 'post-Islamist' political programme abandoned reference to Islamic values, embraced the free market economy, adopted the discourse of democracy, human rights and rule of law, and enthusiastically supported Turkey's entry into the EU" (Patton, 2007: 343). To these ends, JDP single-mindedly demonstrated a strong commitment to the IMF programme (launched in the aftermath of 2001 economic crisis), and undertook a series of structural reforms to satisfy the requirements of the programme and work towards harmonizing with EU standards.[20] The pro-EU membership and neo-liberalization agenda of JDP have been considered as interlinked paths both to achieving macro-economic stability and claiming power in the global hierarchy of power relations (Uğur, 2009): Reforms and incentives have been introduced for

and social living conditions was at peak. At the level of local governance the party had put such novel and popular ideas into practice as setting up 'people's assemblies' where face-to-face, personalized relationships between district mayors and electoral constituents could be developed in the solution of various problems. Catering various forms of aids (e.g. coal, food, clothes) supplied by the conservative wealthy for low-income neighbourhoods was another novel practice, frequently exercised by WP (Çakır, 1994; Çavdar and Atayurt, 2009). The party's particular attention to squatter areas showed in its overall approach to Istanbul's development as well; in 1995, "the metropolitan municipality [had] announced that it would freeze financial development in the city centre and shift investment to the urban periphery" (Tuğal, 2008: 74).

[19] According to Öktem (2005: 44-55) whereas the centre-left had contributed to the economic setbacks by falling short of protecting the rights and interests of the underprivileged, right wing parties had already developed a reputation for 'planting the seeds of corruption' in Turkish politics.

[20] An initial disinflation program, approved by the IMF Board in December 1999, was designed to address up front the credibility of the disinflation effort and rested on "a large front-loaded fiscal adjustment; a strong exchange rate commitment underwritten by a no-sterilization monetary policy rule and income policies; and a wide range of upfront structural reform measures." (*IMFSURVEY*, 2000: 236). This was expected both to stabilize the fiscal situation and to bring inflation down. However, the programme failed only 14 months after its launch due to a severe banking and currency crisis in late 2000 and early 2001. Launched in Autumn 2001 with the support of IMF, a new programme was introduced which "[represented] a deeper attempt than previous ones to address the fundamental weaknesses in the economy. Hence, key structural reforms placed a strong focus on public sector reform, building a sound banking sector, and liberalising markets for private sector– led growth." (*Policy Brief*, 2002: 2).

Turkey to be able to interact with European and regional actors in full capacity on the grounds of economic and political credibility.

This combination of efforts resulted in a speedy recovery from the crisis, a record fall in the inflation rates since the 1970s and a significant economic growth, which restored investor confidence greatly.[21] JDP's performance in maintaining economic and political stability and creating a conducive environment for investments within a short span of time did not only gain the support of such national associations of elite republican businessmen as TÜSİAD, but was also recognized by the OECD:[22]

The recovery from the 2001 crisis has been impressive. Over the 2002-05 period, output increased by a third, representing the strongest pace of growth among OECD countries. At the same time, annual inflation fell steadily, reaching single digits in 2004 for the first time in three decades, while sound fiscal and monetary policies improved confidence and reduced risk premia, thereby enhancing business investment and FDI inflows. Thus good progress has been made towards a shift to a stronger and more sustainable growth path. Indeed, the process of real income convergence seems to have begun, following the disappointing periods of the late 1980s and the 1990s. If this path can be maintained, this would represent a significant break from the past decades of short-lived economic booms, followed by sharp downturns or recessions. (Policy Brief, 2006: 3)

Reverberations of JDP's strategic approach towards economic and political stability found its most clear expressions both in the achievement of a certain growth in national economy and a salient increase in the amount of FDI inflows following 2002.[23] What assumes critical importance here, however, is the intensification of

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[21] In 2005 February, Moody's "upgraded Turkey's key foreign-currency ratings in light of the country's positive economic, political and social transformation over the past four years". Providing positive feedback on Turkey's new relations with the EU, the report put that "the EU's ongoing positive influence on Turkey [was] arguably even stronger than for those countries already comfortably inside the union", and also that "the EU's legislative criteria for membership starting early next year [would] reinforce market confidence and reform momentum". For more information on Moody's annual reports on Turkey, see http://www.moodys.com/credit-ratings/Turkey-Government-of-credit-rating-768337 (accessed, 28.05.2013).
[22] TÜSİAD's support to JDP government has generally been considered striking since the association had traditionally "enjoyed a tense relationship with political parties, or governments with Islamist roots, or orientation" (2004: 19). However, the periodic assessments of the association, as Öniş revealed, display open appreciation of the government's contributions to 'the overall improvement in the macroeconomic performance of the Turkish economy', 'commitment to fiscal discipline as a key ingredient of stability' and 'the pro-active stance adopted (...) in promoting the cause of EU membership' among many (ibid.: 20). These indicators have often been proof to the wide range of positive feedback that JDP government received particularly during the initial years of its rule.
[23] Whereas the total number of international companies in Turkey between the years 1954-2003 was 6323, this number has climbed up by 14.966 between the years 2003-2009 mounting up to a total

efforts to integrate these positive economic returns with attempts to reinvigorate real estate mechanisms and the construction sector: A good amount of the past decade's reforms has directly aimed at strengthening the integration of urban land markets to mechanisms of capital accumulation, and the further empowerment of local governments and relevant state institutions in regulating and controlling these markets and mechanisms. Repercussions of these efforts have surfaced in the urban landscape of Turkey in the form of new housing projects, major road works and privatizations.

The significance of Istanbul within this scenario gained centrality in line with the very same reasons that were valid during the MP rule of the 1980s. In the words of Keyder, "following the success of liberalization in Turkey, it was further understood that the city would represent a mandatory gateway for global capital and assume importance not only for the country, but also for the geography surrounding the country" (2009: 45). Thus, the post 2000s period saw a visible shift from "a sloppy 'opening up' policy, lacking in mental and institutional structuration" to a "process of establishing the city's global links on a much more conscious and serious platform" (ibid.). Opening urban land to the investments of (inter)national and public-private partnerships, and major infrastructural operations at an increasingly larger scale, and thus, channeling revenues into shaping Istanbul into a rent generating economic and cultural centre with the use of new institutions and policy tools assumes ever more critical importance towards the achievement of national goals. What distinguishes the 'second round of globalization' from the previous, thus, is not only the heightened level of determination on the part of particularly the political elite, but also its heavier reliance on real-estate driven strategies that are increasingly and actively being secured by state mechanisms. In this sense, Istanbul has almost become a 'salvation

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number of 21.664. 11,803 of these companies are headquartered in Istanbul according to the 'Bulletin of Data on Foreign Direct Investment' issued by the Prime Ministry Undersecretariat of Treasury (Ankara: General Directorate of Incentive Implementation and Foreign Investment, 2009). According to the *OECD Istanbul Territorial Review*, this corresponds to %60 of the total foreign direct investment entering Turkey (2008: 71). With respect to economic success in national context, Uğur asserts that, "during the term of the first AKP government, the national income grew at an average annual rate of approximately 7% [and] inflation fell from about 30% in 2002 to 7.7% in 2005. Thanks to sustained fiscal discipline, high growth rates and appreciation of the Turkish Lira, the ratio of public debt to national income has fallen from around 78% in 2002 to 41% in 2007. Finally, as growth resumed and stability set in, the cost of disinflation (in terms of high real interest rates) began to fall." (2009: 6)

project' in the agenda of central government.[24] On one occasion, Prime Minister Erdoğan said;

Istanbul stands both as a summary of our country and one of the most important centres of our civilization. The more the star of Istanbul shines, the more prestigious it becomes as a world city, the more will the star of Turkey shine and the more prestigious it will become. (…) In our view, providing Istanbul with the services it deserves is what we owe to this country the most. (*İstanbul Bülteni*, July 2007: 5)

These sentiments have gone to such an extent that a news-piece in the monthly *İstanbul Bülteni*, titled 'The Visual Revolution of Istanbul from the Ugly to the Beautiful: Urban Regeneration', suggests that 'the regeneration projects in Istanbul should not only be seen as the vision projects of Istanbul, but also of Turkey.'[25] In line with this view, Istanbul's current mayor, Kadir Topbaş, also put that "there are cities that carry the entire nation they belong to on their shoulders (...) In the case of Turkey, this city is Istanbul. Each and every positive step taken in Istanbul denotes a positive step for Turkey."[26]

Thus, (…) "in the new millennium, every part of the city [has become] exposed to radical change as more and more land is brought into the market economy, catapulting the whole of Istanbul into an irreversible process of large-scale urban change" (Aksoy, 2008: 75). What has been witnessed since the election of JDP is on one hand an intensification in the patterns of urban development which had already emerged with the 1990s: The total number of shopping malls in the country counted up to 225 in 2009 and 30% of these were located in Istanbul.[27] Numbers provided by

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[24] At a conference in October 2009, the former president of the Mass Housing Administration (MHA) and the new minister of Environment and Urbanism, Erdoğan Bayraktar, proposed that it is not possible to "talk about the improvement of Turkish economy without the salvation of Istanbul." ("Do You Mean the MHA Has a Mission of Generating Rent and We Are Not Aware Of It? [TOKİ'nin Rant Yaratma Misyonu Vardı da Bizim mi Haberimiz Olmadı?], accessed July 23, 2012, http://www.yapi.com.tr/Haberler/tokinin-rant-yaratma-misyonu-vardi-da-bizim-mi-haberimiz-olmadi_73564.html)

[25] *Istanbul Bulteni* is the monthly news bulletin issued by the IMM, which provides information on the latest activities, investments, accomplishments and various other undertakings of the local government and its many institutions.

[26] See "Istanbul Will Become a Shining Star" (İstanbul Parlayan Bir Yıldız Olacak), *İstanbul Bülteni*, (January 2005: 2).

[27] In Istanbul, there were 68 active shopping centers in 2009 whereas 26 new shopping centers were under construction and 10 new shopping centers were in the pipeline according to the Colliers Real Estate Market Review (*Istanbul: Colliers Turkey*, First Half 2009: 3).

Danış and Perouse (2005: 93) indicated that the number of gated communities in the city were 650 in 2005 and 150 were more on its way. Ranking in the first place for A class office areas, Istanbul hosted approximately 1,5 million m2 available space in the second half of 2102 and this availability would be enhanced by an additional 870.000 m2 by the end of the year (*İstanbul: Colliers Turkey*, Second Half 2012: 9). Coming to hotels, the bedroom capacity of luxurious hotels saw an increase by %50 starting from the 2000s according to Candan and Kolluoğlu (2008: 16); total capacity in 2008 equated to a number of 10,199 whilst it was only 2000 in the 1980s. Added to these, on the other hand, are large-scale urban transformation projects (hereafter, UTPs), targeting public spaces, state-owned land, coastal and former industrial areas, historical inner-city zones and *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, or in other words, urban land that remained outside of capitalist circuits with vast potentials of rent. This last category will be covered at length in the coming sections.

It is important to note, though, that as distinct from the MP period, these recent forms of urban change and development have been enveloped and defined within an equally engineered discourse of 'urban regeneration'. In fact, it was argued that the costs of 1999 Marmara earthquake and the economic crush of 2001 would be overcome within the context of a physical, social and economic programme that would help 'create opportunities out of crises'.[28] Regarding the material and fatal losses experienced, the 2005 IMM Report on *Urban Regeneration and Historical Renovation* asserted that turning crises into opportunities was primarily a 'responsibility' on the part of Istanbul for it is both a 'world city' and a 'European Capital of Culture' in the

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[28] The earthquake of 17 August 1999 is considered as one of the most devastating natural disasters, which resulted in immense human and material losses. Official numbers claim that there were approximately 20.000 deaths and 44.000 casualties. Unofficial numbers, however, suggest that the death toll is more than 50.000 whereas the number of casualties is predicted to be more than 100.000. More than 600.000 were left homeless following the collapse of more than 100.000 buildings. Official estimates also claim that approximately 16 million people within Marmara region were affected by the earthquake at varying degrees. For more details, see the Report of The Parliamentary Research Commission on http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem23/yil01/ss549.pdf (Accessed 27.05.2013). The economic crush of 2001, on the other hand, is considered as one of the worst crisis that Turkey experienced, whereby "capital inflows came to a sudden halt and turned into outflows, leaving the country illiquid and the central bank with no control over its instruments, and therefore, unble to stabilize economy" (Cizre and Yeldan, 2005: 396). According to Akyüz and Boratav's (2003) calculations, as put by Cizre and Yeldan (ibid.) "in the last week of November 2000, alone, "Turkish financial markets lost $5.3 billion via non-resident's short-term speculative operations."

effort to 'harmonize with EU standards'.[29] In the presence of a generous aid, granted by the IMF for the post-earthquake recovery, the report announced that, "Istanbul has grabbed a rare opportunity to realize its project of civilization that will mark the age we live in." (*İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi*, 2005: 174-175).[30]

Creation of opportunities, within this framework, is defined under the label of 'urban regeneration', which denotes an extensive physical and visionary restructuration project. Physical aspects of the programme chiefly involve 'the regeneration and rehabilitation of run-down and de-industrialized areas, the central business district and its surroundings', and 'the creation of new landmarks unique to Istanbul'. According to the report, initiation of a grand scheme as such is a necessity for 'advancing at a local level', 'developing a progressive sense of urban governance', 'boosting the competitive qualities of the city', 'triggering metropolitan development' and 'creating a conducive environment for national and international partnerships and investment'. In the past decade not only has the IMM set up new offices and partner institutions to enable the effective realization of this vision, but also embarked on the drafting of various masterplans and reports.[31]

Having a look at the 1: 25,000 and 1: 100,000 scale master plans, prepared in 2007 and 2009 respectively, one can see that the given discourse and vision of IMM have been modelled into concrete strategies. The report of 1: 25,000 master plan states that the primary aim is to render Istanbul 'a regional centre in a global context' and 'to

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[29] Here it is important to note what Candan and Kolluoğlu's (2008) refer to as 'the discourse of urgency' adopted by authorities along similar lines. According to authors, "in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 1999, an intense public debate has taken place regarding the imminent massive earthquake and the extent of the city's preparedness to deal with it. (…) Measures that need to be taken in relation to the pending earthquake, such as strengthening the housing stock and examining the infrastructure, are discussed in relation to many other "disasters" that are "awaiting" Istanbulites, such as crime, migration, chaos in the transportation system, and overpopulation. In other words, the earthquake is discussed in relation to other "naturalized disasters," creating a sense of urgency." Also important to note is that Istanbul was nominated as the European Capital of Culture for 2010.
[30] In June 2005, the IMM was granted 400 million dollars by the IMF to be utilized for earthquake preparedness.
[31] The Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office (IMP), established in 2004 and responsible from the development of the Istanbul Master Plan, is probably one the most significant institutions set up by the IMM in this period. Apart from the creation of smaller offices under the umbrella of the IMM (such as the Urban Design Directorate and the Urbanism Atelier), the MHA and KIPTAS (an IMM owned company engaged in housing production), have also become effective players in urban restructuring through legal and administrative adjustments, as will be discussed later.

move Istanbul to an upper level in the power hierarchy of global cities' (2007:16). On the way to accomplishing these targets, the report argues that Istanbul should first and foremost succeed to evolve from a 'megalopolis' to a 'metropolis'. This dichotomy contains a critique of the post-1980s urban governance and development, which has accordingly failed to integrate all parts of the city to the new scales and mechanisms of production and consumption by prioritizing certain areas and disdaining others (ibid.: 16-17). Setting barriers to the equal distribution of economic returns among diverse social classes, it is argued that this 'particularistic' mode of planning is the main reason for the severe fragmentation of social, economic and urban structure, irregular growth pattern and the destruction of natural and historical environment in Istanbul. Thus, the report proposes the adoption of a more 'wholistic' mode of planning, which can link parts of the city on a much more rational basis, or in other words, maintain the 'sustainable' reorganization of the city.

Urban regeneration projects, in this respect, are seen as major tools in the realization of this ambition. The report also lists the major strengths and weaknesses of the city that should be kept in regard whilst designing solutions: whereas 'informality in urban economy', 'continuous flow of migration', 'inconsistency in housing markets', 'insufficient infrastructure' and 'scarcity of financial resources' are considered amongst the major weaknesses, 'unique historical, cultural and natural assets' and 'geopolitical advantages of the city in both national and intercontinental contexts' are considered as the main strengths (ibid.:15). In the light of these, the plan calls for an attempt to 'control urban growth and density' and 'take the pressure off from the urban core' by 'creating sub-centres in the region', 'restructuring the periphery', 'clearing the centre off from small scale industries', and 'managing urban integration and infrastructure' while at the same time 'protecting natural and historical heritage'.

3.2.1. Actualizing Neoliberal Urbanism: Legal, Administrative and Institutional Grounds

With the given perspective in mind, the JDP government passed a major series of legal and institutional reforms in the areas of local governance, real-estate markets and housing finance since 2004. In a way to ensure the effective initiation of envisioned plans at many levels and the penetration of big capital into these processes, the reforms have particularly aimed at the further empowerment of local governments, eradication of informal housing, 'revitalization' of historical inner-city areas, and the revival of housing markets. More than anything, the combination of reforms gesture at a determined will to achieve the 'almost complete transformation' of the city in line with the expectations of a growth economy.

Equally important, however, is the implication that previously existing populist strategies, which distributed the rewards of liberal urbanism to wider social segments, have almost diminished (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). As much as it has become easier for local governments, public institutions and real-estate developers to initiate projects and plans on the grounds of given reforms, it has become increasingly difficult for severely disadvantaged groups to access the rewards of these transformative changes, let alone surviving them. As it will be explained later, reforms given below have not only led to major restructuration processes within the city, but have also brought new limitations to the living spaces of under privileged groups at many different levels.

3.2.1.1. Further Empowerment of Local Governance

Some of the initial reforms in the legislative structure of metropolitan governance included the new Municipality Laws, released in 2004 (Law No. 5216) and 2005 (Law No. 5393), which granted the IMM with extended powers and authorities that consolidated its entrepreneurial disposition. Physical space under the control and jurisdiction of the greater municipality has been broadened; its power and authority

in development, control and coordination of district municipalities have been increased; its capacity to establish partnerships and collaborations with private companies has been enabled and responsibilities in dealing with natural disasters have been enhanced.

