

Remaking Space for Globalization: Dispossession through Urban Renewal in Istanbul

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## Abstract

In its attempts to craft Istanbul as a “global city” and attract international business, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality—which is presently controlled by the Islamic *Justice and Development Party* (JDP)—is spearheading an ambitious campaign of “urban transformation.” The two main pillars of urban transformation are the clearance of squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city for re-development and the enforced gentrification of the inner-city slums. While these renewal projects are carried out in the name of promoting planned urbanization, upgrading the built environment and improving the living conditions of the poor, what they effectively achieve is the expulsion of the urban poor from the city center towards the urban periphery thereby exacerbating spatial inequities. This thesis discusses the emergence of competitive governance policies and the particular speculative urban redevelopment schemes that they underpin and how poor people contest displacement and dispossession through urban renewal. I focus on two neighborhoods: *Basibuyuk*, a site of squatter redevelopment project located on the Asian side of Istanbul, and the historic neighborhood of *Sulukule* – home to one of the oldest sedentary Roma communities in the world – which has been demolished as part of the local municipality’s renewal project. I found that in both neighborhoods, residents’ perceptions of and their abilities to withstand or avert urban renewal projects depend most notably on tenure relations, employment status, existence of networks of solidarity, the level of participation and trust in the neighborhood association, and on the availability of exploitable personal or community connections with the ruling JDP.

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures</b> .....	iv
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	v
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
Introduction.....	1
Objectives & methods.....	3
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
An Aleatory Materialist Approach to the Urban.....	12
Immanence.....	14
The non-contemporaneous whole.....	20
Encounters.....	23
Conclusion: Cities as multiplicities.....	36
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
Neoliberal-Islamic assemblage.....	38
Neoliberalism as diagram.....	39
Coupling.....	45
Privatize, Civil-ize, Localize.....	54
Fictitious ‘civil society’.....	66
Conclusion.....	73
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
Dispossession.....	74
Urban renewal as spatial fix.....	74
Globalizing Istanbul.....	77
From spontaneous urbanization to a marketized regime of urban redevelopment.....	82
Urban renewal.....	83
Case study: Basibuyuk.....	89
From resistance to negotiation.....	93
Case study: Sulukule.....	101
Conclusion: rights to the city.....	112
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
Conclusion.....	115
Policy relevance.....	117
Bibliography.....	121
<b>Appendix I: Sample interview questions</b> .....	<b>129</b>

## List of Figures

Map 1.1. ....	5
Figure 3.1. ....	50
Figure 3.2. ....	71
Figure 4.1. ....	78
Figure 4.2. ....	78
Figure 4.3. ....	98
Figure 4.4. ....	98
Figure 4.5. ....	102
Figure 4.6. ....	104
Figure 4.7. ....	104
Map 4.7. ....	106

## Abbreviations

AINA	Alliance of Istanbul Neighborhood Associations ( <i>Istanbul Mahalle Dernekleri Platformu</i> )
CPW	Collaborative Planning Workshop ( <i>Dayanışmacı Planlama Atölyesi</i> )
HDA	Turkish Housing Development Administration ( <i>Toplulukonut İdaresi Başkanlığı</i> )
IHS	Imam Hatip School ( <i>Imam Hatip Lisesi</i> )
IMM	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality ( <i>Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi</i> )
JDP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
NOP	National Order Party ( <i>Milli Nizam Partisi</i> )
PUM	Popular Urbanism Movement ( <i>Toplumun Şehircilik Hareketi</i> )
RPP	Republican People's Party ( <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> )
SRCA	Sulukule Roma Culture Association ( <i>Sulukule Roman Kültürünü Geliştirme ve Dayanışma Derneği</i> )
TAD	title assignation document ( <i>tapu tahsis belgesi</i> )
WP	Welfare Party ( <i>Refah Partisi</i> )

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In his seminal *Toward an Architecture* (1923) Le Corbusier famously declared the house as a ‘machine for living in.’ He was among the most audacious architect/planners of his era embodying the pinnacle of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernist conviction that social processes and practices could be controlled and improved through the proper engineering of space. The eradication of dystopic spaces such as slums called for radical architectural intervention. So resilient was this conviction that, despite significant criticism and counter-movements challenging the deleterious effects of modernist urban planning – an approach which effectively reduced the ‘urban question’ to a set of efficient zoning and transportation issues – today, the field of ‘urban planning’ continues to be dominated by the expert notion of ‘planning’. Urbanism, even as a theoretical activity, is hardly dissociated from the tacit faith in the unmediated link between representation and a reality to come. Critiquing modern city planning for its functionalism and for mistaking cities as ‘problems of simplicity,’ Jane Jacobs once asked “Why have cities not been identified, understood and treated as problems of organized complexity?”(Jacobs 1961: 434). Here Jacobs incites us to tackle urban complexity by focusing on processes rather than fixed identities and to analyze the relation of entities to other parts that make up the complex whole called the urban:

“Objects in cities – whether they are buildings, streets, parks, districts, landmarks, or anything else – can have radically differing effects, depending upon the circumstances and contexts in which they exist. Thus, for instance, almost nothing useful can be understood or can be done about improving city dwellings if those are considered in the abstract as ‘housing.’ City dwellings – either existing or potential – are specific and particularized buildings *always involved in differing, specific processes* such as unslumming, slumming, generation of diversity, self-destruction of diversity” (Jacobs 1961:440).



Jacobs' challenge of building a process-based, relational urban theory that approaches the urban in its organized complexity has been rarely taken up. This dissertation takes a step towards addressing this gap. Following DeLanda (2006) and May (2005) I propose to approach cities as virtual structures that are actualized through connections between a multitude of urban assemblages (bodies, interpersonal networks, neighborhoods), rather than as an engineered arrangement of zones and functions.

The recent 'urban transformation' campaign launched by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) provides a compelling point of entry to explore these theses. Over the last three decades there has been a persistent drive to transform Istanbul into a 'global city' and increase its share of international tourism, cultural industries and finance. However, it is only in the last eight years that this drive has coalesced into an ambitious and determined campaign of 'urban transformation,' successfully launched by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), which is presently controlled by the Islamic 'Justice and Development Party' (JDP). The two main pillars of this urban transformation are the clearance of squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city for lucrative re-development and the enforced gentrification of inner-city slums. The dissertation investigates the IMM's urban transformation agenda as a lens to study the shifting dynamics of disenfranchisement and poor people's mobilization in Istanbul.

While the IMM promotes 'urban transformation' as beneficial for all citizens, tensions between the city's poorest neighborhoods and its proliferating affluent 'gated communities' are escalating. To the IMM, the squatter settlements in the outskirts of the city and dilapidated neighborhoods in the historic city center are 'eyesores' actively undercutting Istanbul's potential status as a 'global city.' In my investigation of the various ways in which political, cultural, ethnic and class-based differences influence residents' responses to the IMM's evictions, I propose that it is only with due attention to contemporary political dynamics, particularly the rise of political Islam amongst the urban poor, that one can make sense of, for instance, why and how slum dwellers and squatters—even in the face of imminent eviction threats as a result of the Justice and

Development Party's (JDP) policies—voted as a majority for the JDP in the July 2007 national elections.

There is a large literature on urban poverty (Bugra and Keyder 2003; Erder 1996; Isik and Pinarcioglu 2001) and the rise of political Islam (Bora 1999; Secor 2004; Tugal 2009; White 2003) in Istanbul. A few studies have investigated deepening urban segregation and new forms of urban poverty (Ayata 1996; Erman and Eken 2003; Kurtulus 2005; Robins and Aksoy 2000). However, to date there is no research examining the link between the Islamic JDP's neoliberal agenda and the politics of the urban poor. Similarly, while there have been an array of studies on mobilizations of the urban poor in the many other mega-cities of the Global South, most have concentrated on how the disadvantaged groups resist and defend their livelihoods against the governments' eviction threats, and ignore crucial questions of internal conflicts of interest and destabilizing dynamics *within* grassroots mobilizations.

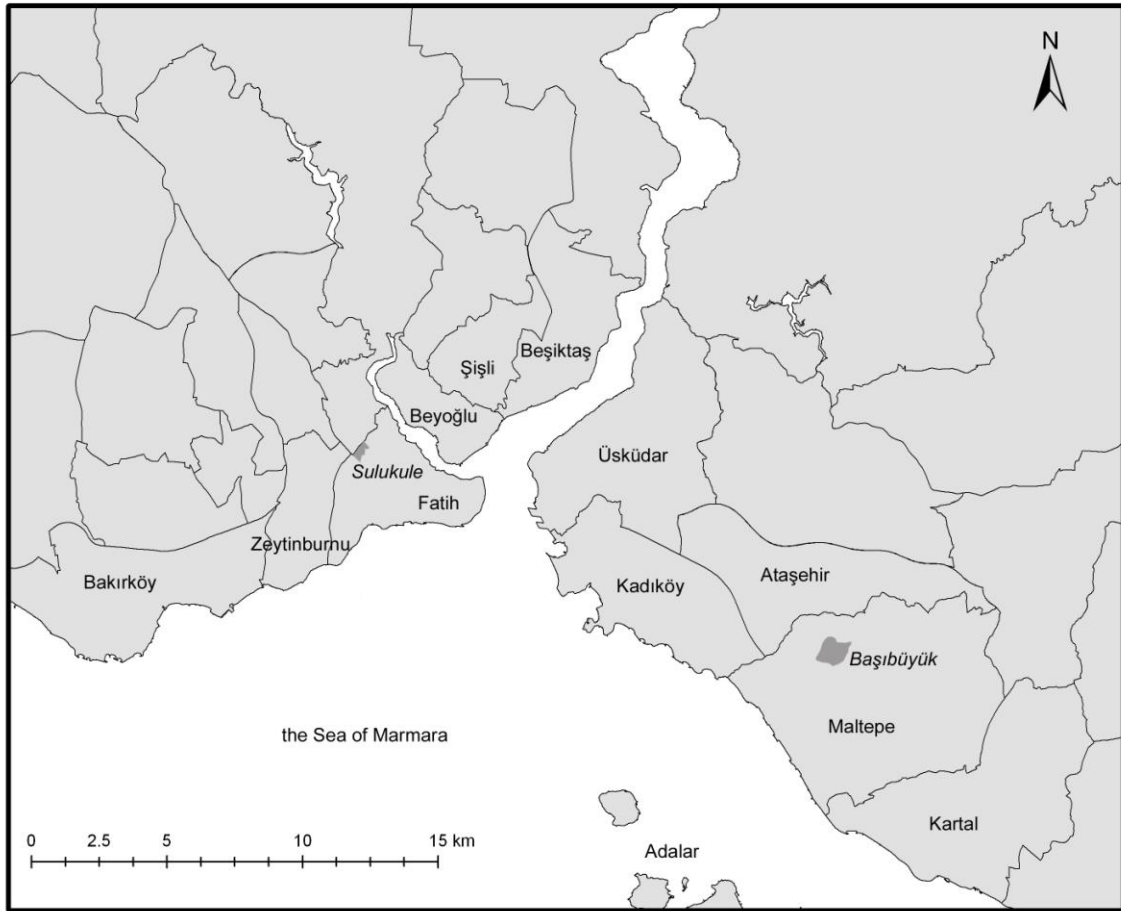
### **Objectives & methods**

My research has two major objectives. The first objective is to contextualize the neoliberal governance policies which underpin the urban transformation projects in Istanbul, and to identify the actors and intended goals of urban renewal in Istanbul. The second objective is to conceptualize the residents' responses to the IMM's evictions. I organized my methods in two parts corresponding to my two main research objectives.

To gain an understanding of the entrepreneurial governance policies that underpin the urban transformation projects in Istanbul, I accessed details of a series of loan agreements between Turkey and the World Bank signed in the early 2000s, as these were one of the primary means by which an overhaul of public administration was imposed upon Turkey. The primary conditionality of these agreements is a comprehensive re-structuring of public administration through the implementation of principles of decentralization and 'good governance.' I also accessed various bilateral agreements between the Turkish government and the agencies of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Similar to the World Bank documents, these agreements contained strong 'recommendations' for

structural reforms in public administration as conditionalities for Turkey's integration into the EU. In order to gain insights into the decisions regarding the declaration of an area as a site of urban renewal, what actors are involved in the process and in what capacity, I conducted in-depth expert interviews with the managers of the Directorate of Urban Transformation and with the IMM authorities as well as with officials at the district municipalities that my two case study sites are located in. I also obtained and analyzed various plans, plan reports, surveys, and 'mission' statements from these municipalities.

My major research methods for examining residents' responses were in-depth interviews, participant observation and life histories. I focus on two neighborhoods that are the most recent and intensive targets of the IMM's evictions (Map 1.1): The first is the *Basibuyuk* neighborhood, the site of a squatter redevelopment project. While once a marginally positioned squatter settlement at the fringes of the Asian side of Istanbul, due to the rapid expansion of metropolitan boundaries over the last two decades, *Basibuyuk* is now widely considered a prime location for real estate development. Its newfound desirability is largely due to its positioning within one of Istanbul's few remaining forest areas, its connectivity to main transportation axes, and the magnificent views of the Marmara Sea that it commands. In *Basibuyuk*, the local municipality's (Maltepe Municipality) project aims to gradually re-develop the whole neighborhood. The first phase involves the construction of six apartment towers in the uninhabited area in the middle of the neighborhood. According to the plan, the residents in the immediate surrounding are to be relocated to these units so as to make space for the next phase of redevelopment. During my fieldwork, the Maltepe Municipality repeatedly refused to disclose any information as to the long term schedule of the redevelopment plan. The residents meanwhile are convinced that the municipality aims to squeeze the whole neighborhood into high-rise, high-density housing, so that the vacated land can be sold for the construction of a high-end gated community.



**Map 1.1.** Istanbul administrative borders and location of fieldwork sites

The second neighborhood I focus on is the historic neighborhood of *Sulukule*, which is home to one of the oldest sedentary Roma settlements in the world dating back to the Byzantine Empire. The ‘renewal project’ developed by the local municipality (Fatih Municipality) involves the demolition of the whole existing building stock, to make space for the municipality’s ‘Ottoman neighborhood project,’ a high-end development catering to the rich. As of now the entire neighborhood is completely demolished except for a few buildings which are formally certified as historic. The renewal project is now on pause, pending archeological excavation in the area – a legal requirement for any authorized construction undertaken within the historic peninsula.

There were two main reasons for choosing Sulukule and Basibuyuk as case study sites. First, they represent two different aspects of urban transformation in Istanbul: the enforced gentrification of an inner city neighborhood and the redevelopment of a squatter neighborhood, respectively. Second, during my pre-dissertation fieldwork I identified these two projects to be the most prominent two cases both in terms of the scale of the projects and in terms of the reactions the projects have faced both from the grassroots and from various civic groups and NGOs. Undoubtedly, there are obvious differences between Basibuyuk and Sulukule that complicates a straightforward comparison between the two in terms of the residents' response to urban renewal. Basibuyuk is a gecekonu settlement, where none of the home-owners have legal claims to the land they occupy, whereas Sulukule is a completely legal settlement. Basibuyuk is a relatively new settlement dating back to early 1960s, but Sulukule is one of the oldest neighborhoods of Istanbul, one of the rare places where one can still accurately trace the historic street pattern of Ottoman-era Istanbul. Another major difference is that Sulukule is home to a very old sedentary Roma population whose presence in the vicinity dates back to the 11th century when Istanbul [then Constantinople] was still the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Marsh, 2006). Although there are other groups in the neighborhood who do not identify as Roma in the popular imaginary, Sulukule is generally identified – often in a derogatory manner – as a Roma neighborhood. Basibuyuk on the other hand has a less homogenous demographic structure, made up of residents who migrated to the neighborhood from diverse regions across Turkey. Indeed, the renewal project in Sulukule has an overt 'ethnic integration' objective that aims at 'saving' Sulukule's Roma from their "misery" and incorporating them into society. Given these differences I do not attempt to conduct a point-by-point comparison between the two, as that would be a futile attempt. Rather I pay attention to the ways in which these two cases could inform a better understanding of each other as distinct spatial entities with distinct capacities.

An understanding of the complexity of neighborhood politics, the challenges that the resistance movements face, and how different interests and political groups position themselves in the face of the urban transformation projects, requires a deeper engagement

with the everyday life of the residents to uncover their perceptions of and reactions to urban renewal. I found ethnographic methods to be most suitable for such purposes. Here, I followed Emerson et al.'s (1995) strategy of 'resocialization'<sup>1</sup> and participated in residents' day-to-day activities. Most of the qualitative data I collected in the neighborhoods were gathered through informal dialogues and observations, in coffee shops, on the streets, and in people's homes. Even though I conducted a fair number of open-ended interviews towards the end of my fieldwork (n=26) most of the data comes from my ethnographic fieldnotes, which were coded for recurrent themes, and supplemented by analytic and integrative memos.

I spent a total of 11 months in the field.<sup>2</sup> To facilitate my fieldwork in the neighborhoods, I collaborated with various voluntary civic organizations. For my work in Basibuyuk, I was associated with the 'Popular Urbanism Movement' (PUM), a network that was established in 2006 by a group of grassroots activists, students and university professors, most of whom have a background in urban planning or architecture. In opposing capital-centric approaches to urbanism, the group promotes principles of participatory planning, and follows the motto: 'You are the planner!' During my fieldwork I participated in the PUM's weekly meetings in their modest office space in Beyoglu. It is arguably the most prominent activist group operating in Basibuyuk; it is also active in numerous other neighborhoods across Istanbul. They offer professional counseling and advice to the Basibuyuk neighborhood association. Given time limitations, I never became a core member of the network; however, my affiliation with the PUM helped me establish contacts in the neighborhood. During my fieldwork in Sulukule, I was associated with the 'Sulukule Platform.' Similar to the PUM, the Sulukule Platform is a volunteer based citizen action group advocating a more participatory approach to urban renewal. It highlights Sulukule's unique Roma heritage and exposes human rights violations

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<sup>1</sup> For Emerson et al (1995:2) "resocialization" is indispensable to ethnographic immersion. By participating in a group's system of organized activities and feeling subjected to their moral codes, the ethnographer comes closer to learning what is required to become a member of that world.

<sup>2</sup> June-August 2007, March-August 2008, January-March 2009

committed against the Roma of Sulukule. The Platform is a very loose group. It does not have a program statement, it does not hold regular meetings, and it does not display any hierarchy in its organizational structure. As Nazan a 35 year old woman, a community organizer and a prominent member of the group, explains, the group emerged “spontaneously” in the late 2006.<sup>3</sup> The core members are all middle-aged, professional women with backgrounds in journalism, architecture, art history, archeology, urban planning, literature and community organizing. Communication between group members is sustained through a group page on the internet. Due to its loose organizational structure and flexibility it was quite easy for me to become part of the group, and I was warmly welcomed particularly due to my proficiency in English. I carried out three main tasks. I enabled correspondence between the Platform and international organizations (most notably, UNESCO, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the EU Commission) by translating documents from Turkish to English (and much less frequently from English to Turkish). I assisted the residents – mostly poor and illiterate<sup>4</sup> families – in their correspondences with the local municipality. I also assisted several families (again most of them illiterate) in getting their ID cards issued by the district governorship.<sup>5</sup> Issuing of an ID card requires the applicant to be physically present at the governor’s office. Governorship officials are in general quite dismissive of Sulukule residents. My presence as a literate and relatively more acceptably clad outsider improved their chances of successfully jumping through all bureaucratic hoops. These duties helped me establish myself in the neighborhood and gain the general trust and approval of the community.

With this thesis, I seek to contribute to a growing body of highly interdisciplinary literature addressing neoliberal urbanism and the social movements that are contesting its

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Nazan (pseudonym), June 24, 2008, Beyoglu

<sup>4</sup> The illiteracy rate in Sulukule is 31 percent, very high compared to illiteracy rate in Istanbul as a whole, which stands at 8 percent.

<sup>5</sup> In Turkey, the absence of a national ID card has serious consequences since it is the primary legal document that renders a citizen visible to the State. A citizen is legally non-existent without her ID card. For example, a child cannot register for elementary school without an ID.

deleterious impacts on local residents' livelihoods<sup>6</sup>. This prolific literature has derived empirical support for its theoretical insights almost exclusively from cities in Europe and North America. The relevance and validity of its insights for coming to grips with urban transformations in non-Western cities like Istanbul, has not been sufficiently explored. Furthermore, an enormous gap remains regarding the study of the relations between neoliberalism and the complex internal dynamics of grassroots mobilizations in megacities of the Global South. To address these gaps, and challenge understandings of non-Western cities as inert recipients of global flows of capital, policies, and know-how, my research contributes to a fuller understanding of how localities are actively constituted through the complex interactions between their already existing economic, political and cultural landscapes, and deepening neoliberal inscriptions. I argue that the neoliberal state, and the circuits of capital accumulation that it seeks to facilitate, are inherently unstable and are interwoven with other logics such as political Islam, which the ruling Islamic Party in Turkey has skillfully utilized in garnering a faithful constituency in poor neighborhoods and among business elites alike.

The thesis is organized into five chapters with three main modules. In this chapter, I have introduced the research agenda, its objectives, and methods.

The second chapter is a critical engagement with immanentist approaches to cities. Certainly, there are various ways to approach the concept of 'immanence'. My focus is specifically on Spinozist strands within Critical Theory. With immanentism I refer to modes of thinking that refuse all spiritual or immaterial dimensions of being that are ontologically and epistemologically distinct from and prior to material reality. Spinozan immanentism negates all modes of thinking that accepts transcendent determination, namely the determination of material reality (e.g. social practices and relations) by an external and ontologically distinct substance (e.g. 'God', 'Iron laws of history'). Here the cause and the effect are understood to be of the *same* ontological substance. Transcendent

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<sup>6</sup> Hackworth 2006; Hall and Hubbard 1998; Harvey 1989; Jessop 2002; Leitner et al. 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2002.



determination has been an implicit assumption in approaches that reduce contemporary developments in the cities of the global South to ‘effects of globalization’ or ‘impacts of neoliberalism’. The recent immanentist critique in urban theory has offered valuable critiques of such traces of transcendent causality (Doel 1999; Massey 2005; Smith R G 2003; Smith M P 2001; Urry 2005). I identify two major shortcomings within this literature: first, their rejection of the notion of a structure *in toto*, and second, their noticeable silence on Louis Althusser despite his unique contribution to the question of a complex whole and his shared trajectories with and influence on more contemporary immanentist theorists, including most notably Deleuze himself. By using illustrations from the ongoing urban renewal program in Istanbul, I speculate on the ways in which an Althusserian notion of ‘immanent structure’ could contribute to a better understanding of cities as multiplicities.

The third chapter examines the changing policy framework that underpins urban renewal practices in Istanbul through a detailed analysis of a unique coupling of neoliberalism and modern Islamism which I call ‘Islamic urban governance.’ Here I explain how Turkey’s most powerful and mainstream Islamist movement came to embrace neoliberalism and how this neoliberal-Islamic assemblage created unique capacities that enabled a rapid phase of neoliberal reforms. I take neither neoliberalism nor Islamism as pre-given models or ideal end-states. Building on Wendy Brown’s (2003) neo-Foucauldian method, I propose approaching neoliberalism diagrammatically: in other words as a diagram of power that seeks to re-order society around the primacy of the ‘market logic’. Similarly political Islam has its own diagram of power, a view of society in which Islamic values and rules are central and subjects are interpellated religiously. The chapter discusses how these two rationalities came to resonate together and how their combined effects assemble policies, policy-makers, businessmen, and the urban poor in Istanbul.

The fourth chapter focuses on the theme of dispossession. With the term “dispossession”, I primarily refer to the ways in which urban renewal is used as a tool to deprive poor residents of their homes, and to transfer accumulated land rent from residents to the state

and its affiliated contractors. As Basibuyuk residents aptly put it, what is being imposed on them in the name urban transformation, is fundamentally a scheme of “rental redistribution.” However in addition to these visibly economic dimensions of dispossession, I maintain that there is also a deeper aspect of dispossession that needs to be understood and addressed; namely the disintegration of a community’s networks, and its unique social ecology. By putting Basibuyuk and Sulukule in a comparative perspective, I discuss the significance of a grassroots politics that centers around the defense of a ‘community’s right to the city’ in addition to individual right to housing and property ownership. In this, I pay attention to the extent to which both Basibuyuk and Sulukule act as individual bodies, or assemblages, with unique capacities to connect with and mobilize other bodies.

In the fifth and concluding chapter, I discuss theoretical implications and possible policy relevance of my work.

## Chapter 2

### An Aleatory Materialist Approach to the Urban

‘Neither Gilles Deleuze nor Louis Althusser was ever a structuralist’ (Stolze 1998: 51).

Since the early 1990s political economy approaches<sup>7</sup> in urban theory have faced a mounting challenge from proponents of cultural and what one might broadly call poststructuralist<sup>8</sup> approaches. Particularly, the emerging strands of poststructuralist geographic thought that have been significantly inspired by Gilles Deleuze’s materialism (Amin and Thrift 2002; Doel 1999; Smith R G 2003) take political economy approaches to task for their assumption of a putatively discrete structure (e.g. capitalist social relations) that is validated and confirmed by concrete occurrences and events on the ground (cf. Smith and Doel 2010). The detractors instead lay emphasis on a Spinozist notion of ‘immanence’ in which a cause is only retrospectively distinguished and realized in its ‘effects’. In my view theorists rooted in the political economy tradition would likely benefit from these interventions, as they offer valuable theoretical openings for approaching urban complexity and contingency.

Recently there have been unmistakable signs of poststructuralist sensitivities within the political economy literature. Take Brenner et al.’s (2009) latest systematic attempt to tackle the opposition between two representations of neoliberalism: one that sees it as an omnipresent hegemonic force, and the other depicting it as an unstable hybrid and contextually specific presence. Confronting this perennial binary, they attempt an argument for the ‘variegated character of neoliberalization processes’. In their analysis

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<sup>7</sup> Here I am referring particularly to Marxist political economy approach, the foundational origins of which can be traced back to David Harvey’s seminal work in 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>8</sup> In this chapter my use of the term poststructuralism will not actually go beyond approaches that are rooted in particular readings of Gilles Deleuze’s materialism. Deleuze would most probably reject such labeling.

there is hardly any mention of neoliberalism – understood as a coherent and consistent model; the emphasis is on neoliberalization *processes*, which are generative of ‘systematic geoinstitutional differentiation’. One could further push this theoretical agenda by bringing neoliberalism back into the analysis, this time not as an external force with consistent effects but as an abstract machine (diagram), as ‘unactualized difference,’ in other words as a cause that is only realized in its effects. The relevant question then is no more about identifying the inner logic of neoliberalism, but understanding how it is actualized (see Chapter 3).

Drawing from and critically engaging with those strands of poststructuralist work that have been inspired by Gilles Deleuze’s work, this chapter offers a major corrective to Marxian political economy approaches to contemporary urbanization. I argue that *immanence* is the key concept that both confronts challenges posed by contemporary neoliberalization and globalization more adequately and makes possible a conversation between the apparently incompatible epistemological and ontological tenets of Marxian political economy and Deleuze inspired non-representational geographic theories of urbanism. I contend that Louis Althusser’s largely overlooked reading of the Marxian conception of a complex whole refracted through a Spinozist immanentism has a lot to offer for such dialogical exchanges, allowing analysis to move beyond the dichotomies of a Harvey-Thrift debate. Like Deleuzian and non-representational approaches, an immanentist approach to the urban informed by Althusser’s ontology enables analysis to be attentive to contingencies between various autonomous parts that make up the complex social formation called the urban. However an Althusserian framework comes with the benefit of offering a framework that is also attentive to the mode of articulation of the complex whole. In suggesting theoretical directions for approaching cities as complex formations, I provide illustrations from the ongoing urban redevelopment campaign in Istanbul.

