

**SOCIAL STRUCTURAL POSITION AND VOCABULARIES OF MOBILIZATION:
FRAMING URBAN ACTIVISM IN ISTANBUL**

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ABSTRACT

As in many other countries around the world, urban movements around the "right to the city" has gained substantial momentum in Turkey. Based on qualitative data collected through participant observation in movement activities and in-depth interviews with activists, this study investigates contemporary urban mobilization in Istanbul to understand the dynamics of opposition to the physical and cultural reconstruction of the urban landscape. The findings of the study are two-fold: First, building on the growing literature on urban politics and urban social movements in Turkey, this study comparatively analyzes two distinct geographies of mobilization in Istanbul: (i) anti-commodification struggles in city's relatively affluent parts against the marketization of public space, and (ii) the collective action in city's informal neighborhoods threatened by state-led urban transformation projects, arguing that the geographical variation entails a class-based differentiation in movement building, where different clusters of Istanbul's middle class try to secure their interests tied to the economic and cultural forms of capital they possess. Second, integrating insights from Pierre Bourdieu's field theory into the existing literature on social movements, the study presents and unpacks the structural roots of the two "collective action frames" used by activists working in these geographies, which are conceptualized here as the "right to the city" and "moral economy" frames.

Keywords: urban politics, collective action and social movements, frame analysis, middle class, Istanbul

ÖZET

Son yıllarda diğer pek çok ülke gibi Türkiye’de de "kent hakkı" kavramı yoğunlukla tartışılmaya başladı. Bu çalışma, kentin fiziksel ve kültürel dönüşümüne karşı oluşan muhalefetin dinamiklerini anlamak amacıyla, katılımcı gözlem ve derinlemesine görüşme yöntemleriyle toplanmış verilere dayanarak, İstanbul’daki kentsel mobilizasyonu incelemektedir. Çalışmanın bulguları iki ana parçadan oluşmaktadır: İlk olarak, Türkiye’deki kentsel politikalar ve kentsel toplumsal hareketler konularında gelişmekte olan literatürün izinden giderek, İstanbul’da kentsel muhalefetin yükseldiği iki farklı coğrafya karşılaştırılmaktadır: (i) kentin görece varlıklı bölgelerindeki kamusal alanların piyasalaştırılmasına karşı çıkan anti-metalaşma mücadeleleri, (ii) ve kentin enformel mahallelerinde devlet desteğiyle yürüyen kentsel dönüşüm projelerine karşı süregelen kolektif hareketler. Bu coğrafi çeşitlilik, toplumsal hareket örgütlenmelerinde, İstanbul’un farklı orta sınıf kesimlerinin ekonomik ve kültürel sermayelerine dayalı çıkarlarını koruma çabası gösterdikleri, sınıf temelli bir farklılaşmayı beraberinde getirmektedir. İkinci olarak, Pierre Bourdieu’nun alan teorisini toplumsal hareketler literatürüne entegre ederek, bu farklı coğrafyalarda ortaya çıkan ve burada “kent hakkı” ve “ahlaki ekonomi” olarak kavramsallaştırılan iki farklı “kolektif eylem çerçevesi” incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: kentsel politika, kolektif eylem ve toplumsal hareketler, çerçeve analizi, orta sınıf, İstanbul

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZET	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Context.....	2
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Methodology	10
Structure of the Thesis	15
CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CLASS ANALYSIS	16
Resource Mobilization and Political Process Theories.....	16
Framing.....	22
Bourdieu.....	26
CHAPTER 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: URBAN POLITICS IN ISTANBUL AND THE FORMATION OF THE URBAN MOVEMENT FIELD.....	33
Clientelist Urbanization	34
Istanbul as a “Global City”	38
Political Islam and “Bulldozer Neoliberalism” in the 2000s	44
CHAPTER 4 FORMS OF CAPITAL AND VOCABULARIES OF MOBILIZATION	49
Gecekondu Mobilizations: The Moral Economy of Upward Mobility	50
“Right to the City” and Its Discontents.....	62
When Deprivation Meets Discontent.....	72
Boundary-Making after Gezi	75
Concluding Remarks.....	80
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION.....	82
REFERENCES.....	88

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the dynamics of opposition to the physical and cultural reconstruction of urban landscape in Istanbul, Turkey. Through a class-cultural lens that draws from and aims to combine the contributions of the social movement literature and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, I analyze the recent mobilizations around the urban transformation projects. The main research question that orients the study is how mobilization depends on actors' possession of and control over different material and non-material resources. This question is important in understanding the diversity in ideas and repertoires used by social movements, which I refer to in this study as "collective action frames" (Snow et al. 1986). Moreover, it helps us understand what motivates movements to emerge, how they construct collective interests and identities, and how they choose their strategies and tactics. It also invites us to revisit the connection between the micro-foundations of mobilization and the broader political, economic, and social structures.

The main argument of this study is two-fold. First, building on the growing literature on urban politics and urban social movements in Turkey, I comparatively analyze two distinct geographies of mobilization in Istanbul: (i) anti-commodification struggles in city's relatively affluent parts against the marketization of public space, and (ii) the collective action in city's informal neighborhoods threatened by state-led urban transformation projects. I argue that this geographical variation entails a class-based differentiation in movement building, where different clusters of Istanbul's middle class try to secure their interests tied to the economic and cultural forms of capital they possess. Second, I present and unpack the structural roots of the two collective action frames used by the networks of activists operating in these geographies, which I conceptualize as the "right to the city" and "moral economy" frames.