Yet, most important of all, the first legal framework for urban transformation was also outlined within this context, "authorizing district municipalities to implement 'transformation projects' in the derelict, obsolescent, and risky (...) parts of cities" (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010: 6). Implemented through partnerships with either the MHA, or private construction companies, "these projects would renew the existing building stock through a 'demolish-rebuild' method and transfer the 'rightful owners' into public housing built within or out of the neighborhood" (ibid.: 7). Among many areas, *gecekondu* zones became the priority targets of transformation with the use of this law due to their often problematic and complex characteristics in legal terms.[32]

Last but not the least, reforms in the power structure of local governance has made it possible for the IMM to "create opportunities for entrepreneurial actors and real-estate developers by drafting new (rent seeking) plans and selling publicly owned assets to private groups" (Kuyucu, 2010: 128). Numbers from 2012 show that the rate of privatizations in Turkey went up from 8 billion dollars between 1986-2003 to 35 billion dollars between 2003-2011 (Dogan, 2012: 23). There is no official data, which reveals the weight of urban land privatizations within the context of this increase; yet, according to the same report, the sale of public real-estate and assets rank the second in overall privatizations (ibid.: 25). Recent transfer of vast tracts of public land to big capital groups in Istanbul is one of the constituents of this wave of privatizations. Such spots as the Zincirlikuyu Highway Administration's land, the Besiktas Tobacco Factory, Mecidiyekoy Liqueur Factory, Levent IETT land and Salipazari Harbour have been sold to various national and international business groups in the past decade for

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[32] Ayazma and Başıbüyük are among the very first *gecekondu* areas that were designated as renewal zones on the grounds of the 10th clause of Law No. 5393. For more detailed analysis of the experience of these neighbourhoods with UTPs see Kuyucu (2009) and Uzunçarşılı (2010).

their transformation into multi-functional landmark projects in the most prestigious locations of Istanbul.[33]

3.2.1.2. Complete Eradication of Informality

Another set of reforms concerns the *gecekondu* policy, whose justification rests on two main rationales: The need to take necessary measures against the earthquake risk awaiting Istanbul, and to put an end to sustained informality in housing areas (Ünsal, 2010). In June 2005, the IMM was granted 400 million dollars by the IMF for the initiation of relevant research and operations, as mentioned earlier, to strengthen the built environment as a measure against the awaited earthquake risk. Three months later, *İstanbul Bülteni* announced the finalization of the first 'Earthquake Regeneration Project' plans in Zeytinburnu and declared the initiation of more housing regeneration projects to come in at least six other districts.[34] A year later, Mayor Topbaş announced the results of ongoing research, revealing that 1.600.000 of Istanbul's housing stock would not survive the disaster, and noted that the earthquake risk is 'the primary point of reference' in 'planning/regenerating the new/old housing areas'.[35]

It is within this context that *gecekondu* neighbourhoods have been addressed as primary targets of the mentioned transformation due to their seemingly poor building qualities. What complements this stance, though, is the IMM's determination to fight against informal housing' and 'persistence in sanctifying Istanbul of these shabby structures and restoring the city back to its beauty' as noted in the February 2005 editorial of *İstanbul Bülteni*. Another piece summarizes the overall approach of IMM to *gecekondu*s to a great extent:

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[33] Following the announcement of plans with respect to the construction of Istanbul's third international airport, vast areas that were not previously open for development and construction have also been added to this list of soon to be privatized public land.

[34] Zeytinburnu, the former industrial centre of Istanbul, was selected as a pilot area for the initiation of the earthquake focused research and regeneration project in 2002. Initiation of the actual project only started in May 2008, targeting the construction of 1038 residential units and 212 shops in collaboration with KIPTAS. See "Zeytinburnu Earthquake Regeneration Project Has Been Finalized" (Deprem Dönüşüm Projesi Tamamlandı) *İstanbul Bülteni,* (September 2005: 14-15)

[35] 'Istanbul is Getting Ready for A Possible Earthquake' (İstanbul Olası Depreme Hazırlanıyor), *İstanbul Bülteni*, (September 2006: 28-29).

Informal housing structures in Istanbul will be spotted one by one and demolished. The city will be beautified through demolition. Yet, this is not to suggest that it will at the same time be victimized. We will provide all citizens, especially the low-income groups, with the opportunity to become home-owners by allowing them to pay small instalments in the long run. The problem of housing will be solved through social housing projects and big investments.[36]

Regarding the relationship of previous governments to informal housing markets, the turn that JDP has taken can best be described as a novel one. The twist becomes even more intriguing when the winning political standpoint of JDP, based on a fine balance between 'social justice', 'eradication of poverty', 'strengthening of democratic participation' and 'further economic liberalization', is considered.

What explains this turn is undoubtedly the determination to integrate urban land markets in full capacity to neo-liberal market forces, which over-rides the political sensitivity towards social and economic disparities. As mentioned earlier, perpetuating the previous patterns of tolerance and populist strategies regarding informal housing posed an obstacle to the targeted privatization and commodification of urban land in the face of scarce financial resources (Kuyucu and Unsal, 2010). What deserves attention though is that, JDP's battle against *gecekondu* has been wrapped in a language that does not only present gecekondu neighbourhoods as 'the sole responsible [agencies] of irregular urbanization' but also stigmatizes them as the centres of crime and terror.[37] These sentiments have eventually been translated into legal codes, which deem the construction of *gecekondus* a crime. With the passage of new Criminal Code in 2004, *gecekondu* demolitions reached record numbers in Istanbul.[38]

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[36] 'Irregular Urbanization Will be the Fate of Istanbul No More' (Çarpık Yapılaşma İstanbul'un Kaderi Olmaktan Çıkıyor) *İstanbul Bülteni* (February 2005: 37)

[37] The former quote is from the news piece 'Apartments with Gardens Against Global Warming' (Küresel Isınmaya Karşı 'Bahçe Katlı' Konutlar) in *İstanbul Bülteni* (October 2007: 32-33). The note on gecekondu areas as the centres of terror was delivered by the former president of the MHA and the new minister of Environment and Urbanism, Erdogan Bayraktar, who said, "It is a known fact that gecekondu neighbourhoods and irregular housing areas are the roots of terror, drugs, warped attitude towards the state, psychological negativities and health problems." *Star*, 'Gecekondu Bölgelerine 10 Milyar Dolar Akacak' (10 Billion Dollars' Investment on *Gecekondu* Areas), 13.11.2007.

[38] Between 2004 and 2008, 11.543 units in Istanbul were demolished (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010: 6). This was a record high for its period.

3.2.1.3. Restructuration of the Mass Housing Administration

Complementing the reforms in *gecekondu* regime has been the major restructuration of MHA, which rendered the institution a key actor in the workings of urban land markets at many different levels. This has been achieved though a series of legal reforms passed between 2002-2010 which granted the MHA extensive powers and authorities to claim publicly owned land with no costs; to engage in for-profit housing production; to set up housing related companies and establish partnerships with public/private companies in implementing various projects both abroad and inland (which can include such publicly owned assets as schools, hospitals, police offices etc.); to extend credits for renewal, regeneration and development projects, and most importantly, to draft plans for and expropriate properties in regeneration zones.[39] In the given respects it can be argued that the MHA has come to play "a primary role in the construction of a capitalist housing and real estate system" (Kuyucu, 2010: 126) in Turkey.

In the aftermath of the reforms under question, the administration has not only accessed the power to manage formal housing/land markets made available to middle to lower-income groups, but also the power to transfer state-owned land, or properties to big capital groups. In other words, it functions as a rent-generating agency, which creates financial resources for the continuation of further public investments by the administration. Some numbers reveal that the MHA has taken a total area of 65.808.239 m2 land into its possession between the years 2003-2008.[40] According to a report issued by the administration in July 2010, 432.956 housing units were produced in 81 different cities of Turkey between the years 2003-2010. This number equates to 17 cities with populations of more than 100.000 people (Ünsal, 2010). What is more, with the most recent legal and administrative tunings, the MHA has been immunized against various taxes and state scrutiny regarding its financial

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[39] Among these reforms are Law no. 4966 (2003); Law no. 5162 (2004); Law no. 5582 (2007); Law no. 5793 (2008). 2985.

[40] Whereas 46.921.000 m2 of this land was transferred from the state treasury, 793.239 m2 of it was acquired from private properties. For more numbers on the MHA's operations and transactions, see http://www.toki.gov.tr/ (accessed, 28.05.2013)

transactions and operations.[41]

Extension of extraordinary privileges and powers to the MHA and the way in which these privileges and powers have been utilized by the institution did not only trigger reaction from civil oppositional circles (as will be addressed in the following in Chapter 3), but also from the private actors of real-estate and construction sectors. From the given perspective, the operations of the administration constitute a matter of unfair competition within the sector, since it functions much like a for-profit company with privileges that are not available to the rest of the actors within the free markets. At the annual meeting of The Association of Real Estate Investment Companies (GYODER) in 2008, the president of one of the leading real estate investment companies of Turkey suggested that the administration should retreat to its regulatory position, and create incentives for and/or collaborate with private initiatives for the production of affordable housing units.[42] Moreover, the administration is accused of corrupting tenders opened by overwhelmingly accepting offers from companies that are within the circles of the ruling JDP. [43]

3.2.1.4. Revitalization of Historic Urban Core

Another area of reform relates to the regulation of 'historical and natural protection zones', which have been insufficiently integrated into rent generating mechanisms due to special laws imposed on them. With the passage of Law No. 5366, 'Law for the Protection of Dilapidated Historical and Cultural Real-Estate Through Protection by Renewal' in 2005, district municipalities became authorized to implement regeneration projects in 'derelict' and 'obsolescent' areas within conservation zones. That is, the law has enabled the district municipalities to bypass the existing conservation norms and the obligation to rely on the decisions of conservation boards before intervening into areas that call for physical protection due to heritage

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[41] For more on this change, see 'MHA Exempt from Fiscal Rule' (TOKİ Mali Kural Denetimi Dışı) http://www.sabah.com.tr/Ekonomi/2010/07/05/toki_mali_kural_disi (accessed, 28.05.2013).
[42] From field notes at the GYODER 2008 Summit (4-5 June 2008).
[43] For more detailed accounts of such accusations, see Gürek (2008).

qualities.[44]

Law No. 5366 has been put into effect particularly for its utilization in the historical and residential 'inner city' zones, which have experienced gradual physical, social and economic deterioration throughout decades (Kocabaş, 2006) and been inhabited predominantly by the most vulnerable ranks of the urban poor who do not have access to housing elsewhere (Erder, 1995; Yılmaz, 2003). Initially, the law allowed district municipalities to restore existing buildings in these sites, or to demolish-and-rebuild them in accordance with the 'general historical characteristics', and 'development potentials of their surrounding territory'. With the earlier mentioned change in the 73rd clause of Law No. 5393, however, the authority to designate certain areas as 'renewal zones' has been transferred from district municipalities to the IMM.[45] Currently, all powers mentioned above rest on the IMM and projects can still be implemented through partnerships with the MHA, or with private developers.

Since its release in 2005, the law has been effective in the designation of four inner-city poverty areas (Süleymaniye; Neslişah and Hatice Sultan [a.k.a. Sulukule]; Fener-Balat and Ayvansaray, and Tarlabaşı) as renewal zones. Whereas Süleymaniye has become subject to an extensive renovation scheme since 2006, Sulukule and Tarlabaşı have been exposed to radical renewal schemes on the grounds of public-public (Sulukule) and public-private (Tarlabaşı) partnerships. The use of Law No. 5366 has triggered a number of controversies to date among which is its capacity to satisfy the conditions of conservation. Various non-governmental organizations and civil initiatives have raised their concerns over the destruction of authentic urban and architectural forms that need protection, and the creation of entirely new landscapes

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[44] Law No. 2864 that is the 'Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets' has been in effect since 1983, and utilized for the protection of natural reserves and heritage structures in Turkey. It is based on this law that Conservation Boards designate certain areas as conservation sites, impose strict norms that come in the way of radical physical interventions in these sorts of areas and regulate what can be done and what cannot be done. Each city has a number of Conservation Boards, operating at regional levels, depending on the size of a city. Istanbul take the lead within this framework with six conservation areas in effect.

[45] This is because the results of 2010 local elections demonstrated that it was possible for the JDP to lose seats in some of the district municipalities. In the given year, voting behavior in Maltepe and Kartal -two of the most debated areas in terms of urban transformation- changed dramatically in way to vote off JDP aligned mayors. Amendments brought to Law No. 5393 was a way of bypassing such risks as the loss of political power at local levels.

in the attempt to satisfy development potentials. Another matter of concern has been with respect to the way in which resident communities would be affected by the implementation of renewal schemes in these areas, which will be covered at length in the following chapters.

3.2.2. Istanbul in the 2000s: Landscape of the Second Round of Urban Globalization

The given overview allows one to argue that mentioned reforms have "laid the foundations of a fully formalized and commodified urban regime that creates vast opportunities for state agencies, private developers and credit institutions" (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010) to partake in entrepreneurial actions and indulge in the emergent potentials of urban rent. More than anything, reforms have prepared the fitting legal, bureaucratic and economic grounds for the initiation of large-scale urban transformation operations that reify the existing physical, functional and demographic characteristics of diverse parts of the city. Yet, they have also given way to radical restrictions in public access to various urban spaces, services and resources alongside further social and economic fragmentation of the city in the absence of previously existing redistributive mechanisms. Combination of these dynamics has thus brought a new dimension to the controversies of urban problems in Istanbul, deriving from its neoliberal restructuration.

As the diversity of recent urban policies indicate, there are various sorts of operations through which the current mode of restructuration and change finds expression in Istanbul's topography. One set comprises entrepreneurial operations on large-tracts of land, made available for development through highly contentious methods that help lift existing building restrictions imposed on them. In the past decade, state owned land in prestigious parts of the city and former industrial zones on the urban periphery and coastlines have seen ambitious schemes on the grounds of a series of privatizations as mentioned earlier. Although there are variations to the schemes envisaged, almost all of them are underlined by the predominant will to create new

landmarks that aim to strengthen Istanbul's hand for the purposes of urban branding and marketing: Whereas mixed-use developments, comprising up-scale residences, shopping malls, office spaces and recreational functions have become the most typical translation of these ideas in the most central parts of the city (like the cases of Zincirlikuyu and Mecidiyeköy Liqueur Factory), their grander versions are being drafted as 'gateway' projects on the coastlines (like the cases of Salıpazarı Harbour [Galataport] and Haydarpasa).[46] Also important to note is that international competitions were launched for the development of architectural design ideas regarding these areas.[47]

Having become integral parts of Istanbul's increasingly neo-liberalized landscape, these projects also became objects of harsh criticism for they are held responsible for the restriction of public access to urban resources, spaces and services. In other words, all landmark projects are seen as contemporary fences within the city whose gates are only open to the privileged minority. To be more specific, there are widespread concerns about the ways in which publicly owned land is transferred to private actors by the hand of the state to satisfy profit driven ambitions rather than public interest; open spaces like parks, heritage sites and coastlines become increasingly gated, and thus, barred from public access, and natural and green reserves are pressurized under the weight of such schemes. It is however important to note that part of these schemes have not reached the implementation stage, or not completed as yet, due to ongoing judicial processes on the given grounds and various other legal violations. Yet, they have firmly been inscribed on the imagined landscape of the city by those governing it.

The other set of operations are predominantly defined by transformation projects imposed on such residential areas as *gecekondu* neighbourhoods and historical inner-city areas, which entail the direct involvement of IMM, district municipalities, MHA and/or private developers. As mentioned earlier, whereas such neighbourhoods as

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[46] More details on these projects and their controversial aspects -alongside the arguments of civil oppositional groups- will be provided in Chapter 4.

[47] As a result of the competition launched by the IMM in 2006, celebrity architects Zaha Hadid and Ken Yang were appointed to develop design projects for the transformation of Kartal and Küçükçekmece, former industrial zones, into new business hubs and port areas.

Ayazma, Gülsuyu-Gülensu, Başıbüyük fall into the category of *gecekondu* transformation areas that have become exposed to renewal schemes on the grounds of Law. No. 5393, others like Sulukule, Tarlabaşı, Süleymaniye and Fener-Balat represent the historical inner-city areas exposed to Law. No. 5366.[48] Looking at the individual stories of each neighbourhood reveals the distinctions they bare in terms of the stages they are at; typology of projects envisaged for them; demographic feature of neighbourhoods etc. What they have in common, though, is that they are all incompletely commodified areas with enormous rent potentials in a city where serviceable land is getting increasingly scarce. Once legal uncertainties and physical handicaps disabling their rent generating capacities are cleared, these neighbourhoods are made ready for integration with the new urban regime in the making through public/private investments.

What grants current modes of urban development with heightened concerns over social and economic inequalities and well-being is this particular aspect of transformative operations at work. Experiences to date have shown that the way in which renewal and transformation projects are implemented in *gecekondu* neighboruhoods and historic inner-city poverty zones bear alarming problems with respect to democratic participation in governmental decision-making mechanisms at local levels alongside violations of housing and property rights. That is, resident communities are not included in the development of planning ideas for their respective living spaces, not targeted as the main audience of these projects, only provided with limited options of compensation, and face ample risks of dispossession and displacement. Moreover, they are deprived of social and economic security nets that can protect them from the ill effects of such schemes under the given conditions. It can thus be argued that spaces available for the urban privileged expand in a way to contract the spaces of the urban underprivileged at degrees of significant distress.

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[48] Looking at the regeneration map of Istanbul, published by *İstanbul Bülteni* in 2008, one can see that there are more than 20 neighbourhoods that are marked as regeneration zones. However, not all of these neighbourhoods are included within the 'regeneration scheme' of the IMM. Some of these neighbourhoods are being intervened, or partially cleared not for large-scale redevelopment, or re-organization purposes, but for other purposes such as highway construction, or other infrastructural projects.

In order to reveal the grounds for this contraction, there is a need to explain how standard procedures for the implementation of transformative schemes in residential areas work: First, the metropolitan government officially designates a certain area as a regeneration zone in line with the legal frameworks available.[49] This stage is followed by three way protocols signed among actors that will initiate, coordinate and carry out the project - that is the IMM, the district municipality and the MHA, or a private developer. Later, the district municipality launches research to reveal the *de jure / de facto* owners, tenants and occupiers within the area. This is needed in order to work out 'rightful owners' for the process of 'negotiations' to follow. The municipality, then, initiates a process of valuation for each property within the project area -in order to determine their real estate values- and starts to approach property owners with offers.[50] Consequently, owners are presented the following options:

a) *Monetary compensation:* That is, a certain amount of payment, which corresponds with the real-estate value of property in question.

b) *New properties from the project area*: In most cases there is a vast rent gap between the value of new units offered and already existing ones; thus, the real-estate value of existing property is accepted as a down-payment for the new unit and for the rest of the required payment, owners get indebted either to the MHA, or the private developer depending on the conditions of the project.

c) *New units from the MHA public housing system:* These units are located in the newly emerging social housing areas –outside the project area- that are primarily made available for middle to lower middle class consumer groups by the MHA. Regarding payments, the same formula for option (b) applies here as well: If the value of the new unit accounts to be more than that of the existing one, the owner gets indebted to the MHA on the basis of long term and low credit installments.

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[49] Until the amendments of 2010 to Law. No.5393, this power rested on district municipalities as mentioned earlier.
[50] Criteria for valuation are not revealed, although the size and building quality seem to be obvious reference points. More on this will be provided in case study chapters.

If property owners do not opt for any of the above, s/he faces expropriation, meaning that his/her property ends up getting confiscated by state authorities in return for a minimal payment.[51] For tenants, options are barely exist: Whereas they are not even considered as recognized parties throughout negotiations, in some situations they are offered social housing units only to be 'purchased' on the basis of long term and low credit installments.[52] For even more vulnerable groups (e.g. occupiers, or those who are unable to prove their ownership status and cannot afford to move elsewhere within the regular market conditions etc.) there are no options available, meaning that they are evicted from the project area without support. Thus, property ownership becomes the key reference point in determining 'right to housing' within the context of regeneration, regardless of the social and economic conditions of community members. Property owners can guarantee certain gains, whether it is financial compensation, or provision of housing, whereas tenants and illegal occupiers remain unprotected by law unless they join the formal housing market. Social and economic policies that can nullify these drawbacks are currently non-existent.

An increasing number of studies focusing on the implementation of urban transformation projects in residential areas confirm that schemes based on the given sorts of models worsen the quality of life of communities that already suffer from socio-economic fragilities. Candan and Kolluoğlu's (2009) in-depth analysis of Bezirganbahce is a pioneering example of such studies that unveil thought-provoking details as to how the lives of many low-income households in Ayazma were affected by such schemes.[53] First of all, previously existing solidarity networks, which provided the community of Ayazma with the much-needed support in sustaining many challenges of urban living have been dramatically interrupted. Secondly, these networks have been replaced by formal relations both to the new living environment

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[51] Since some of the dwellings in *gecekondu* areas are without any title deeds, these are considered illegal and thus, real-estate value does not apply. In these cases, the appropriator of the building is offered a 'demolition value', which is even less than what would be offered for expropriation.

[52] If needed, tenants can receive financial support from the municipality for a period of six-months; however, not only are the criteria for receiving such support not clear, but also there is no consistency to the provision of such support as it will be demonstrated in the case of Sulukule.