## **Immanence**

It is not my intention to embark on a comprehensive overview, assessment or critique of poststructuralist geographic thought. What interest me are those rapidly emergent strands of poststructuralist geography that emphasize ‘immanence’ and critique the assumption of ‘a totality that is structured from a distance’ (Smith and Doel 2010). Certainly there are various ways to approach the concept of ‘immanence’. My focus is specifically on Spinozist strands within Critical Theory. Thus, with immanentism I refer to modes of thinking that refuse all spiritual or immaterial dimensions of being that are ontologically and epistemologically distinct from and prior to material reality. In rejecting the transcendentalist separation of the ideal from the real, and its dominance over the latter, Spinoza’s immanentism asserts the universal substance of being as one and indivisible (May 2005:34-39). There is only one type of substance. Substance cannot be separated into ideal and material whereby the former determines and governs the latter. Thus Spinozan immanentism negates all modes of thinking that accepts transcendent determination, namely the determination of material reality (e.g. social practices and relations) by an external and ontologically distinct substance (e.g. ‘God’, ‘Iron laws of history’). Here cause and the effect are understood to be of the *same* ontological substance: “Between the cause and the effects, between the expressed and its expressions, there is no ontological gap or hierarchy, no loss, deficit or degradation of being, no priority, logical or chronological: the cause has no existence outside or before the effects” (Fourtounis 2005: 201). Transcendent determination has been an implicit assumption in approaches that conceptualize contemporary developments in the cities of the global South in terms of various ‘effects of globalization’ or ‘impacts of neoliberalism’. The recent immanentist critique in urban theory has offered valuable critiques of such traces of transcendent causality. Rejecting the notion of a structural exteriority, and any ontological hierarchy (i.e. scale), an increasing emphasis is laid on the ‘flatness’ of material practices, associations, events and encounters.

“Something exciting is happening in urban studies” Richard G. Smith proclaims, “a great experiment is afoot as slowly but surely old urbanism is being rejected and a new

urbanism is coming into focus.” This new urbanism, he says, is based on an “ontology of movement, networks, flows, fluids, folds, mobilities, nonhumans, practices” (Smith R G 2003: 562). With bold emphasis on contingency and complexity the recent poststructuralist critique has vigorously challenged comprehensive theoretical schemes developed by geographers adopting a political economy framework. While the overarching themes of production of space and the capitalist space economy are not completely eschewed, they are sidelined by the lexicon of “new urbanism,” which, as noted, is one of fluidity, chance, complexity, deterritorialization, becoming and streaming (Doel 1999; Massey 2005; Smith R G 2003; Smith M P 2001; Urry 2005). We are advised to learn “to let go, to become alert to difference and differentiation” (Doel 1999: 7).

I contend that while the recent poststructuralist critique of a structure that commands from a distance is well targeted, it comes with the cost of rejecting the conception of a structure altogether. Thus capitalism, both as a structured whole and as a theoretical object, is typically left out of discussion due to its close association with the political economy tradition, and the presumed “Marxist teleology” built in it (DeLanda, 2000: 281). Analysis typically proceeds with an unproblematized and pragmatic notion of ‘the (global) economy’ and transactions in the market. Amin and Thrift’s (2002) recent work on contemporary cities is emblematic in this regard. They take issue with the holistic and systematic political economy approach, which, they claim, posits global capitalism as the primary force shaping the city, in which the mobility/fluidity of capital is opposed to the fixity of places. Emphasizing the importance of the urban encounter, they call for “a different practice of urban theory based on the trans-human rather than the human, the distanced rather than the proximate, the displaced rather than the placed, and the intransitive rather than the reflexive” (ibid: 5). In this approach cities are never ‘fully present’, and at best are conceived as virtualities, a “set of potentials which contain unpredictable elements” (ibid: 4).

A particular reading of Gilles Deleuze that is fascinated with deterritorialization has been influential among proponents of new urbanism. As Smith argues, “Deleuze’s poststructuralist philosophy is one where boundaries, scales, and territories vanish through deterritorialization as the world is conceptualized as a living dermis with an infinite bundle of (un)folds and surfaces that make space and time” (Smith R G 2003: 565). What is envisioned here is a geography of perpetual folding, unfolding and refolding; its topology “overwhelms the fictions of boundaries, limits, fixity, permanence, embedment” (ibid: 565). Smith portrays Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy as a force that counters “any force, power or desire that strives to restrict, capture, fix, manage, redefine, specify or limit the flows” (ibid: 574).

Recently some (predominantly British) geographers affiliated with the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC)<sup>9</sup> have strived to incorporate insights from poststructuralist theory, actor network theory, non-representational theory and complexity theory into the geographic literature on world cities (Doel and Hubbard, 2002; Smith and Doel, 2010; Smith R G, 2003; 2006). These scholars reject the existing world cities literature for its place-based approaches and structuralist tendencies and claim to offer instead an immanentist perspective that reframes competitive world cities as networked and topological rather than bounded phenomena governed by an exterior structure<sup>10</sup>. They argue that even Manuel Castells – in spite of his widely accepted arguments regarding network society as a *space of flows* and his conceptualization of it as an entangled network of increasingly dense linkages – cannot escape the restrictions of the neo-Marxist, political economy lens that he utilizes. Relying on Thrift, Richard G Smith (2003) argues that Castells’ work is essentially a meta-cartography of global capitalism.

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<sup>9</sup> A study group and network that focuses upon the external relations of world cities, and is centered in the Geography Department at Loughborough University in the UK. (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/>)

<sup>10</sup> This critique commits a very serious oversight in its neglect of earlier critiques within Marxian and other political economy traditions that adopt a process-based and relational approach to localities. See, for example, Sheppard 2002 and Harvey 1996. As early as 1973, Harvey was calling for a study of the organization of the city in terms of the “analytical tools of topology” (Harvey 1973: 34-35).

Paralleling the Marxist topographic metaphor of base-superstructure, Castells describes the world as covered by a global space of flows, which is dominated and determined by the meta-network of financial flows. For Smith, Castells' theory rests on a technological determinism given how much import it places on the new information technology paradigm as the material basis for the global social network. (Smith R G 2003: 33). Due to his totalizing and top-down ontology that locates globalization as the primary driving force Castells, according to Smith, ends up depicting a geography of winners and losers in an urban hierarchy. Smith, by contrast, proposes an ontology which rejects scales and boundaries altogether, "as globalization and world cities are too intermingled through scattered lines of humans and non-humans to be delimited in any meaningful sense" (Smith R G 2003: 570). Following Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalytic approach, he insists that world cities should be understood as "Bodies without Organs(BwOs)". "The BwO is a process of continuous coupling, chains of machines that facilitate endless flow and flux"; it is the most adequate "way of visualizing the city as unformed, always becoming, unorganized, non-stratified and transient nomad space-time." The city understood as BwO is nothing but "unconstrained flow" (ibid: 570).

Offering many provocative insights on what an ontology of cities as complex processes could entail, the recent Deleuzian poststructuralist endeavors place considerable emphasis on fluidity, contingency and deterritorialization. Yet it is often neglected that Deleuze is clearly a thinker of (re)territorialization as well. His concept of assemblage, for instance, is as much about organization as it is about contingency (Braun 2006: 211).<sup>11</sup> There are signs of sensitivity to this aspect of Deleuze's work in Amin and Thift's formulation, when for example they assert that the "machinic ontology" of modern cities are "spaces of flow and mixture, promiscuous 'meshworks' and hierarchies of different relations . . . They are best described in terms of a language of forces, densities, intensities, potentialities, virtualities. Everything is piled in and from this high-density mix" (Amin and Thrift 2002: 81). Alert to the tempting tendency for "flowsy-flowsy depictions of the

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<sup>11</sup> This arguably more generative aspect of Deleuze's work has been taken up and rigorously expanded by Manuel DeLanda (2000; 2006).



city” (ibid: 81) they posit *circulation* as the central characteristic of the city and the engine of encounters. Unfortunately, this significant line of argument is not pursued in any systematic manner in the remainder of the analysis.

In these accounts, in a rather curious way, immanence and intransitivity (cf. Law 2000) come at the expense of any sustained or critical engagement with capitalism as an immanent structure. Thus what is being rejected is not just the conception of a structure that commands from a distance, but the idea of structure altogether. As I will discuss in detail in the following section, this closes off the possibility of a non-structuralist engagement with immanent structures. In terms of theoretical and methodological tools for tackling urban complexity, poststructuralist/Deleuzian geographers have rarely offered anything beyond vivid descriptions and imaginaries of flows and flux. Thus despite the salient insights they offer – particularly their topological understanding of places as ever-changing configurations of human and non-human forces, and their well-targeted critique of teleological residues within the political economy tradition, proponents of poststructuralist approaches in geography have rarely moved beyond the assertion of the complex nature of the urban.

These limitations notwithstanding, poststructuralists’ call for a new urban theory of cities as immanent complex formations cannot be ignored. Political economy scholars would significantly benefit from incorporating immanentism in a systematic way. Similarly poststructuralist scholars could confront some of their methodological and political limitations through a critical dialogue with – instead of a deliberate marginalization of – the theoretical tools of the political economy school. Confluences and possible interfaces for conversation between these two schools of social theory have been overlooked for variety of reasons until very recently. Fortunately, there have been a few emergent attempts at opening up space for exploring convergences and parallels between Marxian and Deleuzian geographies. Braun (2006) offers an insightful discussion of the “strange proximity” between Harvey’s historical geographical materialism and the non-dialectical, immanentist materialisms of writers such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Serres, Bruno Latour

and Sarah Whatmore. Sheppard (2008) questions the increasing skepticism about dialectics among critical geographers, and points up striking commonalities between dialectics, the assemblages of Deleuze and Guattari, and complexity theory. In the spirit of contributing to these debates, my intention is to offer insights from one such prolific area of confluence, an underestimated and ignored Spinozist current in Marxist thought that explicitly tackles the question of complex structures through a materialism of the encounter.

I argue that Louis Althusser's immanentism offers a compelling and exciting way to think about the constitution of cities that is grounded in Marxist political economy and the structural effects of capitalism but, at the same time, is attentive to contingency and indeterminacy. Althusser is commonly known as a structuralist Marxist. While this is partly true in the sense that his writings are unmistakably concerned with structures, what is usually overlooked is the fact that these structures and their elements are *absent* in the sense that they are immanent causes. In Deleuze's words a structure – in the Althusserian sense – is “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (Deleuze, 1973). Althusser's portrayal as an orthodox structuralist has also effectively served to disguise the common philosophical trajectories he shared with Gilles Deleuze. The striking commonalities and compatibilities between Deleuze's and Althusser's immanentist materialisms are not mere coincidence. Pointing out the astonishing silence regarding Deleuze's relation to Althusser, Stolze (1998: 52) asserts that “it is as though one had at all costs to protect a ‘good’ Deleuze from keeping philosophical company with a ‘bad’ Althusser !”<sup>12</sup> Especially in the context of the recent publication of a collection of his later writings on aleatory materialism into English (Althusser 2006), any substantial discussion of immanence would be profoundly deficient without carefully engaging with Althusser's ideas on the necessity of contingency, and the materialism of the encounter. Like much of the poststructuralist, non-representational scholarship that I have referred

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<sup>12</sup> As one account of mutual philosophical exchange between Deleuze and Althusser Stolze (1998) discusses an exchange of letters between the two in the late 1960s regarding the first draft of an essay that Deleuze wrote on structuralism.

to, I am interested in the question of how to conceptualize the city as an articulated whole made up of encounters between a multitude of human and non-human elements. Yet, I diverge from them by remaining attentive to capitalism as ‘a non-contemporaneous whole’ and a ‘decentered structure in dominance.’

### **The non-contemporaneous whole**

The well-entrenched and taken-for-granted conception of a universal homogenous time has enabled various teleological and stagist interpretations of Marx’s account of capitalism, and any critical engagement with the necessity/contingency dyad beckons us to reckon with the historicism that these interpretations rest on. With historicism, following Chakrabarty’s definition, I refer to a certain mode of thinking that urges one to look at the nature of any entity as a historically developing unity with a single continuous history (Chakrabarty 2000). In this conception of universal time, the elements of the totality are seen as “contemporaneous with one another,” and “the relation between social totality and its historical existence is immediate” (Althusser 1970: 94). It is this contemporaneity that allows the intellectual operation of an ‘essential section’ by which the totality can be disclosed at any point along the continuous singular time. Althusser calls this type of totality an “expressive totality.” In this, each and every part of the totality can express and be expressed both in the other parts and in the totality as a whole – which, according to Althusser, is epitomized by Hegelian understandings of totality and history<sup>13</sup>. Althusser takes issue with this metaphysical closure by building on the conception of a Marxist whole, which, he contends, differs from an expressive totality in its *structured complexity*, containing “levels or instances which are distinct and relatively autonomous” (Althusser 1970: 97). Against the historicist temptation to reduce all phenomenon to manifestations of a single principle (in Hegel, the progression of Spirit or Reason), Althusser posits the multiplicity, complexity and unevenness of temporalities

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<sup>13</sup> Admittedly Althusser was not a particularly lenient reader of Hegel; in many ways he replicates the conventional portrayal of Hegel as the philosopher of totality and telos par excellence. Since it was this particular reading that has dominated western Marxism and for that reason the one that serves Althusser’s purpose of a counter-example quite well, I will adhere to this portrayal. For non-teleological readings of Hegel see Nancy 2002 and Gidwani 2008, among others.

within a given whole. Since component parts maintain their relative autonomy, their peculiar times and punctuations, this complex whole cannot be sliced into *essential sections*. If we take a social formation as illustrative of this complex whole, productive forces and different levels within the relations of production such as the political, philosophical, and aesthetic will each exhibit its own semi-autonomous temporality in terms of histories, tempos, rhythms, and practices. “[I]n the capitalist mode of production...the time of economic production has absolutely nothing to do with the obviousness of everyday practice’s ideological time,” proclaims Althusser (1970: 101). In a strikingly similar formulation Deleuze (2004[1973]:179) writes that a structure is a “multiplicity of virtual coexistence”, thus “the social system is defined by the coexistence of elements and economic relations, without one being able to generate them in a successive manner following the illusion of a false dialectic.”

Here one could pursue the obvious geographical question: to what extent these relatively autonomous *times* correspond to relatively autonomous *spaces*? For example, do the time of production and time of theoretical practice have their distinct spaces as well? Regrettably, like the majority of Marxist intellectuals/scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Althusser was neither a theorist of space nor interested in explicitly geographic questions, and he did not therefore pursue or address questions of space or space-time in any direct manner. Is there any way to extend his arguments to include spatiality while remaining faithful to the central claims he puts forth? Commenting on the reasons as to why Marxists have failed to integrate geographical questions into their theories David Harvey remarks that: “The issue of geography is a sadly neglected child...in part, I suspect, because its incorporation has a numbing effect upon the central propositions of [Marxists]” (Harvey 2001:324). For Harvey, geography – conceived as the realm of the concrete and the empirical – has always been seen as a complicating factor; thus time has historically been privileged over space by philosophers and social scientists. Marx was not an exception in that regard. Harvey nonetheless has consistently and convincingly shown that incorporating geography into a Marxian theoretical framework in a systematic way is eminently possible. Through his decades long commitment to a research agenda

that replaces historical materialism with a more comprehensive “historical geographical materialism,” he has provided careful and systematic analysis of the production of second natures, the formation of regional inter-class alliances, structured coherences, and how they are *indispensable* to the temporality of capital accumulation. Space was indeed a major complication in the case of the grand project that Harvey set for himself. Following the uneven development theses of Rosa Luxemburg and VI Lenin, he tackled one of the burning questions in Marxist theory and politics: What shall be the focus of a progressive internationalist leftist politics in the era of neo-imperialism: the exploitation of one class by another, or the exploitation of one region by another? (Harvey 2000:53-72). Or how does one approach this question with a holistic framework that takes into consideration both aspects? Notwithstanding Harvey’s immense contributions, this central question still calls for further discussion and theoretical tools attuned to the study of complex space-times. I believe an Althusserian framework is particularly well-equipped to face this challenge, as his philosophy already avoids one major pitfall, namely the positing of a single, continuous universal time, which is an implicit assumption in much of political economy approaches including that of Harvey. Althusser understood time as *multiplicity*. If space is understood as a process (cf. Lefebvre 2000[1974]), by inference practices that have distinct times (rhythms, tempos, punctuations) will inhabit and produce different sorts of spaces. Thus there is a relatively unproblematic transition from an argument about time as multiplicity to one about space as multiplicity.<sup>14</sup>

Now, we are in a position to confront the central question of this chapter: What does an Althusserian notion of complex structure, anchored in an ontology of heterogeneous temporality, have to offer in understanding contemporary urban processes? Foremost, this is an argument against *synchronicity*: namely, against the presumption that the times in which governmental institutions function; policies are implemented; citizens act; urban social movements rise; and slum-dwellers, activists, and multinational real estate companies operate (to name but a few elements of an urban social formation) inhabit the

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<sup>14</sup> On the inseparability of space and time, and the constitutive role that space-time plays in the dynamics of capital accumulation see Castree 2009.

same essential section within a totality. Instead, the Althusserian analytic of the “complex whole” views them as semi-autonomous elements with distinct rhythms that co-exist without being subsumed by one another. The encounters between these discrete parts – which have their own “regional structures”<sup>15</sup> – exceed the event of the encounter, in the sense that they are not simple interactions between parts of a single determinate totality; rather, the interactions between the parts are contingent and generative of new connections between them.

Once the ‘urban’ as an object of theory is understood, in line with Deleuze (and Althusser), as a “virtuality of coexistence”<sup>16</sup> then the task of analysis becomes of examining how its virtuality is continuously and differentially actualized. By way of illustrating these conceptual claims the next section introduces a case study of urban renewal in Istanbul.

## **Encounters**

I begin with a vignette.

The sharp stifling smell of tear gas fills the air slowly as the heavily armored riot police, followed by a police tank and a pair of caterpillars, march forward to break through the frail makeshift barricade. The crowd behind the barricade occasionally throws stones and bricks at the police as they hastily tie scarves around their mouth in a vain attempt to protect themselves from the throat-burning gas. Some of them – mostly the elderly – throw themselves on the curbs, desperately seeking a shelter as they cough deeply with their hands on their chests. The police tank sprays those who remain in the way with cold water, mixed with a special chemical substance that causes temporary blindness and

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<sup>15</sup> In pointing out the inherent complexity of each of the constituent part of a complex whole Althusser resorts to a distinction between “regional structures” and the “global structure.” Here quite similar to DeLanda’s assemblage theory, what is invoked is a spatial metaphor of complex structures within structures (cf. DeLanda, 2006). In Althusser’s words, a regional structure is “a complex and deep space, itself inscribed in another complex and deep space”(1970:182).

<sup>16</sup> “[T]o extract the structure of a domain is to determine an entire virtuality of co-existence which pre-exists the beings, objects, and works of this domain” (Deleuze 1973).

burning sensation to the face. The crowd succumbs to this second round of the chemical assault. Having quashed the crowd and cleared the way, some police officers now proceed to brutalize the dispersing crowd of residents.

Scenes like this are becoming increasingly common in Istanbul, as the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality – which is presently controlled by the Islamic ‘Justice and Development party’ (JDP) – determinedly pledges to redevelop the whole informal housing stock of Istanbul, with the mission of increasing the earthquake resistance of the housing stock and promoting “sanitary and planned” urbanization. Like elsewhere in the world, this is part and parcel of the “vision” of transforming Istanbul into a “global city” and increasing its ability to attract international tourism, culture industries and finance; in short to increase its competitiveness and marketability (IMM, 2006:138-141). The squatter settlements (*gecekondus*) that are being targeted for “urban transformation” are mostly located in the outskirts of the city. But as the boundaries of the city perpetually expand there is increasing pressure on these areas for lucrative redevelopment.<sup>17</sup> District municipalities have found themselves in fierce competition to redevelop their informal housing stock so as to close the rent gap, and incorporate these spontaneous spaces into the formal circuits of capital accumulation. Municipalities typically develop renewal schemes in partnership with the Turkish Housing Development Administration (HDA), which is a governmental institution founded in 1984, with the mission of alleviating housing shortages in the country. Most of the HDA’s projects are high-rise mass housing developments. Its activities across Turkey remained limited until the JDP took office in 2002. Enjoying an overwhelming majority in the Turkish Parliament, the JDP passed a series of laws that dramatically extended HDA’s authority – granting it the right to form business partnerships with national and transnational developer firms, to privatize state-owned land, to prepare neighborhood level plans and most importantly to execute urban renewal and urban re-development projects in collaboration with local and metropolitan

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<sup>17</sup> As claimed by Istanbul Valuation & Consulting Inc., a major real estate valuation company, a comprehensive urban transformation program could increase real estate values in the city by at least three times (Senol 2007).

municipalities. The HDA, consequently, has been transformed into a quasi-private real estate giant and the primary producer of market-rate housing in Turkey, raising its share of the housing market from a mere 1.1 % in 2003 to 18.6% in 2007 (Toruneri 2008). As a result of the HDA's unprecedented command within the construction sector – which has been historically the main economic motor of the country, with 70 thousand licensed contractors – it has become a profitable privilege to become an 'HDA contractor.' Reports published by the HDA indicate that a tiny fraction of these registered contractors have been repeatedly awarded the big chunk of these lucrative awards. Most of the firms that have been contracted are new firms founded during the JDP administration, a majority of which were proven to have links with the JDP and/or are members of Islamic business associations.<sup>18</sup> The JDP administration claims that the HDA model of house-ownership is a huge success and promotes it as the only viable solution to the nation's housing shortage. Low-cost housing options that might include rent-controlled areas or public housing are ruled out; all housing policies are focused on the construction of "affordable" market-rate housing, regardless of residents' current and future ability to pay in order to attain ownership of their apartment.<sup>19</sup>

While the district municipalities negotiate terms of compensation with residents, and ensure the rapid clearance of renewal areas, the HDA coordinates the execution of the new development. The residents are offered entitlements in the new project, on the condition that they pay the (often significant) difference between the current value of their house and the one they are entitled in the new project. Such entitlements are typically restricted to homeowners. Therefore tenants face straightforward eviction, while the homeowners are asked to commit to paying schemes that extend over a period of 15-20 years to attain ownership of their new houses. Since the majority of these residents are

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed list and analysis of the profiles of the 'HDA contractors' and their affiliations see Gürek 2008, also see 'HDA Assessment Report' released by the Turkish Chamber of Civil Engineers, accessible at <<http://e-imo.imo.org.tr/Portal/Web/IMOMenu.aspx?menuid=131>>

<sup>19</sup> The fundamental contradiction is that, on the one hand the JDP administration aggressively advocates and implements neoliberal and pro-privatization policies, yet it also effectively funds the largest housing firm in the country.



extremely poor and do not have regular incomes—most of them are either underemployed or unemployed – the amount of monthly payments and of compensation they receive for the demolition of their existing dwelling are vital to their prospects.<sup>20</sup>

In all the urban transformation projects, while there are terms on paper regarding the compensation to be offered to residents, negotiations are mostly carried out on an individual basis. The municipality avoids interactions with the residents of a neighborhood as a whole during information meetings or negotiation of terms. An activist and pro bono lawyer explains this ‘strategy of dividing’ as follows:

“As a rule the municipality always begins with the poorest and most desperate resident. First they go to Ahmet and say ‘Ahmet we offer you 30 thousand [TL as compensation for eviction], but do not tell this to anyone!’ After he signs he is asked to remain silent and they go to Hasan and say similar things; and proceed one by one...Of course they do not organize meetings in broad daylight like we do! They meet secretly after sunset.”<sup>21</sup>

Many residents I interviewed corroborate that the municipality uses its JDP connections within neighborhoods to carry out these clandestine negotiations. Those who have close connections to the JDP get favorable deals, and influence others in the neighborhood by coaxing them to sign an agreement with the municipality. Therefore, urban renewal follows distinct trajectories in different locations depending on the success of the clandestine ‘inducement networks’, and the level of participation and trust in the neighborhood associations, among other factors. In short the local power geometry is

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<sup>20</sup> Just to give a sense of the ‘affordability’ of this house-ownership arrangement, I want to provide some figures from the *Basibuyuk* renewal project – a case that I discuss in more detail later. The declared value of an apartment in the HDA’s project is 55 thousand TL (1 TL= 0.65 USD as of August 2010). For a typical single storey squatter housing the amount of compensation is around 15 thousand TL. The home-owner is asked to pay the difference, in the amount of 40 thousand TL, in installments over a period of fifteen years. In short a typical home-owner resident is asked to commit to pay around 220 TL a month for fifteen years, which is way beyond the means of the majority of the residents, most of whom are either unemployed or underemployed.

<sup>21</sup> Interview, July 10, 2008, Beyoglu

crucial for the outcome: while tenant residents in one urban renewal site might win compensation, in another area they could simply be excluded. The same HDA could settle on different terms in different neighborhoods, without setting any precedent.<sup>22</sup>

One can identify multiple parts to this structured articulation: the HDA as a space production machine, the municipality's planning department, the construction firm contracted by the HDA, JDP's networks within and beyond the neighborhoods, reproduction and collective consumption in the neighborhood, the everyday life of residents, the particular economic relations that are driven by the imperative of realizing urban rent, local and extra-local political associations, and oppressive state apparatuses, all have distinct *times* and *punctuations* that cannot be reduced to expressions of a single or underlying logic that is (neoliberal) capitalism. Moreover, the particular policy networks at the local municipality and the HDA have their own particular histories and rhythms that are distinct from the time of the residents of the neighborhood as community. Distinct temporal structures orient conduct in distinct ways. When policy-makers and project coordinators sit around a table to prepare reports on a neighborhood and plans for a renewal project, they have a particular orientation to time: namely, a chronological time frame for the completion of renewal project. Time-tables for the project are posted on walls, reminding everyone of a series of binding deadlines. Aside from the time horizon of the project, the project development in the Municipality entails regular meetings, and periodic interactions between various departments of the Planning Department. These mark specific punctuations of the time of the renewal project. There is also the time of squatter housing. Squatters appropriate state-owned lands in the hope and expectation of acquiring legal title deeds in the future. Political conjunctures, and the resident's economic means permitting, a single storey unit may gradually expand either to accommodate sons and daughters who get married and need a separate unit or simply to be sold or rented out in the informal real estate market. An Althusserian approach asserts that the time of the renewal project and the time of squatting, are relatively

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<sup>22</sup> This is in conformity with Chatterjee's analysis of "negotiations" in political society. See Chatterjee 2004, especially pages 34-41 and 134-139.

autonomous of each other. In other words, they cannot be simply traced back to a totalizing essence, called capitalism. They constitute regional structures that have their particular, semi-independent times; yet insofar as they are overdetermined by other levels, they are also part of the same global multiplicity, or what Althusser (1970:102) calls the “time of times.”