[53] Bezirganbahçe is an MHA built social housing site where rightful residents of a former *gecekondu* neighbourhood, Ayazma, were transferred to on the grounds of a gecekondu transformation project. For more information on the specific case of Ayazma, see Baysal (2010) and Kuyucu (2009).

and state authorities, which pose substantial challenges to the everyday lives of residents.[54] Thirdly, the mobility of the community came to be negatively restricted for the housing blocks are located in the outer urban periphery.[55] Fourthly, new forms of ethnic and social tension are rising since the previously existing settlement patterns, organically formed by the residents, have been interrupted by top-down decisions of public authorities.[56]

To put it shortly, the urban poor who were already challenged in social and economical terms -despite the survival strategies they had managed to develop in the previous decades- are now confronted with added challenges imposed by the diverse impacts of state-led urban transformation. Recent research shows that a big proportion of those transferred to Bezirganbahce blocks have failed to make their necessary payments (Kuyucu, 2009; Baysal, 2010). This leaves many households not only with enormous financial debts to the state, but also homeless since their units are confiscated. Together with others, who cannot access MHA housing from the very beginning, they are left to find solutions to their housing problem on their own in neighbourhoods where they have family, relatives, or other connections.

Departing from these, it can be suggested that urban fragmentation defined by the spatialization of social and economic inequalities as Kurtulus (2005) put it, has evolved into a new phase with the 'second round of globalization' in Istanbul. Heightened attraction and entry of capital forces into urban space –with the use of

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[54] Everyday lives of residents in MHA blocks are currently defined to a great extent by novel conditions and responsibilities, which include payments they need to make to MHA and other public institutions (i.e. directorate of electricity, or water works) and rules they need to abide with around the housing blocks. Electricity and water supply in certain *gecekondu*, or inner-city areas might be illegal, meaning that it was common for many not to pay for such services. Moreover, While the residents enjoyed galore open spaces in Ayazma -predominantly comprising of single-storey houses with gardens- public space available around the new high rising blocks is radically limited and regulated by a private management company for purposes of 'orderliness'. These regulations strictly dictate that the open spaces around Bezirganbahçe cannot be used for gathering, or picnicking.
[55] This negative impact cannot merely be defined by physical distance but more by limits of affordability: for most of these low-income families, saving money for public transport is a major issue, especially if they are to travel as a family
[56] In their former neighbourhood, Kurdish and Turkish residents of Ayazma had negotiated on their own settlement patterns, which helped them achieve a fine balance in living together despite tensions. However, once they were transferred to Bezirganbahçe blocks and stacked upon each other randomly, this balance was disrupted to the degree that potential and actual violence has emerged.

transformation projects- brings disparate consequences for the two extreme ends of social and economic hierarchy: Whereas the spaces of the affluent expand, the spaces of the underprivileged contract – with even bolder contours dividing them. Here, space does not only refer to a physical terrain, but also to the social, economic and cultural aspects of urban life that provide a platform of existence for diverse social classes. Keyder provides an insightful description of how these different aspects of space are influenced by ongoing neo-liberalization, which has increasingly led to the social exclusion of the poor (Keyder, 2005)

Departing from here, one may argue that urban regeneration, as it is practiced today, adds one more dimension to the degree and modes of social exclusion described by Keyder: Regeneration schemes currently work in a way to replace the previously existing strategies of survival (marked by informal networks) and redistribution mechanisms (that defined populist relationships between the urban poor and the state) with the newly created conditions and dynamics of formal land and housing markets. Thus, although large-scale urban transformation affects the quality of life of all socio-economic segments for reasons that have been explained, the lives of the most insecure are influenced most dramatically since the conditions, which once helped them integrate with urban living, are swiftly diminishing. Stories from both *gecekondu* neighbourhoods and inner-city poverty zones undergoing regeneration reveal that transfer of property from weaker to stronger urban actors and the displacement of low-income communities from more central areas to the outskirts are preparing the grounds for more severe conditions of social, economic and cultural marginality.

In the light of the above-mentioned developments it can be asserted that a sharper divide is emerging between the social, economic and physical realms of the poor and the rich in Istanbul. Aksoy and Robins (1999) had previously argued that despite budding polarization, there were fundamental similarities between the selective strategies of the rich and the poor in terms of finding themselves a place in the city. Today, these similarities are swiftly diminishing as the poors' right to taking initiatives regarding place selection is being restricted by legal measures and their

survival strategies are also being interrupted by a new urban regime imposed by the state. On the opposite end, wealthier groups are granted with ever-increasing investment opportunities -by the same legal measures- and ever-expanding space for residential, recreational and commercial purposes. Thus, it can be argued that what is being experienced in Istanbul with the neo-liberal turn taken by the JDP is heightened fragmentation and inequality, resulting in the radical social exclusion of the urban poor.

Conclusion:

The post-1980s refer to the period when economic liberalization of Turkey paved way for the transformation of Istanbul into a global city project for the country. It was within the context of this imagination that Istanbul was defined as a node, or gateway, through which Turkey would connect with the networks of global capitalism. Thus, the decades to follow saw attempts towards the shaping of its topography in a way to station the institutions and services that would aid the achievement of this goal. Predecessors of many of the current urban policies were also formulated in this period and put into full effect to pave the way for radical changes to take place. It was due to the combination of this vision and legal tools that new infrastructural projects, spaces of living and consumption, and business zones became integral to Istanbul's urban landscape starting from the 1980s

It has thus been inevitable for emergent social and economic inequalities underlined by the new economic and urban restructuring to find expressions on the very same landscape. New forms of wealth and poverty started to spatialize in Istanbul at equal paces, marking the fragmentation of the city along diverse social and economic backgrounds. Yet, it is important to note that the sort of urban change taking place still allowed diverse socio-economic classes to make space for themselves within the city. Whereas various redistributive mechanisms worked in a way to formalize existing informal housing stock, and thus grant their adopters with the title of ownership, inner-city poverty zones remained as shelters –mostly- for tenants in need of cheap

housing. Thus, although divides between the more and less privileged became increasingly visible on the urban landscape, the city's capacity to accommodate all was sustained to a reasonable extent in this initial round of urban globalization.

Yet, the post 2000's political and economic visions for further neo-liberalization have minimized this capacity of the city to a substantial degree. Not only were the powers and authorities of governmental actors and institutions boosted in this second round of urban globalization, but also the policies devised broadened the territories of neoliberal urban operations in line with current ideals of development, and planning schemes drafted maximized the scales at which investment driven operations could be implemented. It was due to the orchestration of these complemenary variables that large tracts of state owned land, coastlines, informal housing zones and inner-city poverty areas came to be increasingly exposed to entrepreneurial projects by the hand of the state in a never before seen fashion.

It is has been with these developments that public access to various forms of urban resources and spaces started to shrink at a swift and steady pace. Communities suffering from various socio-economic insecurities constitute the leading segment within the definition of public here, for their living spaces have increasingly been exposed to various forms of renewal projects resulting in ultimate displacement and dispossession. What is more, these experiences are currently underlined by the absence of social and economic security nets provided by the state. Vulnerable groups are not only becoming forcefully exposed to processes that deprive them of their material possessions, but also of immaterial resources (i.e. solidarity networks, access to the city centre etc.) which aid them in their struggles for survival under the forces of neoliberal urbanism. The contemporary landscape of Istanbul is thus being inscribed by these new forms of inequality, underlined by housing and property right violations of varying degrees.

4. Oppositional Movements and Grassroots Resistance to Urban Transformation in Istanbul

As explained in the previous chapter, the relationship between ideals of economic growth and urban land has intensified; the state has taken on a much more entrepreneurial role with respect to urban governance, and investment driven operations of both public and private actors in Istanbul have multiplied dramatically starting from the mid-1980s. What is more, these operations have been surrounded by administrative and legal frameworks, and guarded by public institutions with extensive powers to enable and legalize/legitimize their initiation since the early 2000s. It is within this context that the definition, function, value and management of 'urban land' have become central concerns and matters of debate not only for the political and business elite but also for the wider stakeholders of cities - i.e. civil initiatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the inhabitants.

Little has been written on the specific topic of 'urban oppositional movements' in Turkey, critical of the state's approach to urban development, planning and governance. This may be explained by the fact that such comprehensive legal frameworks and governmental practices with direct impacts on the wider geographies and stakeholders of Istanbul, or other major cities of Turkey, did not previously exist. This is not to suggest that the metropolitan areas of Turkey did not suffer from any social, economic, or physical problems, and thus, critical stance towards urban governance did not exist in earlier periods. Genesis of oppositional tendencies can be traced back to 1970s, when *gecekondu* residents on the urban periphery joined forces with radical political groups to create living spaces for themselves outside the formal system (Aslan, 2004). Later with the 1980s, when investment driven activities over urban land burgeoned, the agenda and actors of opposition also transformed. The physical impact of large-scale infrastructural operations on the historical and natural fabric of the city, and the violation of existing planning schemes through these operations initially prompted chain reactions from professional chambers (Ekinci, 1991). These groups were later joined by the middle to upper-middle class residents of neighbourhoods in prime locations, pressurized by various plans and projects of significant scale (Mills,

2006; Erman and Yıldar, 2007; Morgül, 2004).

Coming to the 2000s, intensified efforts to turn Istanbul into an attractive destination for global tourism and investment have led entrepreneurial operations to spill over far larger areas than earlier: State-owned land, public spaces, dilapidated neighbourhoods and informal housing areas all became targets of urban renewal and transformation, and thus, subjects of expropriation and privatization. Cumulative dynamics of current urban transformation, thus, do not only pose threats to the historical and natural heritage areas, or the sound functioning of the planning system anymore, but also to the rights of urban citizens to the city at many levels. Today, the range of actors that stand against public policies in urban governance and planning are much more varied than ever in terms of professional, economic, social and ideological background. Amongst these many groups, civil initiatives (CIs) and neighbourhood associations (NAs) mark the specificity of post-2000s in Turkey. Set up by activists of diverse skills, know-how and resources, CIs actively advocate for a socially, economically and environmentally more sustainable and just city in the light of recent changes in urban policy and planning. NAs, on the other hand, represent the communities of *gecekondu* and inner-city poverty areas, directly exposed to the many stages of urban transformation in line with the policy changes of post-2000s. Since their formation, NAs have not only become one of the leading and novel actors of grassroots resistance, but also managed to create -with the support of CIs-substantial public awareness regarding the social and economic outcomes of current urban transformation.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how the two rounds of globalization have contributed to the formation of an urban oppositional front, critical of policies, decisions and practices, set by local and central governments, on urban land and housing markets since the early 2000s. The analysis will start with an attempt to answer the question of how oppositional tendencies and their actors have emerged and transformed since the 1970s within the urban arena, and continue with an investigation of current oppositional forms. In doing so, CIs and NAs will first be investigated separately in order to draw the line between the main arguments of civil opposition and grassroots resistance. Later, however, a joint

evaluation of these two phenomena will be made in an attempt to provide a critique of urban oppositional movements in Istanbul on the grounds of the major challenges they face. These will be discussed under the umbrella of the 'possibilities and impossibilities of collective action' as coined by Yalçıntan (2009).

4.1 Origins of Urban Oppositional Movements in Istanbul

Urban land use and value has become increasingly central to Turkish economy following its liberalization starting from the 1980s, affecting the lives of diverse socio-economic groups in multiple ways as explained in the previous chapter. There have been attempts on the part of central government to manage and minimize the impact of economic rescaling through redistributive mechanisms, which aimed to extend the rewards of the emergent system among diverse social classes by relaxing rules and regulations in urban land and housing markets during the 1980s; however, these redistributive mechanisms have ceased to function with the institution of a more neo-liberalized system by the early 2000s. Experience has so far shown that the turn in question has inevitably limited the rewards of the new system at work to the upper echelons of socio-economic hierarchy, leaving those who represent the lowest ranks of the same hierarchy with new social and economic insecurities.

The consequences of these recent changes have found expression in the form of heightened inequalities particularly in Istanbul, the terrain upon which Turkey has grounded its strategic plans of economic growth. Although the physical, social and economic reverberations of the such changes and development plans had never been as intense as the posth 2000s, Turkey's familiarity with urban oppositional movements dates back to as early as 1970s. This is because the relationship between public authorities and urban communities with limited access to various resources and redistributive mechanisms was still problematic when it came to the provision of social and economic securities.

Causes of collective and mobilized reaction to authorities in cities are strongly linked with the ways in which local governments tackle issues relating to the

citizens' quality of life (e.g. access to housing, public spaces and resources, or better maintained neighbourhoods). Conventionally, the expectation from public authorities is to serve public interest and secure optimum public welfare through governmental practices. It is at instances when the state's approach to such matters fail to satisfy the most fundamental needs of citizens that resistance and opposition surface (Erman and Yıldar, 2007). Thus, reviewing the earlier implications of urban resistance and opposition in Istanbul can help one understand how governmental approach to Istanbul, and the inner-dynamics of grassroots movements have evolved throughout time.

4.1.1. Politicization of Housing Struggle: The Late 1970s

It is not a coincidence that the 1970s mark the genesis of urban oppositional tendencies in Istanbul: The period was marked by a national economic turmoil leading to declining wages and rising unemployment with dramatic impacts especially on the lives of low-income rural migrants and working-class residents of metropolitan areas. Political implications of the crisis were immediate, finding expression in the rise of working class movements and the emergence of radical oppositional groups in defense of justice and equality. It was under these circumstances that the housing struggle of the urban poor came to be politicized when *gecekondu* communities joined forces with radical leftist groups in order to create their own living environments (Aslan, 2004).

The politicization of housing struggle meant that the many communities of *gecekondu* areas were getting mobilized with the active involvement of radical political groups in a way to raise their demands towards their most fundamental needs. This is not, however, to suggest that *gecekondu* neighbourhoods lacked a sense of mobilization prior to the 1970s. Community organizations (*dernek*), led predominantly by 'natural leaders' among the residents with relevant organizational skills, powers and networks, and ambition to achieve, were the main hubs that co-ordinated everyday life within *gecekondu* areas since the 1950s. The main responsibilities and concerns of these bodies covered such broad issues as the establishment of a community spirit; maintenance of order and security;

improvement and development of the built environment, and connection of the settlement with the 'outside world', that is employment networks and governmental institutions.[1] In the words of Karpat:

The *Dernek* is actually a rational - that is interest-oriented- organization. It bridges the natural and traditional forms of association rooted in the family, kinship, and village, and those based on interest, class, or occupation in the city. All decisions concerning the community as a whole are formalized in the *Dernek* and enforced through it in the entire settlement (...) In sum, the *Derneks* create a degree of formal integration in the settlement, establish working relations with the city and the government as a whole, and defend the interests of the squatters before official organizations (Karpat, 1976: 134).

In other words, community organizations functioned in a way to compensate for the absence of governmental schemes that would help *gecekondu* dwellers integrate with the many aspects of urban life. Absence of governmental schemes was related to the earlier noted 'blind eye' approach of the state to the diverse consequences of rural to urban migration - conjoined with financial and administrative incapacities in providing the relevant aids. These circumstances did not change under the pressing conditions of the 1970s, and moreover, was accompanied by a process whereby "the state (...) could easily negotiate with particular social groups within the informal arena whereas it adopted an exclusionary attitude towards others" (Aslan, 2004: 69). These groups of negotiation were certain powerful groups –often referred to as 'land mafia', or 'squatter lords'- who would purchase large tracts of unserviced agricultural land on the periphery to resell it in tiny plots at the price of serviced urban land to new immigrants.[2] Thus, "fresh waves of immigrants arriving from the mid-1970s onwards were forced to pay enormous rents in peripheral neighbourhoods without the most basic infrastructural services, while at the same time trying to

[1] Community organizations that would often be coined either as 'beautification and conservation associations' (*güzelleştirme ve koruma derneği*), or 'associations of mutual help and support', (*yardımlaşma ve dayanışma derneği*) would help *gecekondu* residents access housing, education and job opportunities through kinship and community relations especially in the early periods of arrival into the city. Another significant task of these organizations, however, was to foster the further establishment of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods since this would protect them against the risk of demolishment - due to a particular law that prevented the clearance of 'inhabited dwellings'. Moreover, if optimum density would be achieved, such basic infrastructure as water, electricity, public transport links and sewage would be brought in by municipalities, and finally, legal titles could also be extended to the appropriators of *gecekondus*. See Karpat (1976: 89) for more details.
[2] These investors were lured into the informal land markets on the grounds of vast opportunities they offered for capitalization as Öncü (1988) puts it. Informal land markets had proven to be a major channel of accumulation since the 1950s when the first generation of rural to urban migrants had arrived into the city and started claiming public, or private land. In time, part of these groups had not only been able to legalize their ownership rights, but also managed to take advantage of high inflation and rising property values.

save exorbitant sums necessary to acquire the split-deed of some unserviced land even further out in the periphery" (Öncü, 1988: 47-48). In short, the state did not only fail to create support mechanisms for the socio-economic needs of the most vulnerable urban communities, but also actively contributed to the unequal distribution of urban resources by favouring certain groups over others.

It was under these circumstances that the 1970s witnessed the gradual politicization of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods with the support of radical socialist groups operating outside the formal political system.[3] At a time when criticism towards the impoverishing impact of the economic crisis was peaking, ideas in favour of devising pro-labour socio-political formulas outside the framework of the parliamentarian system were also emerging. Focusing on issues of poverty, unemployment and housing, radical groups that adopted the stated ambition aimed at the development of idealist models that would cater justice and equality to those communities, suffering from the consequences of the system at work most immediately. It was on these grounds that *gecekondu* areas, or peripheral urban land deprived of building permissions were approached as the most fitting arenas for the realization of models, based on the given principles (Aslan, 2004). Communities pressed by poverty, unemployment, inability to access urban services and precarious conditions of housing had little hesitations in joining forces with a front that was eager to attend to their most alarming problems; thus, a reciprocal relationship between these two groups emerged quickly.[4] The *Gecekondu* movement of the late 1970s, driven to meet diverse needs of the peripheral urban poor, found different forms of expression out of this shared will:

Although part of the social movements taking place in the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods targeted at finding solutions to problems which barred the full integration of already existing *gecekondu* areas with such urban systems as public transport, sewage, roads, communication etc., the other part of it was grounded upon providing the urban homeless with a dwelling, and thus, tackling the housing problem. The shortcut solution to this matter under the circumstances of the time was to take the '*liberty*' of claiming urban land. In other words, the aim was to take the possession of and appropriate state-owned land in order to satisfy *public* goals. (ibid.: 79)

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[3] It is important to emphasize here that community organizations in the pre-1970s were more *solidarity* oriented than being *struggle* oriented as it turned out in the post-1970s. The ultimate aim was to form intra-communal unity and order to be able to achieve legal and social recognition within the wider city and society.

[4] As Aslan put it, "it was easy for the [urban poor] to negotiate with a mobilized power that was ready to sacrifice itself [on the way to finding solutions to their fundamental problems]" (2004: 80).

In this respect, *gecekondu* neighbourhoods also transformed into spaces of *political* struggle where solutions outside the formal system were sought with the active collaboration between radical socialist groups and *gecekondu* settlers. The driving force behind this collaboration was primarily the "conviction that such demands as the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, reorganization of urban everyday life and the establishment of a politically more just system could never be met within the framework of the existing system" (ibid.: 81). Thus, by the late 1970s, not only did a number of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods form strong links with radical political groups on the above grounds, but new neighbourhoods were created, based on socialist ideals of planning – e.g. 1 Mayıs, Güzeltepe, Nurtepe and Gülsuyu-Gülensu.[5]

Politicization of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods eventually prepared the grounds for a shift in the stance of state authorities towards informal housing areas, defined by a fierce reaction rather than solution-oriented responses to the problems and needs of resident communities. This reaction was very often given in the form of *gecekondu* clearances, or attempts for demolition that would result in stern clashes between *gecekondu* settlers, socialist groups and state authorities. Ending with fatal losses at times, resistance and opposition emerging from these areas confirmed that struggle for housing and better living conditions in the city had gained a class-based and political character.