When Althusser ruthlessly critiques the conception of a contemporaneous expressive totality in which the existence of any given element could be traced back to the phenomenal form or a mirror reflection of another (since they are all expressions of a unitary principle), and instead offers a structured whole in which elements are asymmetrically related and semi-autonomous, he could be read in close proximity to poststructuralist geographers in their emphasis on indeterminacy, chance and contingency. But Althusser does not seek a conception of a complex and contingent whole, parts of which interact in an accidental fashion. He is concerned with the question of how the elements of an unevenly structured whole articulate. He follows a straightforward path of reasoning in explaining the overall structuration of the whole: the whole is made up of non-congruous and non-identical levels, each overdetermined by others and the structure as a whole. Since none of these levels – each with a different level of autonomy and determination – is equivalent or identical to each other, by necessity in any given complex whole there must be one level that *dominates* all the others.<sup>23</sup> However the domination of the principal level over the others is not to be understood as a “quantitative superiority,” whereby levels are in a relation of transitive determination vis-à-vis each other (with the economic level determining the political, the political determining the administrative, and so on).<sup>24</sup> Instead, the whole is a complexity which is structured under the dominance of a principal level in a peculiar form of causality that determines without being deterministic. Althusser (2006: 203) maintains that in the capitalist mode of production, it is the economy as the “structure of

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Domination is not just an indifferent *fact*, it is a fact *essential* to the complexity itself. That is why complexity implies domination as one of its essentials: it is inscribed in its structure’ (Althusser 1969: 201).

<sup>24</sup> For an insightful discussion of transitivity see Law 2000.

exploitation” that articulates all the elements. In other words it is the level of the economy that is determining *in the last instance*.

This renowned proposition has, understandably, made Althusser an easy target for accusations of economic determinism. Yet, a scrupulous reading reveals that Althusser is far from establishing an *essential* relationship between the economic base and the superstructure; he is far from thinking concrete economic and superstructural forms as purely phenomenal expressions of a base. “The economic dialectic is never active *in the pure state*,” according to Althusser (1969: 113, emphasis original). An unmediated relation between base and superstructure in which the latter is transitively determined by the former is never possible in actuality: “From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes” (ibid: 113). Or, to invoke Deleuze (1994: 186), the economic here should be understood as “a differential virtuality to be interpreted, always covered over by its forms of actualization.” Thus the determination by the economic is not simply the setting up of limits by an external force: “The necessity is *established at the level of the accidents themselves, on the accidents themselves, as their global resultant: so it really is their necessity*” (Althusser 1969: 120, emphasis original). The resultant is then the outcome of a combination of all the forces, yet it is irreducible to any individual acts or wills, and hence is ‘unconscious’ in the sense that it is a process without a subject or a pre-determined goal. Therefore necessity – determination by the particular structure of domination *in the last instance* (in capitalism, this would be exploitation as surplus value extraction) – exists not as an outside force but emerges through the articulation of various levels and constituent parts.

Althusser’s immanentism is highly influenced by Spinoza’s distinction between the “object of knowledge” and the “real object,” (Holland 1998). The “global structure of the mode of production” is marked by its *determinate absence* (Althusser 1970: 183). In other words the structure is not empirically verifiable. Economic objects are defined and related to each other only as *concepts*, and most importantly these concepts have to be defined and theoretically constructed according to changing circumstances. Thus the

Marxian *object of surplus value* – which for Althusser expressed the fact of capitalist relations of production in economic reality itself – is not a measurable reality, simply because surplus value is not a thing ‘but concept of a relationship, the concept of an existing social structure of production, of an existence visible and measurable *only in its effects*’ (ibid: 180-181). Yet these effects are *not* external to the structure; they are not “a pre-existing space in which the structure arrives to imprint its mark” (Althusser 1970: 189) as the structure is a cause immanent in its effects; i.e. it has no existence outside its effects<sup>25</sup>.

In a series of fragmentary texts in the mid 1980s under the title “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter” Althusser (2006: 163-207) further articulates his immanentist approach. In what happened to be his last philosophical work, he lays the foundations of what he calls an “aleatory materialism” or “materialism of the encounter.” Even though this work marks a significant modification of his earlier agenda, there are many elements of continuity with his previous work, most notably his insistence on the structure in dominance and theme of the necessity of contingency. Aleatory materialism stands out as his most focused critique of teleology, and all varieties of materialisms of necessity. As he states, aleatory materialism is “not a Marxist philosophy but a philosophy for Marxism” (Althusser 2006:259). Here, his main objective is to think about a “materialism of a process without a subject” and without an assignable end. He turns to what he claims to be a long overlooked materialist tradition that dates back to early materialists such as Democritus and Epicurus and extends to Heidegger and Derrida. His starting point is Epicurus’ postulations regarding the formation of the world. Epicurus describes an infinity of atoms that were falling parallel to each other in the void. An infinitesimal swerve of an atom (*clinamen*) breaks the

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<sup>25</sup> Therefore when Doel (1999: 23) takes fault with Harvey for affirming flux as pivotal to a logic of internal relations while continuing to insist on the “solid rock of historical geographical materialism,” he seems to conflate the “solidity” of Harvey’s abstract categories with the solidity of real and actual occurrences. It is not a contradiction that Harvey’s thought concretes are of a different order than those of real concretes that he is trying to understand; in other words, it is not inconsistent to accept the ontological priority of flux and flow, and to tackle these with non-fluid (yet relational) thought objects such as “capital.”

parallelism inducing *an encounter* between another atom. This instigates a chain reaction whereby through the piling up a series of encounters atoms agglomerate and become something that is more than the sum of its parts. Althusser (2006:260) advances two main theses regarding Epicurus' world. "(1) Before there was a World there existed absolutely nothing that was formed; and, at the same time; (2) all the elements of the world already existed in isolation." The aleatory encounter of atoms is the origin of the World, however it does *not* create the reality of the world, as the atoms were already present before the encounter. Yet it is the encounter alone that "confers their reality upon the atoms themselves which without swerve and encounter, would be nothing but abstract elements, lacking all consistency and existence"(ibid:169)

Althusser's aleatory materialism is as much a political project as it is a philosophical one. A 1986 interview on aleatory materialism conducted by Fernanda Navarro (Althusser 2006: 251-289), opens with political questions. Here Althusser explains how Hegelian readings of Marx in the USSR replaced The Hegelian 'Absolute Idea' with 'matter' and lent ideological support to 'monstrosities' such as Stalin's 'dialectical materialism' and 'laws of dialectics.' For him a truly materialist conception of history should dispense with 'laws.' It is in the swerve produced by the clinamen that Althusser sees "the existence of human freedom in the world of necessity" (Althusser 2006:262)

Let's re-consider the vignette in which I described the confrontation between the police and the residents of a squatter neighborhood in Istanbul. *Basibuyuk* neighborhood, located on the Asian side of Istanbul, has been targeted as part of the local municipality's redevelopment scheme. Since there was space available in the middle of the neighborhood, the municipality figured it could embark on the first phase of the reconstruction without first having to demolish existing dwellings. This space, which was used as the neighborhood park, was uninhabited because of the instability of the terrain due to underground water dynamics. The residents had dug wells and used them as reliable water supplies for decades.

Over the last twenty years, Basibuyuk like many other gecekondu neighborhoods in Istanbul and across Turkey – has emerged as a major stronghold of the Islamic movement. Strikingly, even in the face of imminent eviction threats from the JDP’s policies, the residents of *Basibuyuk* delivered at a 56% majority for the JDP in the 2007 general elections.<sup>26</sup> Many residents, community leaders and activists I talked to corroborated that due to residents’ widespread and unwavering commitment to the Islamic party and the extensiveness of the party’s political networks within the neighborhood, the local municipality did not expect any opposition from the residents to the project. However when the construction firm arrived in the neighborhood to establish the worksite it was met with an unexpectedly fierce resistance from a group of residents, who blocked and threw stones at the caterpillars and the trucks carrying construction equipment. Eventually, the riot police were called in by the municipality. The residents report that on February 27, 2008 the entire neighborhood was besieged by hundreds of police who shot tear gas into the crowd both from the ground and from the air (from helicopters) brutally crushing the resistance and arresting dozens of residents. The construction equipment was eventually able to enter the site, and a police presence became permanent in the neighborhood in the name of guarding the worksite. Since most of the men left the neighborhood to commute to other parts of the city for work, women were left in a position to confront the police on a daily basis. Completely shocked by the brutality and harassment of the police, women – practically all of them wearing the Islamic hijab – told me that they had never imagined that one day they would have to confront the police, simply because they were not ‘terrorists’ and they had never ‘opposed the state,’ in short they hadn’t done anything wrong.

How to make sense of the ‘encounter’ between Basibuyuk residents and the police? A familiar political economy approach (cf. Smith, 1996; Mitchell 2003), steeped in the organic conception of a totality, and class-based analysis might conceptualize this encounter in terms of an opposition between residents defending their justified claims to their houses and oppressive state apparatuses that represent the interest of the ruling

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<sup>26</sup> The national rate was 48 %. Source: <<http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/SandikSonuc.html>>

classes. In more bare terms the whole event could be seen in terms of a contradiction between dispossession through urban renewal and grassroots resistance against it. Understood as such, both the act of dispossession and Basibuyuk residents' resistance to it are taken as 'synchronous': namely as simultaneous expressions of a single inner contradiction between two social classes, and the encounter is sealed within the contemporaneous capitalist whole. I argue that such an organic ontology is deficient in accounting for that which exceeds the encounter, namely the emergence of political bodies that "run ahead of their times."<sup>27</sup> Consider the novel ways in which the residents were assembled and connected to each other during these repeated episodes of confrontation. Before the urban renewal project, Basibuyuk residents in general had a very limited sense of community and neighborhood. As Hatice, a 45 year old housewife explained:

"We moved here ten years ago, and until recently, I didn't know and didn't want to know anyone except for a couple of friends. Most of my friends and relatives live in Maltepe[the district center]. We always go there. But when these events began, and the resistance tents were erected, I became intimate with people whom I used to hate."<sup>28</sup>

This sentiment is widely shared amongst the residents who participated in active resistance. Up until the urban renewal the neighborhood had no reported history of organized mobilization. As such, Basibuyuk has historically stood in stark contrast with many surrounding gecekondur neighborhoods. In *Gulsuyu* for example, one can find representatives from the full spectrum of leftist politics. *Gulsuyu* is also well known for repeatedly staving off attempt of demolition through effectively neighborhood-wide mobilizations. Basibuyuk residents on the other hand have always been distant to and critical of leftists, who they perceived as 'enemies of state.' However the few media outlets that covered the violent events of February and March 2008 from the perspective

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<sup>27</sup> A phrase used by Althusser (1970: 95) in his critique of the Hegelian totality, and the philosophy of presence in which the present constitutes the "absolute horizon of all knowing".

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Hatice (pseudonym) date: March 01, 2009, Basibuyuk



of the residents were almost all leftist media. This modified residents' perspectives.

According to a 60 year old retired construction worker:

“In the 1980s, communists were shouting ‘Speak up! Or you’ll be the next!’ and the police would beat them up. We always thought they were getting what they deserved. But the same things are befalling us now, and only these newspapers and TVs are with us. I am ashamed of my thoughts back then” (cited in Geyik, 2008).

Basibuyuk residents began to organize public demonstrations and press conferences against the renewal project on a regular basis. What were once disparaged forms of coming together and looked down to as ‘anti-state’ or ‘terrorist’ acts, became commonplace. Residents not only participated in demonstrations directly related to urban renewal, but gave their support for other pro-labor causes. For example, a number of Basibuyuk women participated in a citywide demonstration against a reform bill that seriously curtailed workers’ social security rights (Kadikoy, 2008). Undoubtedly this bill had negative consequences for Basibuyuk residents as well, but their participation in a public demonstration would have been unthinkable just a few years previously.

All this said, I am far from putting forth the humanistic claim that the encounter transformed Basibuyuk residents into ‘revolutionary subjects.’ Rather than properties or the identities of individuals, my emphasis here is on the new sorts of associations and connections that were forged. It might perhaps be more apt to describe the transformation in terms of the proliferation of “revolutionary connections in opposition to the conjugations of the axiomatic [of capitalism]” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 473). Or as Todd May puts it:

“Subject groups [as opposed to *subjected* groups] are ignorant. Like Socrates, their wisdom lies in knowing that they do not know. And most important, they do not yet know what their collective bodies are capable of.... To be ignorant is not to be stagnant. It is not to be paralyzed. To be ignorant in this way is instead to be seeking new possibilities, new formations. It is to be creating new connections. It

is to move among the as yet undecided and the undecidable in order to see what might be created” (May 2005: 149).

Through the ‘Alliance of Istanbul Neighborhood Associations’ (AINA)<sup>29</sup> Basibuyuk established connections with other neighborhoods across Istanbul and Turkey as well as various NGOs and activist groups. Thus the confrontation between the residents and the police exceeded the encounter, enabling new ways of co-existing that unleashed formerly unactualized capacities and novel ways of connecting with other bodies.

In November 2008, the 5th Administrative Court of Istanbul ordered the Basıbüyük urban renewal project to be annulled, on the grounds that it fails to offer any solutions to the social and economic problems of the neighborhood, and ordered that the project be opened to the participation of residents. This was undoubtedly a momentous legal victory for the neighborhood. Even though the first stage of the project had been completed at that point, the later stages were indefinitely suspended.

How to locate the structure in dominance here? The encounters between the residents and the riot police were contingent; yet they were *not* accidental. They were results of a series of contingencies that were overdetermined by the particular mode of articulation of a multitude of elements/levels within the urban social formation. These levels, and their distinct times are asymmetrically related in their relative autonomy from each other; and precisely due to this asymmetry – due to a lack of a center or a transcendental cause to which all elements could relate to as *equivalent* expressions – one of them is *dominant*. The economic level, i.e. surplus value generating diagram of capitalist relations of production, is determinant in *the last instance*. The residents of Basibuyuk are well-aware that what is being imposed upon them in the name urban transformation, planned urbanization and legalization, is at heart a scheme of “rental redistribution” in their words. Fundamentally, this involves the transfer of urban land rent that has rapidly accumulated over decades from its current occupants, to the state; and eventually its affiliated contractors. Yet the fundamental contradiction between the expropriators and

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<sup>29</sup> AINA is an Istanbul-wide grass roots organization founded in February of 2008.

the dispossessed is *never* active in its pure state; it is mediated through and overdetermined by its complex co-articulation with other elements such as political Islam, which the ruling JDP has skillfully utilized in garnering a faithful constituency in poor neighborhoods and among business elites alike. Thus one cannot deduce the time of the economic directly from the site of real accidents even in the case of an event as profound as the confrontation between the police and residents defending their homes. Yet determination by the economy is the structuring ‘essence’ of these encounters.

### **Conclusion: Cities as multiplicities**

I embrace the poststructuralist critique of the still well-entrenched notion of structures commanding from a distance. In that regard I completely agree with Amin and Thrift’s conceptualization of cities as *virtualities*, or a “set of potentials which contain unpredictable elements” (Amin and Thrift 2002: 4). But I diverge from them in their deliberate refusal to come to terms with the capitalist structure of dominance as the primary force shaping contemporary cities.

I argue for a conceptualization of the urban as a complex structure overdetermined by a multitude of forces, flows, rhythms, among which those governed by the imperatives of capital accumulation stand as part of the dominant structure. This begs the question: What is the mode of existence of the structure in dominance? As Althusser once asked, “By means of what concept, or what set of concepts, is it possible to think the determination of the elements of a structure, and the structural relations between those elements, and all the effects of those relations, by the effectivity of that structure?” (Althusser 1970: 186) One possibly compelling way of addressing this question is thinking of the urban as an abstract diagram (or a virtual multiplicity). Diagram here is understood as “the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which . . . acts as a non-unifying immanent cause which is coextensive with the whole social field. The abstract machine is like the cause of the concrete assemblages that execute its relations; and these relations take place ‘not above’ but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce” (Deleuze 1988: 37). The diagram exists only as a virtuality;

i.e. it “constructs a real yet to come.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 142) Thus, I contend, the urban could be thought as a multiplicity – “a non-unifying immanent cause” (Deleuze 1988: 37) – that only exists as a *virtuality*.

Such an approach replaces the ontology of co-presence with an ontology of non-contemporaneity, an urban theory agenda that comes to terms with incongruities between different times and rhythms. The rise of development mafias in Mumbai to prominence in mainstream politics is not anomaly; they are part and parcel of property development in the making of a competitive city (Weinstein 2008). As Solomon Benjamin (2004) shows, complex tenure forms and flexible forms of land development are integral to ‘economic growth’. Similarly, AbdouMaliq Simone (2004)’s notion of *people as infrastructure* emphasizes the flexible and provisional nature of economic collaboration among residents, and their ability to forge ephemeral connections with diverse objects, spaces, persons and practices and how these conjunctions provide a platform for the reproduction of city life.

While calls for a new urbanism agenda that takes immanence and *intransitivity* are much needed, it is important not to throw the baby of capitalism out with the bathwater of teleological necessity. A new ontology of the urban need not and should not lose sight of capitalism as its primary theoretical *object*. An adequate conceptualization (production) of this object has profound political implications. Althusserian notions of immanence, non-correspondence and non-contemporaneity point up possibilities for a post-capitalist politics that can actually “run ahead of its time.” This runs against the conception of an *omnipresent* capitalism, and a counter-politics that could only transform and revolutionize it *from within*, namely a counter-politics that is by necessity *co-present* with capitalism.

## Chapter 3

### Neoliberal-Islamic assemblage

This chapter discusses the changing policy framework that underpins urban renewal in Istanbul through a detailed analysis of a unique coupling of neoliberalism and Islamism in Turkey which I call ‘Neoliberal-Islamic assemblage’. My goal is to show that neoliberalism, as a political rationality that seeks to facilitate circuits of capital accumulation through marketization, articulates with seemingly incompatible rationalities such as political Islam, which the ruling Islamic party in Turkey has skillfully utilized in garnering a faithful constituency in poor neighborhoods and among business elites alike. With the term Neoliberal-Islamic assemblage I do not intend to pose a unique and singular category. In many respects one could see striking parallels between the Neoliberal-Islamic assemblage in Turkey and the coupling of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism in the US. Yet while there are various commonalities in the implementation of pro-business and pro-market approaches, there are significant differences in the ways in which they govern the urban poor.

The first part of the chapter lays out my approach to neoliberalism, through critical engagements with the existing literature. The second part explains how Turkey’s most powerful and mainstream Islamist movement came to embrace neoliberalism. I show how the coupling of neoliberalism and Islamism created unique capacities that enabled a rapid phase of neoliberal reforms. The third section details the new legal framework that redefines the parameters of urban policy making, which have been enacted by the Justice and Development party (JDP) administration over the last eight years. The last section discusses how the JDP has further solidified its credibility and consolidated its political authority through the utilization of alms as a technique of governance.

### **Neoliberalism as diagram**

There are two broad approaches to neoliberalism. In the more prevalent and mainstream approach neo-liberalism is understood as a policy framework. Scholars of political economy and state-theoretical approaches conceptualize neoliberalism as a signifier for a multitude of forms and pathways of market-led regulatory restructuring (Brenner et al. 2009; Jessop 2002). Here the focus is on the changes in the policy frameworks, which is marked by a shift from welfarist policies of the Keynesian era towards a political agenda that prioritizes the unfettered operation of markets. In most general terms, this political agenda is characterized by policies aimed at privatization, deregulation, and deep cuts to social spending. While in the Global North this is primarily manifested by the gradual and selective dismantling of inclusive welfare state systems, and the abandonment of policies of full employment, in the Global South one finds structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank as loan conditionality. These notoriously generic policies involve – in addition to privatization and rolling back of state welfare activities and employees – reduction of trade barriers, facilitation of foreign investment, devaluation of currencies, removal of existing price controls on consumer goods, and focusing economic activities in export sectors and resource extraction.

In the recent scholarship of this strand (Brenner et al. 2009; Peck 2004) neoliberalism as a noun is eschewed as it is seen to presume a teleological trajectory and an eventual ‘neoliberal condition’ to be reached. Here there seems to be a deliberate move away from a presumption of an original ‘neoliberal model’ and variations on that model and towards a more context sensitive approach that takes into consideration the spatio-temporally complex and path-dependent nature of the two processes: on the one hand, the uneven development of neoliberalization and, on the other, the neoliberalization of regulatory uneven development (Brenner et al. 2009; Peck 2004; Peck and Tickell 2002). The main object of analysis is ‘neoliberalization’ as a spatio-temporally variegated and always incomplete *process*. However, in so far as their neoliberalization framework focuses on policy networks and actors, and the varieties of neoliberal state forms, there is an implicit analytical separation between the state (where neoliberalism is performed)

and its effects (marketization and commodification). In other words, this theoretical framework emphasizes neoliberalization, as it is a necessary logical relay for their analysis of the ways in which state actors and institutions act in differential ways to ensure the encroachment of an entrepreneurial and market logic into the nooks and crannies of state and civic conduct. Thus instead of the conceptual chain of neoliberalism→marketization, we are presented with neoliberalism→neoliberalization (→marketization).

Neo-Foucauldian/ governmentality approaches offer a partial corrective to this shortcoming. Focusing particularly on advanced liberal societies, they stress micro-technologies of governance and control. Challenging the prevalent notion of 'neoliberalism' as a programmatically coherent policy agenda, Larner argues that neoliberal political projects are inevitably characterized by "compromises, contradictions and inconsistencies, thus revealing neo-liberalism to be a more tenuous phenomenon than is commonly assumed" (Larner 2000). She shifts the focus from politicians and policy makers who are often portrayed as the chief actors of neoliberalization to the "object of governance." In this approach neoliberalism is not simply a force that is wielded by state actors and policy makers, but is a technique of governance. The question for Larner is: What sort of citizen subjectivity does the neoliberal turn entail? The neoliberal strategies of rule, she argues, "encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well-being" (Larner 2000: 11) rather than relying on state provision of public services. Nikolas Rose similarly argues that the transition to "advanced liberal" rule is a process of "de-governmentalization" of the welfare state, in which competition and consumer demand have supplanted the norms of public service (Rose 1996: 41). This conception of the "active society" beckons a particular politics of the self, in which citizens are conceived as individualized actors responsible for enhancing their own well-being and interests whereby they become "experts of themselves" in contradistinction to the Keynesian subject, who is to be governed through a nexus of collective dependencies (ibid: 40).

Arguably the most salient contribution of the governmentality literature on discussions about neoliberalism has been its disruption of the taken-for-granted unity between the government and the state. This has been done through an analysis of the two-fold process of “de-governmentalization of state” and the “de-statization of government” (ibid: 40). Two striking examples for these twin processes are seen in Quangoization<sup>30</sup> and the proliferation of non-governmental organizations taking over regulatory functions in Britain (Rose 1996: 56) and the emergence of the “partnering state” in New Zealand (Larner 1997).

Brown (2003) takes this delinking one step forward and shows how marketization is *internal* to the state itself. She approaches neo-liberalism as “a mode of governance encompassing but not limited to state, and one which produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social” (Brown 2003: paragraph 2). This approach, as she maintains, is in distinction to referents that reduce neo-liberalism to a bundle of economic policies that have consistent effects and consequences on the ground. Challenging this relation of exteriority between the external cause (policies) and inadvertent effects, she focuses on the very “political rationality” that organizes these policies. Her main referent here is Foucault’s 1978 and 1979 College de France lectures in which he provides a critical analysis of the German ordo-liberal school and the Chicago neoliberal school. As Foucault (2010:131) argues in these lectures,

“[N]eoliberalism differs from classic liberalism since the problem of neo-liberalism is not how to cut out or contrive a free space of the market within an already given political society, as in the liberalism of Adam Smith and the eighteenth century. The problem of neo-liberalism is rather how the overall exercise of political power can be modeled on the principles of a market economy.”

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<sup>30</sup> namely the proliferation of ‘quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations’ in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia, and increasing devolution of government power to these organizations.



Neoliberalism, thus, involves a “normative” rather than an ontological claim about social life (2003: paragraph 9). As Treanor (2005) argues, “the ultimate (unreachable) goal of neoliberalism is a universe where every action of every being is a market transaction, conducted in competition with every other being and influencing every other transaction, with transactions occurring in an infinitely short time, and repeated at an infinitely fast rate.” Since this unattainable end state is not ontologically given, it needs to be constructed. This is a particularly significant way in which neoliberalism diverges from the classical liberal *laissez faire* principle. Under neoliberalism the economy needs to be orchestrated, buttressed and protected by law since neither the market nor rational economic behavior is taken as pre-given. However, in this arrangement the state is not in a position of command, nurturing and controlling the markets. On the contrary, with reference to Foucault’s remark on ordo-liberalism, Brown argues that the market becomes the organizing and regulating principle of the state. This means two things. First, the efficiency with which the state responds to the needs of the market and manages ‘the economy’ becomes the basic criterion for its success. Second, the state itself becomes part of the market. It is “animated by market rationality, not simply profitability, a generalized calculation of cost and benefit becomes the measure of all state practices” (Brown 2003: paragraph 13). The entrepreneurial discourse requires that the state should not simply facilitate the market, but should itself act like a market actor. In Brown’s approach, neoliberalism does not redefine the relation between state and the markets to the benefit of the latter; rather, it marketizes all realms of social life including state itself. In other words it is not a force that is *external* to the state, and therefore one that can be utilized by state and policy actors. It is a political rationality that seeks to intensify and expand the market; *it is a machine of marketization that seeks to cast all dimensions of social life in terms of market exchange.*

Building on Brown’s neo-Foucauldian approach this chapter approaches neoliberalism diagrammatically, in other words as a diagram of power that seeks to re-order society around the primacy of the ‘market’. In this immanentist approach neoliberalism is not the prior cause of connections between various actors – for example between IMF

officials and the Turkish government: rather, it is actualized *through* these associations.<sup>31</sup> Despite attempts to impute neoliberalism with an “identity crisis” (Larner 2003), I maintain that there is a theoretical consistency to neoliberalism as an abstract machine of marketization even though its actualizations are compromised and incomplete. The diagrammatic approach I propose here allows me to draw a distinction between neoliberalism as a political rationality (thought object) that is *only* present in its effects, (and thus is non-existent as an empirically verifiable thing) and its hybrid and messy actualizations on the ground (real objects).<sup>32</sup> That it has a variety of effects on the ground and that it articulates with other rationalities does not mean that neoliberalism is variegated or hybrid ‘in essence’, even though its actualizations are always incomplete and uneven.

How does neoliberalism articulate with other political rationalities? Examining the convergence of neoliberalism (as a market-political rationality) and neoconservatism (as a moral-political rationality) in the contemporary US, Brown looks at the ways in which these “two rationalities themselves composite, inadvertently converge at crucial points to extend a cannibalism of liberal democracy already underway from other sources in the past half century” (Brown 2006: 691). She explains how these two rationalities mutually reinforce each other despite visible incongruities between the two. Similarly, in his essay on the alliance between “cowboy capitalism” and evangelical Christianity in the United States William Connolly explains how the capitalist-evangelical assemblage becomes a powerful machine “as corporate and evangelical sensibilities resonate together, drawing

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<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly this actualization requires that the IMF and the Turkish government be at a historical moment where they are predisposed to relations that actualize certain logics and not others. In other words, neoliberalism as virtually real already exercises a force-field.

<sup>32</sup> My main reference in drawing this distinction is Louis Althusser, whose arguments on this issue are in turn influenced by Spinoza’s distinction between *extension* and *thought*. For Althusser (and Spinoza), the physical and the mental are distinct and causally closed systems. For example, the Marxian *object* of surplus value – which, for Althusser expressed the fact of capitalist relations of production in economic reality itself – is not a measurable reality, simply because surplus value is not a thing “but concept of a relationship, the concept of an existing social structure of production, of an existence visible and measurable *only in its 'effects'*” (Althusser 1970: 180-181).

each into a larger movement that dampens the importance of doctrinal differences between them” (Connolly 2005: 871). He calls this “the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine.”

In a similar vein, this chapter seeks to explain how Islamism and neoliberalism as two distinct political rationalities come to resonate together<sup>33</sup>, in the early 2000s, in the organizational body of the JDP. As with my approach to neoliberalism, I do not take Islamism to be a coherent, fully formed, self-reproducing model. Rather, I take Islamism as a political rationality that seeks to shape all aspects of social life (economic, legal, political, private) along Sunni Islamic principles<sup>34</sup>. And for the purposes of this chapter I am concerned with the particular form it took under the leadership of the mainstream ‘National Outlook’ movement in Turkey. With ‘resonance’ and ‘mutual reinforcement’ in this particular context I refer to two processes:

1. Neoliberalism has become more entrenched in JDP’s hands. Its agenda was considerably furthered thanks to the Islamist party’s widespread acceptance by and extensive networks within the urban poor and the marginalized.
2. Islamism gradually became a legitimate political stance mostly due to its commitment to a neoliberal agenda that granted it the approval that it needed both internationally (from the US, the IMF, and the EU) and locally (from small and medium size business owners and center right and liberal intelligentsia, as well as moderate right voters). Islamist practices, morals, values and codes of conduct became more mainstream within Turkish society as the Islamist party was able to claim a center-right position within the political spectrum.

The following section provides a historical background to the coupling of Islamism and neoliberalism in Turkey.

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<sup>33</sup> In Althusserian terms one might argue that they are ‘synchronized’.

<sup>34</sup> For all practical purposes, the sizable *Alevi* population (estimated to be around 20 percent of the overall Muslim population in Turkey) has to be excluded from the potential and existing political base of the Islamist movements in Turkey.

## **Coupling**

As aptly argued by various scholars (Bugra 1999; Yavuz 1997), the Turkish brand of secularism has not aimed at the complete separation of government and religion; instead it has involved the institutionalization and imposition by the state of an officially controlled and authorized sort of religion. The ideal modern citizen envisioned by the Republican founders was one who would nominally adhere to basic tenets of Sunni Islam yet at the same time wholeheartedly embrace values of western enlightenment and civilization. Heterodox Islamic orders (Sufi or Alevi) were eschewed and religion was strictly relegated to private sphere of the individual (Ozyurek 2006). The institutionalization of this authoritarian version of secularism faced fierce resistance from various Islamic movements and orders (*tariqat*) across the country. Thus, a strong anti-secularist current has been actively present since the inception of the Republic in 1923.

The first political party with an explicitly Islamist agenda to be represented in the Turkish parliament was the National Order party (NOP) founded in 1969. The Islamist cadres founding the party referred to their political frame as the ‘National Outlook’ (*Milli Gorus*). The NOP was shut down in 1971, and reappeared under a different name shortly after, only to be shut down again – alongside all other political parties – during the military coup of 1980. It was re-founded under the name Welfare Party (WP) in 1983 – the year the military junta stepped down, and re-opened the Parliament. The Islamic party – through its various incarnations – consistently utilized a discourse of exclusion and discrimination. It voiced its opposition against the containment and regulation of Islam by Kemalist state apparatuses and institutions, which it perceived as an active attempt at liquidation. In doing so, the Islamist party frequently referred to the fact that Turkey was a predominantly Muslim nation, and thus it was absurd that ‘the majority’ was being discriminated against by a handful of secular elites.

The WP was not the final incarnation of the Islamic party, yet it marks a significant turning point in Islamic mobilization; it is during the WP era that Islamic politics became a mainstream force in Turkish political life. The primary reason for this unprecedented

shift was the complete redefinition of the Turkish political landscape as a consequence of the September 12, 1980 military coup. During the 1970s, as in many parts of the Global South, leftist opposition was gaining momentum and confidence in Turkey asserting itself as an increasingly forceful challenge to the capitalist order. The constantly expanding squatter settlements served as convenient strongholds and safe havens for various legal as well as underground revolutionary leftist groups. Particularly during the second half of the 1970s, a high level of organic unity between the squatters and leftist activists emerged as the latter would actively help rural immigrants establish themselves in the city, assisting them in building homes and in engaging in active resistance in the face of eviction threats. The September 1980 military coup fundamentally changed this relationship. This was the “shock wave” that the country needed for the neoliberal structural adjustment reforms to follow (see Klein 2007). In January of 1980 the government had adopted a package of economic stability measures, which came to be known as the “January 24 Decisions”. While the January 24 Decisions did not differ much from the stabilization programs, and structural adjustment policies imposed on various Latin American countries during the same period, Boratav (2002:149) argues that in the Turkish case more weight was placed on wage control policies and less on monetary and financial policies. These anti-labor policies would have been extremely difficult to implement under a parliamentary system, and in the presence of a strong labor movement. The September 1980 military coup eliminated these hurdles.

The unmistakable target of the US approved coup was the increasingly radicalizing Left. The military junta, which stayed in power for three years, actively promoted and propagated Islamic values as an antidote to the ‘destructive’ and ‘destabilizing’ effects of communist ideology.<sup>35</sup> Islamism emerged as the only oppositional political movement that did not face persecution under military rule; it quickly filled the political vacuum left by the Left, and established itself particularly in poor neighborhoods. The squatter neighborhoods in the urban peripheries entered into a phase of rapid Islamization (Tugal

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<sup>35</sup> As a symbolic gesture the junta leader K. Evren made sure to carry a Quran during his addresses to the public.

2007; White 2003). Following the example of the radical Left in the 1970s, Islamists declared “liberated zones” in Istanbul and other cities where they established Islamic institutions and norms to substitute for those of the secular system.

Islamic political networks remained relatively under the radar up until the mid-1990s. But March of 1994 marked a turning point in Turkish political history. In the municipal elections that month, The WP won mayorships of six (out of a total of 15) metropolitan municipalities across Turkey including those of Istanbul and Ankara. The WP increased its popular vote from 9.8% in 1989 to 19.14%. This unprecedented rise sent shockwaves across the secular segments of the population, who perceived this as a significant threat to the seven decades old secular Republican model founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

During the 1994 elections, the WP’s Istanbul candidate Recep Tayyip Erdogan (currently the Prime Minister of Turkey) ran on a platform of anti-corruption, poverty alleviation and redistribution. The campaign was particularly well-organized in squatter neighborhoods in the urban periphery. WP’s campaign volunteers knocked on doors one by one,<sup>36</sup> and reached out to the apparent “losers” of the global city project (Bora 1999:52). Following their victory in the 1994 Istanbul municipal elections, the Islamist party gained control of significant tax revenues. This allowed Islamist municipalities to considerably expand the scope of their ‘charity’ to the poor. Compared to previous Municipal administrations significantly more resources were channeled directly to the urban poor in the form of food, clothes and coal. The Islamist Municipalities were also able to attain an efficient and corruption-free image in the eyes of the public. Indeed, Municipalities controlled by the Islamist party proved to be quite competent compared to their predecessors when it came to tackling the “three Cs” as dubbed in the local media, namely *cop*, *cukur* and *camur*, which translate as garbage, pothole, and mud respectively (Akinci 1999: 76).

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<sup>36</sup> The party volunteers selected for this task were modestly dressed women with headscarves, which made them far more admissible compared to other party campaign volunteers. They were more likely to be welcomed into people’s homes.

The WP Municipalities across Turkey produced their own urban spectacles in conformity with their conceptions of an ideal Islamic community. These included: organizing circumcision festivals, setting up tents for soup kitchens (especially during Ramadan), as well as camps to distribute cheap or second hand school supplies and clothing, making public buses free of charge during Islamic holidays, re-organizing public green spaces to make them ‘family friendly’ (i.e. separating sections where single men are allowed from areas reserved only for families), creating women-only parks, and organizing various commemorative events during the birth week of Mohammed and the anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul (Dogan 2007).

In Istanbul the Metropolitan Municipality re-invented the ‘Ramadan night festivity’ in the name of reviving a long-forgotten Ottoman-Islamic tradition. Each night during the month of Ramadan, the historic public spaces surrounding the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (The Blue Mosque) turn into fair grounds for various entertainments. Istanbulites from far corners of the city are brought to the area in Municipal buses, and the gardens of the Blue Mosque turn into impromptu picnic grounds. Various live music and play performances are put on stage, all funded by the municipality. Through this re-invention of an imagined spectacle, the public space – which is by and large a tourist space for the rest of the year – is ‘reclaimed’ and made available to the ‘general public’: the masses from the urban periphery.<sup>37</sup> In a similar populist gesture, many restaurants owned by the municipality were converted to alcohol-free and thus ‘family friendly’ spaces, with menus at affordable prices. Hence the re-conquering of secular Istanbul by the faithful is accomplished through the conquering of the elite center by the marginalized periphery.

These efforts solidified the WP’s paternalistic image as a pious and honest Muslim party that distributes what comes from Allah to the people. WP’s popularity soared quickly. In

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<sup>37</sup> The Union of Tourism Agencies (TURSAB) complained to the Minister of Culture that the events were harming the vulnerable historic heritage, were causing pollution (from the rubbish left by the crowd) and were an anathema to the European Capital of Culture (Turizmçiler 2006).

the 1995 national elections it came out as the leading party, winning 21% of the popular votes. As it did not have a sufficient majority to form a Cabinet on its own, the WP formed a coalition with the centre right True Path party, with the WP leader Necmettin Erbakan becoming the PM. Thus for the first time in the history of the Republic a politician with an explicitly Islamic outlook and agenda took the PM office, with the majority of the Municipalities also under the control of Islamists.

The WP-led coalition came to an abrupt end by what later came to be dubbed as the ‘postmodern military coup’ of 1997.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently the WP was banned by the Supreme Court. After this major defeat a new political initiative emerged within the ranks of the Islamic party. Led by the party’s young cadres, this faction was markedly pro-business, pro-US, and pro-EU. They found the Justice and Development party (JDP) in 2001 under the leadership of former Istanbul Mayor Erdogan. The JDP leadership repeatedly assured the mainstream media that their party was not a religious party and would not use Islam for political benefit. The JDP advertised itself as “conservative democrat” (Erdogan 2009) comparable to Christian Democrat parties in Europe. In strategically tuning down radical Islamist tones and distancing themselves from the National Outlook tradition, the JDP strived to fashion itself as a center right party that appealed to provincial merchants, small and medium scale business people, religious and liberal intellectuals as well as big businesses and the urban poor. This unique coupling of Islamic conservatism and pro-western neoliberalism proved to be a successful hegemonic project, as the JDP sealed a resounding victory in the November 2002 national elections. Capturing 365 of the 550 seats in the Parliament, the JDP was able to establish a one party cabinet.

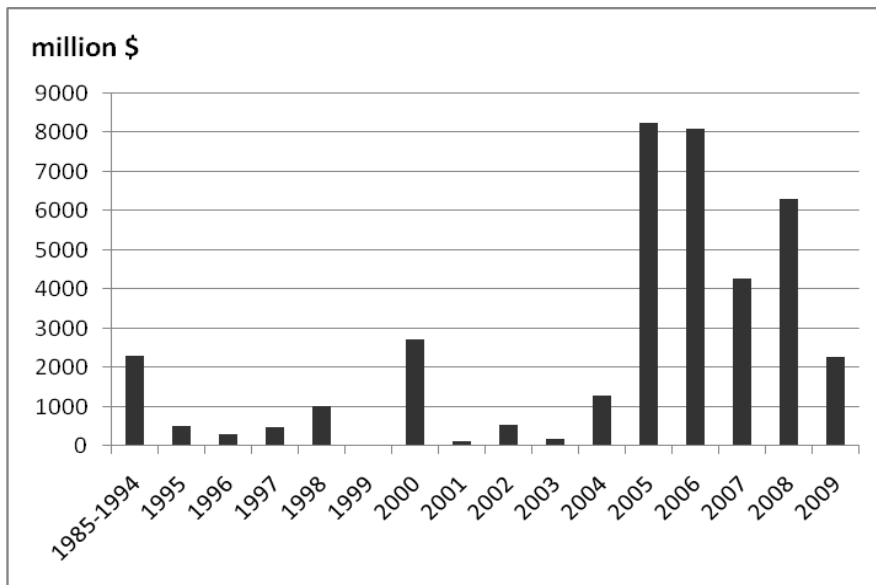
Upon assuming office the JDP strictly adhered to the IMF-supervised crisis management program that had begun in April 2001. This program was initiated by the previous administration, in the wake of one of the most severe economic crises in Turkey’s history (more on the crisis later). The IMF-crafted anti-inflationary, debt-management program

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<sup>38</sup> For a detailed account of the series of events that resulted in the ‘postmodern military coup’ see Tugal 2009.



mandated checks on spending for public services and social reforms. The compliant JDP quickly implemented policies to cut public spending, control wages, significantly roll back agricultural subsidies, and privatize state-owned enterprises, as well as natural resources (Patton, 2006). Though privatization has been a state policy since the early 1980s, more than three times as many public enterprises have been sold over the last five years under the JDP administration than in the previous twenty years (Figure 3.1). Even though the JDP administration was quite successful in keeping inflation under control, real wages kept dwindling and unemployment kept rising (Erdogan'in, 2010).



**Figure 3.1.** Privatization by year. data source: Turkish Privatization Administration, <[www.oib.gov.tr](http://www.oib.gov.tr)>

Under normal circumstances this situation would incite widespread public discontent and uproar, as was the case during previous rounds of structural adjustment. In fact one of the most violent episodes of public upheaval against an IMF-imposed plan took place on April 2001, just a few months before the JDP's electoral victory. This massive popular protest against impoverishment was led by small artisans and shop owners who are generally known to be the most conservative and religious segments of the population and the main electoral base of the JDP. How then was the JDP able to maintain its power

and actually considerably increase its vote in the 2007 national elections, even though it carried out more or less the same IMF prescriptions that the previous administration initiated?

Using a social movement theory framework, Tugal (2009) offers one compelling explanation. As he explains, the evolution of radical Islamic politics in a market-oriented and partially pro-western direction is not unique to Turkey. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, in a context in which public opinion tended to identify Islamic politics across the world with radical challenges against democracy and western civilization, scholars and policy-makers were quick to point out an alternative trend that they labeled ‘moderate Islam’. Even though there have always been traditions of liberal and modernist interpretations of religion in the Muslim world, he argues that the contemporary wave of moderate Islam is not in continuity with any of these traditions. Drawing from the Turkish case he argues that the current moderation of Islam

“is rather the mobilization of broad sectors under the banner of radicalizing Islam, the subsequent defeat of radicalism, and the radicals’ strategic (yet internalized) change of track after defeat. These ex-radicals might be the heirs of the liberal Islam of the nineteenth century, but it is their previous radicalism and past experience with populist mobilization that allows them to naturalize modernized Islam among the masses. Without this defeated mobilization, moderate Islam would neither have its loyal followers nor its ardent leaders today” (Tugal 2009:3).

In understanding this process of “absorption” of the Islamic challenge, he uses the Gramscian concept of “passive revolution.” Passive revolution is different from a classic revolution (e.g. French, Russian) in that, rather than the complete elimination of old dominant classes by an emergent dominant class and their institutions through mass mobilization, it entails a process whereby popular sectors are mobilized with revolutionary discourses, yet end up reinforcing existing patterns of domination. For him “moderate Islam is the culmination of a long process of passive revolution as a result of

which erstwhile radicals and their followers are brought into the fold of neoliberalism, secularism, and western domination” (Tugal 2009:4).

In Tugal’s formulation Islamic politics is portrayed as a force that historically mobilized popular masses against neoliberalism and capitalism. These popular masses were later recruited to become the main political engine of neoliberalization under the leadership of ex-radical Islamists (JDP cadres). He concludes that despite its instability, passive revolution is a viable route to market economy. Through a detailed ethnography of Islamism in a squatter district on the eastern periphery of Istanbul (*Sultanbeyli*), he explains how previously radical Islamists abandoned their uncompromising militancy and transitioned to a “conservative Muslim” position and internalized the ethic of the market and entrepreneurship.

Tugal’s passive revolution thesis is a very useful framework for understanding the transformation that Islamic politics has gone through and the significance of charismatic leadership in first mobilizing discontent poor populations and then demobilizing them through promulgation of a work and market ethic at the molecular level. However it suffers from a major shortcoming. It presumes a dichotomy between Islamism and neoliberalism, and comes to the conclusion that the former is absorbed by the latter. His primary evidence is the fact that the majority of Islamists abandoned their political ideal of an Islamic state based on *shariah*, and instead assumed a non-confrontational attitude, whereby former “radical Islamists” turned into “conservative Muslims”. He does not imply that that this is a decisive liquidation of radical Islamism, as the possibility of a resurgent radicalism still lingers. Yet his sequential model of mobilization → failure → absorption treats both neoliberalism and Islamism as coherent and complete political projects with ultimate end-states (e.g. the neoliberal state, the Islamic state). A diagrammatic approach on the other hand takes both neoliberalism and Islamism as political rationalities with variegated and incomplete *effects*. Just like neoliberalism, political Islam has its own diagram of power, a view of society in which Islamic values and rules are central, and in that sense just as neoliberalism can be understood as a

diagrammatic machine of marketization, Islamism can be understood as a machine of Islamization,<sup>39</sup> that seeks to propagate Islamic values and norms in all aspects of social life. Therefore seen as a political rationality, it is difficult to claim that Islamism has been dissolved or absorbed by neoliberalism. Today Sunni Islam has become an undeniably prominent force in Turkey; Islamic values, habits, customs and rituals have become more visible and widely adopted. Some examples include, proliferation of Islamic TV channels and Islamic newspapers (both in terms of the number of newspapers and their share of readership), emergence of an Islamic fashion industry, decreasing tolerance for alcohol consumption, more references being made to Quran and Islamic sources in daily speech, increasing practice of sex segregation in daily life, such as proliferation of women only hotels, swimming pools and public parks. The Islamization of secular lives, concomitant with the de-radicalization of political Islam, does not figure as part of the central argument in Tugal's analysis.

I argue that conceptualizing the relation between neoliberalism and Islamism in terms of an antagonism that is eventually resolved through a process of absorption (synthesis), leaves little room for discussing the symbiosis between the two.<sup>40</sup> Instead of one being absorbed by the other, I argue that neoliberalism and Islamism are in a relation of 'mutual reinforcement.' Of course the suturing together of two rationalities is tenuous and far from complete. The neoliberal rationality of strict means-ends calculations and satisfaction of individual needs clashes with the Islamist project of producing a moral

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<sup>39</sup> And consonant with the arguments I develop in Chapter 2, I maintain that these diagrams have their own times and punctuations, in other words neither is derived from the other or neither is a direct expression of a single mastertemporality (that is capital, or value).

<sup>40</sup> Such an ontology could arguably be said to be in congruence with dialectics in its conventionally understood Hegelian sense, namely as "the perpetual resolution of binary oppositions" (Gregory 2000). This conventional conception of dialectics has come under resolute attack from poststructuralist geographers due to its totalistic and theological ontology. However one needs to make a careful distinction between this widely accepted version of dialectics and post-Hegelian dialectics as proposed by thinkers such as Althusser and Harvey. In this latter tradition dialectics is not reduced to a seamless and closed totality that progresses towards a telos through dyadic self-contradiction (Sheppard 2008). The narrative I am developing in this chapter draws from this latter tradition and does not presume an eventual reconciliation or synthesis between neoliberalism and Islamism nor does it presume a binary opposition between the two to begin with.

subject and moral order (cf. Brown 2006: 699). It is particularly at such points of tension that the suturing work needs to be vigorously performed. Addressing an American audience in 2002, then-prime minister Abdullah Gül referred the JDP cadres as the “WASPs of Turkey,” with regards to their ethnic Turkish origins, their adherence to orthodox Sunni Islam, and a hardworking, pro-business, entrepreneurial spirit that is comparable to the Protestant work ethic. In another instance, Gul described their communitarian liberal synthesis as a model in which the “ ‘thin’ instrumental rationality of the free market is supplemented and guided by the ‘dense’ moral context of ‘moderate and democratic Muslim society’ ” (cited in Onis and Keyman 2003: 101).<sup>41</sup>

Having established the background for the combined capacity of the Islamic-neoliberal assemblage and the JDP’s boldness and confidence in implementing economic liberalization reforms, in the next section I focus on the JDP’s administrative reform agenda that aimed at the implementation of principles of ‘subsidiarity’ and ‘good governance’.

### **Privatize, Civil-ize<sup>42</sup>, Localize**

Turkey ratified The European Charter of Local Self-Government – one of the earliest legal documents framing the principle of subsidiarity<sup>43</sup> – in 1988 and the Charter came

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<sup>41</sup> In that context Keyman and Onis (2003: 102) go so far as to imply that the JDP, despite its strong Islamist roots, has adapted an outlook comparable to European social-democratic parties of the “third way” type, “repeatedly stressing its commitment to EU-related reforms and the goal of a pluralist and multicultural society.”

<sup>42</sup> Here I use the term for the Turkish word *sivillesme* that translates into “to make civil,” namely to devolve state functions and duties to civil organizations.

<sup>43</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines subsidiarity as “the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.” Subsidiarity was established in EU law by the Treaty of Maastricht, signed on February 7, 1992. This treaty limits the European Union’s activities to only those which cannot be performed as efficiently by member states individually. Article 3b of the treaty states that “In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community.” Source: Treaty on European Union (92/C 191/01).

into force in Turkey in April of 1993, which formalized Turkey's obligation to guarantee the political, administrative and financial independence of local authorities in accordance with the Council's commitment to democracy and the decentralization of power. This entails granting local governments a wide degree of autonomy "with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfillment."<sup>44</sup> In June of 1997, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe<sup>45</sup> adopted a recommendation "on the state of local and regional democracy in Turkey."<sup>46</sup> The recommendation critiques the existing system of local government finance in Turkey for not providing "sufficient means for the autonomous functioning of local and regional government which must therefore rely too much on specific State grants."<sup>47</sup> It then goes on to provide the guidelines for a comprehensive local government reform which it considers to be "an essential asset of democracy." Improvements to be introduced are: increasing the share and autonomy of expenditure of local administration, increasing local authority's control over local taxes and charges, shifting resources from the State budget to local and regional authorities, termination of the principle of the central government's "trusteeship" over local governments, which is based on Turkey's Constitutional principle of "the integral unity of the administration," and transfer of State owned land to municipalities and provincial administrations.<sup>48</sup>

All these recommendations had little to no effect. The occasion for more authoritative 'advice' for restructuring public administration came as part of the IMF-designed stabilization and structural reform plan in March 2001 in the aftermath of the November

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<sup>44</sup> The European Charter of Local Self-Government Strasbourg, 15.X.1985

<sup>45</sup> An institution representing local and regional authorities from the forty-seven member states of the Council of Europe, which Turkey has been a member of since 1950

<sup>46</sup> Recommendation number: 29 (1997)

<sup>47</sup> Recommendation number: 29 (1997) article 15

<sup>48</sup> The Charter makes the very prescient statement that the transfer of state owned land to local authorities would "allow municipalities to ensure a balanced urban development and housing programs in the forthcoming years." Indeed such a transfer in the late 1990s and early 2000s did enable and encourage local municipalities to develop these fresh assets through partnerships with the HDA (see chapter 4).

2000-February 2001 economic crisis. To convey the nature and severity of the crisis I offer a brief description of the series of events that led to it.

In examining the IMF monitored structural adjustment path of the Turkish economy in the post-1980 context, the year 1989 is generally considered to mark a turning point (Boratav 2002; Yeldan 2006). The 1980-1989 period is characterized by export promotion under a regulated foreign exchange system and controls on capital flows, and a severe suppression of wages and organized labor. During this period, commodity trade liberalization was the chief means of integration into the global markets. The post 1989 period is characterized by an attempt to liberalize the economy through a complete deregulation of financial markets. In August of 1989 capital account liberalization was introduced and Turkish Lira was declared convertible. Stock markets (government bonds, equities, bills) were opened up to foreign investors. The Central Bank lost its control over exchange and interest rates. This resulted in a highly unstable growth pattern vulnerable to the inflows and outflows of speculative short-term financial capital. As a consequence throughout the 1990s Turkey went through successive cycles of instability-crisis-unsustained growth. This chronic instability resulted in the increasing predominance of the IMF and the World Bank in the management of the Turkish economy. In 1998, a “Closer Inspection Agreement” was signed with the IMF. In December 1999 a disinflation program was initiated by the Turkish Central Bank and the Undersecretariat of Treasury under the direct supervision of the IMF. This disinflation program took a monetary approach and similar to the currency board regime implemented in Argentina, relied on a nominally pegged exchange rate system (Yeldan 2006). Nonetheless Turkey faced a severe economic crisis in November 2000 as short term financial capital fled the country due to perceived deterioration of macroeconomic conditions. A second full-fledged crisis ensued in February 2001 which proved to be the most severe economic crises in Turkey’s history. Labor markets bore the brunt of the crisis as real wages plunged and unemployment rose.

In the official discourse, both in Turkey and among international policy circles, the crisis was portrayed as having erupted due to the failure of the Turkish bureaucracy to carry forth the structural adjustment policies. Yet evidence shows that the crisis was actually a direct consequence of the IMF's dogmatic model, as it deprived the Turkish economy of its monetary and fiscal tools of austerity (the Central Bank and the Treasury) and left it completely vulnerable to the speculative forces of short-term capital (Boratav 2002; Yeldan 2006). And in an "astoundingly submissive manner" (Boratav 2002: 182), the management of the 2001 crisis was devolved to the IMF, the very institution whose financial deregulation policies had resulted in a series of crises throughout the 1990s and culminated in the catastrophic 2001 crisis. Thus, even though the series of IMF-led programs in the 1990s were obvious failures, the ever deepening crises did not result in a crisis of neoliberalism.<sup>49</sup>

The new IMF plan specified guidelines for the restructuring of the banking system and strong fiscal adjustment in the public sector. The plan was backed by a US\$16.2 billion IMF loan – the largest IMF loan to Turkey up to that time – accompanied by the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) as loan conditionality. The Programmatic Financial and Public Sector Adjustment Loan (PFPSAL) program was part of the strategic plan designed to support the Government's combined package of financial and public sector reforms. The PFPSAL project report<sup>50</sup> claims that the structure and management of the public sector are at the core of Turkey's chronic macroeconomic instability. It attributed structural imbalances to "the combination of an oversized public sector living beyond its means and inadequate management of existing resources." In the

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<sup>49</sup> As Brenner et al (2009:37) aptly put it:

"Regulatory failure and various forms of crisis have been essential elements of neoliberalization processes since their initial appearance on the landscape of global capitalism in the mid-1970s....[I]n each case, regulatory failure appears, paradoxically, to have facilitated an intensification of aggressively marketdisciplinary forms of regulatory reorganization, in some cases redesigned to alleviate or circumvent the dysfunctional consequences of earlier rounds of reform."

<sup>50</sup> Report no: PID10510, June 25, 2001



five-page document the word ‘governance’ appears nine times (without being explained). It is declared to be indispensable to a *transparent* and *effective* government. Yet transparent to whom and effective in what terms also remain unexplained.