4.1.2. A Middle-Class Defence of the 'Neighbourhood': The Post-1980s

Radical movements in *gecekondu* areas came to a significant halt following the *coup d'etat* of 1980 for two reasons: First of all, the coup led to a relative deh politicization within the society. Secondly, as explained earlier, the MP

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[5] Şükrü Aslan, who published a seminal ethnographic work on the formation of 1 Mayıs neighbourhood within the context of urban oppositional movements puts that, "although these neighbourhoods did not exist in *legal terms*, they did exist in *practice*. No such public services as transport, communication, or other infrastructural amenities were provided; the streets and main roads did not have names and it was not clear who resided where. Yet, these neighbourhoods with thousands of inhabitants managed to cling on to the peripheries of the city. To some, these were 'occupied zones' that needed to be cleared, and for others they were the new centres of 'struggle and resistance'." (ibid.: 84)

administration issued a number of amnesty laws that both granted varying degrees of ownership rights to *gecekondu* proprietors and permitted the owners to build extra storeys on existing properties: New forms of wealth surfaced in these formerly illegal housing areas as traditional *gecekondus* were transformed into apartment buildings and the newly available flats were introduced to rental markets by their owners (Işık and Pınarcıoğl, 2001; Esen, 2007). That is, amnesty laws aimed to function both in a way to formalize informal housing stock within the city and to distribute urban rent among wider communities so that low-income groups would not be hit by a potential economic crisis, resulting from the shift to the new economic framework. Combination of these two factors has been key to pacifying radical tendencies that previously arose from *gecekondu* areas.

However, a new strand of critique and opposition emerged from an almost polar-opposite socio-economic segment, this time against the urban entrepreneurial activities of post 1980s. As the will to encourage the entry of (inter)national capital into the real-estate and urban land markets gained supremacy within the agenda of both central and - newly restructured- metropolitan governments, the dynamics of capital came to orientate the pattern of urban development in this period. Physical pressure of entrepreneurial projects and large scale infrastructural operations on the historical and natural fabric of Istanbul, and the violation of existing planning schemes by these interventions led to harsh criticisms from professional chambers to start with (i.e. Chamber of Architects and Chamber of Planners).[6] This oppositional voice was in time joined by community organizations, mostly represented by a new generation of 'beautification associations' (hereafter, BA) in the better-off neighbourhoods of Istanbul, and took on the leading role of opposition at grassroots level.

What distinguishes this strand of grassroots opposition from the previous decade's can be defined at a number of levels: First of all, *the mode of politico-economic system* within which it formed had shifted. Whereas the state protected import

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[6] From the point of view of the Chamber of Architects, policy frameworks formulated in the 1980s led way to various problems, ranging from "designation of characteristic areas, shorelines, and both archeological and natural sites as tourism zones", "privatization of these areas and their closure to public access" and "the fragmentation of planning system in a way to create an irrational city" (TMMOB: 1991).

substitution model -prioritizing industrialization over other channels of capital accumulation- was still at work in the 1970s, the 1980s were marked by a free market system whose logic is built upon the development of urban land and housing markets among others. That is, priorities of the governmental agenda had changed. This meant that, secondly, *the matter of opposition* had also changed: Local and central authorities were now being criticized for the radical and top down decisions they took to enhance the investment potentials of the city, rather than being criticized for their shortcomings in improving the living conditions of underprivileged groups in the effort to channel savings into the main priorities of the system. Thirdly, *the actors of opposition* were not the politically radicalized inhabitants of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods anymore, but quite the contrary, the middle to upper-middle class residents of prime locations in central Istanbul. This shift was due to the concentration of large-scale and investment driven projects on central and valuable parts of the city where better-off urbanites resided. For example, whereas the possible construction of a third bridge over the Bosphorus was met with reaction in Arnavutköy, a historical neighbourhood on the coast, decisions as to the construction of a private school in the greenest spot of Kuzguncuk led to similar sentiments, evolving into organized community action. Ayaspasa, Cihangir and Galata are some of the other neighbourhoods where this new strand of opposition was institutionalized in the form of BAs.[7]

A certain emphasis on locality came forward in the leading arguments of BAs, which found expression in a fierce defence of the 'neighbourhood' against external forces.[8] Growing concern among the BAs was that the modesty and authenticity of

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[7] In July 2002, *Istanbul,* a leading magazine with a focus on the urban agenda of Istanbul, published a special issue with the thematic title 'Making a Civil Claim to Istanbul' (*İstanbul'a Sivil Sahip Çıkış*). This special issue is one of the first and most detailed documents that reflect on the emergence of civil organizations as a response to the post-1980s transformation of Istanbul. Issues covered were not limited to BAs set up in Arnavutky, Galata, Cihangir and Kuzguncuk, but also included commentaries on environmental protection and historical conservation in the face of entrepreneurial governmental decisions and the role of civil initiatives in taking a possible stand against these decisions. These topics were all discussed within the wider framework of the development of civil society in Turkey.

[8] Here, external forces should be understood in two different categories: The first is the intrusiveness of earlier remarked projects and plans drafted by local and central authorities, and the second is the ideological aspect of governance. As Erman and Yıldar (2007) put it, some of the NAs formed in the posth 1990s were also taking an ideological stand against the İslamist Welfare Party in power. The concern among the liberal residents –of these areas identified by social and cultural capital, and modern lifestylesh was that the conservative background of metropolitan governance would affect the neighbourhoods through physical interventions. Cihangir Beautification Association (CBA) was one of these, which was established following the local

neighbourhood life (*mahalle*) were coming under threat with the top down interventions of metropolitan government in partnership with private capital (Erman and Yıldar, 2007). It is important to note here that majority of neighbourhoods where the period's BAs were based in historic neighbourhoods with tangible (i.e. 19th century housing architectural and urban form) and intangible elements (a cosmopolitan past) of 'heritage'.[9] In this respect, what defined the supposed 'authenticity' of these neighbourhoods was not only art-nouveau style apartment buildings and timber houses on narrow and tree lined streets, but also their cultural memory This imagination was particularly embraced by groups who moved into the neighbourhoods due to their growing popularity on the grounds of centrality and symbolic value in the 1990s.[10] This can be explained by the assumption that these groups had chosen to move into the neighbourhoods in question as a reaction to the radical transformation of the city. In other words, "the heightened concretization and greyness of the city bred the longing for the green hills and leafy streets of the romantic past. All these elements (…) have provided the residents with a framework in which investments for the protection of historical structures, resonating a more pleasant yet long gone everyday life, could be made." (Mills, 2006: 88).

The defence of *mahalle* mainly articulated itself through demands for better conservation of architectural landscape and protection of the greenery. Looking at the coverage of struggles pursued by various NAs within this period, it can be

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municipality's attempt to paint the pavements in green and white (the 'colour of İslam' as interpreted by the informants). The reasoning for the foundation of CBA was expressed with the following words: 'The İslamists came to power. We are losing our control over our neighbourhood. Let us organize ourselves' (Erman and Yıldar, 2007: 2554).

[9] Cihangir, Kuzguncuk, Galata, Arnavutköy and Ayaspaşa were all resided both by Muslim and non-Muslim communities for long centuries during the Ottoman rule. However, the period starting from the declaration of the Turkish republic and extending to the 1960s saw the gradual exodus of non-Muslim communities due to the rise of Turkification policies. Housing stock left abandoned by these communities were taken over by Muslim groups and are considered as the most significant artifacts of Istanbul's *levantine* architecture, some of which have been listed and governed by conservation norms. More on this topic will be covered in Chapter 6.

[10] In fact, Mills argues that these sentiments were claimed predominantly by this specific category of residents in Kuzguncuk. where the BA aimed to terminate the project for the construction of a private school in order to protect the 'physical and cultural landscape' of the neighbourhood. Departing from the results of her research among the long term and late coming residents of Kuzguncuk, Mills proposes that, "the nostalgia for Kuzguncuk, which takes the neighbourly relations between its non-Muslim residents and others as a reference point, belongs to the late coming residents more than its long term residents." (Mills, 2006: 93). What is even more intriguing is that the late comers in such neighbourhoods have been considered as their 'gentrifiers'. For more writings on the critical place of gentrifiers in neighbourhood change see (Behar and İslam, 2006).

observed that almost all initiatives were driven by the will to protect the *mahalle* as an urban form. Despite the impression as though the goals of BAs were limited to mere physical maintenance, research reveals that these demands were overwhelmingly underlined by the NAs desire to create 'sensible' urban communities with a sense of protecting what is *ours*, claiming the environment and the built form, praising the local and owning up an urban identity primarily. In fact, during a round table discussion for a book project, one of the leaders of the Galata Beautification Association asserted that, "[their] association [was] constituted by people who have a certain sensitivity towards the urban, urban life and urban citizens." (Behar and İslam, 2004: 160). The aim of the BA was defined as "working together to spot the matters of decline in the physical, social and cultural form of the neighbourhood, and taking steps towards their elimination" and "breeding a sense of neighbourhood sensibility" (ibid.) which seemed to overlap with the motivations of Kuzguncuk BA. In the words of one of the leading community members, "without the backdrop of cultural and social planning [at community level], you cannot achieve physical improvement." (ibid.: 174).[11]

What is particularly important to note on the BAs of the 1980s and 1990s is that they did not pursue any wider social, or political goals, and neither did they network with each other, or other civil groups with similar goals. The main emphasis was predominantly on protecting the *mahalle* and demonstrating active mobilization to achieve this end. Having access to resources, and equipped with the required know-how and skills, the initial reaction of BAs to any plans, or projects with excess physical impact on their respective areas was to engage in active campaigning and advocacy to increase public awareness.[12] These actions

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[11] Critical view towards the BAs of this period suggests that there was a strong tendency among these groups to approach their localities as 'paradise lost' (Behar and İslam, 2004: 161) and protect them from elements that the considered 'undesirable'. The representative of the Galata BA, for example, suggested during the same discussion that "small manufacturers and workshops should be relocated elsewhere since they [did] not fit in the current uses of the neighbourhood" - although these sorts of establishments had been in the area longer the period than the residence of its current community. Also regarding Cihangir BA's stance towards 'conservative forces' coming from outside, thus, it can be argued that BAs mainly strived to create their own territories protected from forces that they deemed undesirable (Erman and Yıldar, 2007: 2560).

[12] What is meant by resources here is not limited to the financial capabilities of BAs but also networks that can be of use for such diverse purposes as publicizing and disseminating the main arguments of opposition in various media, and being able to contact authorities directly when needed. Accounts of a leading members of the Kuzguncuk movement deserves attention in these respects: "We built a playground with the help of kids and then the next day a team from the municipality came to demolish it. Later, they did the same thing to our street theatre stage (…) It

would later, or simultaneously be followed by legal mobilization to halt envisaged projects, which have proven successful to date.

4.2. Urban Opposition and Grassroots Resistance Today: The Post-2000s

By the 2000s, expansion of entrepreneurial activities towards public spaces, state-owned land, dilapidated neighbourhoods and informal housing areas caused another round of transformation in the nature of oppositional movements against urban governance and change. Currently, urban policies devised by the central government, and large-scale projects carried out by local governments, private developers and public institutions (sometimes individually and sometimes in partnership) on the grounds of these policies cause a number of controversies from the point of view of opposition. These do not only relate to the protection of historical heritage and natural resources and the sound functioning of metropolitan planning system, but also to the rights of urban citizens to the city at large.[13] This latter issue adds a new dimension to and marks the specificity of post-2000s within the context of Istanbul's urban dilemmas.

In line with these matters of debate, what is being witnessed in Istanbul is a proliferation in the number of actors that actively protest the further extension of capital into the cityscape and a diversification in the forms of protest as practiced by these actors (conferences, seminars, publications, workshops, public demonstrations, press releases etc.). Actors in question range from professional chambers and unions to civil initiatives (hereafter, CIs) and neighbourhood associations (hereafter, NAs). Professional chambers/unions and such civil bodies as 'beautification associations' had already been actively criticizing the decisions and actions of central and local governments since the 1980s, as explained earlier, when profith driven urban operations of local and central authorities had emerged for the first time. What constitutes the main novelty of current times is the

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was not giving harm to anyone. I ended up paying a visit to the mayor's office and he said 'Oh, brother Cengiz we are so sorry'. They had also fined us for occupying space but he took it from my hand and tore it into pieces. He is afraid of the things I can do." (Behar and İslam, 2004: 175)

[13] The 'rights to the city' discussion, here, comprises of a number of different layers, which include the right of all citizens to access public services, resources and spaces on equal terms, and more specifically, the housing rights of the socio-economically vulnerable under the conditions of neo-liberal urban restructuring. These will be covered at length in the sub-sections to follow.

accompaniment of these actors with NAs that result from the growing mobilization of socio-economically and legally vulnerable communities, living in areas pressured by forces of state-led urban transformation. It can thus be argued that the socio-economic and demographic geographies of opposition are expanding and varying parallel to the physical expansion and variation of decisions and plans that embrace the overall transformation of Istanbul.

An extensive review of the debates that have been going on in the past decade reveals that there are certain commonalities among the main arguments of oppositional actors stated above. These commonalities, it can be suggested, outline some of the core arguments that define the substance of urban oppositional movements in Istanbul in the current times. Yet, at the same time, the agendas of NAs' reflect more specific issues with respect to how the *residents* of renewal areas are affected by the forces of urban transformation, since their struggles are also marked by diverse property relations, legal complexities and socioh economic vulnerabilities. The following sections will first focus on the standpoint of civil initiatives within the context of urban opposition and thus expose the common ground upon which both CIs and NAs raise criticism against current urban policies and projects. This analysis will later be followed by the main criticisms and particular standpoint of NAs.

4.2.1. Framing Civil Initiatives

Looking at the period starting from the early 2000s, it can be said that the importance of CIs within the context of urban opposition and resistance rests upon two main grounds in Istanbul: First of all, aside from being powerful actors on their own, they have been ardent supporters of all anti-transformation neighbourhood movements that have emerged since the early 2000s. In some cases, they have even prepared the grounds for the emergence of NAs, or given them the support they needed during the initial stages of mobilization.[14] Secondly,

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[14] One example, as will later be covered in Chapter 4, is the role that the Human Settlements' Association and Accessible Life Association as played in the case of Sulukule. It was due to the guidance and support of primarily the former group that it had been possible for the neighbourhood to set up an NA. Another example, on the other hand, is the support given by the Solidarity Studio to the Gülsuyu-Gülensu NA in drafting a survey of their neighbourhood and

they have succeeded in creating notable public opinion on the matters of opposition via diverse and effective uses of communication networks.[15] Similar to the profile of some of the BAs in the previous decade, CIs are constituted by citizens of diverse professions and skills with access to multiple arenas of public sphere in various forms.

The institutional substance and characteristics of CIs vary: Whereas few of them are fully registered and structured organizations (e.g. The Human Settlements' Organization), the majority of the rest are non-official and semi-structured groups (e.g. İMECE and Dayanışmacı Atölye [Solidarity Studio]). What makes the latter 'structured' can be systematic routines such as weekly meetings where members get together and hold discussions around specific agendas; the sense of a 'base'/'headquarter', or electronic presence defined by mail groups where exchange of news and information take place on a daily basis.[16] What makes them '*semi*-structured', on the other hand, is their considerable flexibility in terms of operation: There are no strict rules as to how decisions should be taken, or how new members should be accepted. Whereas decisions can be taken during meetings, or via e-mail exchanges (yet always on the grounds of the majority's opinion), membership is defined through equally flexible procedures. For discussions and networking predominantly take place online, subscribing to a mail group, becoming active in the discussions and then taking part in real-time meetings and activities usually builds up to what might be called a form of 'membership'. Regardless of their status in terms of formality, all CIs actively take the issues that are of concern to them to the street at relevant times, either on their own, or in partnership with other CIs.

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developing the strategic planning of their struggle.

[15] The use of social media tools have been paramount within the given respects. Such groups as İMECE, Emek Bizim, Kent Hareketlr (Urban Movements) and Taksim Dayanışması (Taksim Solidarity) actively use Facebook and Twitter, while at the same circulating frequent updates via e-mail groups. Aside from these, these groups have organized, or taken part in public demonstrations to vocalize their concerns, and publicized online petitions.

[16] The range of these news and information can extend from new planning decisions taken by the metropolitan governance, or urban policies drafted by the central government, to developments taking place in various neighbourhoods, or international cases that can relate to what is being experienced in Turkey.

Fig. 2 Poster of Emek Bizim (Emek is Ours) hung on the scaffoldings protecting the constructions, which will turn the historical Emek Cinema into a shopping mall. Poster reads a poem from a renowned Turkish poet, Orhan Veli: "Even if I may go home home / I can go out again / For I am the owner of these clothes and shoes / And for the streets belong to everyone." The rest reads: "We don't want a mall-type city! We are boycotting all shopping malls! Emek is Ours, Istanbul is Ours!" (June 2013) (Photo by: Muhsin Akgün).

The member profile of CIs demonstrates a diversity which could not be observed in the previous decade: Whereas such groups as İMECE and Solidarity Studio mainly include volunteers with backgrounds in urban planning and architecture, Urban Movements consists of a much more heterogeneous group of volunteers with backgrounds in media, civil society, academic organizations, law etc. and also of neighbourhood representatives from different parts of the city. Despite distinctions in their structuring and profile, the main commonality among all CIs is their equipment with certain skills and know-how that provide the neighbourhoods with various forms of support. Among these, achievement of visibility in (inter)national media, advocacy at (inter)national scales, formulation of alternative plans for neighbourhoods and development of legal strategies to resist the projects and/or defend the housing and property rights of residents come to fore. Despite the fact that CIs mostly operate independently of each other, they do collaborate during such critical periods as demolitions, provision of aids to

neighbourhoods, or diverse activities within neighbourhoods that call for solidarity.[17]

Fig. 3 Taksim Dayanışması (Taksim Solidarity) protesting against the pedestrianization project targeting Taksim Square and Gezi Parkı. The signpost reads: "A Better Project, A Better Taksim, A Better Future" (February 2012) (Photo by: Özlem Ünsal)

4.2.1.1. An Overview of Main Arguments

Looking at the debates that have been going on in the past decade, certain commonalities can be found among the main arguments of both CIs and NAs. It can thus be proposed that these commonalities define the current substance of urban oppositional movements based in Istanbul. They adopt a critical stance against the transfer of public and private properties to entrepreneurial agencies; displacements and dispossessions; anti-democratic approach to decision-making processes; pressures built upon historic and natural zones, and violation of Building Acts for the ambitions of public authorities. These can be considered as

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[17] On example is the action taken for the development of an alternative plan for Sulukule's renewal whereby volunteers from diverse backgrounds and initiatives worked together. In the end, the collective who produced the plan gathered under the name of STOP, that is 'Autonomous Planners with No Limits' (*Sınır Tanımayan Otonom Plancılar*). More details on this is provided in Chapter 5.

some of the concerns that compose the oppositional backbone in question, and need close analysis for a better understanding of where the CIs stand within the current debates on RttC in Istanbul.

Fig. 4 Haydarpaşa Dayanışması (Haydarpaşa Solidarity) protesting against the closure of Haydarpaşa train station and its transformation into a potential hotel within the context of a marina project. The poster reads "Haydarpaşa Solidarity for the Society, the City and the Environment" (Photo by: Ercan Kurtarır).

To start with, CIs are highly critical of the privatization of stateh owned land for the initiation of transformative programmes against the grain of public interest. As stated earlier, large tracts of public land, which command highly prestigious locations, have been privatized in the past decade to become subject to profit driven schemes. One such example is the National Highways Authority Land, measuring up to a total area of 96,505 square meters, which was sold for 800 million dollars to Zorlu business group for the construction of a high end mixedh use development. Similarly, a nearby plot of 46,000 square meters, belonging to Istanbul Transport Authority, was sold to a Dubai based development company for 705 million dollars for the construction of highh rise towers. The reaction of the Chamber of Architects to the former case in relation to the latter was as follows:

Marketing and utilizing this plot for speculative purposes instead of introducing it to the use of public and/or public interest will cause irreversible harms to this city. With these changes in planning schemes, what is being committed is the victimization of public

interest to private sector. Regarding the surroundings of this place together with the real estate prices, public authorities will be left with no other land within the area. For these reasons, we believe it is essential that the space is planned in a way to satisfy the need of Istanbul's citizens; offer functions with social and cultural purposes that meet public interest, and that the vacant land in between should be turned into a green zone all in line with the norms and principles of planning.[18]

What is also an equally significant concern for the CIs is the expropriation of private properties for similar purposes in renewal zones.[19] Theoretically, once expropriation takes place, the ownership of formerly private properties get transferred to public authorities and law urges that in such cases "expropriated properties should be used for purposes of public interest."[20] However, within the current logic of local governance, expropriation only functions as a tool for the future transfer of properties to either MHA, or private developers. What follows this transfer is the redevelopment of both privatized and expropriated properties according to transformation, or prestige projects of varying sorts, and their re-introduction to the free market. In other words, state authorities are currently capable of integrating both public *and* private properties into rent generating urban land and housing markets through urban transformation projects.

On the given grounds, secondly, it is argued that the way in which urban transformation is taking place conflicts with the measures of social justice. There are two spheres within which this debate has developed: The first is defined by the limitation of access to public spaces, or resources for urban citizens as a result of top-down decisions, made to initiate large-scale projects. Prospective plans with respect to the pedestrianization and 'mallification' of one of the most central and vital squares of the city –that is Taksim Square- caused fury among activists from diverse backgrounds who formed the Taksim Solidarity initiative. The main argument here is that the plan does not only rest on unlawful and unscientific acts of planning, but more importantly violates citizens' right to access and enjoy open public spaces:[21]

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[18] See "A Joint Declaration on the Court Case of National Highways Authority Land" on http://www.mimarist.org/odadan/1906-KarayollariDavasiHakkindaOrtakBasinAciklamasi.html (05.06.2008) (accessed 30.05.2013)
[19] This is particularly being experienced in the transformation of residential areas that are being exposed to UTPs. Sulukule and Tarlabaşı constitute examples for such forms of expropriation and this will be later covered in case study chapters.
[20] Controversies arising from this matter will be discussed in detail within case study chapters.
[21] Another example within this category is the case of the Third Bridge construction over the Bosphorus which has been severely protested by various initiatives for the development plan will

Changes in planning schemes have been put into effect in this area through the violation of the universal values of urbanism and the scientific technicalities of project development – not to mention the abuse of conservation norms and other legal frameworks. What is in question is a project of 'cementization', 'dehumanization' and 'disidentification'. It pushes the vital and visual integrity of a historical place to the underground by creating access ramps, retaining walls and narrow pavements that obscure people's access to the main square. What is more, new construction plans are pushed forward through the same violations and promoted to the public as the revitalization of Topçu Military Barracks.[22] The possession of Gezi Parkı, the only centrally located park open to all –and also our only gathering point in case of an earthquake- is being taken away from us, and our spaces of greenery, stroll, gathering and relaxing are being claimed through their commercialization. Once again, we see attempts to fool the public in the name of glorifying power and money.[23]

The second, on the other hand, is defined by such consequences of urban transformation as forceful transfer of ownership and displacement. Regarding that it has predominantly been *gecekondu* and inner-city poverty areas that were designated as transformation zones within the past decade, the main subjects of this debate have primarily been socio-economically challenged groups. From this point of view, social justice initially becomes a matter of debate when property owners are pressured to either negotiate with public/private actors, or face expropriations, or when tenants (who represent the most vulnerable) are forced to relocate in the absence of sufficient financial capacities.[24] Thus, the dislocation of

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violate people's right to access natural resources due to the potential destruction of water reserves and forestry areas. As the 'Platform for Life in Place of Third Bridge' put it "The Third Bridge, which is falsely promoted as a solution to the traffic problem of Istanbul (…) is opening the remaining natural resources, forestry areas, agricultural land and water reserves to the invasion of capital." For more details, see http://kopruyerineyasam.blogspot.com/2011/12/cinayetin-ihalesi-10-ocakta.html (27.12.2011) accessed on 30.05.2013

[22] The Taksim Pedestrianization Project is a large scale scheme which both includes the removal of motor traffic from the main square of the Taksim region and the construction of a shopping mall right beside the square, on a park that was designed after the demolition of Ottoman military barracks in the 1940s. Current plans at work suggest that the military barracks will be rebuilt under the tag of 'conservation and revitalization project' for the barracks came to be declared as heritage structures in their absence. Suspicions and concerns of critical circles over the future function of the barracks were proven right in April 2013 when the prime minister declared during a speech that it as likely they would be turned into a shopping mall. For more details, see "There Can be A Shopping Mall and Residence in Topcu Military Barracks" (Topçu Kışlası'nda AVM ve Rezidans da Olabilir) (30.04.2013) http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/topcu_kislasinda_avm_ve_rezidans_da_olabilir-1131564 accessed on 30.05.2013

[23] See "A Joint Declaration of Taksim Solidarity" on http://taksimdayanismasi.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/taksim-dayanismasi-ortak-deklarasyonu/ accessed on 30.05.2013

[24] At a later stage, though, injustice within this context acquires a new dimension when socio-economically fragile groups are pushed towards the outer fringe since the urban core turns increasingly less affordable due to entrepreneurial operations. Such groups are grossly dependent on a number of vital advantages provided by the city centre: Access to job opportunities, affordable shopping, health services, education and other amenities is easier, and proximity to such resources is a major aid for the urban poor in getting by on a daily basis. More on this matter will be

low-income communities from the urban centre translates into their further deprivation of the most fundamental requirements of urban living in the absence of social and economic support schemes. As put in a press release by İMECE (The People's Movement of Urbanism):

To this date, all procedures undertaken in the name of 'urban regeneration' in such neighbourhoods as Dikmen, Sulukule, Ayazma and Tarlabaşı has led to the exposure of resident communities to forced evictions; loss of jobs; heightened debts; violation of social, economic and cultural rights, and unjust treatments within the context of human rights – not to mention the destruction of all relations they established in their living spaces. Moreover, the rent value of all these places have been shared among private developers, and local and central governments through the construction of luxurious residences and shopping malls.[25]

The third point of objection is to the adoption of non-inclusive methods in the decision-making and project development processes, giving way to the formation of an anti-democratic urban sphere. Although such terms as 'democratic representation', 'participation' and 'multi-actor decision making mechanisms' are frequently uttered in the various reports, press releases and project catalogues published by local and central authorities, these terms have not fully been integrated into the workings of most recent urban policies. Inclusion of citizens to planning processes is only *advised* in the currently effective policies; however, not only are the methods to satisfy the conditions of inclusion not defined, but also sanctions for authorities to put the advice into practice do not exist.[26] In other words, state officials as the initiators of regeneration and transformation projects are not legally bound to perform such procedures. This, consequently, adds another dimension to the exclusion of urban citizens from the physical, social and economic realms of urban living.[27] A statement from the Emek Bizim (Emek is

covered in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

[25] See "The Urban Transformation Law is the Biggest Disaster That Has Pillaged Our Living Spaces!" on http://www.toplumunsehircilikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20 7:afet-riski-altndaki-alanlarn-doenuetueruelmesi-hakknda-kanuna-yoenelik-ortak-deklerasyon- &catid=7:basn-acklamalar&Itemid=5 (no specific date, 2012) (accessed on 31.05.2013). This declaration was signed by and thus gained the support of more than 30 other initiatives later.

[26] The 7th clause of the directory of Law No. 5366, for example, states that, "Authorities in charge shall search for the opinion of property owners, or communities in the renewal area, and ensure their participation whilst informing them of the projects to be implemented. Authorities can also organize meetings with universities, professional organizations, NGOs, public institutions and local administrators if needed, and disseminate information via media organizations."

[27] Interestingly, it should also be noted that there seems to be no negotiation on the content of the such terms. At the Real Estate Developers Summit of 2008, the Mayor of Sakarya was asked by a member of audience how they ensure the participation of citizens to the development projects at work, his response was: "The problem is, we go and tell people what we are about to do in various

Ours) Platform reads as follows:[28]

We reject all forms of project development that take place behind closed doors, deprived of collective discussion and transparent procedures (...) We defend that the future for these spaces can only be decided over a process of public discussion. We are making a call to unions, professional organizations, film makers, cultural and artistic producers, urban activists and NGOs for the establishment of a participatory decision making mechanism. This fight, which has been going on for the past two years, should at least prompt us to raise this question, loud and clear: Who has the right to say over the cities we live in? We say, all of us![29]

The fourth objection revolves around pressures posed by large-scale projects on heritage sites and natural resources. This particular topic had been on the agenda of civil opposition since the 1980s, when 'project oriented' approaches in local governance had started to target listed buildings in the urban core and greeneries in the Bosphorus region.[30] However criticisms have intensified as consecutive and multiple projects have come to be imposed on natural and historical areas, this time guarded by legal frameworks and governmental decisions that secure their realization. Law No. 5366 has been a primary tool within these respects, as explained earlier, which paved the way for the designation of one neighbourhood within a natural conservation site and five innerh city poverty areas with heritage characteristics as transformation zones. Although not all areas have seen the finalization of envisaged plans for them, experiences of Sulukule, Tarlabaşı and Süleymaniye have revealed that the projects predominantly rely on demolish and rebuild methods which destroy the heritage qualities of these areas. Thus, civil opposition urges that in the absence of wellh defined conservation masterplans, renewal schemes initiated by the IMM and district municipalities on the grounds of Law No. 5366 will cause more harm than good in terms of conservation. Below is an excerpt from a press release issued by ICOMOS on this specific matter:

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ways, they listen to us, but then they tell others that they don't know what the project is about and that they are not for it. That is, they forget that we told them about the project, so what can we do?"

[28] Emek Bizim Platform has been fighting against the conversion of an old cinema into a shopping mall by a partnership between the local Beyoglu Municipality and a big business group in central Istanbul, Taksim. The cinema does not only constitute an element of cultural heritage in the social memory of the city, but also the building was owned by a public authority before its privatization for such purposes. The platform both objects to the essence of the project envisaged for the building and the transfer of its ownership to private actors upon dubious grounds, in the absence of public knowledge.

[29] This quote is from a press release issued by Emek Bizim –and supported by other initiatives- dated 24.12.2011. An online copy does not seem to exist.

[30] For extensive analysis of these cases see Ekinci (1994, 1991).

Currently, local governments see the interest of big developers in the rising urban rent in the city centre as a solution to the problems of dilapidated historical neighbourhoods. One threat posed by this perspective is that, examples of civil architecture (which still keep their uniqueness, planning schemes and façade details) are being exposed to interventions that go against the grains of contemporary approaches to conservation (…) In the face of these unacceptable attitude within the context of historical heritage (…) the Turkish National Committee of ICOMOS would like to draw the attention of authorities to this important issue for a careful reexamination of matters. Unless this attention is paid, historical structures in Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray and Tarlabaşı will be destroyed like the way it happened in Sulukule before the very eyes of the entire world.[31]

Similarly, what has repeatedly been uttered by various groups in the past few years is that Istanbul's expansion towards the north should be avoided at all costs, for the area hosts such vital natural resources as water reserves and forest land.[32] However, plans for the construction of a Third Bridge that will connect European and Asian continents over the Bosphorus, and the integration of forestry areas to construction activities have been underway despite popular opposition.[33] Combined effects of these plans were coined as 'suicide' by the presidents of the Chamber of Forestry in the film *Ekümenopolis* (2011), since the city will inevitably 'eat into' its natural resources.[34] However, not only has the ground been broken for the Third Bridge in May 2013, but also plans for the construction of a third international airport within the same area were announced in August 2012.[35]

A fifth matter of criticism is that the ways in which current urban policies are being

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[31] The press release has not been dated, however it must have been issued between 2008 and 2010 regarding that demolitions in Sulukule had been underway and no developments had taken place in Tarlabaşı as yet.

[32] What is quite ironic is that the 1:100.000 Masterplan, drafted by IMP, also draws attention to the risks of urbanization towards north-south and advises that development should take the direction of east-west (İstanbul Masterplan Director's Summary, 2009: 17).

[33] The case of Third Bridge was previously mentioned in footnote 23. A new law was released in April 2012 (i.e. Law No. 6292), which permits the sale of agricultural and forestland that previously belonged to the Treasury. It has been with the use of this law that plots governed by building restrictions have become available for construction, including those surrounding the Third Bridge plot.

[34] *Ekümenopolis* (2011) is a critical documentary by İmre Azem which reflects on the multiple aspects of urban change and development in Istanbul throughout history with a special focus on the past decade.

[35] Despite criticisms from various civil groups, a bid was launched for the airport in January 2013. The Minister of Transport announced the results of the bid in May 2013 with positive notes on the offer accepted and special emphasis on the exact location of the airport, which he referred to as a 'pit'. In response, the Chamber of Environmental Engineers issued a press release, which protested the plan and the bid. In this statement, it was explained that the designated construction site was a 'wetland', 'a forest', 'a migration route for birds', 'an earthquake zone', 'a water basin' and altogether 'an area that is not suitable for the construction of an airport'. For more details from the press release see 'Dear 'Minister Binali Yıldırım, It's not a 'Pit'! It's a Forest and Wetland…' (Sayın Bakan Binali Yıldırım, "Çukur" Değil! Orman ve Sulak Alan…) on http://www.tmmob.org.tr/genel/bizden_detay.php?kod=9059&tipi=9 (accessed on 01.04.2013)

utilized for the implementation of transformative projects violate the Building Act of Turkey (i.e, Law No. 3194) in fundamental ways. The act sets the terms, parameters and conditions which policy makers and urban planners should abide with in the development of cities, and has been in effect since 1985. With the recent powers and authorities granted to local governments, however, metropolitan municipalities have been able to make plan revisions and amendments and put them into effect despite their clashes and conflicts with Law No. 3194.

Departing from here, the main commonality among countless lawsuits filed by various civil initiatives against numerous urban transformation and landmark projects is that they draw attention to the mismatch between projects and Law No. 3194. Although the above stated clashes and conflicts deem the acts of authorities illegal in theory, the pace at which the legal system works (together with the fashion in which it works) and translates into everyday life constitutes a major problem, undermining civil initiatives within the process of legal opposition. Thus, many projects that pose threats to the sound functioning of planning system, conservation acts, environmental well being and public interests materialize due to the incapacity of legal mechanisms to cope with the judicial process and the political dynamics which manipulate these processes.[36]

Although most CIs are formed on the grounds of individually specific cases, all arguments stated here can easily be claimed by each group since these are considered to be complementary to each other in terms of accessing RttC in an integrated fashion. This negotiation becomes most visible when diverse CIs come together under certain umbrella organizations for specific causes. The Taksim Solidarity group is a good example of this, whereby more than 100 CIs came together in 2012 to make an active defence of Taksim against the grains of the rather ambitious and capacious pedestrianization project drafted by the IMM. More interesting is that, the same group includes CIs that do not necessarily focus

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[36] In a press statement regarding the construction of the high rising Trump Towers, a shopping mall, the Chamber of Planners clearly state that what led to the construction of the mall was plan revisions that went against the grains of Law No. 3194 and also that their attempts to halt the process have been unfruitful due to political pressures on the judicial system. For more details, see 'Our Chamber Is Not Responsible for the Trump Towers' (Trump Towers'dan Odamız Sorumlu Değildir) on http://www.spoist.org/basin-aciklamalari/trump-towerin-sorumlusu-odamiz-degildir (accessed on 01.04.2013)

on urban matters – i.e. Public Art Laboratory, Kaos GL, Anti-Capitalist Muslims etc. This gestures at the fact that what is defended as RttC cannot be divorced from the wider struggles of many other groups in defence of labour rights, gay and lesbian rights, anti-capitalism, independent art etc.

4.2.2. Neighbourhood Associations

Despite the emergence and establishment of a defined oppositional ground through the collective stance of CIs, the most novel aspect of the current movement is the growing mobilization of *resident communities* in transformation zones around their rights to the city. With the support of various civil initiatives, professional chambers, intellectual circles and in some cases international pressure groups, NAs in the informal housing areas of the urban periphery and poverty zones of the inner-city are trying to develop strategies against large-scale regeneration projects envisaged for their respective neighbourhoods. The aims of such strategies are multi-layered, however it can be proposed that they all fundamentally seek to prevent dispossession, displacement and other ill effects of transformation projects.

This is a novel phenomenon in Istanbul within the context of urban oppositional movements in many respects and these novelties are evident in at least three distinctions between the NAs and earlier forms of grassroots mobilization – i.e. those of late 1970s and 1980s: First of all, today's resistance is not ideologically driven; or better put, the NAs are not led by politically charged groups and their struggles cannot be aligned to particular ideological strands. Clear diversities in the voting behaviour of neighbourhoods represented by such associations during political elections seem to confirm this statement greatly.[37] Instead, resistance is mostly defined on the grounds of rights to housing and property, urban resources, and democratic representation in urban governance. Here what is of importance for the NAs is to gain the support of CIs and other non-governmental organizations

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[37] To give a few examples, whereas Tarlabaşı predominantly comprises of the pro-Kurdish Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP) constituents, Başıbüyük is represented predominantly by ruling JDP voters. That is, it has become possible to find associations in opposition with the urban policies of JDP in neighbourhoods where JDP supporters form the majority.

in their struggle rather than that of political bodies since what is pursued is the construction of a 'rights based movement'.[38]

Departing from here, and secondly, what seems to come forward is a sense of *institutionalization* around certain principles that constitute the foundations of a fight for urban rights. In numerous accounts, representatives of NAs have emphasized that they place primary importance on the establishment of power structures whereby information becomes accessible to all and decisions are made from bottom-up so that the working mechanisms of opposition can be democratized at grassroots level.[39] It is assumed that it can only be through the accomplishment of a goal as such at the local level that regional and national alliances of inhabitants can be formed, and attempts for bridging international links can be made.

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[38] In an interview with *Express*, Erdoğan Yıldız (one of the leading members of Gülsuyu-Gülensu NA and INAP) had put that there were efforts towards abandoning the historical links of neighbourhood struggles with the previous periods' political ties. In his view, the problem with these forms of politics was that urban transformation would only become a tool for leftist and revolutionist ideals to be achieved, and never a central issue on its own. Thus, the outlook under question suffered from the tendency to delay the solution of urban problems to a systemic revolution and could not satisfy the urgent expectations of those falling victim to renewal projects (April 2008: 37).

[39] A round table discussion held by *Istanbul*, representatives from six NAs that have all become members of INAP, it was repeatedly emphasized that it is important to create the bottom-up mechanisms first at a neighourhood level, then spread it at a district level if possible and finally turn it into a city wide process to make sure that information is shared democratically. This was seen as the most ideal way of getting institutionalized to be able to communicate with authorities. In an interview for *Express*, Ayşe Yazıcı (a leading member of Karanfilköy NA and INAP) said "We want to make sure that we, as community members, are involve in all decision making and planning development processes." (April 2008: 37).