The term ‘governance’ was introduced to the Turkish public at large in April 2001, as part of the government’s “Transition to a Robust Economy” program.<sup>51</sup> The second time it was asserted as part of a comprehensive restructuring program was in the wake of the JDP’s 2002 general election victory. On November of 2002 Erdogan announced JDP’s “Emergency Action Plan” that outlined goals to be achieved within the first year of the JDP administration. Among the goals to be attained within the first three months is “enactment of legislation regarding the implementation of principles of ‘total quality management’ (TQM) and governance in public administration” (Acil Eylem Planı 2002). Yet it took more than a year for the government to release the Public Administration Reform (PAR) bill draft, intended to provide the framework and road map for other public policy reforms to follow. The first draft was released on April 2003, yet in the face of criticisms that the bill was violating the Constitution, it was revised numerous times. The bill was finally ratified by the general assembly on July 2004. Yet the President of the Republic, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a staunch Kemalist and nationalist, refused to ratify the bill and immediately returned it to the parliament on the grounds that it was violating the constitutional principle of the primacy of central administration over local administrations. The JDP administration subsequently suspended its attempts to pass a base law that would have ushered in a radical restructuring of public administration and prescribed principles of subsidiarity and governance. Instead it followed a strategy of getting around the Presidential impasse. The JDP administration passed a series of legislations within only a period of two years that effectively instituted some of the crucial components of TQM in public administration and strengthened local

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<sup>51</sup> “Transition to a Robust Economy” was prepared by Minister of Finance, Kemal Dervis and released on April 16, 2001.

administrations by granting them more financial and political autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Thus even though the PAR bill was not ratified, its agenda was asserted to a large extent through roundabout means.

The PAR bill draft is unique in its systematic analysis of the current situation in Turkey and provides a survey of public reforms in other countries and lessons to be learned from them in making the argument for a radical reform. It offers salient insights into the motives for a public administration reform and lays out the diagnoses and correctives as perceived by the JDP administration. For these reasons, it is necessary to undertake an attentive reading of this document in order to adequately contextualize JDP's urban policies.

The draft bill justifies the need for a radical reform of public administration by the failure to match the successful economic liberalization since 1980 with liberalization in public administration (Kamu 2003:21) . It argues that the problems Turkey is facing today are largely a consequence of this mismatch. Thus what is intended with this law is “to implement principles of good governance in central and local governments”(ibid:21). The bill cites four main factors that have radically transformed conceptions and structures of public management worldwide: “1. changes in economic theory, 2. changes in administration theory, 3. competitive structure of the private sector and improvements thereof, and 4. the development of civil society with demands of social critique and change” (ibid:21). The need for a redefinition of the role of the public sector is further justified by external and independent factors such as globalization, the “transition to the information age” and the “blurring of international boundaries” (ibid:22). According to the lawmakers, the proper response to these developments is to follow general policy trends in other countries – such as the US, the UK, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand – that have been at the forefront of administrative reform in the global age. These are summed up in three words: privatization, civil-ization and localization.

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<sup>52</sup> These are the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities, the Law on Municipalities, the Law on the Special Provincial Administration, the Law on Associations/Unions of Municipalities, and the Law on Regional Development Agencies

The document praises economic liberalization policies post-1980 that changed the import substitution development strategies that the country had relied on for decades. It contends that the goal of opening up to the global economy through a strategy that relied on competitiveness and free market principles was successfully implemented up until the 1990s. It goes on to say that, however, the country was unable to keep up with shifting global dynamics during the 1990s and failed to carry forth the success of the “first wave” structural adjustment policies, which were intended to “remove impediments” for free markets to flourish (ibid:23). These first wave reforms correspond to what Peck and Tickell (2002) call the “roll back” moment of neoliberalism. A brief look at the consequences of roll-back neoliberalism, and the way it is interpreted in the report reveals a bizarre logic that can only be explained in terms of an unshakable faith in liberalization. The report cites various statistics for the period following the first wave. It notes that Turkey’s share of global FDI slumped from 1.8% in the early 1990s to 0.3% in 1999 (Kamu 2003:23-25). Between 1994 and 2001 the economy receded three times at rates unmatched in the whole history of the Republic.<sup>53</sup> During the same time period, unemployment rose from 7.8% to 10.6%. In 1991 the budget deficit was at 5.3% (as percentage of the GDP), by 2002 it had risen to 14.6%. Between 1991 and the 2003 GDP per capita dropped from \$2681 to \$2607 (-0.3%), while during the same period the OECD average rose from \$11141 to \$22100.

Unwittingly, the document provides strong evidence that the roll-back structural adjustment policies of 1990s actually took a dramatic toll on the nation’s economic well-being and stability. Yet through an act of faith, and an ideological commitment to neoliberalism, this bleak situation is seen as a result of *insufficient* liberalization rather than its direct consequence. It laments that the first wave of “liberalization” was not followed by a more challenging yet imperative second wave of “restructuring.” Again

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<sup>53</sup> During the 1954-1993 period Turkey’s economy recessed three times. Rates for 1954, 1979 and 1980 are %-3, %-0.5, and %-2.8 respectively. In 1994 and 1999, the economy recessed %6.1. In 2001 it recessed at a record high of % 9.4.

following Peck and Tickell (2002) this second wave could be called “roll-out” neoliberalism, which redefines the role of the state and the criteria with which its efficiency and success are measured. The document argues that “Turkey was opened to the risks of globalization without being able to reap its benefits” (Kamu 2003:23). The austere economic outlook of the country is seen as evidence of the opportunities that have been wasted during the last decade, as a result of failing to follow roll-back neoliberal policies with a market-centric overhaul of public administration.

The PAT bill draft declares the existing administrative structure to be deficient in four respects: 1. strategic deficit (i.e. deficit in strategic thinking), 2. budget deficit, 3. performance deficit, and 4. confidence deficit (ibid:24). It argues that a lack of strategic vision, growing beyond its means, inefficient resource management, and its centralization, coupled with corruption – perceived and real – have “shaken people’s confidence in their administration...[I]n a competitive world, an administration that is not based on the consent of its citizens makes people discontented, risks losing its high quality labor force to other countries, and benefiting from foreign capital investments, and in doing so exacerbates the country’s relative position in international competition” (ibid:22). This is one of the most insightful moments in the entire document: Consent of citizens is required not because it is indispensable to a democratic society, but because it is essential for a competitive economy. Since this market-centric approach is at the heart of the diagnosis, the treatment is also marked by the imperatives of the ideal of free markets. The document declares that the new approach proposed in the legislation “respects the market, and uses market tools whenever possible,” focuses on priority areas consistent with a “strategic management” approach and relies on “performance and quality” (ibid:23).

Many tenets of PAR have been enacted through a series of new legislations and amendments to existing laws regarding local administrations. These new laws grant the municipalities the right to privatize public assets, participate in public–private partnerships, form private firms or real estate partnerships with private firms, and take up

loans from national and international financial institutions. As of 2006 the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) had a total of 516 million USD of foreign debt (16 % of the IMM's 2006 budget) to a number of international financial institutions.<sup>54</sup> Since 1999, the IMM has been working with various credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's, Fitch Rating and Moody's in an effort to "procure low-cost resources from international financial markets, to measure the financial performance of the municipality, and to ensure its transparency and solidify its credibility both at the national and international level" (IMM 2007:5). As a whole, these legislations severely limit the tutelage of the central state (*idari vesayet*) system that has defined the public administration of the Republic since its inception and aim to gradually replace it with the principle of the precedence of local administrations over the central government. Thus, local administrations are summoned to behave like semi-autonomous market actors competing with each other and with private state actors for resources and investment.

In his study of state spatial restructuring in post-1970s Western Europe, Neil Brenner (2004) examines this shift in terms of a fundamental rescaling of national-state space. While the Keynesian policies aimed at territorial equalization across a national territory, the "glocalization strategies" of the 1980s and 1990s promoted formation of "Glocalizing Competition State Regimes" (GCSRs) (Brenner 2004). Under these new regimes, economic regulation is concentrated on the sub-national levels and major socio-economic assets are concentrated in the most competitive urban regions and industrial districts. The rise of metropolitan cores as strategic nodal-points within the European financial networks provides empirical support to his argument that Keynesian policies – which promoted the diffusion of growth potentials across western Europe – were taken over by the new entrepreneurial-competitive model in which "winning cities and regions" form a dense network dominated by high value added activities (Brenner 2004: 180-181).

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<sup>54</sup> including Standard Chartered Bank, AKA-Deutsche Bank, Korea Exim Bank, Bahrain off-Shore Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, German Development Bank (KfW), European Investment bank, Amro Bank, BNP Paribas Bank, WestLB Bank, HSBC Bank and Calyon Bank (IMM 2007:5).

The European GCSR model was directly imported to Turkey as part of priorities and intermediate objectives laid out in the EU Accession Partnership document issued in 2001. Among numerous criteria that Turkey is asked to fulfill for full membership in the EU, one is to “set up operational structures at regional level [sic] and reinforce existing administrative structures dealing with regional development.”<sup>55</sup> In the revised and updated version of the accession partnership document,<sup>56</sup> where conditionalities for EU assistance are laid out, “the establishment of regional development plans at NUTS2<sup>57</sup> level” is listed as one of the short term economic criteria. In response, in 2006 the Government passed the law on Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)<sup>58</sup>, which established RDAs in 26 NUTS2 regions. As the law frames it, the RDAs are mainly envisioned as investment promotion agencies with the stated intention of encouraging “public-private co-operation.” Other duties and authorities of RDAs are listed as: building each region’s capacity in consonance within the framework of the regional plan and program, conducting and/or supporting research on the ways to increase regional competitiveness, advertising the region on both national and international platforms, co-operating with institutions that conduct research on management, production, advertisement, marketing, technology, finance, organization and labor force education, supporting small and medium size businesses and entrepreneurs, announcing and advertising activities mandated by bilateral, or multilateral international programs, and supporting the development of projects within the framework of these programs.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Council Decision No 2001/235/EC of 8 March 2001 on the Principles, Priorities, Intermediate Objectives and Conditions Contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey, (2001/235/EC) OJ 24.3.2001 L 8511 3.

<sup>56</sup> Council Decision No 2003/398/EC of 19 May 2003 on the Principles, Priorities, Intermediate Objectives and Conditions Contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey (2003/398/EC) OJ 12.6.2003 L 145.

<sup>57</sup> The nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (in French, *nomenclature d'unités territoriales statistiques*) is a geocode standard for referencing the administrative divisions of countries for statistical purposes, developed by the European Union. In Turkey, NUTS 2 level principally corresponds to groups of provinces. All 81 provinces are grouped into 26 NUTS 2 clusters. Istanbul is a NUTS 2 region by itself.

<sup>58</sup> Law no 54459: Law regarding the establishment coordination and duties of Development Agencies. January 25, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> To supplement and collaborate with 26 RDAs, a nationwide agency called “Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey (ISPAT)” was established in June 21, 2006. On the agency’s

The Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener (2007) summed up the thrust of the new development paradigm underpinning RDAs as follows: “We are replacing state-led development with market-led development... Agencies will compete with each other for development and come up with new projects to attract investment.” Correspondingly, the envisioned neoliberal subject is embodied in the ideal figure of the pro-active, entrepreneur citizen, replacing the idle, passive and dependent citizen. As Sener (2007) explains:

“Everyone will work to accomplish something. The prevalent mentality that ‘eventually the state will come and save me’ will be replaced by a determination to achieve things by one’s own means... *The most important single mission of the RDAs are to make our people dynamic.* No one shall regard RDAs as an opportunity for creating employment for the unemployed; agencies will not create employment according to a particular person’s qualifications, it will seek individuals who are appropriate for the job” (emphasis mine).

The RDAs are a substantial step towards supplementing roll-back policies that have radically eroded the welfare state. On the ideological front, the citizens are told to hold themselves responsible for their lack of self-sufficiency, their idleness, and their juvenile dependence on ‘the Father State.’ Thus development agencies are not only organizational platforms for partnerships between state and private sector actors, but are embodiments of neoliberal technologies of governance that instill an ethics of self-rule and self-dependence (Ong 2006). RDAs are not accountable to and are not concerned with serving the needs of the citizens unless the citizen in question is an entrepreneur or potential investor. Article 15 of the law states that “services provided to investors at

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web page potential foreign investors are tried to be seduced by “a liberal and reformist investment climate with highly competitive investment conditions.” A major selling point for Turkey is “competitive labor costs.” Potential investors are assured of “committed workers, flexible working hours, and a low absenteeism rate.” <<http://www.invest.gov.tr>> (last accessed August 29, 2010)

investment support centers are completely free of charge.” While the citizens are viciously made aware of their ‘burden’ on state resources, and are charged for even mandatory documents and certificates (e.g. issuance of a mandatory national ID<sup>60</sup>) regardless of their income, business owners are invited to take advantage of free services made available to them in most part by tax money. The RDAs are exempt from all types of taxes and fees, and are not subject to laws governing administration and investigation of public finance, and laws and ordinances regulating public tenders (Guler 2004).

The RDA law projects the establishment of ‘Development Councils’ made up of a maximum of 100 members in each region. These will be composed of representatives from governmental institutions, private sector and civil society associations, and universities. In regions composed of a single city – such as Istanbul – the administrative board of the RDA is made up of the governor of the province, the metropolitan Mayor, heads of the metropolitan assembly, the chamber of industry, the chamber of commerce and three representatives from “civil society organizations,” who are to be elected by the Council. In its first meeting on December 2009, the Istanbul Development council elected the head of the Participation Banks Association of Turkey (TKBB)<sup>61</sup> the president of the Development Council. The three “civil society organization” representatives elected for the administrative board were from: the Turkish Exporters Union (TIM), the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) and the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON). Both MUSIAD<sup>62</sup> and TUSKON –

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<sup>60</sup> In Turkey, the absence of a national ID card has serious consequences since it is the primary legal document that renders a citizen visible to the State. A citizen is legally non-existent without her ID card. For example a child cannot register for elementary school without an ID. For the poor, the cost of a single ID card (circa 5 USD) is a significant burden.

<sup>61</sup> TKBB was founded in 2005 as a union of banks that adhere to Islamic practices in their operations and utilize interest-free banking instruments.

<sup>62</sup> MUSIAD has historically endorsed the notion of an Islamic Union like the European Union. As the founding president of MUSIAD argued “Everyone unites with his own brother. The EU [European Union] united Christians and this is their natural right. Our highest goal is to unite with our brothers. Any effort to prevent this will remain unsuccessful”(1997: 45). Consonant with the end of setting up a ‘Global Business Network among Muslim Nations’ MUSIAD has organized numerous international business fairs, conferences and business trips oriented particularly towards Islamic countries. Since 2002, the MUSIAD has organized 12 business trips to foreign



founded in 1990 and 2005 respectively – are Islamic business associations that have recently emerged to challenge the mainstream ‘secular’ business association TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association). They both promote a society faithful to Islamic values and endorse efforts at establishing business ties with Muslim countries. They have gained a significant edge over TUSIAD with their constantly increasing membership. In short the “civil society” pillar of Istanbul DA is completely made up of actors and institutions that are in close alignment with the political agenda of the ruling JDP. Thus it is marked by a double exclusion: trade unions and community associations are excluded; and public resources are deployed to serve the interest of big businesses, predominantly those who subscribe to some version of political Islam and who do not pose a threat to the hegemony of the JDP. <sup>63</sup>

### **Fictitious ‘civil society’**

As I have demonstrated, what is taken as civil society in the new governance model is nothing more than elite members of the citizenry, most of whom represent the interest of the private sector. Yet, instead of simply concluding that neoliberal governance excludes ‘real’ civil society at large, I would like to draw on Chatterjee’s (2004) distinction between citizens and populations, in order to understand the particular ways in which the

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countries. Only two of them are non-Islamic: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, China, Holland. MUSIAD has also advanced within the international Islamic business community by repeatedly hosting the International Business Forum (IBF). This is “a voluntary based non-governmental platform for gathering Muslim business people from all over the globe, where they try to stimulate trade, investment and co-operation.” It was initiated by Pakistan Business Forum in September 1995 in Lahore, Pakistan, in which 600 businessmen from 23 Islamic countries participated. The second meeting was organized by MUSIAD in 1996 and the head office of the IBF was moved from Pakistan to Istanbul-Turkey, and since then MUSIAD has hosted the majority of the annual IBF meetings. The main objective of the forum is stated as “to coin and utilize the Islamic ethical virtues among the conventional business life.” The latest (12<sup>th</sup>) IBF Congress was held in Istanbul on 23-26 October 2008 with the attendance of 24 guest ministers, over 60 bureaucrats from 17 countries, 2200 overseas businessmen from 61 countries in addition to thousands of MUSIAD members. For information about IBF visit: <http://www.musiadfair.com/ibf.php>

<sup>63</sup> Journalist Funda Ozkan (2008) captured the thinning dominance of Istanbul-based, secular, mainstream big businesses and the increasing influence of Islamic business organizations by declaring that “the Istanbul Development Agency has been seized by the ‘Other.’”

JDP's policies enlist the popular will of marginalized groups through a moral economy of the gift.

Chatterjee challenges the conventional understanding of the term 'civil society' by pointing out how it fails to accurately represent the politics of the poor and the marginalized. He re-invents the Gramscian term 'political society' to capture the domain of the popular politics of the poor. Drawing from the Foucauldian tradition of governmentality studies he points out the "antimony between the lofty political imaginary of popular sovereignty and the mundane administrative reality of governmentality" (ibid: 36). These two correspond to different ways of securing legitimacy, one through the participation of citizens in state affairs, and the other through the claim of ensuring the well-being of the populations. While the former rests on the ideal of deliberative openness and participation, the latter operates with an instrumental notion of costs and benefits (ibid:34). Chatterjee argues that these two regimes of power co-exist and correspond to distinct domains of politics. In his formulation, the citizens inhabit the domain of popular sovereignty, and appear as the modern elite members of the civil society who participate in the sovereignty of the state. Populations on the other hand lie outside mechanisms of participatory citizenship and are targets and objects of welfare policies. They account for the large segment of the political society, which includes "[r]efugees, landless people, day laborers, homestead, below the poverty line" (ibid:59). I would like to focus on a particularly effective technology of governance that the JDP municipalities have resorted to in including poor marginalized members of the political society within its governance scheme *without* generalizing their needs and demands to those of the entire political society as a whole (as they are not considered *citizens* proper).

In what follows I use illustrations from the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in a squatter neighborhood in Istanbul: the *Basibuyuk* neighborhood, which is located in the district of *Maltepe* on the Asian part of Istanbul. It is one of the several squatter neighborhoods targeted for urban renewal in Istanbul. The local municipality's (Maltepe Municipality) renewal project entails the demolition of the whole neighborhood and relocation of residents in high rise apartment towers that are to be built in the same area.

The renewal scheme was faced with significant resistance from the neighborhood. Even though the municipality went on to complete the first phase of the project, partly thanks to grassroots resistance the project has been suspended as of November 2008.

Up until the late 1960s Basibuyuk was a self-contained and relatively isolated village located far outside the urban area. Starting in the early 1970s the area received an increasing influx of rural migrants from central and eastern Anatolia. The migrants came in search of work and affordable shelter. Today the neighborhood is home to fourteen thousand people. Over the last twenty years, Basibuyuk –like many other gecekondu neighborhoods in Istanbul and across Turkey – has emerged as a major stronghold of the Islamic movement. Strikingly, even in the face of imminent eviction threats from the JDP’s policies, the residents of Basibuyuk delivered at a 56% majority for the JDP in the 2007 general elections.<sup>64</sup>

How to explain this puzzle? As I have discussed earlier, the still widespread perception of the JDP as the party of the marginalized and the oppressed, its corrupt-free image and the popular reactions to the extra-democratic means with which it was repeatedly shut down have a lot to do with this. In the immediate aftermath of the first police assault in the neighborhood I bluntly asked a middle aged male resident why the JDP was able to enjoy such widespread support in the neighborhood in spite of what its policies have done to them. The resident answered, “well if they [the Military and the Constitutional Court] constantly attempt to overrule our popular will, that is what happens.”<sup>65</sup> Here he was specifically referring to the Military’s and the Constitutional Court’s efforts to block the JDP member Abdullah Gul assuming the presidential office even though he was elected by the Parliament in May of 2007. Many residents echoed similar ideas about how they felt that the JDP had to be defended against attempts to liquidate it via extra-democratic means. Thus although the Islamic party has embraced and dramatically furthered the same structural adjustment policies that impoverished masses since the early 1980s, the

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<sup>64</sup> The national rate was 48 %. Source: <<http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/SandikSonuc.html>>

<sup>65</sup> Interview, March 14, 2008, Basibuyuk

poor and conservative masses still keep vivid memories of the Islamic party as the party of the oppressed majority and the ‘popular will’.

I would like to focus on one other major interrelated factor. The JDP administrations across Turkey oversee a very intricate and adaptive system of in-kind aid to poor people. Every year an average of 100 thousand families receive aid in cash or in kind from the IMM. In 2007, 625 thousand of shopping checks were distributed by the IMM (IMM, 2007). This excludes gifts given by the local municipalities and the central government. Additionally food items, fuel for heating (mostly coal) and consumer durables are distributed to poor people. When accused by the opponents for bribing poor voters and making them dependent on alms (*sadaka*<sup>66</sup>), PM Erdogan (2009b) responded: “I don’t understand these criticisms. Sadaka is part of our culture. There is nothing wrong with that.”

There seems to be an obvious incongruity here. While on the one hand the JDP figures citizens as self-dependent, rational, entrepreneurial actors who can provide for their own needs and service their ambitions, and preaches to the unemployed and the poor on the dignity of self-care, on the other hand it distributes them *sadaka*, which by definition is a redistributive instrument and anathema to neoliberal governmentality. Yet I maintain that due to the particular ways in which this form of redistribution is administered, it functions as both an exception and a supplement to neoliberalism. Cash and in-kind aid are distributed on an irregular basis, and as a gesture of piety. As such, they figure as gifts rather than part of a systematic state policy to alleviate poverty. This JDP practice dates back to the early 1990s when the distribution of gifts prior to elections was a staple

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<sup>66</sup> *Sadaka* is an Arabic word meaning ‘voluntary alms’ in distinction to ‘obligatory alms’ *zakat*. *Sadaka* falls under category of ‘charitable gift’ in Islamic jurisdiction and is much less strictly defined than *zakat*; it could encompass any act of giving out of sympathy, love or generosity. Where one does not have the means to give anything tangible, even a kindly or considerate word or a good deed could count as *sadaka*. Modern Islamic scholarship traces the word to its Jewish usage as *Tzedakah*, which in its original Hebrew usage had meanings such as righteousness and justice (Weir 2002). In Quran God is said to accept the alms of His servants (IX, 104). There are many *hadiths* that talk about the importance of giving *sadaka* to avoid harm and trouble in this life and punishment in afterlife.

political device that the WP resorted in recruiting marginalized populations. This was indispensable to the performance of an imagined Islamic-Ottoman tradition of caring for the poor.

Should we then simply interpret the JDP Municipalities' gifts to poor citizens as a pious gesture intended to fulfill certain religious duties? This religious aspect is definitely an indispensable part of the JDP's grassroots pragmatism, yet one also needs to take into consideration the moral economy of reciprocity and gift exchange. Here I am referring to Marcel Mauss's argument that "there is no free gift;" a gift that is not returned is a contradiction. For Mauss (1990) the whole society could be understood in terms of a map of relations or reciprocity and obligations to give between its members.

Just prior to the Municipal elections of March 2009, I was in the Maltepe Municipality for an interview that I had scheduled with an official. As I was waiting for my appointment, a woman in her early 40s, wearing a long dark blue trench coat, and a yellow headscarf entered the room. She approached a clerk, and with a very soft voice asked if she could receive some assistance in cash. The clerk responded that they were not allowed to distribute any aid at this point because the Supreme Court banned all municipal aid two weeks prior to the elections (even though I was able to get a hold of a shopping coupon handed to a resident by the Maltepe Municipality just a week prior to the elections, Figure 3.2). The woman responded with an indistinct voice. When she was rejected a second time, she yelled in resentment "OK, then I will not vote for the JDP this time!" and left.<sup>67</sup>

Reciprocity is implicit in the gift even if it is not explicitly requested. The gift establishes a relation of exchange. Many residents I interviewed in Basibuyuk were bitter towards those who accepted aid from the municipality. As Hatice explains:

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<sup>67</sup> Fieldnotes, February 17, 2009, Basibuyuk



**Figure 3.2.** “Gift check” (really a shopping coupon) of 25 YTL (circa 16 USD) issued by the Maltepe Municipality prior to the Municipal elections of March 2009. The coupon includes the name of the grocery store where one can ‘cash’ the check.

“Recently Mustafa Zengin [mayoral candidate from the major opposition party] came to our neighborhood, a woman found her way, and asked him ‘Are you going to give coal?’ Now, as long as we have this mentality we cannot win anything. We have a major issue here, we are about to lose our homes, but these people are still negotiating about bread and coal! Today Fikri Kose [the mayor in office] brags on every occasion saying ‘I am feeding Basibuyuk’. Now only a minority receives these aids in kind, but the whole neighborhood is included in the narrative. We all become indebted.”<sup>68</sup>

Macit, a 54 year old male resident with strong anti-JDP sentiments echoes similar ideas in frustration:

“After September 12, [the 1980 military coup] we became a parasitic people...[the municipality] gives three courses of meal to 1340 people. It distributes fresh bread every day. In the winter it gives away 1-1.5 tons of coal to lots of families. Every now and then it distributes checks of 200 TL [Approximately 150 USD]<sup>69</sup>. Around 1000 people received a green card<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Interview, March 3, 2009, Basibuyuk

<sup>69</sup> Approximately 150 USD

<sup>70</sup> The colloquial name for the state issued card that entitles the holder with health care and medication completely free of charge.

This is the people of Basibuyuk! Whoever gives them bread they go and vote for them....When they accept these gifts they do not ask themselves ‘who pays for these? Whose money pays for these?’ They don’t say, ‘well instead of these gifts, why don’t you give me a job so that I can work and earn my own living?’<sup>71</sup>

The alms approach to poverty solves multiple problems at once for the JDP. First, since it is not a right-based approach, it creates a relation of gift exchange and thus consolidates the JDP’s political authority and its electoral base. Second, it avoids the ‘danger’ of welfare-dependent subjects, as the aid is neither distributed on a regular basis nor as a social right. Therefore even though it is masterminded, administered and overseen by state actors, it is actually a ‘non-policy’, an exception to neoliberalism (cf. Ong 2006). As such, the alms format avoids the trap of social welfare policies that “encourage people to remain idle”.<sup>72</sup>

The mechanisms through which aid recipients are chosen are far from transparent. The applicant needs to acquire a ‘certification of poverty’ from the local governor’s office, then Municipal authorities go and check the situation on the ground and question the applicant’s neighbors to confirm her destitute situation. A resident told me that the only reason she didn’t apply even though she needed assistance was because she didn’t wear the Islamic headscarf and thus she thought she didn’t have a chance. Many other residents confirmed that wearing a headscarf is a tacit requirement. Another resident explained to me that a neighborhood located right across the highway didn’t get any aid simply because the residents were predominantly *Alevi* – followers of a heterodox Islamic sect in Turkey – and would not vote for the JDP.

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with Macit (pseudonym): May 7, 2008, Basibuyuk

<sup>72</sup> In the words of Hasan Gemici, the former Minister in charge of the Solidarity Fund (cited in Bugra and Keyder 2003).

## Conclusion

Over the last eight years the JDP has been able to forge a strong hegemonic bloc, through a curious combination of neoliberalism and Islamism. This coupling has emerged and been sustained thanks to wide popular support that the JDP has enjoyed, which makes it a unique case in the Middle East.<sup>73</sup> The JDP has established networks of economic and political inter-dependence (or tapped into existing networks ) by appeasing both the big businesses – especially those which are affiliated with Islamic business networks – through lucrative contracts, and the urban poor through gracious gestures ingrained in traditional Islamic community values and morality. To understand this pragmatic combination of pro-business policies and Islamic alms this chapter proposed a diagrammatic approach to neoliberalism. Here neoliberalism is understood as an (immanent) diagram of power that seeks to re-order society around the primacy of the ‘market’: in short, as a machine of marketization. This approach does away with the idea of a state that intervenes in or disengages from markets. As Foucault maintains, under neoliberalism, the calculative logic of the market becomes the organizing and regulative principle underlying the state itself (Foucault 2010:131). It replaces the classical liberal notion of a limited and external state with the market form that “serves as the organizational principle for [both] the state and society” (Lemke 2001: 200). I argued that political Islam similarly has its own diagram of power, a view of society in which Islamic values and rules are central and in which subjects are interpellated religiously. In short I take Islamism as a machine of Islamization. Understood as a diagram, neoliberalism is a cause that is only realized in its effects. The relevant question then is no more about identifying the logic of neoliberalism, but *how* it is connected to other diagrams such as political Islam, and how through these connections they both emerge more potent and resilient and understanding the particular ways in which their combined capacity assembles policies, policy-makers, businessmen and the urban poor.