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Fig. 5 Image showing Başıbüyük residents, dressed in what looks like burial robes, protesting against the urban transformation project targeting their neighbourhood in Maltepe town centre. (Photo by: Tuna Kuyucu)

Thirdly, resistance is not limited to *gecekondu* areas, or neighbourhoods of the betterh off, but has also found voice within innerh city poverty zones. As explained, earlier demonstrations of grassroots opposition had emerged from peripheral informal housing zones and then moved on to centrally located middle to upperh middle class neighbourhoods due to the pressures they were exposed to by entrepreneurial acts of IMM. In the current times, however, geographies of opposition have widened in correlation with the heightened spatialization of profiht driven operations by public and private actors. In other words, each and every locality that bears substantial degrees of rent potential (either due to the availability of space, or other locational advantages) is currently under the pressure of neoliberal urban acts regardless of class orientation in targeted areas. Thus, what is also witnessed is a big class shift in the anatomy of resistance: Communities of incompletely commodified housing areas, innerh city poverty zones and upscale neighbourhoods are equally vulnerable to the planning decisions made by the metropolitan government, and thus, equally inclined to get involved

in an oppositional stance.[40]
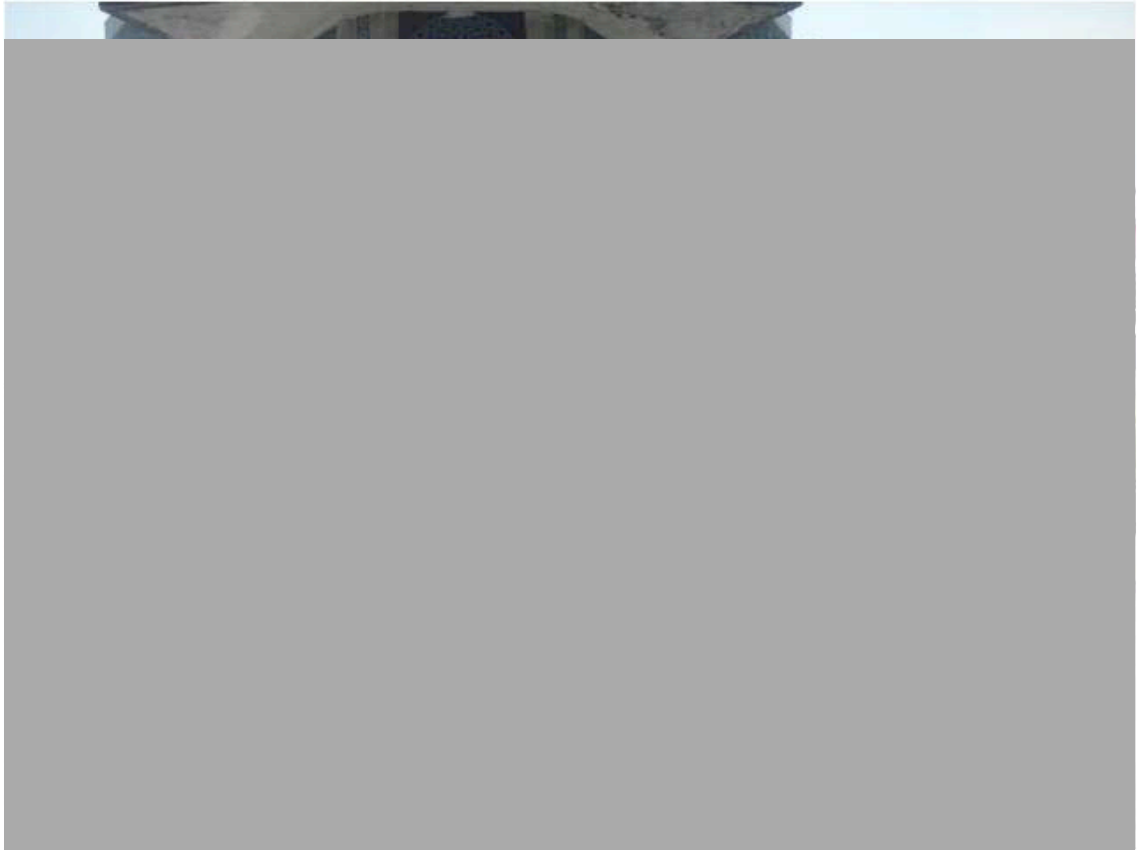
Fig. 6 Image showing Ayazma residents protesting against TOKİ (i.e. MHA) and Küçükçekmece Municipality 'for not keeping their promises' (as read on the signpost) within the context of a regeneration project which resulted in the large-scale displacement of the resident community. (Photo by: Cihan Baysal)

Although resistance strategies may vary from one neighbourhood to the other due to the particularities of processes they become subject to, the main commonality among all NAs is opposition to the further engagement of urban land and housing markets to capitalist circuits via legal reforms, the undermining of property and housing rights within this context, and the absence of supportive social and economic programmes that can fight against the ill consequences of urban transformation at large. This joint will amongst the neighbourhoods has even led to the formation of a collective structure, the Istanbul Neighbourhood Associations Platform (INAP) in 2007. Representing more than 20 neighbourhoods, the

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[40] It is, however, important to note that current transformation zones within residential areas primarily aim at low-income neighbourhoods (as in the case of informal housing and inner-city poverty areas) since it has become of alarming importance to clear negative elements that come in the way of economic rent generation.

platform aimed to form "a pressure mechanism by bringing the individual struggles prevailing in each neighbourhood together."[41] Undoubtedly, the purpose of each individual struggle taking part in the platform was to take the opportunity in having a say within the oppositional sphere; doing so would contribute to the achievement of certain ends for all, such as the establishment of fair grounds within regeneration processes, and the protection of resident communities from potential harms in social and economic terms.

Fig. 7 Residents of Fener-Balat-Ayvansaray protesting against regeneration plans envisaged for their neighbourhood. Poster on the top left reads: "We Don't Want Governments That Demolish Neighbourhoods"; the poster at the bottom to the left reads: "The Earthquake Could Not Demolish It, The Court Did Not Demolish It, Hence You Cannot Demolish It", and the poster on the far right at the bottom reads: "Do Not Touch My Home". (Photo by: Elif İnce)

Yet, INAP proclaimed that its ultimate goal was to prevent the release of a highly disputed bill, popularly addressed as the Urban Transformation Law, which would authorize the metropolitan municipality in designating any area within the city a transformation zone without having to rely on specific justifications like the way it is required by the rest of policy frameworks. The main concern was that "all areas

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[41] Erdoğan Yıldız in *Express* (April 2008: 39).

whether formal, or informal, will be exposed to transformation without authorities having to rely on concrete excuses".[42] However, not only has the law made its way to the general secretariat of the Turkish parliament as of January 2012 – under the title of Disaster Law- but also INAP distintegrated as of 2009 for reasons that will be explained in the coming sections.[43]

4.2.2.1. An Overview of Main arguments

The NA's are on a similar page with other categories of oppositional actors when it comes to issues in debate as discussed earlier: They are equally critical of the privatization of state owned land and/or expropriation of private properties by the hand of the state for profit driven goals; corruption of social justice through displacements and dispossessions; adoption of non-inclusive a n d non-participatory methods in decision-making processes; radical interventions into heritage zones and natural resources, and violation of Building Acts for the ambitions of public authorities. However, there are additional matters of concern for NAs, arising from the specificity of their position within the ongoing processes of transformation. These were identified by INAP within the context of a declaration, which was presented at a symposium in 2007.[44] Published interviews and roundtable discussions with representatives of NAs constituting INAP in later periods also confirmed these concerns.

To start with, the NAs are critical of the fact that UTPs are legitimized through the active stigmatization of both the targeted neighbourhoods and their resident communities by public authorities. As explained in the previous chapter, two of the leading justifications presented by authorities for transformative urban decisions and projects are 'earthquake preparedness' and 'crime clearance'. Within this framework, local authorities increasingly adopted a discourse that holds migration waves that spatialized in the city throughout past decades responsible

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[42] Quote from Erdoğan Yıldız in *Express* (Atayurt and Kuyucu, 2008: 39).

[43] Law on Transformation of Areas Bearing Disaster Risk (Law No. 6036), released in May 2012, targets at the renewal of areas under disaster risk. More on this law and its implications will be covered in the main conclusion.

[44] The symposium, titled 'The Neighbourhoods Are Talking' [Mahalleler Konuşuyor], was organized by the 23 neighbourhoods constituting INAP to start a brainstorming process to stop the release of then rumoured Disaster Law.

for the majority of 'urban problems' encountered today.[45] In a similar fashion, it has increasingly being claimed that elements of crime in the city originate from informal housing areas and inner-city poverty zones. In various public statements, such official figures as the Prime Minister Erdoğan, Mayor Topbaş and the MHA president Bayraktar did not refrain from addresssing these areas as 'centres of crime', or 'tumours surrounding our cities'.[46]

In an attempt to address this issue in the declaration of 2006, INAP criticized the blind-eye politics of past governments to the housing needs of migrant crowds and the dire housing deficit in the metropolitan areas of Turkey -together with the absence of sound social housing policies. From this perspective, although the state had actively chosen to tolerate self-help housing operations of migrants to back the course of industrialization, collect votes and cut back from the costs of social housing, this attitude had changed now that the big shift from production to services had taken place in the economic sphere. Thus, not only was there no longer any need for workers who had provided industrialization with the required labour force for decades, but also their living spaces had become integral to the larger development plans of authorities:

They let the city form on its own as it would for decades. And now they want to become the owners of the land that they once considered as far away places. On top, they convinced the rest of citizens that we are those who are responsible from the current state of our neighbourhoods (…) We do feel that we are not wanted anymore.

Secondly, the NAs state that almost none of the UTPs are designed to better the living conditions of resident communities. Instead, it is argued that UTPs aim to attract wealthier groups into transformation zones at the expense of displacing already existing communities. There are a number of reasons that have given way to this perception: First of all, the inhabitants are almost never involved in the planning, or decisionh making processes of UTPs as noted in the previous section. Rather, communities face toph down schemes that aim at the almost complete restructuring of their neighbourhoods in social, economic and physical

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[45] In a news-piece dated 2007, Mayor Topbaş argued that İstanbul "came to develop in a random fashion in the past 50 years as a result of 13 million people arriving into the city" and that "all current problems in the city are caused by this reason predominantly"; departing from here, he stated that "living spaces are being transformed in an attempt to eliminate these problems." For more details, see "Küresel Isınmaya Karşı 'Bahçe Katlı' Konutlar" *İstanbul Bülteni* (Ekim, 2007).
[46]

terms.[47] Therefore, NAs criticize the methods of regeneration and assert that rehabilitation, or renewal programmes should not be developed, or initiated in the absence of the residents' ideas, needs and consent if the eventual goal is to improve the living standards of communities. It was within this context that the declaration included the statement, "we believe we should be a part of solutions to the problems in our neighbourhoods."[48]

At a second level, as part of this concern, lived experience has so far demonstrated that projects envisaged and realized do not target the resident communities of renewal zones. Rather, the neighbourhoods are demolished and rebuilt in the form of upscale residential, or mixed-use areas that might comprise of shopping malls, luxurious residences, office blocks and hotels. The two case studies to be covered as part of this thesis are examples of such projects.[49] In response to this, INAP objects to privileges extended to relatively better off groups at the expense of dispossessing and displacing socially and economically disadvantaged groups. This was addressed in the declaration as follows:

We want each and every person in this city and his/her family to live in earthquake resistant and secure buildings without fears. Those who want us out of these neighbourhoods, obviously, do not wish the same for us. They think that living in earthquake proof areas, secure buildings, green spaces with a view of the sea is a privilege that is only available to the rich.

The third concern and criticism of INAP drew attention to the centralization of property ownership within policy frameworks. That is, property owners are the only groups who are recognized as official parties by public authorities for the purposes of formal talks and negotiations. Under such circumstances, and as explained in the previous chapter, property ownership functions as a main reference point in deciding who can benefit from the compensations that will become available to the residents of areas affected by regeneration: Whereas

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[47] NAs very often state that they do not pursue an 'anti-regeneration' opposition. To the contrary, physical, social, economic and infrastructural improvements are regarded as alarming necessities both by the representatives of NAs and resident communities of UTP zones. Case study chapters will also confirm this statement.

[48] If UTPs envisaged for their respective neighbourhoods may lead to the relocation of residents to other areas, then it is argued that alternatives of compensation should again be devised in the presence of residents: "We would like to be recognized as a legitimate and official party within negotiations."

[49] Apart from the cases of Tarlabaşı and Sulukule, one can also give the example of Ayazma which was completely razed in 2008 for the construction of an upscale residential complex, *Ağaoğlu My World,* by one of the leading developers in the country, Ağaoğlu İnşaat.

owners have a degree of say and can guarantee certain gains and/or securities within the context of UTPs -whether it be financial compensations, or the opportunity to stay within the project area- tenants and the rest remain unprotected by law at many levels.

The centrality of property ownership within this framework causes, primarily, a big divide between owners and 'others', who transform into non-entitites with minimized access to housing opportunities, or other support mechanisms. Moreover, this division poses a big pressure on the resilience of resistance in neighbourhoods. Pressured by the forces of transformation, property owners try to avoid material losses and end up negotiating with authorities in return for compensations. A more in depth analysis of this statement will be provided in case study chapters.

The fourth concern relates to the way in which UTPs often and predominantly lead to the forced and large-scale displacement of resident communities in renewal zones. Although local governments tend to argue that renewal schemes do not seek to displace inhabitants, it becomes financially impossible for the majority to stay within transformation zones following the completion of the project due to the speculative boom in real estate values.[50] For property owners, choosing to do so translates into the obligation to pay for the rent gap between the old and new units. Experience has so far shown that those who can afford to stay in renewal zones under such conditions are dramatically limited in number.[51] As for tenants, who represent the majority in some cases, being able to afford the new rent figures is an even slimmer chance. For these reasons, very large groups mainly represented by tenants and non-recognized owners get displaced against their will. Below is a statement from the manifesto with respect to this issue:

We have become useless within the scope of plans for new Istanbul; we are being displaced, our properties are being transferred to the rich and yet we are completely excluded from the processes that lead to these consequences! (...) All we are offered are housing blocks, built in areas that are far away from the places we live and work, our neighbours, and our kids are away from their schools.

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[50] In fact, this boom comes into effect way earlier than the completion of the project as will be demonstrated in the case of Sulukule.

[51] More details on this are provided in the main conclusion of the thesis.

Coming to the fifth matter, projects are not backed by social and economic programmes that can immunize resident communities against the possible ill effects of transformation: This is the biggest concern for tenants who become relatively more vulnerable when compared to property owners who can secure certain returns from the schemes. The only support mechanism formulated by authorities for these groups is the opportunity to purchase what is referred to as social housing units made available by the Mass Housing Administration through long-term payment plans. However, this formula has not proven sustainable so far since (a) the surroundings of social housing areas lack both job opportunities and sufficient infrastructural development, (b) displacement gives way to severe interruptions in the social and economic survival strategies of communities, and (c) the financial burden of these units is predominantly non-affordable for these groups. UTPs do not include any programmes that can help communities cope with these dynamics and similar. Thus, NAs raise strong criticisms to being forcefully exposed to schemes that practically worsen the living standards of communities in the absence of security nets, as the manifesto also states:

It is claimed that urban transformation projects are social projects as they are. When we say 'social project', does it mean the obligation to work in the constructions of new residences, like the way it will happen in Hacıhüsrev? Is the best we can expect from these processes the opportunity to build new apartments on the ruins of our homes?[52]

Last but not the least, existing policies are utilized in a way to create scare mechanisms over residents. Both the case studies which this research is based on and other studies, have demonstrated that both the terms and conditions of projects, and the way in which these are communicated to communities is one of the major dynamics that contribute to the eventual weakening of oppositional tendencies. It has already been explained that the projects and compensations extended by them are constructed upon some debt mechanisms, whereby residents (regardless of their tenure status) can only access certain gains if they accept to take some financial burdens. Not only do these burdens constitute substantial matters of concern for residents, but also when objections are raised against these limited options, residents get fierce reactions, which they tend to address as 'threats' by local authorities. These threats, or reactions, suggest that if

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[52] Initial plans drafted for Hacıhüsrev, an inner-city poverty zone, in 2008, suggested that the social aspect of the Project was to based on the provision of jobs for residents in the construciton site of the renewal Project. Later, plans for Hacıhüsrev were out aside for unknown reasons.

residents do not show willingness to opt for one of the available options, their properties will be expropriated (if they are owners), or they will face homelessness (if they are tenants). Thus, the 'scare mechanisms' created lead residents to selling their properties, or accepting to join the housing schemes on offer even if they might be in opposition of the project. This, often, is how full resistance starts to fragment as also put in the manifesto:

They come to our neighbourhoods and tell our neighbours that 'their houses are illegal, that they do not own these lands, that they have to leave, or they will become indebted to the state and their houses will be demolished', we all know that. We also know that our neighbours are deprived of options and that they end up signing documents that they do not want to sign out of fear for their kids and their future.

In their 'battle' against the transformative powers of the state and private developers, NAs are still in a process of shaping. With the addition of each and every neighbourhood to the list of renewal zones in Istanbul, the agenda of struggle for housing and property rights attains further complexity. NAs are almost never alone in their battles, always finding support from CIs; thus, it is a combination of actors that brainstorm on the ways of rendering grassroots resistance more sustainable. Yet, what creates NAs with substance is eventually determined by the actions of community members within the course of mobilization.

4.3. On the 'Possibilities and Impossibilites of Collective Action': Assessing the Potentials of Urban Oppositional Movements

Departing from the above described array of arguments, put forth by a wide range of actors with distinct positions in the socioh economic and political landscape of Istanbul, one may suggest that the city is enjoying a momentum within the context of an oppositional stance against urban transformation. Thus, some relevant and intriguing questions on the impacts of opposition to current urban change in Istanbul can be raised: Have any 'gains', or 'victories' been achieved to this date? Or, has the process been more about 'losses', or 'leth downs'? Overall, what are the implications of the momentum in question? Has the opposition managed to bring change in tangible, or intangible terms?

For the diverse processes of urban entrepreneurial transformation are still at work and their consequences are in the making, the impacts of opposition are also in formation. Thus, it is currently very difficult to make clear-cut statements on the 'gains' and 'losses' of opposition. Besides, since different parts of the city are going through different stages of transformation in different forms, it is not easy to make generalizable comments on civil and grassroots opposition, and their impact on the consequences of transformation. For example, Ayazma has completely been razed and its inhabitants have been transferred to MHAh built social housing blocks in Bezirganbahce despite strong resistance. Or, there is Gülsuyu-Gülensu, another *gecekondu* neighbourhood, which has managed to halt the project to be initiated by the district municipality for an indefinite period.[53] Coming to landmark projects, almost all that have been publicly declared are taken to the court by the Chambers of Architects and Planners. Whereas the majority of these legal battles are still continuing, some have been lost and others have been won only until court decisions were nullified due to amendments brought to the terms and conditions of debated projects by public authorities to enable their implementation.[54] Still, the majority of landmark projects remain unimplemented for the time being.

Overall, one may argue that since there are no examples whereby opposition has given way to the permanent termination of projects, or their amendment in a way to secure public interests and rights, opposition has not succeeded much – and thus, it may be at a loss.[55] Or, from a polar opposite perspective, it can also be

[53] On the other hand, many other neighbourhoods are still in dialogue with public authorities (e.g. Başıbüyük), or developing strategies before they are approached by authorities (e,g, Bedrettin). Finally, although Bedrettin, an inner-city poverty area, has been declared as a renewal zone, formal dialogues with authorities have not started as yet. There are continued efforts towards the establishment of an NA.

[54] An ambitious project for a cruise marina, known as Galataport, was taken to the court by the Chamber of Planners in 2005 on the grounds that it did not fit with the planning and conservation requirements of the area it was situated in and also because the project did not serve public interests. Although this case was won, certain amendments were made to the status of the land over which the project was wanted to be implemented. It was in this way that the project was redeveloped and put to tender with the same problems since the status of the land no longer required the conditions put forth by the chamber to be fulfilled. For more details on this project, see Eğrisiyle Doğrusuyla Galataport [All About Galataport] (2008), a report published by the Chamber of Planners.

[55] Fener-Balat NA, for example, has currently succeeded in terminating the project developed by the Fatih Municipality on the grounds of a court decision. However, this decision is still subject to change in the long run. In other words, certain victories are not always definite in legal terms. Yet,

argued that the capacity of opposition to delay projects, or put pressure on authorities through judicial processes, can be interpreted as a significant gain – especially compared to the past, when there were limited mechanisms, or actors capable of achieving such ends. Thus, as examples also confirm, it is presently very difficult to name gains and losses on part of opposition as a unified entity. Yet, it is possible to suggest that there is a certain fragility that is common to the CIs and NAs in their battles against current forces of neoh liberal urban change, and that this fragility has an influence on the potential gains and losses of civil and grassroots opposition.

Although there is little written on the specificity of recent urban oppositional movements from a critical perspective, it is suffice to argue that the existing few have raised noteworthy points on the current potentials and weaknesses of both civil initiatives and grassroots organizations (Yalçıntan, 2009; Yalçıntan and Çavuşoğl, 2009; Türkmen, 2011; İMECE, 2011). Departing from these, it seems appropriate to discuss these potentials and weaknesses under the joint umbrella of what Yalçıntan (2009) coins as the 'possibilities and impossibilities of collective action'. According to this perspective, current oppositional groups h whether they be CIs, or NAs are faced by certain challenges and crisis issues that greatly disable their ability to establish firm coalitions against the forces of neoliberal urbanism.

Despite the fact that oppositional groups are in extensive negotiation on the major matters of criticism and opposition, as explained earlier, the methods of struggling for RttC remain highly contested – leading to the constant fragmentation of opposition (Yalçıntan, 2009 and Türkmen, 2011). 'Opposition in fragments' does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a weakness. Yet, 'forming a collective oppositional front' is very often addressed as a main target both by CIs and NAs, and therefore, the inability to do so is articulated as a handicap since it comes in the way of 'creating a shared platform among many' (İMECE, 2011: 6).[56] According to this perspective, a front as such is needed in order to put greater pressure on

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on their own, each legal success is a step forward for urban oppositional movements.

[56] Yalçıntan puts that forming a joint front is needed for 'the number of groups fighting for this cause is rather limited and the strength of these groups can only be enhanced if they stand together' and also because 'collective action can help eliminate one group's mistakes' (2009: 2).

public and private actors involved in transformative processes, and "create a more humanitarian imagination of the future within the context of local politics" (Yalçıntan and Çavuşoğlu, 2009: 4).

It is important to note here, again, that these arguments apply both for the possibilities of collective action among CIs and NAs, and also within their very own categories. What seems to come forth in the case of CIs, according to Yalçıntan (2009), is that although they have functioned in a way to appease the incapacities of political groups, or institutionalized civil organizations (such as professional chambers) in fighting against urban controversies, they have partially fallen victims to disputes among themselves. From this perspective, despite CIs' effective performance in coming together at such acute moments as demolitions, or mass protests, tensions and mistrusts among groups on the grounds of ideological distinctions translate into irreconcilable differences in each other's methods and approaches to demonstrating joint struggle.[57] According to a report issued by İMECE (2011), the fact that there is an initiative set up against each and every entrepreneurial action ongoing in the city does not also help regarding the fragmentation under question.

In an attempt to provide an example of disputes as such, Yalçıntan (2009) refers to tensions and discussion that erupted at the time when volunteers and activists from diverse backgrounds –i.e. STOP [Autonomous Planners with No Limits]- worked together to develop alternative plans for Sulukule and Gülsuyu-Gülensu. The aim of these plans was to "demonstrate that it was possible to draft transformation and renewal plans without causing displacements [i.e. proposing *in situ* relocation] and other vulnerabilities with a focus on not only physical space but also social and economic relations" (ibid.: 5). However, plans faced fierce reactions from some other CIs on such grounds as 'distintegrity', 'populism', 'not being in opposition of the system', 'leading residents to false dreams' etc. (ibid.) A alash of views on how resistance and fighting for the right to the city should be translated into practice is not restricted to this case alone, but applies to all other

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[57] Yalçıntan and suggest that this relates, at times, to the 'introvert nature' of each group at certain levels (2009: 4). That is, the introspective nature of CIs may come in the way of 'openness' towards each other. According to Yalçıntan, this goes to the extent that CIs can accuse each other for 'revisionism', "counter-revolutionism', or 'orthodox leftism' (2009: 3).

instances of brainstorming which aimed at the demonstration of joint action.[58] For all these cumulative reasons, İMECE argues that CIs do not only suffer from problems of 'institutionalization' and solidarity, but also fail in elevating RttC struggles to a wider political agenda.[59]

Coming to the case of NAs, İMECE notes in its report that the main significance of such bodies and their attempts to create umbrella organizations lies in their potential to bring neighbourhoods with prior experience and no experience of mobilization together in the effort to construct a collective struggle (2011: 5). This is a noteworthy argument, regarding that NAs get to learn from each other's experience whenever they come together for various meetings and occasions, building up on their existing knowledge of urban transformations and its pitfalls alongside distinct forms of struggle under different dynamics. Fieldwork undertaken for the purposes of this research has also confirmed that learning processes have been effective in developing mobilizational skills, as will be demonstrated.

Yet, at the very same time, Yalçıntan argues that NAs suffer from a series of problems among which are shortfalls in representation, discontinuity, reactionism, inability to act beyond crisis moments, introversion, tensions among different NAs due to ideological, or methods based oriented reasons, time restrictions and economic deprivation (2009). Perhaps among all, economic limitations take the lead as also stated in the report of İMECE. Accordingly, economic constraints pose big obstacles to resistanceh driven mobilization in neighbourhoods since the grounds for dialogues on urban transformation are heavily defined by monetary elements. This means that communities tend to shift their efforts from a fight for their rights to the city to a negotiation process with authorities at a bargaining table in gradual terms. Taking informal housing areas to provide an example, İMECE (2011) report argues that what comes to fore for community members within the course of resistance is 'the number of units they can access as part of compensations', 'the value of their existing units is', 'how

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[58] Creation of Taksim Solidarity has not been easy in that respect with more than 100 constituents, fighting on a diversity of topics with the adoption of diverse methods.
[59] Yalçıntan argues that tensions among CIs instigate a certain mistrust within the wider society, and perhaps more importantly, within communities that CIs would be in want of providing support (2009: 3-4).

much the unit to be offered will cost', and thus 'how much they will owe to authorities'. Thus, the final goal of resistance gets redefined around 'the possibility of changing the conditions of the project in an attempt to minimize losses'.

Findings of this research do not only confirm the above noted statements but also add two more elements that can be considered as integral to the 'possibilities and impossibilities of collective action' within the particular context of NAs. Findings derive from the specific case of innerh city poverty zones undergoing regeneration, however they can also apply for other neighbourhoods that both experience dire conditions of poverty and also absence of prior experience in civil and political mobilization at neighbourhood level.

First of all, it seems obvious that communities of inner-city poverty zones face immense difficulties in coping with pressures exerted by existing policies and the ways in which they are put into practice due to the social and economic drawbacks they experience. Putting resistance driven mobilization into action requires constant and steady supply of legal advice alongside the need to take the struggle out on the street in practical terms; however these processes are not affordable for the majority of community members in economic and temporal terms.[60] Thus, provision of resources for resistance remains problematic. At another level, the way in which policies are being put into practice instigates the previously uttered scare mechanisms, which force many inhabitants to withdraw from resistance and settle for negotiations. Different forms of oppression and stigmatization experienced by some of the communities do not also help.[61] As stated, some communities tend to have problematic relations with authorities for various reasons either due to their marginalization as 'criminals', or 'unwanted citizens'. Tarlabaşı and Sulukule can be considered as examples of these for

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[60] Leaving aside the fact that community members predominantly come from very low-income backgrounds with little savings for such expenditures, there are time limitations to how the communities can take action. During a meeting in Gülsuyu-Gülensu, there was a discussion on whether it would be possible to visit Sulukule as a big crowd from the community to provide support at the time of demolitions. Not only did some of the residents raise concerns about travel costs (for public transport) but also there were complaints about the fact that the visit was arranged for a weekday. One among many reacted by saying that 'he had to work on a week day and did not have the luxury of skipping it even if it would be for a rightful protest'. (Field notes, dated 18 November 2008).
[61] This is not limited to the case of inner-city poverty areas but also applies to informal housing zones as noted earlier. For an account of how a criminalizing language emerged in the 1990s to marginalize *gecekondu* communities, see Erman (2001)

reasons that will be explained. This history, when it applies, comes in the way of confronting authorities and performing radical resistance in an organized and collective fashion. 'Unwillingness to confront the state', or 'the fear of state' were two of the most recurring lines from the fieldwork in the attempt to explain reasons for negotiation with authorities.

The second, on the other hand, relates to the recognition of property owners as the sole party in talks, which leads to fragmentations within the community and threatens the unity of resistance in the due course. As already mentioned in previous chapter, all tenants and occupiers are treated as non-entities within the framework of policies that pave way for the transformation of designated renewal zones. So far, it has only been within the course of resistance that NAs in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı managed to create options for tenants within the inner-city areas although these were equally defined by financial burdens and debt mechanisms. Despite the availability of options for all, however, inequality between property owners and tenants persists since owners remain as the only party with bargaining power. Consequently, as pressure heightens, property owners tend to move towards 'negotiation with authorities' in fear of losing what they already have for certain returns – and as the case studies hall demonstrate, these returns do not always end up being profitable in the long run. Withdrawal of property owners from resistance –defined on the grounds of not leaving the neighbourhood on any terms and coming in the way of demolitions- means a loss of grounds for resistance on the part of tenants. That is, private ownership renders tenants dependent on owners in terms of their capacity to resist transformative processes. Thus, fragmentation between these two groups inevitably translates into a fragmentation in the interests of the actors of resistance. Gestures towards this trend were visible in the initial stages of transformation in Başıbüyük and Tarlabaşı (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). Later, these findings were also supported by Türkmen (2011), Deniz (2011) and İMECE (2011).

Conclusion:

Urban oppositional movements that have come to constitute one of the most debated matters within the context of the past decade's urban change is not entirely a novel phenomenon: *Gecekondu* movements, which helped politicize the housing need and struggle of socio-economically vulnerable groups in the 1970s and middle-class beautification associations of the 1990s, which demonstrated a strong defence of the neighbourhood in the face of heightened entrepreneurial projects, can be considered as building blocks that paved the way to current urban movements. Complementing these were also the efforts of professional chambers and civil initiatives starting from the 1980s. What is being witnessed today may not necessarily be defined as a continuum of what was experienced in the earlier periods, but more as an occurrence that is both contingent to the present conditions of neoliberal urbanism and built upon the heritage of previous struggles.

As noted, what characterizes posth 2000's movements is their specificity within the context of contemporary urban development and change, described in the previous chapter. Today, it is possible to see a wide range of civil groups and initiatives, struggling for such matters as the environment, housing and property rights, conservation, public spaces and resources etc. Issues that have become central to the agenda of current urban oppositional movements are both telling of what has come to be pressurized under recent urban policies and operations, but also of what is becoming critically unavailable to ordinary people. Departing from here, another matter of significance is that the scope of class orientation within movements has widened in correlation with the range of critical issues in debate. What calls for particular attention, however, is the growing visibility and presence of neighbourhood associations within the current oppositional front.

As already explained, grassroots initiatives were already present in the 1970s and 1990s; however, since the matters of controversy only applied to restricted areas in the previous periods, the class orientation of these organizations remained limited to the areas affected by the time's controversies. Now that territories of urban entrepreneurial activity have expanded immensely, neighbourhood

associations can be found in informal housing zones, inner-city poverty areas and middle-class neighbourhoods, all of which have been designated as renewal sites in line with current urban policies. Either with previous knowledge and experience of mobilization, or not, these associations are trying to develop working strategies against potential displacements, dispossessions and various other violations of housing and property rights in the absence of securities provided by public authorities.

Despite the diversity and vibrancy of current movements in the face of neoliberal urban forces, limited yet substantial debates suggest that one of the biggest challenges confronting oppositional groups is their 'incapacity to stand together', at least for the time being. That is, there are impediments to establishing collective fronts that sustain beyond acute moments and demonstrate integrity. What is emphasized in these debates can be evaluated within two separate categories for each of CIs and NAs. Regarding CIs, it is argued that these circles suffer from stark divisions among themselves around the question of how to struggle for the right to the city. Regarding NAs, on the other hand, it is asserted that the pressure of current urban policies and operations heighten the tendency of grassroots initiatives to withdraw from ultimate resistance and focus on potential gains and securities that can be extracted from dialogues with authorities and processes of transformation.

It is in line with these problems, it is argued, that current oppositional groups fall short of not only establishing collective presence within their specific categories but also across categories. Two fieldwork studies undertaken for the specific purposes of this research confirms these arguments and suppositions to a great extent. Results drawn from fieldwork also indicate that NAs suffer from challenges relating to issues of ownership. That is, since the current urban policies and local governments take property ownership central to how urban transformation is managed, debated and conversed within neighbourhoods, reverberations of the centrality of ownership find immediate reflection in the mobilization efforts of NAs. Whereas there is strong will towards 'standing together' as a joint coalition of owners and tenants in the initial stages of opposition and resistance, what follows later is often a fragmentation between these two groups in order to attain certain

securities as the pressure of renewal peaks. Needless to say, these patterns come to the fore particularly in poverty zones.

5. 'Getting In' and 'Getting On': The Uses and Intricacies of Ethnographic Fieldwork in Urban Transformation Zones

Before moving on to my case studies, I would like to describe the manner in which this research was undertaken and its ethnographic characteristics. In-depth interviews were held with 28 property owners, 27 tenants and 8 NA representatives within a period of four months between October 2008 and February 2009 in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı. The main body of this thesis is made up of the data extracted from these one-on-one conversations based on semi-structured interviews, and the patterns observed within and among these conversations. The four intense months of interviews took place following a yearlong period of participant observation. An overview of how I 'got in' and 'got on' within the context of my fieldwork reveals not only the slippery grounds and sensitive aspects of carrying out research, but also the importance of studying the process of urban transformation and the communities that become subject to it in Turkey with an ethnographic take.

The evolution of ethnographic research confirms that in our attempts to understand social and cultural systems, 'being there', 'observing', and 'excavating first-hand data' is essential to 'gaining an insider's perspective' and 'developing multiple-perspectives' (Murchison, 2010; Bradburd, 1998; Watson, 1999; Gobo, 2010). Studies initiated by the Chicago School and such seminal works as the *Street Corner Society* (Whyte, 1943), *Tally's Corner* (Liebow, 1967), *Norman Street* (Susser, 1982), *Ain't No Makin' It* (MacLeod, 1987) etc. are of particular significance here since they demonstrate that an ethnographic approach can greatly illuminate urban phenomena. At a time when urban dynamics have become increasingly complicated in political, economic, social and cultural terms, continuing with this tradition of establishing "direct connections with the research site and subjects" (Murchison, 2010: 12) is of utmost importance in understanding how complex networks of relationships define the shaping and making of places.

The ethnographic perspective is useful in analyzing the urban conditions of countries like Turkey, where the development of metropolitan centres has depended on swift and uncontrolled growth processes for decades –

accentuated by a multitude of informal place making practices. These intense relationships between the making of the urban and the survival tactics of the underprivileged became the subject of many major studies especially between 1960-1980, but almost none of these made use of an ethnographic approach in a systematic fashion. *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk* [Poverty in Turns] by Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2009) and *Kentsel Gerilim* [Urban Tension] by Erder (1997), for example, made valuable contributions to our understanding of the dynamics between place making and community structures in Istanbul between 1980-2000. Yet these studies have remained as examples of only a certain degree of ethnographic outlook on the interactions between human factors and urban settings in Turkey.

Studying the transformation of Istanbul with an ethnographic take is crucial at a time when the neoliberal operations of local and central governments are redefining not only the formal processes of urban planning and development, but also the survival tactics of disadvantaged communities. This thesis aims to make a contribution to this recently growing literature in Turkey, and this chapter aims to reveal the tactics crafted in "'getting close to the inside', 'telling it like it is', 'giving an insider's account', 'being true to the natural phenomena', giving 'thick description' and 'deeply rich' data" (Brewer, 2000: 37). My fieldwork experience has explored the sensitive aspects of undertaking ethnographic fieldwork in urban transformation zones, and has confirmed that developing a thorough understanding of complexities within settings under immense pressures depends heavily on 'getting in' (achieving physical access) and 'getting on' (achieving social access) (Cassel, 1988) at many different levels.

5.1. Understanding the Realm of Urban Transformation in Istanbul

This initial part of my research can be read as a step-by-step journey from the 'outer' to the 'inner' territories of my fields in many respects. To start with, my participation in events such as conferences and symposia (organized by circles both critical and supportive of urban transformation) opened the gates for me to attend meetings held by civil initiatives working to support communities in

renewal zones. My participation to the latter first led me to protests in various renewal zones, and then granted me with access to mass meetings held by neighborhood associations.[1] Thus, my journey evolved in such a way that I managed to arrive into the core medium of my fields.

Meetings of civil initiatives had a significant impact on my role as a participant observer in the field. From the start, I was encouraged to contribute to discussions: I either filled the discussions in with my existing knowledge deriving from research, or showed my support for, or objection to the ideas proposed. When ideas were translated into action plans, I volunteered in giving support to the initiatives, and hence, to the residents.[2] That is, my role transformed from being a relatively passive observer to an active volunteer at times. This shift in my position helped me overcome some of the moral concerns I had: Knowing that letting others into these intimate meetings was a matter of hesitation for some, demonstrating my reasonable attendance to the discussions and volunteering in the neighbourhoods would provide the initiatives with the logistic support they needed, and thus, help me become an element of 'use' rather than 'intrusion'.

During the mass meetings in neighbourhoods, however, I preferred to step back and adopt a relatively passive role. I limited my participation to asking questions where appropriate, or raising my opinion when I was asked to. Mass meetings are of vital importance for residents since the information and guidance they receive from the leaders of their respective NAs and other experts (i.e. volunteering lawyers, representatives from professional chambers etc.) have an immediate impact on their lives. Although mass meetings were exclusive sources of information for me as a researcher, I prioritized the needs of those who would be affected by the transformative processes directly.

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[1] Mass meetings are gatherings where NA leaders get together with the residents to inform them of the latest developments and issues relating to the regeneration projects to be initiated in their neighbourhoods; the ways in which these may affect property owners and tenants, and the procedures to follow in dealing with these dynamics.

[2] Aside from writing small features on the latest updates from the neighbourhoods for the web sites of international NGOs (e.g. International Alliance of Inhabitants, UN-HABITAT etc.) and acting as a translator during the visits of foreign experts, I assisted the residents in organizing

[2] Aside from writing small features on the latest updates from the neighbourhoods for the web sites of international NGOs (e.g. International Alliance of Inhabitants, UN-HABITAT etc.) and acting as a translator during the visits of foreign experts, I assisted the residents in organizing their documents during consultations with volunteer lawyers.

Between October 2008 and February 2009 I narrowed my fieldwork down to two inner-city poverty areas, Sulukule and Tarlabaşı, both of which have been exposed to urban renewal on the basis of 'Law for the Protection of Dilapidated Historical and Cultural Real-Estate Through Protection by Renewal' (a.k.a Law No. 5366). I thus needed to develop a better understanding of the legal, technical and social dynamics that surrounded these cases. I held in-depth interviews with 'independent experts' (i.e. lawyers and professionals from the chambers of architects and planners, The Board of Listed Monuments and Buildings) and 'activist experts' (i.e. lawyers, architects, planners etc.) who, as the representatives of civil initiatives, supported the grassroots movements and communities in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı. In this way, I first obtained raw data on certain technicalities, and then situated this information into place-specific contexts.

Following those stated above, I interviewed the actors involved in the making of projects such as municipal officials, private consultants and contractors. Since Sulukule is being transformed by public authorities (i.e. IMM, district municipality and the MHA) and Tarlabaşı by a public-private partnership (i.e. IMM, district municipality and a private developer) this difference also influenced the selection of informants. For the case of Sulukule I interviewed the vice president of Fatih Municipality, known as the 'architect' of the project.[3] In the case of Tarlabaşı, on the other hand, I interviewed the vice president of Beyoğlu Municipality, a consultant who -for a time- acted as a mediator between the involved parties, as well as interviewing the project manager.