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<sup>73</sup> See Tugal 2009: 235-263 for a comparison between Iran, Turkey, and Egypt in terms of the ‘success’ of the neoliberal-Islamic assemblage in terms of the popular support it was able to garner.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Dispossession**

This chapter focuses on what I call ‘dispossession through urban renewal.’ With the term dispossession, I primarily refer to the ways in which urban renewal is deployed as a tool to deprive poor residents of their homes. Yet following David Harvey (2007), I also maintain that dispossession is fundamentally about the loss of ‘rights.’ The residents residing in informal settlements have developed a strong sense of their ‘right to their homes.’ This usually manifests itself as a claim to their property as owners. My goal is to show that there is also a deeper aspect of dispossession that needs to be understood and addressed; namely the disintegration of a community’s networks, its unique social ecology. For this purpose I discuss the significance of a grassroots politics that centers around the defense of the ‘community’s right to the city’ in addition to the individual rights to housing and property ownership.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the debates on entrepreneurial approaches to urban redevelopment. I then discuss the shift in the global city vision and the specificity of the current urban transformation agenda in Istanbul and introduce the main actors and institutions of urban transformation. In discussing how residents respond to urban transformation, the second half of the chapter introduces and elaborates my two case study sites in Istanbul.

#### **Urban renewal as spatial fix**

As noted by scholars of urban neoliberalism, with the increasing predominance of finance and the proliferation of complex forms of money capital and their increasing speculative capacity, the economic geography of the world has become highly volatile and uncertain (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005; Leitner and Sheppard 1998; Swyngedouw et al. 2002). Under Fordism, Keynesian economic policies were able to reduce this uncertainty through regulatory regimes. However, with the dismantlement of this

regulatory framework, and roll-out of pro-market policies, nation-states' capacities to regulate money, trade, and investment flows are significantly "hollowed out" (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 365).

Under these unpredictable circumstances, 'competitiveness' – which has long been accepted as a meaningful concept at the level of the firm – is now considered indispensable to the economic prospects of a city. Cities, like firms, are seen as being in competition with each other for securing or defending their share in the global market (Begg 1999; D'Arcy and Keogh 1999). In this highly competitive regime, urban entrepreneurialism has been widely promoted as the only viable solution to urban policy-makers. Urban entrepreneurialism denotes an array of governance mechanisms and policies that aim at nurturing local and regional economic growth by creating a business environment favorable to capital investment and accumulation (Hall and Hubbard 1998; Harvey 1989; Leitner and Sheppard 1998). The OECD 2006 review of competitive cities defines an entrepreneurial city as a "proactive city" that embraces a strategic approach to economic growth, "exploiting market forces to the maximum through such measures as encouragement of private investment, urban marketing, deregulation and new institutional mechanisms (public private partnerships, development agencies)" (OECD 2006: 348-349).

The design and execution of urban projects under an entrepreneurial regime of governance are oriented towards development of particular places through often spectacular projects – the primary aim of which is the upgrading of the image of a locality – as opposed to comprehensive planning that aim at improving conditions of living or working within a larger juridical context (Swyngdeouw et al. 2002). Thus, much of urban entrepreneurialism is about image production, branding and place marketing. In seeking and enhancing their comparative advantages and capturing a competitive edge over other localities, cities are urged to re-fashion their images and market their cultural assets (Harvey 1989). Within this vision of 'cultural regeneration,' a city's unique identities are highlighted through revitalization projects and mega-events.

Entrepreneurial policies have been widely accepted as panacea for post-industrial urban decline in North American and Western European cities. However, scholars reporting on the disempowering consequences of zero-sum competition and trickle-down economic policies, have shown that entrepreneurial policies have had limited success in generating economic growth and employment; and have in many instances exacerbated social divisions and inequalities (MacLeod 2002; Ward 2003). In addition, the “spill-over effects” of flagship projects have been rarely reported (Hall and Hubbard 1998; Leitner and Sheppard 1998).

All these testify to an essential fact about urban entrepreneurialism. As it fundamentally hinges on public-private partnerships, privatization of publicly owned assets, and deregulated spatial development, it is highly insulated from public accountability and therefore is effectively anti-democratic. The traditional channels of democratic participation are supplanted by new institutional relays at a variety of scales, which enable elite business interests to have direct influence over major local development decisions (Brenner and Theodore 2002: 369, Swyngedouw et al. 2002).

In his discussion of the generalization of gentrification as a competitive urban strategy in the global market, Neil Smith states that “turn-of-the century neoliberalism hints at a threat of convergence between urban experiences in the larger cities of what used be called First and Third Worlds” (Smith 2002: 441). Despite a major setback in the current conditions of extended credit crisis, throughout the world, there has been a dramatic influx of surplus capital into large-scale speculative projects and real estate development (as most conspicuously illustrated by the case of Dubai). It is undeniable that speculative place construction has been a vital strategy of surplus capital absorption in the Global North and the Global South alike. Yet a major development that distinguishes experiences in the megacities of the Global South is the scale at which urban redevelopment is deployed as a means of primitive accumulation, namely the incorporation of uncommodified or incompletely commodified spaces into the formal

circuits of capital accumulation. Cities like Mumbai, Shanghai, and Seoul have been at the forefront of urban renewals, which have resulted in dispossession and displacement of populations at a massive scale.<sup>74</sup>

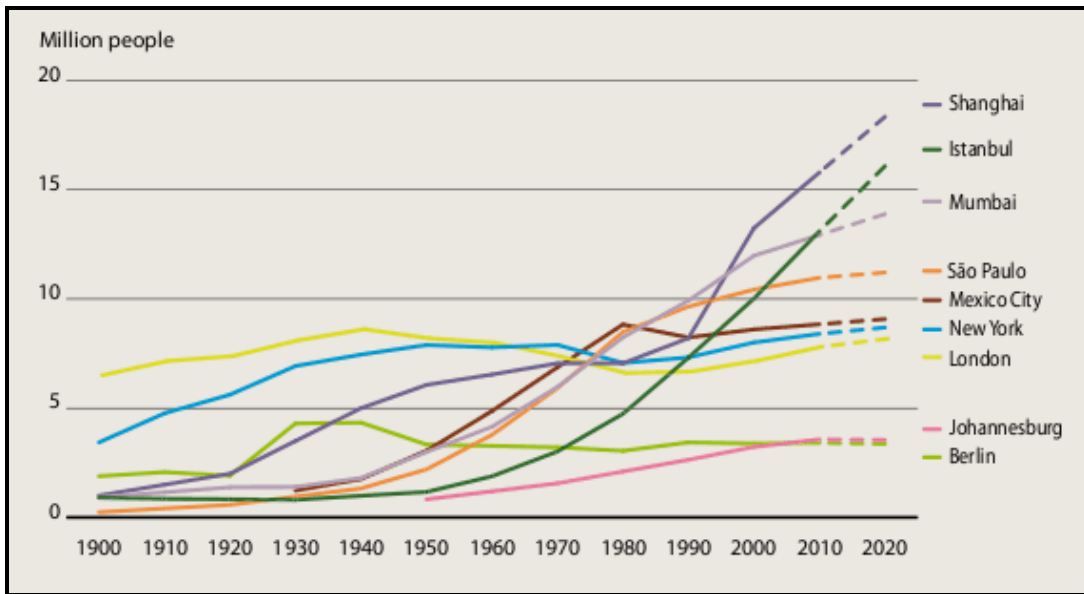
### **Globalizing Istanbul**

The ‘global city’ vision and the ambitions of radically transforming the face of Istanbul date from the early 1980s. Especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc in the early 1990s, there was increasing pressure to seize the opportunity to raise Istanbul to its ‘natural’ status as a regional power and to assert its key position at the fringe of Europe. Yet, it is only in the last eight years – with the Islamic Justice and Development party’s (JDP) unprecedented rise to power – that this drive has coalesced into an ambitious and determined campaign of “urban transformation.” The urban transformation agenda differs from a previous era of global city aspirations, in its emphasis on the wholesale redevelopment of the informal housing stock of Istanbul. I will now proceed to explain how this shift has occurred, namely how squatter settlements became the centerpiece of the new global city vision.

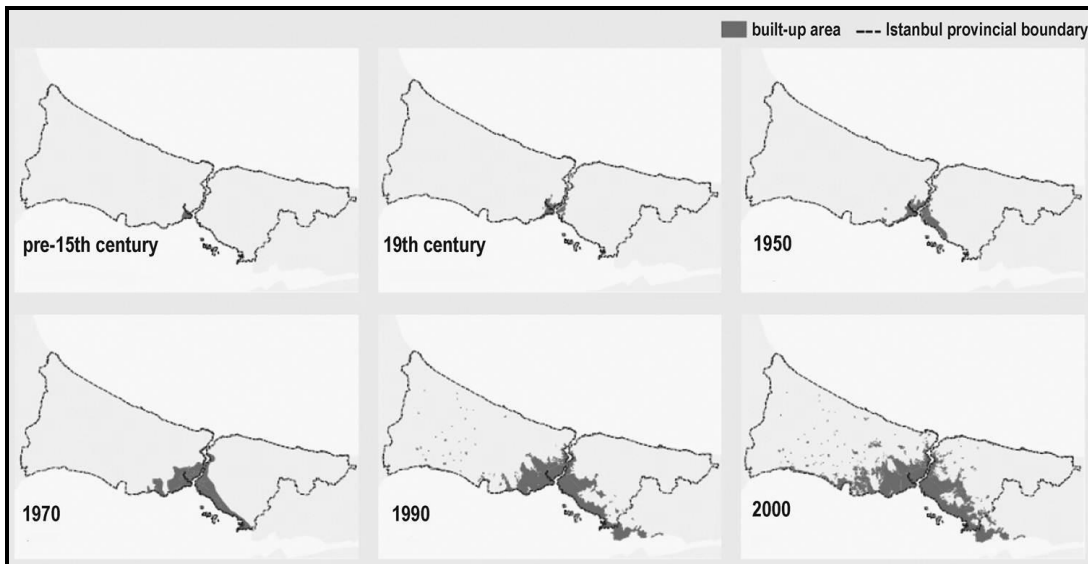
I begin with some facts: Istanbul’s population has increased more than one thousand per cent between 1950 and 2009; from 1.16 million in 1950 to 12.8 million in 2009 (OECD 2008:35, TUIK 2009) (Figure 4.1). This rapid growth has been in part accommodated by the constant expansion of the city’s urban footprint (Figure 4.2). Istanbul’s urban growth is checked by the Marmara Sea in the south and the water catchment and nature reserve areas in the north. These geomorphological and ecological checks on sprawl, combined with incessant population growth, have resulted in a highly dense urban fabric and increasing pressure on low-density areas within the city.

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<sup>74</sup> For a critical overview of residential redevelopment in Seoul and how it resulted in the displacement of the urban poor and the dissolution of local networks see Ha 2004; for critical overviews of urban renewal policies in Chinese cities see Zhang and Fang 2004 and He and Wu 2009.



**Figure 4.1.** Population growth in Istanbul in comparison to select cities across the world, 1900-2020. Source: <http://www.urban-age.net/cities/istanbul/data/2009/>



**Figure 4.2.** Urban growth in Istanbul, 1400s-2000  
Source: <http://www.urban-age.net/cities/istanbul/data/2009/>

Rural to urban migration has been the major force driving this steady and rapid population growth. Between the early 1950s and the late 1980s, millions of migrants from rural areas of central and eastern Turkey flocked to Istanbul in search of

employment in the thriving manufacturing industries. The migrants constructed unauthorized modest dwellings on publicly and privately owned lands located on what was then the urban periphery. These unauthorized and unregulated houses have come to be known as *gecekondu* – a term which literally means ‘built overnight’ in Turkish. Burgeoning gecekondu neighborhoods has always been a major thorn in the side of Istanbul’s urban planners. However, this form of ‘self-help housing’ has not always been targeted by the authorities. Previously there was a long period of ‘conveniently looking the other way’. Gecekondu were tolerated primarily because their presence absolved the state from an obligation to provide affordable housing for the millions of migrants whose labor power was indispensable to the state-led industrialization effort of a previous era. As such, pre-1990 city policies ignored—and tacitly encouraged—gecekondu settlements.

Today it is quite uncommon to find a *gecekondu* settlement in Istanbul in its original sense of the term. Under conditions of sustained growth in the real estate markets, most of what used to be low density, modestly built settlements resembling villages in appearance has rapidly turned into high-density urban neighborhoods made up of five to six storey apartment buildings. The history of this rapid physical transformation, parallels the history of the commodification of gecekondu. As Boratav (1994: 28) argues, accumulation through appropriation of rent has been the primary means of upwards social mobility for rural to urban migrants. This has been more important than returns from petty commodity production.

Isik and Pinarcioglu (2001:161-170) divides the process of land appropriation into three main stages: occupation, parcellation, and selling of land. During the first wave of rural-urban migration in the 1950s and the early 1960s, the occupants were also the constructors and users of gecekondu. Beginning from the late 1960s, however one begins to observe three distinct phases increasingly administered by distinct actors. The original occupier lays claim to a big tract of land and immediately sells it to another person. This second agent subdivides the land and sells the lots to future residents.

Starting from the early 1980s, the chain became even longer, as the buyers of the land are no more the future residents but rather entrepreneurs who develop the land to sell or rent to prospective residents. Thus a gradual commodification of gecekondus has gone hand in hand with a gradual extension of its commodity chain. Gecekondus owners who sought to capture as much rent as possible would either make additions to their gecekondus to sell it or to rent it out, or in some cases, demolish their existing dwelling to construct a multi storey apartment building, which came to be known as ‘apartkondus’ – a portmanteau that refers to an illegally constructed apartment building. Below I narrate a typical story<sup>75</sup>, which was told by Mehmet,<sup>76</sup> a middle aged man from *Basibuyuk* (a squatter neighborhood that I discuss in more detail later):

In the late 1970s Mehmet’s parents were tenants in an apartment building in Kadikoy (a district on the Asian side of Istanbul). One day a friend of his father who is friends with the nightman in charge of the forest area – that would one day become part of the Basibuyuk neighborhood – told him about the emerging squatter settlement. Enticed by the prospects of homeownership, the family decided to move there. When they went to Basibuyuk they saw that the land had already been appropriated and subdivided. They paid a certain amount to the person who claimed to be the owner of the lot they wanted to buy. They also bribed the nightman and the local administrator. And thus they became the “owner” of the lot, and built a single storey dwelling by their own means. In the coming years, they added an additional residential unit in the yard to accommodate his brother who got married. Later on after his father passed away, with the help of his brother he demolished the existing single storey gecekondus and built in its place, a three storey apartment building. Now his brother and he each live in one floor and are sharing the rent accruing from the third floor.

In Istanbul by the late 1990s, those who had acquired their land by squatting were rendered a minority in gecekondus settlements and tenancy in these areas had caught up

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<sup>75</sup> Fieldnotes, March 02, 2009, Basibuyuk

<sup>76</sup> pseudonym

with the rate in formal settlements (Senyapili 1996). How to conceptualize the distribution of rent within informal land markets? In their analysis of the commodification of *gecekondu*s and the conflict-ridden existence of the urban poor, Isik and Pinarcioglu (2001) coin the term “rotating poverty.” Through this they attempt to capture the ways in which certain segments within the urban poor are able to accumulate wealth at the expense of the others, thanks to their seniority as older occupants of state-owned land. Squatters able to participate in the earlier stages of this cycle of land occupation have the lion share of land rents, with the latecomers joining the network as renters. The network is assembled on the basis of the common interest of the settlement as a whole to survive under extra-legal circumstances. Therefore it is hierarchical and collaborative at the same time (Isik and Pinarcioglu 2001: 79-80). The creation of wealth under this system is dependent on new members joining, thus sustained growth is essential for rotating poverty.

It is argued that development of *gecekondu*s and rotating poverty has had some positive outcomes under conditions of weakening formal and redistributive state mechanisms, and the deepening socio-economic inequities of the post-1980 period (Baslevant and Dayioglu 2005; Isik and Pinarcioglu 2001:82-83). According to this narrative, it significantly alleviated the adverse effects of this otherwise potentially traumatic socio-economic transition. In other words, by overlooking and in some cases providing incentives for squatting through frequent squatter amnesties, the state ended up providing a source of compensation for the loss in formal employment. The obvious downside of the process has been the entrenchment of exploitative relations within informal land markets and increasingly fierce struggles to capture land rent, and thus the propagation of a rentier ethics amongst the urban poor. This, I will later argue, has come at the expense of a strong sense of neighborhood identity and community formation.



### **From spontaneous urbanization to a marketized regime of urban redevelopment**

The tacit contract between state authorities and gecekondu dwellers proved difficult to maintain in the post-2002 context of roll-out neoliberalization.<sup>77</sup> As major business groups and state authorities came to envision Istanbul as a global center for finance, tourism, culture and fashion, manufacturing industries had been gradually relocated from the city center to outlying and peripheral urban areas since the late 1980s. This shift radically disrupted the long-unspoken symbiosis between the manufacturing industries and migrant laborers residing in the nearby gecekondu neighborhoods (Keyder 2005).

With manufacturing relocated, gecekondu had no role in the imagined global future of the city. This shift was evident in both the state's approach to and the mainstream media's portrayal of gecekondu. In the new discourse, gecekondu dwellers came to be portrayed as shameless occupiers of the most valuable tracts of land in Istanbul (Bozkulak 2004). Under a new Criminal Code passed in 2004, for the first time gecekondu construction was deemed a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in prison.<sup>78</sup>

The dispensability of gecekondu and their residents has been further compounded by the exigencies of the real estate sector. Recently, Istanbul has emerged as one of the most lucrative real estate markets in the world, with property values tripling between 2001 and 2008 (Konut 2008). With the constant growth of the metropolitan area, once peripheral lands on which gecekondu dwellers settled have become prime locations, too valuable to be left to squatters alone.

It is in the context of the confluence of these two major factors – the changing employment structure of the city, rendering the gecekondu populations superfluous; and the increasing pressure on low density urban land – that the authorities supplemented the 'high-profile prestige landmark project' approach with an all-embracing urban transfor-

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>78</sup> Law 5237, article 184

mation agenda. The overarching economic motive has been to release the rent gap in Istanbul's informal housing stock. Here I am using the term "rent gap" in the sense that geographer Neil Smith (1996) defines it, namely as the discrepancy between actual rent of a piece of land, and the rent that could be captured under a higher and better economic use. As claimed by Istanbul Valuation & Consulting Inc., a major real estate valuation company, a comprehensive urban transformation program could increase real estate values in the city by at least three times (Senol 2007).

### **Urban renewal**

In policy circles there have been two broad approaches to tackling the 'slum problem'. The older approach, slum clearance, has been adopted in developing and developed countries alike since the middle of the twentieth century. This entails the complete eradication of an existing slum, often supplemented by a program of resettlement into public housing. Slum clearance policies and the modernist planning principles that underpin them have been widely critiqued for their spatial determinism and their disregard for both a community's needs and priorities and the inherent complexity of urban life (Jacobs 1961; Turner 1967; 1968).

A second approach that emerged in the late 1970s was a partial response to these critiques. John Turner's seminal work on housing development in squatter settlements was particularly influential in this shift (Mukhija 2003: 71). In his critique of the modernist, expert-administered "instant development" procedures Turner (1967) talks about the merits of "progressive development" as demonstrated by squatter communities in Latin America. Progressive development is characterized by the gradual development of housing through different stages of building as the resources of settlers permit. As opposed to official housing policies that tend to impose a certain development template by requiring minimum modern standards, progressive development allows occupant builders to make decisions for improvements in accordance with their needs and available resources. This allows the settlement to develop in harmony with the rhythm of social

and economic change, instead of being straitjacketed by a grand scheme developed in a planning office.

Taking clue from these insights, starting from the late 1970s, the World Bank began promoting a strategy of tenure legalization, namely the provision of legal title to urban informal and illegal settlements. One of the World Bank's most influential papers, titled *Housing: Enabling the Markets to Work* (World Bank, 1993), stressed the importance of land tenure regularization in informal settlements as part of a large-scale urban property rights development strategy. These ideas were well received within policy networks and are still influential within policy circles. In the mid-1990s the UN-HABITAT published a series of papers advocating tenure legalization, and most recently it launched the "Global Campaign for Secure Tenure."<sup>79</sup> Similar ideas were recited with refreshed pungency by Hernando de Soto's best seller, *The Mystery of Capital*. In this book de Soto (2000) makes the appealing argument that the poor living in informal settlements and eking out a living through informal channels are actually rich. Yet, their affluence is invisible simply because they are incapable of using their wealth to generate capital. The obvious solution as he argues is the formalization of informal property rights and in so doing incorporating undocumented wealth into the circuits of the formal economy. The basic assumption behind the tenure legalization strategy is that with security of tenure residents would be motivated to upgrade their houses without fear of demolition and displacement. Moreover having procured legal certification of their houses, it was expected that the beneficiaries would use their property as collateral for obtaining loans, and thus effectively use their property titles as assets in the formal market. Another expectation was that tenure legalization would provide an additional real estate tax revenue base for the state. And finally economic incorporation through the provision of formal property rights was expected to enable political integration of the urban poor as owner-citizens, thereby

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<sup>79</sup> <<http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=24>> (last accessed August 30, 2010)

pacifying otherwise politically ‘dangerous’ demands and potential threats to public order.<sup>80</sup>

The tenure legalization strategy has been widely criticized for failing to see the actually existing complexity of tenure and property rights and residents’ own perceptions of tenure security,<sup>81</sup> and for exacerbating spatial inequities. In conveying a sense of the range of de jure and de facto tenure systems that co-exist within a city, Payne (2000) offers the idea of a “tenure continuum” with respect to tenure security before law. At the bottom of the ladder is the category of the pavement dweller and at the top is the category of the free-holder. In between are numerous intermediary categories such as squatter tenant, squatter ‘owner,’ legal owner with unauthorized construction, tenant with contract, etc. All these intermediary categories more or less correspond to varying levels of purchasing power and income security. In a context in which a prime piece of land in Istanbul commands millions of dollars in the formal market, *gecekondu*s inhabit an intermediary terrain, remaining a viable option for poor households, recent immigrants and university students for whom rental and property markets in the formal sector is not an alternative.

“[T]he lack of formal titles is a price which the urban poor pay to gain access to residential plots which they could otherwise not afford...[S]ince a significant proportion of rental accommodation for the poorest groups (e.g. tenants) is often provided not by rich slumlords, but by small landlords who are themselves poor

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<sup>80</sup> Indeed self-help housing policies have been a major tool for de-politicization of otherwise potentially militant unrest. Turning a blind eye to land invasions, gradual provision of services and infrastructure as a means of fostering patron-client relationships and political support have all been major tools through which governments have contained urban unrest. Thus contrary to Manuel Castells’ early predictions the “crisis of collective consumption” (Castells 1984) in the cities of Latin America has rarely resulted in full-fledged urban-wide social movements (Gilbert and Varley 1991:10-11).

<sup>81</sup> Duration of occupation is quite significant in self-perception of tenure security. A resident who has occupied a piece of land for two decades would arguably have more self-perceived tenure security on account of their decades old *de facto* owner status than one who has just arrived in the neighborhood. A similar argument could be made with regards to an old versus relatively new *gecekondu* neighborhood.

and possibly living in unauthorized settlements, providing such landlords with titles will exacerbate evictions of the most vulnerable social groups” (Payne, 2000).

The ‘tenure legalization’ policy advocated by the World Bank does not factor in such complexities of and interdependencies within informal sub-markets; and emphasizing and encouraging freehold and owner occupancy as the ultimate desirable goal for any tenure reform, it potentially exacerbates inequities and further marginalizes squatter tenants. This has turned former squatters into landlords, and in some instances slumlords.

Apart from these two poles – clearance on the one hand and legalization/upgrading on the other – a much less acknowledged approach has been emerging since the late 1990s: cross-subsidized squatter redevelopment. An early example of this approach is the slum redevelopment program implemented in Mumbai in the late 1990s (Mukhija, 2003). The strategy deployed in Mumbai involved the demolition of an existing squatter settlement (*Markendeya*), rebuilding on the same site, and at a higher density, new apartment buildings exceeding the number of existing squatter houses. The additional units would be sold in the market to cross-subsidize the new units allocated for the slum dwellers. In effect the slum dwellers became development partners by investing their existing squatter housing as capital assets. As Mukhija explains, this scheme was a particularly viable path both for the state government and slum dwellers, given the extremely high land prices in Mumbai and the already existing demand for new housing in the area. These factors made large cross subsidies available for the slum dwellers of Markendeya.

The “Revenue Sharing Model” developed by the Turkish Housing Development Administration (HDA) could be seen as an innovative variation on the cross-subsidized redevelopment model. The HDA is a governmental institution, founded in 1984, with the mission of alleviating the country’s housing shortage. Most of the Housing Development Administration (HDA)’s projects are high-rise mass housing developments. In terms of the built environment, HDA projects are characterized by high-density, high-rise housing

units, arrayed with almost no regard for the creation of “positive” outdoor spaces.<sup>82</sup> The HDA’s activities remained limited until the JDP took office in 2002. Enjoying an overwhelming majority in the Turkish Parliament, the JDP passed a series of laws that dramatically extended the HDA’s authority. As a consequence, the HDA has been transformed into a joint public-private venture – a real estate giant and the primary producer of market-rate housing in Turkey. The JDP administration is so proud and confident in the efficacy of this housing scheme that it has been promoting the model as a successful remedy to ‘the slum problem’ and offering counseling to state officials in international platforms. The model has been received with particular eagerness in Syria, Egypt and Algeria (TOKI’ye 2009; 2010). In this model the HDA opens vacant state-owned lands in prime locations to private developers for high end housing development, and claims a share of the final revenues from the sale of housing units. The developer (or the contractor) is selected through an open tender on the basis of “revenue ratio” offered. The bidder offering the highest share of the revenue that is allotted to the HDA is awarded the contract. This share is typically around 25 to 30 per cent.<sup>83</sup>

The cornerstone of these projects is the state-owned lands that are given under the authority of the HDA. The HDA values the land less than its actual market price. This works as a hidden subsidy to the developer, which is able to sell the units for less than its competitors in the market. The HDA itself admits that this creates unfair competition<sup>84</sup>, but claims that this is a necessary side-effect of the government’s affordable housing campaign. As a consequence of this unfair competition, The HDA has increased its share of the housing market from a mere 1.1 % in 2003 to 18.6% in 2007 (Toruneri 2008). As a result of the HDA’s unprecedented command within the construction sector – which

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<sup>82</sup> Here I am following Alexander et al’s(1977:518) definition. Outdoor space is “negative” when it is devoid of any outer boundary and simply “leftover” space between buildings. Positive outdoor space on the other hand has a definite shape and is clearly enclosed by buildings. A traditional courtyard is a good example of a positive outdoor space. Alexander et al (1977:521) argue that positive outdoor spaces provide a sense of shelter, as opposed to negative outdoor spaces which provide minimal sense of belonging and comfort.