This was also the period when I collected documents narrating the legal, creative and administrative aspects of the sort of urban transformation targeted.[4] Reviewing these documents was enlightening for at least two

[3] It was not possible to conduct interviews with officials from the IMM and MHA, for these institutions are more than aware of the criticisms against their operations and thus are reluctant in conversing over these matters. This attitude does not only demonstrate itself in the attempts of researchers to hold interviews with officials from these authorities but also at many events whereby representatives from the institutions under question do not show up for giving a talk although they confirm their attendance to organizers.

[4] The monthly newsletter of the IMM (dating from 1994 onwards); master plans of various scales and their relevant reports prepared by the planning offices of both the IMM and other public institutions, and legislative texts constitute the bulk of these items.

reasons: First of all, I developed an understanding of the language through which the driving motives and main rationale of transformative processes are communicated and explained. In time, it was easy to detect the keywords and justifications used repetitively by the decision-makers and practitioners of urban transformation. Grasping that language, I believe, is an inseparable part of understanding the vision and discourse underlying the projects that construct the concept of 'urban transformation in Istanbul'.

Secondly, I got to comprehend that these texts and documents were *not* enough in terms of revealing the controversies embedded in the *actual* experience of urban transformation. Looking at the laws released, one may have difficulties in spotting the pitfalls that explain the controversies uttered, particularly in critical circles. I was, however, lucky to interview a lawyer who told me that "[I] was looking for the problem in the wrong place. The controversy, often, does not lie in the legal frameworks but how these frameworks are translated into practice." This statement made it obvious to me that it was more the manipulative use of the 'rules of the game' (and especially the gaps and ambiguities embedded in them), which were instrumental to the realization of urban transformation than the actual narratives that set the rules.

5.2. The Neighbourhood as The Heart of Ethnographic Investigation

In-depth interviews with representatives of NAs and residents were held between October 2008 and February 2009. In this period, I and Tolga Islam, a doctoral researcher in urban planning at the Yıldız Technical University (Istanbul) at the time, paid daily visits to the neighbourhoods and interviewed 28 property owners, 27 tenants and 8 NA representatives in local coffee shops, NA headquarters and private homes.[5] Tolga and I met at a conference in the early stages of my fieldwork and we volunteered for the neighbourhoods in different periods at various levels. When we decided to collaborate, we were already familiar with the general set up of the neighbourhoods.

[5] Tolga's research focused on mechanisms and practices of participatory planning within the context of neo-liberal urban governance in Turkey. We designed our semi-structured interviews in such a way that both his and my research interests would be covered. In the end, the way in which we structured the data collected is significantly different, since I focus on the dynamics of resistance emerging from poverty areas, whereas he is more interested in policy and practice failures in participatory urban planning.

The reason for this collaboration lay in our mutual need to benefit from gender advantages. Tolga and I knew from the start that spending intense time in the neighbourhoods would require entry into the most intimate spaces of the locals.[6] The experiences of female fieldworkers have traditionally been in the centre of methodological writings of anthropologists since it is assumed that "their gender bars them from some situations and activities" (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007: 73); yet, today it is also acknowledged that, "male researchers may [as well] find it difficult to gain access to settings that are reserved for women." (ibid: 74). It is on these grounds that Tolga and I chose to join forces.

It is important to note that this tactic primarily aimed to serve the locals' comfort since "the ethnographer's presence is almost always obtrusive because it produces embarrassment, unease, stress and alarm in the community of participants" (Gobo, 2010: 123). Throughout the most intense months of fieldwork, developing and maintaining trust relations with the residents was my priority. The main issue, however, was that we were essentially strangers, no matter how familiar we might have been to some locals due to our previous visits. The neighbourhood was not our terrain, and every attempt to enter into the spaces of the inhabitants could become a matter of nuisance especially at a time when these neighbourhoods were under so much pressure in social, economic and physical terms.

Our earlier visits to neighbourhoods had provided us with clues to potential intimidations that could emerge from the encounters between 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. For example, when Sulukule became the first example of a regeneration zone that responded to state-led urban transformation with organized resistance in the early 2000's, the area came to be frequented by 'outsiders' of all sorts (e.g. journalists, photographers, local and foreign researchers, representatives of national/international NGOs etc.) who engaged with the residents to expose and document their experiences. In time, these

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[6] Local coffee-shops, for instance, are traditionally male dominant environments where female presence might sometimes be considered unusual and cause discomfort on the part of regulars. Similarly, private homes -especially in the daytime- are crowded by women where male presence can become a matter of inconvenience even when the person might be a family member.

engagements created an air of belief, or expectation on the part of inhabitants that 'their voices were being heard' and that their interactions with these 'outsiders' (some of which were officials) were legitimizing their cases in the public eye. However, despite much public opposition, demolitions in Sulukule started in 2007 and continued until 2010 when the project area was cleared almost entirely. Thus, the 'insiders'' expectations transformed into a form of anger towards the 'outsiders': In their view, these people had come into their neighbourhoods because there was 'something in these places for them', which boiled the 'insiders'' connections to the 'outsiders' down to 'nothingness'.

In 2008, when we started doing our fieldwork, Sulukule had already been exhausted by many dynamics: First, the pressure of demolition (bulldozers were still paying visits to the neighbourhood, demolishing a building within 20 minutes and leaving); second, issues of poverty and displacement (some of the tenants, whose places were already purchased and demolished by the municipality, were squatting in houses that were to be razed in the absence of other options); third, continued struggle to access various rights (it was very common to see people walking around with papers to the municipality to claim rights to units offered by the MHA, or make appeals towards rent support etc.); and fourth, continued visits of the curious 'outsiders' (we saw a number of photographers and foreign journalists in the two months we spent there although the progress of demolitions had significantly put people off from visiting the area). In Tarlabaşı, although scheduled demolitions were still far ahead and resistance was at its peak, a certain 'wariness' towards outsiders was present since communities of regeneration zones learn from each other's experiences quite effectively as explained in the following chapters.

Being aware of these fragilities, we strove to act in ways that would not add to the existing distress in the neighbourhoods. We encouraged our informants to take initiative in deciding how and whether to engage with us or not. In the first few days we simply walked around, chatted with the people we already knew about everyday matters. Almost inevitably, we would be asked 'what we are doing there' and we would state that, "we [were] going to be around for a while to talk with the residents about the regeneration project, relations with local authorities and the resistance movement for our researches." Sarcastic

comments and further questions would be followed by two options:[7]   In the worst case, the person would kindly wish us luck and walk away. This, however, should not necessarily be understood as a gesture of 'total rejection', as in some cases, those who were not too keen at the start acted otherwise later.[8] In the best·case, people would immediately show willingness to introduce us to friends and acquaintances with things to say, or to offer their very own stories. That is, in every stage of our encounters and dialogues with the community members, we wanted *them* to decide how to interact with us.

The majority of our relations with our informants developed through two major channels: The coffeeɣɣshops and the NAs. Coffeeɣɣshops function almost like community centres where local men gather and share the latest news, information and rumours relating to issues vital to the neighbourhoods. Simply, though, these are places where people drink tea or coffee, play cards, read the newspapers and watch the television. In the beginning periods, we would pop into a coffeeɣɣshop for a drink and mind our own business after saluting the crowd, but as familiarity grew, we started to have small talks with the regulars.

Eventually, we would again be asked 'what we [were] doing there', which would lead to a debate between us and a group of regulars. These debates were a mixture of 'question and answer sessions' between the regulars and us, 'lectures' from the regulars on what is *actually* happening in the neighbourhoods, and 'intense discussions' among the regulars themselves. In other words, our response to their question would trigger a stream of conversations led by the regulars, based on their opinions regarding the regeneration process; the goals of local authorities (or, 'the state', as they put it); resistance and its many consequences; the residents' response to these dynamics, and their very personal stances towards the combination of these matters. People wanted to tell the things they knew and raise the issues they considered critical so that we would be 'informed'. Our curiosity has been at

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[7] Among these sarcastic comments were, "Oh, then you are in big trouble! Everyone has a lot to say!", "What are you, some sort of spies?", "Why don't you go and do worthier things in life? Who cares about our problems?", "We have talked to so many people like you, what is the point?".

[8] My interpretation is that they relied on time and word of mouth to observe how we engaged with others. It was only if they were convinced by our intentions and presence that they opted for sharing their experiences.

the forefront throughout these conversations and they set a perfect start to our in-depth interviews with residents.[9]

When it comes to the rewards of informal conversations in fieldwork, Murchison urges the fieldworker "to learn how to make the most of situations where the choices, actions, and words can help [one] understand what is important to [his/her] informants and what they think [the fieldworker] ought to know, or learn" (2010: 103-104). 'Naturally occurring' oral accounts do not only provide the researcher with "a useful source both of direct information about the setting and of evidence about the perspectives, concerns and discursive practices of the people who produce them" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 99), but also help him/her "discover the categories of meaning in culture" (Fetterman, 2010: 41) that reveal what is important to the community. Thus, informal conversations also helped us narrow our fieldwork down to semi--structured interviews, majority of which took place at the coffee--shops.

Our informants at the coffee-shops also gave us the opportunity to employ the snowball technique. We aimed to talk to different categories of residents who were affected differently by the upcoming regeneration – i.e. tenants and property owners. Knowing this, our informants would introduce us to people whom they thought would fit into the purposes of our research. In this sense, the coffee-shop regulars became our 'satellites'. These 'satellites' have been very important since they did not only link us to a diversity of residents whom we would not be able to meet otherwise, but also took us to homes where we would get to meet women as well. One of the main challenges of the fieldwork was getting to talk to women; those out on the streets were predominantly men, and the women were mostly 'hidden' in their private spaces.[10]

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[9] It is important to note here that our questions were informed by these conversations as much as earlier done on urban change in Istanbul. For the interview schedule, see Appendix C.

[10] At the start we were sensitive to the gender balance among our informants, yet our time in the neighbourhoods showed that the discussions were extremely dominated by men. When accessed, women were mostly uninformed, or repeated the opinions of their husbands/brothers/fathers – although not without. Thus, the presence of women is not as strong as we wished it to be.

The second major channel through which we accessed our informants was the NAs. The NAs have been important channels for us in two respects: First, similar to coffee-shops, they linked us to people whom we would not be able to meet otherwise. In some cases, the leaders would take us around the neighbourhoods and introduce us to people. However, we developed a few concerns regarding these introductions. First of all, we did not want the residents to feel 'obliged' to talk to us just because powerful actors in the neighbourhoods were the mediators. We overcame our concerns by explaining them to the NA representatives; in the later periods, we were just directed to locations where we could meet people willing to help. Secondly, we knew that the community leaders were directing us to people who would be supportive of their opinions. Being aware of this, we tried to rely mostly on our own contacts, whose opinions would vary more.[11] As Fetterman also states, "selecting an integral and powerful member of the community is useful, but establishing independence in the field is also important." (2010: 37).

The other reason why the NAs were important is because these were the main hubs where the logic of resistance was crafted. Talking to the leaders and representatives of grassroots movements helped me understand the main motivations behind the formation of resistance and thus, the foundation of NAs; the structure and working patterns of NAs; the ways in which they interact with civil initiatives and public authorities; power hierarchies embedded in NAs and the place of residents within these hierarchies; the identifying components of resistance, and the successes and failures they observed both in their individual cases and in the emergent grassroots resistance movements around Istanbul. This was the only category with which we conducted repeat interviews for two reasons. First of all, in the initial interviews, leaders and spokespersons tended to talk with a rather rhetorical language. This was due to their frequent interaction with journalists, which led them to adopting a language tailored for attracting media attention. It was difficult to break through this language, which delivered more sensational and 'juicy' elements -and not concrete information- on 'how the regeneration

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[11] Hammersley and Atkinson note the importance of gatekeepers in providing help for the ethnographer to find interviewees; yet, they also state that, "the ethnographer must try to retain the leeway to choose people for interview. Otherwise there is a grave danger that the data collected will be misleading in important respects." (2007: 104)

schemes were causing more harm to urban poor than bringing good at many different levels'.

However, following a number of interviews whereby we asked direct and specific questions on a range of issues, we managed to develop a more grounded dialogue, and thus, retrieve more substantial data. This, obviously, was also related to the further establishment of trust relations; the more they got to know us, the more they revealed about the many details, intricacies and controversies embedded in the movements. The second reason for conducting repeat interviews, particularly in the case of Tarlabaşı where resistance was still at its early stages, was that it would be possible to observe how the opinions of NA leaders and representatives would shape in response to various developments within the diverse processes of regeneration. As Hammersley and Atkinson state, repeat interviews are particularly useful in "[tracing] patterns of change within time." (2007: 104). It is also important to note that towards the final stages of our repeat interviews, we got to reveal the portraits of these leaders and representatives as property owners/tenants who are going through similar experiences as other residents.

Following the completion of interviews, all data was transcribed and thematically coded to showcase the shared patterns amongst all testimonies. These codes were based on the residents' views on their neighbourhoods: solidarity networks; poverty; urban transformation in general, and urban transformation as experienced in Sulukule and Tarlabaşı specifically. The value and significance of the codes lies in their two important functions: First, they confirm the findings of earlier research done on urban renewal and change in Turkey. Existing literature makes it clear that the transformation of the past two decades has led to social and physical fragmentations, numerous cases of displacement and dispossession, heightened poverty, and an overall atmosphere of social and economic injustice in Istanbul (Kuyucu, 2009; Baysal, 2010; Candan and Kolluoglu, 2008, Kurtulus, 2005). The findings of my research verify that these remain as important topics in transformation zones.

The second function of these codes is their demonstration of the commonalities amongst the experiences of those who become subject to state-led urban

transformation. What is more, many of these commonalities applied both to property owners and tenants, *and* the residents of *both* neighbourhoods. Thus, the themes established through my initial analysis enabled me to construct the backbone of the narratives in data chapters. Because the conversation-based material was bulky, I had to "work a way through the sheer volume of data in order to bring order and structure so that patterns, categories and relationships [could] be discovered" (Brewer, 2000: 104).

Yet, a second round of analysis made it clear to me that certain topics were elaborated in much more detail by a number of my informants. These topics related particularly to the residents' views on the issue of resistance within the context of urban transformation in their relevant locales, and more specifically on NA's and their impact on the transformation processes and community life. Reflections on these helped me construct perhaps the most authentic aspect of the main narrative. Little has been written on the complexities of forming grassroots and organized reaction in the presence of identitarian and economic divides in Turkey, which define the nature of collective resistance in urban transformation zones. Rich details and insights provided by a good number of my informants helped me shed light on these particular topics that remain severely understudied within the context of Turkish urban research.

It is important to note here that strategies developed in battling against the ill effects of urban transformation and the role of NAs in turning these strategies into collective efforts were discussed with *all* informants. In the interview schedule, there are questions that specifically address these matters. However, as I stated above, there was a distinction to how these were shared with me by part of the informants. There can be two explanations to this distinction: The first relates to the intensity within which certain processes were experienced by some and not others. For example, in Sulukule, those property owners who dealt with mediators in selling their properties to third parties; tenants who continued in their struggle to gain access to MHA units, and other tenants who sold their MHA units to third parties via mediators captured the multiple aspects of what resistance could, or could not mean within the context of urban transformation. The same applied for owners with valuable properties and tenants with close relationships to their landlords in Tarlabasi. Those who reflected least on these topics were those who were developing solutions

relatively independent of the circumstances that emerged in the neighbourhoods.

The second explanation, on the other hand, relates to the way in which the very same matters were perceived and articulated through different perspectives by others. Some testimonies focused heavily on the 'numeric' aspects and consequences of urban renewal, and did not reflect on the social and cultural aspects of it as much. That is, part of our informants responded to the majority of our questions by making frequent references to the 'square meters' offered, 'percentages' miscalculated, 'money' deserved and 'real estate values' going up. In situations like these, it was difficult to go beyond the quantitative aspects of the transformation process and discuss its qualitative dimensions. This tendency can be explained by looking at the sort of pressure that transformative processes exert on subjects within renewal areas: The projects envisaged are founded upon such material and fiscal criteria that it is difficult to challenge the language it creates especially for those who are concerned about the extent to which they can 'afford' the costs of transformation in both economic and social terms.

For the given reasons, I chose to bring forward the testimonies of those informants who reflected on themes that I identified in both the first and second round of my analysis with rich qualitative insights. This is not, however, to suggest that the testimonies of those who did not reflect on both sets of themes in a similar fashion were completely excluded from the main body of the thesis. Opinions expressed within the context of this work represent the views of all. It would not be possible to establish the backbone of the thesis and construct the narratives of Chapter 7 and 9 in the absence of the information provided by all of the informants. Yet, in order to be able to highlight the major findings of my research -thus, the main argument of my thesis- I focused particularly on the testimonies that captured the multiple aspects of the impacts of transformation and grassroots resistance with rich qualitative details.

Conclusion

This fieldwork has not been without its challenges: There were moments when we were considered to be government officials, or as people with the authority to change the conditions people were facing despite our efforts to clearly and repetitively introduce ourselves as researchers. Due to these sorts of misidentifications, there have also been times when some people tailored their stories in a way to paint a more 'vulnerable', or 'dramatic' picture of themselves, so that we –i.e. the 'authorities'- would bring them help.[12] Last but not the least, we were overwhelmed by the emotional weight of witnessing the conditions in which people had to live on an everyday basis. This is not only about poverty, but also about the rather graphic scenes of demolition, homelessness and helplessness under the forces of urban renewal.

Despite challenges, it has been possible to expose some of the most crucial aspects of the links and/or gaps between policy frameworks, visionary plans, transformative processes, civil mobilization, poverty, community life and the struggle against urban renewal. This exposure depended heavily on my trip from the 'outer' to the 'inner' realm of the matters under question. Attending various sorts of events; gaining access to the meetings of civil initiatives- doing volunteer work for the neighbourhoods; showing presence at various demonstrations, and last but not least, connecting with community leaders and members -were the building blocks of this journey. In the absence of the trust relations established through this process, I would not be able to develop a sense of the intricacies of putting a struggle forth, and the shifting relations among the community members due to the pressure of transformation.

The legitimacy of ethnography as a scientific method has long been criticized by positivist circles, which argue that qualitative research cannot be systematic and also that it is condemned to suffer from issues of bias, perspective and ethics (Brewer, 2000; Murchison, 2010). However, today,

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[12] We were careful to clarify our identities and explain our reasons for being there more than once but still, in some cases, misidentifications could not be escaped. We double-checked our sources, tested the reliability of the testimonies we gathered and eliminated those that were tweaked, or tailored for the purposes explained above.

there is a good degree of conviction that these criticisms are mostly out-dated (Seale, 1999; Hammerseley, 1992; Silverman 1989). To the contrary, ethnography -when compared to natural sciences- can be considered more 'scientific' from a certain perspective since "it enables researchers to get closer and better access to [the] 'real' world." (Brewer, 2000: 38) From another perspective, however, Wacquant engages in a fierce critique of the tendency of urban ethnography to boil down to 'neo-romanticism' and 'raw empiricism' (Wacquant, 2002).[13]

In my attempt to investigate the ways in which people face urban transformation in the inner-city poverty zones of Istanbul -within a specific period- these criticisms were in the back of my mind. I tried to analyze the material I extracted from my observations and portray the patterns I spotted within my one-on-one conversations to be able to answer both the most place-specific and general questions on how underprivileged groups may respond to urban transformation. Sulukule, Tarlabaşı and İstanbul are parts of an urban world that is intensely connected by grand economic, social political and cultural processes. Reminding the reader of a place as such and placing my arguments within that larger picture was one of my goals.

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[13] In line with this argument, Wacquant notes, "the task of social science the task of social science, ethnography included, is not to exonerate the character of dishonored social figures and dispossessed groups by "documenting" their everyday world in an effort to attract sympathy for their plight. It is to dissect the social mechanisms and meanings that govern their practices, ground their morality (if such be the question), and explain their strategies and trajectories, as one would do for any social category, high or low, noble or ignoble." (2002: 1470).