<sup>83</sup> Just to give an example, from the Halkalı Revenue Sharing Project, the HDA claimed 29.5 per cent of the 270 million USD revenue realized by the developer.

<sup>84</sup> <<http://www.toki.gov.tr/english/3.asp>>

has been historically one of the major economic motors of the country, with 70 thousand licensed contractors – it has become a profitable privilege to become an ‘HDA contractor.’ Reports published by the HDA indicate that a tiny fraction of registered contractors have been repeatedly awarded the big chunk of these lucrative awards. Most of the firms that have been contracted are new firms founded during the JDP administration, a majority of which were proven to have links with the JDP and/or are members of Islamic business associations.<sup>85</sup>

The HDA uses revenues generated through the ‘Revenue Sharing Model’ to subsidize housing projects for low and middle-income groups as well as gecekondu redevelopment projects. Similar to the slum redevelopment program in Mumbai, these projects are ownership based programs, aimed at helping the urban poor – who have no access to credit or mortgage-like instruments – become homeowners through offering them affordable payment schemes. The residents are asked to deposit monthly installments to a bank contracted by the Housing Development Administration (HDA) for 15-20 years. If they fail to make their payments on time, ownership of their house is transferred back to the HDA. The HDA has recently taken steps to securitize these debt obligations and sell them in secondary markets. The president of the HDA claims that the formation of secondary mortgage markets is essential for meeting the colossal costs of the HAD (Ozsumer 2008).

The other major actor in urban transformation is the local administration. Between 2004 and 2007, Turkey’s JDP-led Parliament passed a series of laws redefining the judicial status of metropolitan and district municipalities, granting them rights to execute “urban transformation projects” in collaboration with the HDA. These new legislations (particularly the Renewal Law 5366), with amendments to existing laws, authorize municipalities to implement renewal projects in deteriorated historic neighborhoods, to

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<sup>85</sup> For a detailed list and analysis of the profiles of the ‘HDA contractors’ and their affiliations see Gürek 2008, also see ‘HDA Assessment Report’ released by the Turkish Chamber of Civil Engineers, accessible at <<http://e-imo.imo.org.tr/Portal/Web/IMOMenu.aspx?menuid=131>>

designate urban transformation zones, expropriate private property, execute redevelopment projects, form private firms or participate in public–private partnerships (Donusum, 2006).

The Istanbul metropolitan area consists of 39 sub-provincial municipalities (boroughs), responsible for the preparation and implementation of neighborhood-level plans in accordance with the master plan prepared by the IMM. As the central government and the IMM asserted their urban transformation ‘vision’ as an imperative, district municipalities across Istanbul found themselves in fierce competition to redevelop their housing stock. The mandate is to incorporate unplanned, undervalued spaces into the circuits of the formal economy.

Thus, while the district municipalities negotiate terms of compensation with residents, and ensure the rapid clearance of renewal areas, the HDA coordinates the execution of the new development. The residents are offered entitlements in the new project, on the condition that they pay the (often significant) difference between the current value of their house and the one they are entitled in the new project. Such entitlements are typically restricted to homeowners. Therefore tenants face straightforward eviction, while the homeowners are asked to commit to paying schemes that extend over a period of 15-20 years to attain ownership of their new houses. Since the majority of these residents are extremely poor and do not have regular incomes – most of them being either underemployed or unemployed – the amount of monthly payments and of compensation they receive for the demolition of their existing dwelling are vital to their prospects.

### **Case study: Basibuyuk**

Basibuyuk was established on the foothills of one of the major hills in the Asian side of Istanbul. Up until the late 1960s it was a self-contained and relatively isolated village located far outside the urban area. As the Maltepe district emerged to become one of the most important industrial zones in the early 1970s, the neighborhood received an increasing influx of rural migrants from central and eastern Anatolia. The availability of



vacant state-owned land and its proximity to thriving industries made Basibuyuk a suitable location for squatting. With the incessant stream of immigration, the neighborhood continually grew from its original center in the base of the hill towards its peak, slowly swallowing up the state owned forestland surrounding it. Today, the neighborhood encompasses an area of 94 hectares (232 acres) and is home to 14 thousand people. Up until the late 1980s a single narrow winding dirt road connected the neighborhood to the district's business and commercial center.

Today the neighborhood has long lost its peripheral invisibility. It is surrounded by luxurious and high end housing developments, with a university campus to its east, all constructed within the last couple of years as a consequence of the Maltepe district municipality's decision to open certain portions of vacant forest lands to development. As the former Mayor<sup>86</sup> explains, ideas for these "vacant lands" include an amusement park, a zoo, meeting places and "anything that you can imagine" for the sake of turning Maltepe into a major center of entertainment for the entire city (Kose, 2008). Another factor that makes this poor hilltop neighborhood stand out is the magnificent views of the Marmara Sea that it commands. Surrounded by one of Istanbul's now extremely rare forest areas, it is also envied for its fresh air.

Despite having received public services and gradual improvements in infrastructure over the last four decades,<sup>87</sup> Basibuyuk as a whole remains an unauthorized settlement; none of the residents hold legal title deeds to their houses. There are still significant variations in real and perceived tenure security among residents. As a result of a series of tenure legalization laws enacted in the mid-1980s, about half of the residents acquired 'title assignation documents' (TADs), providing them with an official certification of their

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<sup>86</sup> The JDP mayor Fikri Kose lost its seat to the main opposition party's candidate, Mustafa Zengin from Republican People's Party (RPP) in the March 2009 Municipal elections.

<sup>87</sup> The informal bus line that connected the neighborhood to the city center was introduced in 1966. The neighborhood received electricity in 1968, and phone line in 1992. Finally in 2005 it received natural gas. The first elementary school was established in 1989, and a second one in 1994 (Başbüyük 2008b).

rightful claim to their property.<sup>88</sup> As a result there is a visible division between residents who hold TADs and those who are illegal occupants, a division that the municipality carefully exploited in driving a wedge between these two groups and paralyzing the resistance in the neighborhood, as I discuss in detail below.

Basibuyuk was declared an urban renewal area on February 2006 by a joint protocol prepared by the IMM, the Maltepe Municipality and the HDA. On May 2008, the document regulating the urban renewal in Basibuyuk was approved by the local assembly. In this meeting, Mayor Fikri Kose explained how they decided to implement urban renewal in Basibuyuk as follows:

“There have been plans for urban renewal in many illegal settlements across Maltepe. We decided that an urban renewal project would be beneficial for Basibuyuk residents. Since we know that this is the only way they can attain legal title deeds and since the law gives the authority to do so, we embarked on the renewal project. We conducted a survey in the neighborhood to determine the building density. Among 1142 buildings we determined that 53 per cent were single storey, and 22 per cent were double storey buildings. In other words, around 75 per cent of these buildings are low density, therefore are conducive to redevelopment.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> During the early 1980s a total of five legislations (no: 2805, 2981, 3086, 3290, 3366) that regulated the path to legalization for the gecekondu were passed. Among these, law 2981 passed in 1984 was the most significant, as it effectively issued an ‘amnesty’ for all gecekondu that were built on state-owned land before 1984. Gecekondu ‘owners’ were issued ‘title assignment documents’ (*tapu tahsis belgesi*) (TADs). TAD is a document that recognizes the occupant’s right to use the space, and entitles the document holder to legal ownership after ‘a cadastral plan’ and a subsequent ‘improvement plan’ (*imar islah plani*) are prepared and approved by the local Municipality. The ‘title assignment document’ (TAD hereafter) certifies a transitional situation. At present there are still many neighborhoods – just like Basibuyuk – where one finds residents with TADs who still have not achieved a fully-legal status. This has left them in a limbo as the document grants the occupants the right to stay and use the space, yet it does not confer full ownership rights. However, even though TAD does not have an exchange value from a legal point of view (it is non-tradable), within informal property markets it still captures more value than a gecekondu without TAD, yet less than a completely legal property.

<sup>89</sup> Fieldnotes, May 9, 2008, Maltepe Municipal Assembly meeting

Throughout his speech the Mayor did not mention any motive for urban renewal in Basibuyuk other than the ‘low density’ factor. Nor did he mention any attempt to reach out to the residents and include them in the project development process. However he did not fail to mention that the project was in full conformity with the demands and needs of Basibuyuk residents and was in their best interest. As he uttered these words, from where I stood I could see faces of the representatives of the neighborhood association slowly turning red from exasperation. Just as they were denied a say during the preparation of the renewal plan, in this meeting too, due to formalities of the local assembly, they were denied a chance even to refute the Mayor’s claims. Looking at Basibuyuk through the lens of urban renewal the municipality only saw low density housing and wasted spaces, which needed to be incorporated into the formal real estate market.

The Basibuyuk renewal project adopts a gradual re-development approach. The first phase involves construction by the HDA of six apartment towers in the uninhabited area in the middle of the neighborhood. According to the plan, the residents in the immediate surrounding are to be relocated to these units so as to make space for the next phase of redevelopment. During my fieldwork, the district municipality repeatedly refused to disclose any information as to the long term schedule of the redevelopment plan. The residents meanwhile are convinced that the municipality aims to squeeze the whole neighborhood into high-rise high-density housing, so that the vacated land can be sold for high-end development.

The majority of residents, however, don’t want to be relocated from their low-rise houses, with gardens and plenty of space for their children to play, into apartment towers that they call “coffins.” Moreover, again a majority of them simply cannot afford to pay the monthly dues required for attaining ownership of the new apartments.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The declared value of an apartment in the HDA’s project is 55 thousand TL (1 TL= 0.65 USD as of August 2010). A valuation company commissioned by the Municipality assigns a market value to each existing home in the neighborhood. But this value is determined only on the basis of

Residents indicate that when the first pair of HDA caterpillars and construction trucks entered the neighborhood to prepare the vacant land in the middle of the neighborhood for construction, no municipal authority, or HDA representative had bothered to come to the neighborhood to inform the residents about the renewal project, much less to seek their opinion and participation. Even the leading figures of the neighborhood association, who have connections within the municipality, learnt about the urban renewal protocol signed between the Maltepe Municipality, the IMM, and the HDA by pure chance, thanks to a neighborhood resident employed at the municipality who happened to see the protocol document by accident. Just like many other neighborhood associations across Istanbul, the first substantive step that Basibuyuk neighborhood association took was to embark on a legal battle against the project. A young lawyer volunteered to offer his *pro bono* service to represent the association in court.

### **From resistance to negotiation**

On February 27, 2008 the HDA contractor's trucks, escorted by hundreds of police approached the neighborhood in their initial attempt to establish a base in the worksite. Under the leadership of the neighborhood association, residents responded by throwing stones and establishing makeshift barricades to block the trucks' passage. The police responded by extreme use of tear gas and sheer brutality. Dozens of residents were arrested during this first day, and the leadership of the association was charged with inciting violence against security forces. On March 19, 2008 a second major attempt was made by the contractor, and the residents succumbed to significantly raised levels of police brutality particularly against the youth and women. Nine residents were seriously injured and eight were arrested. That day some construction equipment was able to be

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the construction materials that went into the building of the squatter house. The land value is not included in the calculation simply because residents are seen as illegal occupants. For a typical single storey squatter housing this value is determined to be around 15 thousand TL. Then this home-owner is asked to pay the difference, in the amount of 40 thousand TL, in installments over a period of fifteen years. In short a typical home-owner resident is asked to commit to pay around 220 TL a month for fifteen years, which is way beyond the means of the majority of the residents, most of whom are either unemployed or underemployed.

transported, and the worksite was finally established. Since then police presence has become permanent in the neighborhood in the name of guarding the worksite against possible attacks from residents.

In the face of this unexpectedly stern opposition, the municipality agreed to talk with the representatives from the neighborhood association assuring them that “nothing would be imposed upon them by force,” and implied that association’s demands would be taken on board and amendments would be made to the renewal program (Basibuyuk 2008a:37). Having received this assurance, the association held a series of meetings where it was decided that resistance would be suspended to allow the construction to begin. The head of the association later revealed to me that this decision was inevitable, as the neighborhood did not have any more stamina left for further resistance. In the end, weeks of resistance and clashing with the police were the price that the neighborhood paid to have a say in the project. This was a crucial turning point, as some residents continued to regret the decision to put an end to active resistance. Some went so far as to accuse the association of betrayal, and of carrying out clandestine negotiations with the municipality disregarding the common will of the neighborhood. Indeed while initially the association was completely opposed to the renewal plan, later on its primary demand was demoted to not having any debt obligations to attain the ownership of their homes in the renewal project. This visible shift drew a wedge between two main opposing groups within the neighborhood.

First, there are those who oppose the project altogether, with no compromise. This group is mostly made up of residents who hold TADs. They demand their legal title deeds from the municipality, a promise made to them by the Mayor preceding the 2004 municipal elections. In their view, owning legal title to the land would enable the full rights of ownership. They could then sell the land to a contractor in return for a 50 percent<sup>91</sup> share of the multi-story apartment building that is to be constructed on the location of their

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<sup>91</sup> The landowner’s share is a function of the land price. In Istanbul some locations command up to 70 per cent share for the landowner.

existing *gecekondu*. The apartments in these units could then be rented out or sold.<sup>92</sup> As Nurcan, a 50 year old housewife, explains:

“I wouldn’t want [my house] to remain as a *gecekondu* either. Let it be demolished! But first they should give us legal titles and then we will demolish it ourselves! We can re-build the neighborhood ourselves. They [the municipality and the HDA] want to demolish and fill their pockets. Why would I let them? I want to rebuild it myself and I want to profit myself. I mean the residents should be allowed to benefit, not the state....They should let us do it, instead of taking it upon themselves. Three of us will come together and build a six storey apartment building.”<sup>93</sup>

The second group of residents are mostly those without TADs and thus with minimal tenure security. For them this project will be a shortcut to complete legality and therefore is an opportunity that shouldn’t be missed. A homeowner-resident in favor of the municipality’s project explained his view as follows:

“[pointing towards his house] ‘Now look at this house, what is it worth? Nothing! Who would buy this house? But with the municipality’s project we will own houses with real market values. Now the municipality is asking us to pay 30 thousand, but after the project is completed these houses will be worth at least three times as much as that, it will be better.’”<sup>94</sup>

Another resident who is in favor of the project echoes similar ideas:

“When they re-make this neighborhood, it will be more regular, and planned; people from other places will come to buy houses, business and jobs will come here and the neighborhood will be a better place, and our houses would be worth more.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Tellingly, this arrangement bears striking resemblance to the HDA’s “revenue sharing model.” The only difference is that instead of a share of the revenue the owner of the land receives a share of the property.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Nurcan (pseudonym): March 01, 2009, Basibuyuk

<sup>94</sup> Interview, February 17, 2009, Basibuyuk

<sup>95</sup> Interview, July 07, 2008, Basibuyuk

Over the course of resistance, the neighborhood association has slowly moved from the former position to the latter. The primary reason for this shift has been the conviction that urban renewal is inevitable, the best they could do is to bargain with the state to achieve the most favorable conditions of resettlement. The head of the association Adem Kaya explains:

“Now they [the district municipality] tell us that ‘soon the urban transformation law will be passed. If that happens then the HDA will have the authority to implement urban renewal with off-site resettlement. Then you might be sent off to a remote location. While we are still in office you should take advantage of this project.’ We have to take that risk into consideration too” (Basibuyuk 2008a:41).

This ambivalence leaves the association in a rather awkward position. On the one hand it mobilizes the residents against the renewal project, on the other hand it doesn't want to take it off the table completely. This created all sorts of tensions and misunderstandings between the association and the community. During a meeting at the association's headquarters I witnessed one instance of confrontation between a resident and the lawyer of the neighborhood association. The lawyer was trying to explain to the middle-aged woman, who held a TAD and was critical of the association's negotiations with the municipality, why her expectation of acquiring legal title deed for her house was vain:

“They [the municipality] cannot go back to old habits anymore. Do you know why? There is a new function ascribed to Istanbul, they [the IMM] are preparing plans for it. At this point the era of tenure legalization is over for Turkey. It is over! From now on no administration is in a position to implement improvement plans (*imar islah plani*). We need to be realistic. The JDP government might resign. Bush might admit to all his wrongdoings and pull out from Iraq immediately. These are all possible, but are they realistic expectations? Still let's assume for a moment that the municipality is willing to implement an improvement plan, how about those who don't have TADs? Do you understand the extremely dire situation that they will end up in? I am not the lawyer of

individual residents, I have to think about the best interest of the whole neighborhood.”<sup>96</sup>

The association has been in a state of active negotiation with the municipality since April 2008 regarding the terms of the compensation they are to receive, and conditions of resettlement. The municipality offered slightly higher prices of compensation but refused the association’s demand for resettlement without debt. Instead it offered longer terms of payment for the poorest segment of residents. No decisive agreement has been reached. but construction has carried on in impressively speedy fashion. By December 2008, only eight months after the ground was broken, the construction of six apartment towers was complete (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). As of now, these housing units still remain vacant due to stalemated negotiations between the neighborhood association and the municipality. In November of 2008, the 5th Administrative Court of Istanbul ordered the Basıbüyük urban renewal project to be annulled since it fails to offer any solutions to social and economic problems of the neighborhood and to open the project to the participation of the residents. While this is a significant legal feat, the decree does not prevent the administration from proposing a new renewal project in the area. At present the prevalent feeling in Basibuyuk is one of anxiety and suspense.

When the arguments developed by the neighborhood association and the residents are carefully examined, despite some irreconcilable differences, one striking commonality comes to the fore: the emphasis on the defense of one’s *rightful* claim to their property. Basibuyuk residents in general are convinced that their neighborhood cannot and will not stay the same ten years from now. In fact a major reason why the neighborhood has historically retained its low density status is low tenure security. Lacking any fully formal claim to their land they were cautious in upgrading and adding flats to their houses. But in their view this is bound to change. Either the renewal project will be implemented and they will be resettled to higher density housing, or they will succeed in

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<sup>96</sup> Fieldnotes, May13, 2008





**Figure 4.3** The first phase of the project is almost complete. November 2008 (photo credit: Nazim Akkoyunlu)



**Figure 4.4** Aerial image, January 2009. Source: Google Maps

obtaining their legal title deeds and will develop the neighborhood themselves by making deals with independent contractors. In either case, the neighborhood will lose its ‘low-rise house with a courtyard’ typology. For the majority the question is political and economic at once: who will reclaim the resulting surplus rent? It could be easily argued in that regard that most of Basibuyuk residents are pretty much behaving along the terms expected of rational economic actors. That is, they are looking out for their individual self-interest.<sup>97</sup>

Basibuyuk residents in general have a strong attachment to their homes, gardens, and courtyards. However, their collective attachment to their neighborhood itself is not particularly strong. The neighborhood lacks any social center where residents interact as members of the neighborhood, hold meetings, make decisions or organize events. The only social centers that do exist are testimony to the lack of social cohesion in the neighborhood: local coffeeshops where mostly male residents from a particular region of Turkey gather to socialize, known as ‘regional associations’ (*yore dernekleri*). Thus the ‘Association for the Cooperation and Solidarity between Gümüşhanelites’ is a vibrant social center for migrants who moved to Basibuyuk from the eastern Turkish province of Gumushane (who make up about 15 per cent of Basibuyuk’s population). In short, the most expanded form of socialization occurs under the common denominator of where one is originally from, and at the expense of the neighborhood where one actually lives. Moreover, there are hardly any neighborhood-wide events that bring the whole community together. Many residents I interviewed explained to me that it was only during the intense period of clashing with the police and physical resistance that they got

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<sup>97</sup> It is tempting to subject this individualistic approach that is geared towards pursuit of one’s material gain to some sort of moral judgment (cf. Bugra 1998). However it needs to be stressed that it isn’t only the urban poor who participate in speculative gains from informal housing markets (Isik and Pinarcioglu 2002; Roy 2000). On the contrary the urban poor have arguably benefited the least from the whole process. Gated communities and private university campuses proliferating in the fringes of the city are often constructed in violation of zoning codes. And since the rich are much better connected to the political machine, speculative gains accrued are vastly higher than those that could be captured by squatters. Similarly district Municipalities participate in real estate development in blatant violation of zoning codes and misuse of state-owned lands.

to meet and know many of their neighbors. As a consequence of relatively weak cohesion and interpersonal networks at the neighborhood scale, the moments of resistance that do exist emerge more as acts of defense of residents' claims to their land and property than the defense of collective rights to their neighborhood as a unique place and an assemblage of social networks and shared values.

As Partha Chatterjee (2004) argues in the case of a squatter colony formed along the railway tracks in southern Calcutta, the residents' ability to organize and present themselves as a moral community defined by the collective occupation of a territory is politically crucial in gaining state recognition as a political group. Here, Chatterjee draws a distinction between citizens and populations; while citizens inhabit the domain of theory, and appear as the modern elite groups who participate in the sovereignty of the state, populations inhabit the domain of policy and account for the large segment of inhabitants of the "political society." As he argues, a crucial part of the politics of the governed (i.e. the political society) is "to give the empirical form of a population group the moral attributes of a community" (Chatterjee 2004: 57). In the case of squatters, it is vitally important for them to assert their collective moral claim to a tract of land. Chatterjee explains how the rail colony in Calcutta had to be built from scratch as there was no readily available pre-communal form. A community life was created and sustained by sports activities, collective viewing of TV shows and videos, and religious festivals. In organizing against the threats of eviction and putting forth their demands for amendments to their conditions of living, the leadership of the community association downplayed shared material interests emphasizing the moral unity of their community and the collective territoriality of the neighborhood. It is precisely such shared territoriality that lacks in Basibuyuk. This has posed serious limits for the neighborhood's struggle. Their inability to mobilize moral claims to their habitat as a *community* has hampered their efforts to garner support from Istanbul's other urban residents. My interview with an elderly street vendor in Basibuyuk is illustrative. He lives in another neighborhood, where he is the legal owner of an apartment. When I asked his opinion about the ongoing process in the neighborhood, he retorted:

“These people have illegally occupied these lands, and now they are making such a huge fuss about it. Just because I didn’t occupy am I guilty? I pay 480 TL tax every year for my apartment. These people don’t pay a dime of tax. I worked in a hospital for years and now I am trying to make a living by selling bagels [*simit*], but these people they just occupy land and now they want to profit from it. Do you know what makes me really sad, when these people throw stones at the police and the police tanks, they are harming things that were bought by the tax money I paid.”<sup>98</sup>

To put the events, positions and reactions that I have described so far in a comparative perspective, I now turn to my second case study site.

### **Case study: Sulukule**

Before being gradually demolished by the local Municipality between 2006-2009, the historic neighborhood of *Sulukule* was home to one of the oldest ethnic Roma settlements in Eastern Europe. A major aspect that set Sulukule aside from its immediate vicinity was the intermingling of the private and public spaces and the gradual transitions between the two. Streets were an integral part of social life in the neighborhood, arguably making up for the deficiencies of private spaces that lacked many basic amenities. Weather permitting, streets were completely occupied by women, children and the youth, while male members are either at work or at the local coffeehouse. Private living spaces open to communal courtyards, which open to streets through very narrow passageways. These courtyards function as semi-private spaces, circumscribed by three to eight rooms each accommodating a family (Figure 4.5). At one end of the courtyard, one typically finds a bathroom used in common by all families.

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, February 17, 2009



**Figure 4.5.** An architectural survey of select houses in Sulukule showing the courtyard typology (drawing not to scale). Source: the Sulukule Platform

For decades Sulukule was famous for its ‘entertainment houses’ (*eğlence evleri* or *devriye evleri*) – houses composed of rooms in which groups of customers are served food and drinks as they are entertained by scantily clad young girls dancing to the tunes of Romani music bands. Prototypes of these houses were established in the early 1940s, and they continued to serve the entertainment life of the city until the early 1990s when they were banned by the municipality. The entertainment houses formed the basis of the economic activity in the neighborhood. It provided jobs and a source of livelihood not only to those directly employed in the entertainment sector (i.e. musicians, dancers, singers, maids, cooks, etc), but also to the community as a whole. A vibrant service sector emerged for street food sellers, liquor sellers and cab drivers. As an old resident explained to me, “Sulukule was a major point through which large sums of money

entered Fatih [the larger district], everyone prospered from the entertainment houses.”<sup>99</sup> Fatih Municipality attempted to ban these houses numerous times, on the grounds that they did not pay taxes, and refused to comply with the regulations dictated by the municipality banning private rooms and the employment of underage girls as dancers. In the early 1990s, claiming that entertainment houses had in reality become “houses of prostitution” the police conducted frequent raids in the neighborhood, arresting the keepers and employees, in many cases destroying musicians’ instruments. By the late-1990s all entertainment houses were permanently shut,<sup>100</sup> driving the whole neighborhood into serious economic decline. The neighborhood as a whole fell into serious disrepair, and drug trade grew as an alternative source of income.

In September of 2002, the IMM included in its annual investment plan the rehabilitation of areas inhabited by the Roma. In December of 2005, Sulukule was declared an urban renewal site by a joint protocol signed by Fatih Municipality, the IMM and the HDA. Finally, in December of 2006 the central government passed an ‘urgent expropriation’ decree, and Sulukule residents were informed about the decision via mail. Just like in the Basibuyuk renewal project, the local municipality did not bother consulting with the residents at any stage of project development. The renewal project developed by the municipality involves the complete demolition of all existing houses except for a few historic buildings to make space for its “historic Ottoman neighborhood” project. The renewal project encompasses an area of around 90,000 square meters, 12 blocks and 382 plots and directly affects around five thousand people living in the area (Figures 4.6 and 4.7). The project is carried out in the name of “cleaning away the monstrosity” as Prime Minister Erdoğan (2008) put it in defending the renewal project.

The residents were asked to participate in the project by paying monthly installments (of around 400 TL) to attain the ownership of their ‘renewed’ homes. If not, then the municipality would expropriate their property. In a state of panic, many residents who

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<sup>99</sup> Fieldnotes, July 11, 2008, Sulukule

<sup>100</sup> A couple were able to operate clandestinely up until the early 2000s.



**Figure 4.6.** A general view of the Sulkule neighborhood from the top of the Theodosian city walls. A significant portion of the neighborhood had already been demolished when this picture was taken in May 2008.



**Figure 4.7.** Artist's 3D rendering of the neighborhood after renewal, commissioned by the municipality. Source: <http://www.atakanimasyon.com/>

lacked any means to pay succumbed to the offers of real estate speculators, which appeared to be much more rewarding than what the municipality would provide as compensation in the event of expropriation. In this initial stage of the project, the

neighborhood was flooded with middlemen working for real estate speculators, who were ready to pay twice as much as the expropriation values offered by the municipality. According to the neighborhood's local Sulukule Roma Culture Association (SRCA)'s records, 50 percent of the homes changed hands before the renewal project began, while the municipality claims that the percentage is only 35.<sup>101</sup> It was later revealed that most of the new buyers were either members of the JDP, or had business or family ties with JDP members.<sup>102</sup>

Apart from home-owners, tenants – who make up of 58 per cent of the neighborhood population – were also offered installment schemes that would entitle them to homeownership in the HDA mass housing project located in Tasoluk, a small town located 25 miles outside the city center. Given their extremely low levels of income and the huge distance of the proposed resettlement area to the city center, most of the tenants did not participate in the resettlement plan. Tenant-residents simply sold their 'entitlements' to real estate speculators, creating a secondary market around the sale and trade of 'entitlement' documents.<sup>103</sup> When the project gained momentum from early April 2008, tenant residents were selling their entitlements for an amount of 3 thousand TL (approx. 1970 USD); by the end of December 2008, the real estate speculators were willing to pay up to 25 thousand TL (approx. 16 thousand USD). At the end of the process almost all of the tenants had moved to smaller and lower quality houses in the immediate vicinity of Sulukule (Map 4.7.)

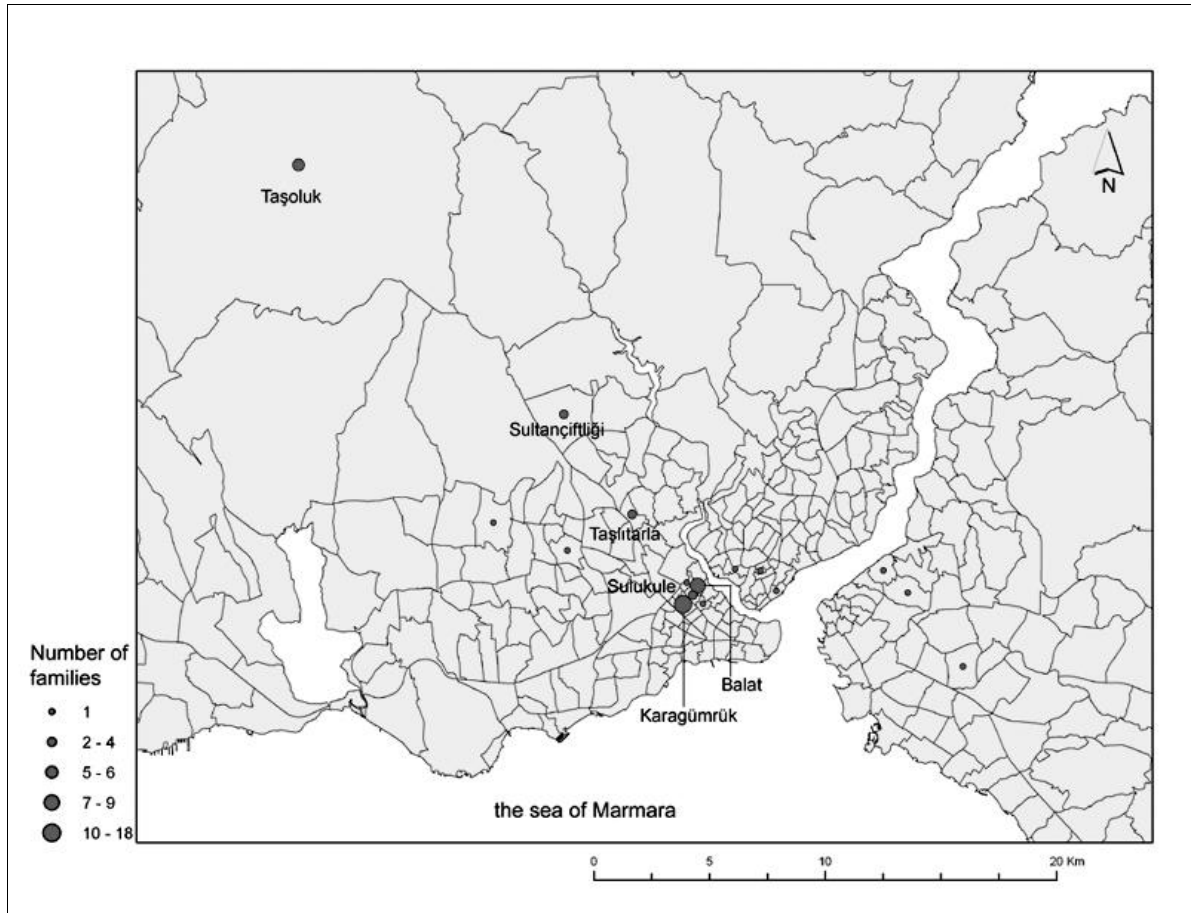
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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Mustafa Ciftci, Sulukule Renewal Project coordinator, June 17, 2008, Fatih Municipality

<sup>102</sup> The Sulukule Platform retrieved identities of some of the buyers from the official register of title deeds and came up with a long list of prominent of JDP members and their relatives, as well as members of an influential Naqshbandi Sufi tariqa based in the Karagumruk district of Fatih (*Ismailaga cemaati*).

<sup>103</sup> As a standard policy the HDA does not allow trade of entitlements, as they want to ensure that only low income citizens benefit from the HDA's lower rates. However in this particular case the Municipality demanded that trade of entitlements be allowed.





**Map 4.7.** relocation map of Sulukule residents as of May 2008. Data source: fieldwork surveys and the Sulukule Platform. n=52 (number of families)

The renewal project in Sulukule has an overt ‘ethnic integration’ objective that aims at ‘saving’ Sulukule’s Roma from their misery and incorporating them to society. As the renewal project coordinator put it:

“It is not easy to integrate these people to society, but we have to accomplish it, in the end these are our people; we have to save them. If it was up to me, as a state policy, I would take all the kids under the age of ten from their parents, put them in boarding schools, educate them and make them members of society. This is the only way.”<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Mustafa Ciftci, Sulukule Renewal Project coordinator, June 17, 2008, Fatih Municipality

This fixation with ‘integration’ as the only path to harmony rests on a view of society as one homogenous entity framing the objectives of planning in terms of fostering similarity and quashing difference. Yet the fundamental question all too often effaced in the dominant discourse due to its blindness to its privileged position is: in whose terms is similarity to be achieved? What is ‘the normal’, or ‘the universal,’<sup>105</sup> in this case? According to Şükrü Pündük – the head of the SRCA – the municipality’s plan is to eliminate the existing lifestyle and culture of the neighborhood:

“In our neighborhood there is a group of people whom we call ‘bearded.’ Cüppeli Ahmet Hodja [literally ‘Robe-wearing Ahmet Hodja’ – who is the leading figure of an influential Naqshbandi Sufi *tariqa* based in the Karagumruk district of Fatih (*Ismailaga cemaati*)] came and delivered sermons in our neighborhood, he had great influence in the neighborhood...The purpose of the current administration is to expand Çarsamba [into Sulukule] and create monotypic individuals.”<sup>106</sup>

The Sulukule renewal project prompted fierce opposition in the city, spearheaded by a group of volunteer activists composed of artists, students, journalists, researchers and social workers. In March 2007, these activists created an umbrella organization called the ‘Sulukule Platform,’ and organized various events and activities with the intent of bringing the project to a halt and promote a more participatory community and neighborhood development project that centered around the needs and demands of the community, rather than those of the municipality and the HDA. The Sulukule Platform and the SRCA framed their political stance around two general themes: The defense of the unique ‘cultural heritage’ of the Sulukule’s Roma community, namely its musical entertainment culture, and the defense of the neighborhoods unique street life and social use of space.

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<sup>105</sup> See Young 1990 for her critique of the universal and the normal in her discussion of “cultural imperialism.”

<sup>106</sup> interview with Şükrü Pündük, March 16, 2008

The framing of the issue in terms of exposing violations of the Roma community's rights and defense of their culture proved to be a double-edged sword. Although their concerted efforts were not able to avert the demolition of the neighborhood and assert their alternative agenda, the SRCA and the Sulukule Platform were successful in raising awareness about the defects of the project by bringing the Sulukule case to the attention of national and international media. They have also managed to put pressure on the municipality and the central government via international organizations such as the UNESCO, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the EU Commission, ensuring that the deleterious consequences of the Sulukule renewal project are mentioned in progress reports on Turkey. The pressure mounted to such an extent that the HDA admitted to some defects in the renewal project and agreed to consider an alternative project prepared by an independent professional initiative called 'Autonomous Planners without Borders' (the Turkish acronym is, conveniently, 'STOP') with backing from the Sulukule Platform (Sulukule, 2009). This alternative plan replaced the municipality's high-end project with a more modest design that allowed all residents, including tenants, to stay in the neighborhood. Yet, while the HDA gave the impression that this alternative plan was given serious consideration it was eventually rejected as too "utopic." The municipality, turning a deaf ear to all criticisms and pressure went on to implement the original project. By November 2009, the neighborhood was completely leveled.<sup>107</sup>

Indisputably, Sulukule has been by far the most controversial urban renewal project in Turkey. The conspicuousness of the injustice that fell upon the Sulukule residents and their plight were widely covered by the mainstream media. The involvement of JDP members and municipal officers as chief actors in the real estate speculation was repeatedly exposed. The level of attention was such that it became the envy of other neighborhoods facing threats of urban renewal. In short, compared to other urban renewal projects that don't even catch the attention of the public at large and the

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<sup>107</sup> The construction is expected to begin after a delay due to the legal requirement of conducting archeological excavations in the area, a requirement for any authorized construction within the historic peninsula.

mainstream media, the anti-eviction campaign in Sulukule had considerable impact. The relative ‘success’ of the Sulukule struggle in garnering support from the wider public and raising awareness of the injustice they faced, by comparison to Basibuyuk, is in part due to the ability of neighborhood activists to make a moral claim to their community’s right to the city as well as their individual right to their property. The Platform did a very efficient job of conveying the argument that the renewal project was practically wiping this unique neighborhood and community off the surface of the earth, and in exposing assimilationist and racist motives behind the renewal project. However the framing of the issue in terms of defense of the Roma put serious limitations in terms of organizing a strong grassroots movement that could address the concerns of the residents in the renewal area as a whole. A significant segment of the Sulukule population did not self-identify as Roma, and did not want to be associated with any form of struggle that would entail the defense of Roma culture and revival of entertainment houses.<sup>108</sup> The statement by Murat,<sup>109</sup> a 35 year old male resident who owns a meatball kiosk, is typical. Murat does not identify as Roma. When I asked him about his opinion about the activities of the SRCA and the Platform he replied: “There is no culture here anymore, the only culture that exists now is the culture of wickedness (immorality). I have nothing to do with their culture, and I have nothing to do with their association.”<sup>110</sup>

Neither the SRCA nor the Sulukule Platform was able to reach out to the majority of the residents with a political agenda that framed the question in terms of right to housing/shelter and/or right to the city. This vacuum in turn was exploited by a second neighborhood association which tapped into the ‘culture of wickedness’ discourse. All of the leading figures of this second association are members of the Islamic *Ismailaga cemaati* that has been growing in influence in the neighborhood over the last two

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<sup>108</sup> Very few of the residents openly acknowledge their Roma ethnicity; some of them accept it only after a certain level of trust is attained. And a fair number of them resolutely deny any Roma roots and feel offended when someone vaguely implies that they are Roma; their typically response is: “I am not Gypsy, I am Muslim.”

<sup>109</sup> pseudonym

<sup>110</sup> Fieldnotes, January 28, 2009, Sulukule

decades. It effectively mobilized non-Roma residents against the Roma and the Sulukule Platform, and managed to significantly weaken the anti-renewal sentiments within the neighborhood. By and large, this second association acted as a liaison between the municipality and the disaffected non-Roma residents and more or less repeats Municipality's arguments. To homeowners they say, and I paraphrase, "this area will be remade and your home values will dramatically increase, and we will get rid of this monstrosity." To tenants: "You are given the chance to become homeowners, this is a great opportunity, you should be grateful for that. And you are simply asked to pay 'affordable' monthly installments. Still if you don't think you can afford it then you can sell your entitlement (to real estate speculators), and basically that is money for nothing."<sup>111</sup> And these arguments do resonate with a lot of tenants. Salih,<sup>112</sup> a 47 year old male resident, who owns a local coffee shop, told me that he started his business with the money he received in return for his entitlement (which he sold to a third party for 25 thousand TL, approx. 16 thousand USD): "I used to work at a coffeeshop, the Municipality gave me entitlement for a house in Tasoluk. I didn't even bother going there. I sold it to a middleman right away. God bless the municipality, I had never seen 25 thousand all in one before. Now I own this business."<sup>113</sup> Salih is among the fortunate minority, as many of the tenants were not even granted entitlements by the Municipality on the grounds that they failed to provide certification of their status as tenants. And many of those who did receive entitlements sold them at much lower rates.

Against the Municipality's and the pro-renewal association's attempts to entice residents by potential economic prospects of the project, The Platform has emphasized the unique cultural and economic dynamics of the neighborhood. One of the prominent leaders of the Platform and a pro-Roma human rights activist Nazan explained:

"I can tell you with a hundred per cent certainty, that this will not be good for anyone, neither for homeowners nor tenants. Wherever they will end up, they will

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<sup>111</sup> Fieldnotes, January 28 2009, Sulukule

<sup>112</sup> pseudonym

<sup>113</sup> Fieldnotes, January 30, 2009, Sulukule

be unhappy. The neighborhood has a vibrant local economy. People depend on each other. One of them goes and buys apparels from a factory outlet in Topkapi [located just a few hundred meters away from the neighborhood] and sells it in the neighborhood. The watermelon vendor buys his watermelons [from a local dealer] and sells it in the neighborhood. They [the residents] are business owners and customers at the same time. They don't know what a shopping mall is. The other day I suggested to Nihal that we meet in Taksim. She didn't know where it was. Everything happens in the neighborhood, everything... When they lose their traditional strategies of survival, these people will get even more destitute. I am very sure, it won't be good for anyone.”<sup>114</sup>

As David Sibley (2006:97) points out, “[c]ultural forms may include a ‘hidden’ economy which gives the group some autonomy but which may become inoperable if the minority is incorporated into the larger society.” The leader of the SRCA, Sukru Punduk, who is currently in his 40s and used to own an entertainment house in the late 1980s explains these hidden dimensions in Sulukule:

“We are living in solidarity here, we share our bread. If someone doesn't make any money that day, I can pull out 10TL (approx. 6.5 USD) and give it to him. We can go to our local grocery store and buy a single diaper, a single cigarette, a couple of olives. And if I don't have money that day, I can always pay later. Would I be able to buy this from a supermarket? When everyone is pre-occupied with paying their individual monthly payments, no one will help anyone. Everyone will be concerned about themselves.”<sup>115</sup>

It is such aspects of shared social and economic life and moral community that the Platform repeatedly emphasized. However this moral claim had to be put forth by the Platform on behalf of the residents, as active participation of the local Roma in the resistance remained almost non-existent throughout the process, a situation that experienced pro-Roma activists are quite familiar with. As Nazan explained:

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with Nazan(pseudonym), June 24, 2008, Beyoglu

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Sukru Punduk, March 16, 2008, Sulukule

“I have worked with Romacommunities across Turkey for five years. All these appear very natural to me. I was never in expectation of an organized grassroots resistance [in Sulukule]...Look, in its recent history the state came to Sulukule two times only. In 1992 they came to shut down the entertainment houses, and ‘Hose Suleyman’ [the nickname of a commissioner notorious for using plastic hose pipes for beating up suspects] tortured the residents. In 2005 they came to tear down their houses. Now in a situation like this, as people coming from outside the neighborhood, what could we expect? How much could we expect them to trust us? If I tell them, ‘if they come to you asking you to sign a contract, decline it’ and then the next day when the Caterpillar shows up, there is nothing she can do. But I can tell you this, I have been in Sulukule for three years, if we had never come here, the whole thing would’ve ended in less than 6 months, and most people would not get as much compensation.”<sup>116</sup>

### **Conclusion: rights to the city**

In the official discourse, urban transformation projects in Istanbul are promoted as vital for meeting the ‘scientific and aesthetic standards’ (Donusum, 2006:1) of modern urbanization, and as ultimately beneficial for the entire metropolitan region. Yet the current implementation of the urban transformation program reveals that it has fundamentally failed in two aspects. First, the administration does not seek the participation of local community groups, residents, and non-governmental organizations; instead it follows a rigid top-down approach in which state ‘experts’ determine what is best for the residents. Second, while homeowners are in one way or another taken into consideration, the projects typically ignore the fates of tenants<sup>117</sup>—the group which constitutes the most vulnerable sector of the whole process. To date there has not been any serious attempt to address the affordable housing problem of the urban poor. Low-cost housing options that might include rent-controlled areas or public housing are ruled out, and all housing policies are focused on the construction of ‘affordable’ market-rate housing, regardless of

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Nazan(pseudonym), June 24, 2008, Beyoglu

<sup>117</sup> Sulukule was an exception in this regard.

residents' current and future ability to pay in order to attain ownership of their apartment.

The urban transformation agenda in Istanbul exhibits several elements of neoliberal urbanism. Essentially this is about facilitation of circuits of capital accumulation through urban renewal, which is carried out through new combinations of corporate and state powers. As Neil Smith (2002) argues, real estate development has become a centerpiece of the city's productive economy under neoliberal urbanism. Building on this, I argue that urban redevelopment/regeneration in Istanbul has also been a process of primitive accumulation through urban renewal. Fundamentally, this is the transfer of un-realized urban land rent that has rapidly accumulated over decades, from its current occupants to the state and its affiliated contractors. As Basibuyuk residents aptly put it, what is being imposed on them in the name urban transformation is fundamentally a scheme of 'rental redistribution.' Thus the residents are well aware of the economic aspects of their eviction and dispossession. Against that, they make the case that they should be the ones to claim the accumulated land rent by virtue of their status as decades old occupants and users of the space (cf. Benjamin 2008). However, defense of individual claims to ownership has rarely been supplemented by the defense of their community, and the neighborhood as a common place.

This shortcoming has posed serious political limitations as illustrated in the case of Basibuyuk. Ironically, the framing of the issue by residents in terms of the *individual right to ownership* at the expense of the *community's right to the city* repeats the very same oversight that the municipality commits. That is, the tenants, who make up about one third of Basibuyuk's population, arguably the poorest segment of the population, are omitted from a say in their future or any rights to housing, simply because they are not property owners. This situation also hinders the neighborhood's efforts to overturn their prevalent portrayal as 'illegal occupiers' and garner support from the wider urban public.

I suggest that an effective grassroots response to eviction and displacement should be able address a deeper sense of dispossession that encompasses not only economic



impoverishment but also the ways in which the existing social networks, cultures and spaces of the neighborhood are irreversibly disintegrated. The Sulukule case in that regard offers precious insights as to the potentials of a civil movement that was able to emphasize a neighborhood's right to the city. Here what was being emphasized was not just economic dispossession, but the eradication of social relations and networks that make up a neighborhood as a particular spatial assemblage.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

“Cities are messy affairs, they work not by orderly segregation, but by a more spontaneous integration of disparate factors” (May 2005: 163).

This thesis has tackled the central question of how to approach the urban as a complex and diagrammatically structured whole? This is the central question that this thesis has tackled. I argued for a conceptualization of the urban as a complex structure overdetermined by a multitude of forces, flows, rhythms, among which those governed by the imperatives of capital accumulation stand as part of the dominant structure. I argued that this structure is virtual; it only exists as a map of possibilities. In that sense the architecture of the city is a *virtual field*. Here I take architecture not as an expert practice of design but as the configuration and reconfiguration of spatial relations between individual bodies, i.e. between diverse assemblages. This could involve the addition of a flat to a gecekondu in an anonymous corner of an anonymous neighborhood, or the development of a new financial district in an erstwhile gecekondu neighborhood. The primary focus is not on the inert characteristics and the identity of an assemblage (e.g. a gecekondu neighborhood) but rather on their ability to forge connections with other bodies, and what sorts of capacities are realized through these connections.

Theorizing cities in terms of their heterogeneous temporalities as well as spatialities has profound implications not only for rethinking urban theory, but also for rethinking the geographies of urban theory production. As Ananya Roy (2009) points out, even though the urban future lies in cities beyond Euroamerica (Shanghai, Cairo, Mumbai, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Dakar, Johannesburg), theoretical work on city-regions is still firmly located within the cities of the core. ‘Third world cities’ are still portrayed as places of

exception, anomaly, obscurity: places where capital accumulation and democratic governance happen under “special circumstances” (Stren 2001: 205). The ‘third world city’ is rendered as that which grows without a form and regulation. To the extent that it entails informal territories, networks and relations which are not measurable and thus remains outside the control and regulation of the state, the third world city remains theoretically elusive. It is dismissed as unable to generate theoretically relevant information. Hence, the fundamental division of labor within urban studies occurs between “urban theory,” broadly focused on and produced in the West, generating models and policy; and “development studies,” focused on the diagnosis and treatment of problems of the megacities of the third world (Robinson 2002). This theoretical asymmetry rests on a presumed eschatology, namely the assumption that the US and European cities are the models to be emulated or to be eventually and *inevitably* converged on as a result of urban and economic development. Unsurprisingly, this perspective is unable to come to grips with cities that have grown and developed distinctive patterns of development, even emerging as new paradigms (e.g. the Shanghai model), or cities that experience urban growth without economic growth.

As I have argued, this theoretical impasse could be surmounted by replacing the ontology of co-presence with an ontology of non-contemporaneity, an urban theory agenda that comes to terms with incongruities between different times and rhythms. Thus, the development mafias in Mumbai are not an ‘anomaly’; they are part and parcel of property development in the making of a competitive city (Weinstein 2008). As Benjamin (2004) shows, complex tenure forms and flexible forms of land development are integral to “economic growth.” Similarly, Simone’s notion of *people as infrastructure* emphasizes the flexible and provisional nature of economic collaboration among residents, and their ability to forge ephemeral connections with diverse objects, spaces, persons and practices and how these conjunctions provide a platform for the reproduction of city life (Simone 2004).

### **Policy relevance**

In her discussion of the immigrant ‘absorption’ policies of the Israeli government, Fenster (1998) elaborates on the distinction between two approaches to planning. The “procedural” approach takes an expert-centric, and totalistic path to planning, imposing the lifestyles and culture of the majority as the normative model into which others should assimilate. It assumes that assimilation is both natural and desirable for ethnic minorities for the sake of attaining equality through citizenship. In this formulation formal equality and civil rights based on citizenship replace difference.

This is precisely the sort of approach that the Fatih Municipality adopted in its development and implementation of the Sulukule Renewal Project. The municipality’s procedural approach relies on two sets of discourses. The first are discourses of othering and criminalization that perpetuate all sorts of racist stereotypes about the Roma (laziness, immorality, untruthfulness, etc.). The second are discourses of integration/assimilation that rely on the premise of incorporating these ‘deviant subjects’ into the disciplined wage-labor force through professional training programs and the replacement of their ‘old squalid shacks’ with modern apartments.

In the case of the Basibuyuk renewal project, the desire to ‘incorporate’ is of a slightly different nature as the assimilation of a distinct ethnic group is not part of the picture. However the ‘hygienic’ discourse, which rests on the promise of ‘cleaning away’ the decay, is exploited to its full potential. Squatter settlements are portrayed as hotbeds of gang activities, drug trade and prostitution. The mainstream media often lends its generous support to these representations, portraying squatters as immoral, opportunistic occupiers, and the spaces they occupy as ‘abused’ by unworthy invaders. Thus the municipality’s ‘mission’ of incorporating these undervalued and under-commodified spaces into the formal circuits of the economy is justified.

The procedural planning approach that underpins urban renewal policies in Istanbul succumbs to a calculus of function and density, replacing neighborhoods and their organically grown street patterns and street-based everyday lives with cookie cutter style apartment towers arrayed with no concern for creation of positive outdoor spaces. Like the replacement of a diverse agro-ecosystem with monoculture cropping, this dominant approach is unable to come to terms with urban diversity, and the complex order behind the seeming chaos of street life. As Jacobs explains,

“This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance – not a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations” (Jacobs 1961: 50).

This is a brilliant description of the non-synchronous city, a city that is made up of a multitude of incongruous parts each of which are defined by their differential capacities to interact with others.

How to think of an alternative to procedural planning that is attentive to difference? Building on Lefebvre’s concept of “the right to the city,” Sandercock (2000) coins the term the “right to difference,” which, as she defines it, is attentive to the identity, cultural norms, and rights of specific groups who have been excluded, stigmatized and marginalized, and are victims of various forms of oppression. The right to difference is foremost a statement against the well-entrenched misconception of democracy as majority rule “and a corresponding belief that the right to difference disappears once the majority has spoken” (ibid:14). More often than not, rights based on citizenship are equalized in terms of the dominant majority. This is how Sulukule’s residents were easily essentialized as deviant, lazy, unhealthy, noisy, untrustworthy, immoral and prone to crime. In agreement with Sandercock, instead of a “neutral” framework, whose claim to

universality is constituted through the paradoxical oppression of difference,<sup>118</sup> I have argued that ‘multiplicity’ needs to be taken as constituent of urban lives, with the city seen as a complex, non-uniform assemblage.

Sandercock’s call for a new planning paradigm that is attentive to pluri-ethnicity and multiculturalism is paralleled by Fenster’s promotion of ‘pluralist planning’ in lieu of modernist, procedural planning. Pluralist planning emphasizes the participation of citizens (through processes such as advocacy planning, negotiated planning, critical planning and radical planning) and acknowledges that some groups might want to preserve their ethnic or cultural differences. This approach, as Fenster clarifies, is tied to a multicultural conception of citizenship that does not pit equality against difference. Such an approach, I would add, would also be attentive to the complexity of urban lives.

“Cities are not matters of function; they are matters of connection, They are rhizomes, not trees...[I]t is the relationships among the diversity of aspects of urban life that create a vibrant street life, not their segregation into areas of uniformity. Diversity nourishes cities; uniformity strangles them” (May 2005: 165).

In their seminal work, *A Pattern Language*, Alexander et al. (1977:80-85) emphasize the importance of well-defined streets and controlled public meeting places in the formation of an identifiable neighborhood. They also show how properly functioning intra-urban boundaries give neighborhoods the autonomy and identity that are vital for healthy communities and cities. In a similar vein, I suggest that urban theorists and policy makers should seek to develop a strategic approach to ‘good boundary’ formations, which value

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<sup>118</sup> Here my main reference is Iris Marion Young’s definition of cultural imperialism. Young (1990) remarks on two aspects of cultural imperialism that sets it apart from other forms of oppression. On the one hand, it renders the particular perspective of one’s own group invisible while on the other hand it stereotypes and marks those outside as the Other. Through this “paradoxical oppression” the culturally imperialized are only acknowledged as ‘remarkable’ and deviant beings. They are stereotyped by the dominant group and are marked with an essence; their difference is never affirmed in their own terms, and the group members are expected to internalize the dominant culture’s stereotyped and generally inferiorized images of themselves.

and respect difference as well as the community's right to self-representation. Such an agenda of course would not contradict a parallel agenda of fighting off economic and social marginalization, and ghettoization.

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## **Appendix I: Sample interview questions**

### **For Maltepe Municipality bureaucrats:**

What are the criteria with which you identified Basibuyuk as a potential site for urban renewal?

What were your policy influences in developing the renewal project?

What kind of social and demographic data did you collect in Basibuyuk prior to the project?

Did you make any attempts to inform the residents or seek their opinion and advice on the project? And if so, what kind of resident input have you gathered and how has it been used?

How do you think this project will benefit the neighborhood in particular, and the city in general?

What are the main reasons that you see for some residents' opposition to the project?

What were the biggest challenges you faced in terms of implementing the project? Are there things you would do differently if you had the chance to begin over?

### **For the residents subject to potential displacement as a consequence of urban renewal:**

Are you a tenant or a homeowner?

How long have you lived here?

How are your relationships with your neighbors?

Are you content with your neighborhood with the way it is?

How could it be improved? Do you think neighborhood as a whole could come together to address these issues?

Are you aware of the renewal plan?

What and how do you know about the renewal plan?



Did authorities from the municipality make any attempts to inform you about or seek your opinion and/or advice on the project?

Do you think the renewal project will be beneficial for the residents and your family? Why or why not?

Do you plan to participate in the project? Why or why not?

Do you think the neighborhood association is doing a good job? What are its weaknesses and strengths? What would you do differently if you were on the association?

Do you participate in the association's meetings and activities? Why or why not?