Context

On the night of May 28, 2013, bulldozers began cutting down trees at Istanbul's Gezi Park, where the city's government, backed by the central government in Ankara, proposed to build a grandiose shopping mall that looked like the Ottoman Empire barracks of the nineteenth century. A small group of urban activists, in reaction to the eyewitness accounts on social media, resorted to direct action and formed a human shield around the park to block the construction machines. The sit-in transformed into an Occupy-like encampment for two days, only to be violently evicted by the riot police at five o'clock in the morning. Occupiers came from a loose network of activists tied to professional associations (of architects, city planners, engineers) and several other local organizations. Having conjointly founded an organizational platform to mobilize against the ongoing transformation of Taksim area (Istanbul's cultural hub), they had previously protested the demolition of a cultural center (*Atatürk Kültür Merkezi*), a historical movie theater (*Emek Sineması*), and a century-old café (*İnci Pastanesi*). While earlier actions had yielded severe police brutality and relatively little popular support, excessive police violence on protestors at Gezi Park sparked massive public outrage. On May 31, after the working hours, number of protestors in Taksim area rose to tens of thousands. Supporting protests erupted across Turkey, culminating into the largest episode of collective action in Turkey's recent history.

The occupation of the park, with thousands of protestors sleeping in tents, organizing their own kitchen, health center, library, and garbage collection, went on until June 15, when the riot police cracked down the park and the surrounding area on a crowded Saturday evening. Even though the protests across Turkey targeted a wide range of issues at the core of which was the government's increasing authoritarianism, initial focus on anti-commodification did not totally disappear within the boundaries of the Gezi Park itself. Although the urban activists did not have the organizational resources or the willingness to lead the entire movement into a specific

direction, they managed to maintain a quasi-leadership status in the Gezi Park “commune.” The crowd in the park voiced further criticism for some of the other mega-projects in and around Istanbul, including a third bridge over the Bosphorus, a new international airport on the city’s northern seaside, and an artificial waterway for commercial vessels on the city’s western outskirts (Milliyet 2013). The massive collective effervescence generated by the Gezi Park was interpreted as a political opportunity to address urban and environment related grievances, among others.

We want to let the government know that the growing reaction [at the Gezi Park] is a demand to stop the plundering of our ecological assets by the Third Bridge, the Third Airport, Kanal Istanbul, and the hydro power plants around the country, the legislation on the new Natural and Biological Diversity Protection Act, the warmongering in our country and the region; to support the sensibilities of our Alevi citizens, *the rightful causes of the victims of urban transformation projects*, the women who protect their bodies from the domination of conservative patriarchal policies, the resistance of the universities, lawyers, and artists, the demands of the Turkish Airlines employees and all other workers whose rights are being fringed, the struggle against the discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; and to remove all the obstacles of citizens’ access to education and healthcare services (TaksimDayanismasi 2013, emphasis added).

Indeed, the Gezi Park protests increased the salience of urban/environmental concerns in Istanbul. After the park was cleared by the police, mobilization changed its course to focus on building popular assemblies (*forum*) around Istanbul. In 2014, these district-based forums came together to establish an umbrella organization that demand citizen control over the transformation in various Istanbul districts, particularly the commercial and cultural hubs where the middle-class Istanbulites spend their time, as well as the coastal areas, parks, and forests in and around the city that are deemed as public goods.

The projects in Istanbul's cultural and historical center(s), however, constitutes only one side of the ongoing process of urban transformation. This study also investigates the collective action in Istanbul's informal residential settlements, known as *gecekondu* in Turkish¹, threatened by urban transformation projects run by public-private partnerships. Contextualized within a peculiar historical trajectory of urbanization characterized by the centrality of clientelism, these informal settlements have addressed the low-cost housing demands of generations of migrant workers. The neoliberal turn in urban politics and the consequent rise of the construction sector within the ranks of Turkish economy costed *gecekondu* residents their bargaining power in urban politics by taking away the special informality that kept them outside the realm of the market for decades. In response to the market-oriented transformation projects, residents resort to collective action through institutional as well as extra-institutional mechanisms. Even though previous attempts to bring together different neighborhood organizations had failed during the 2000s, several Istanbul neighborhoods have managed to unite their efforts under another umbrella organization since 2014.

The unit of analysis employed in this study is the individuals that are tied in various degrees to these two social movement organizations operating in Istanbul's urban movement field. Contemporary scholarship on urban studies is correct in arguing that today's urban mobilizations bring together diverse groups and issues against the profit-oriented logic of neoliberal

¹ *Gecekondu* is a term with strong cultural and political connotations. It appeared in the daily language when the rural-to-urban migration intensified in Turkey and referred to the self-help housing units built by migrants. Chapter 3 presents that most *gecekondu* units have transformed into modern apartment buildings over time. Even though the term is no longer used as commonly, following the activists I interviewed, I use it to refer to the informal or semi-formal residential districts.

urbanization. But it is still necessary to accurately understand the frameworks in which various actors articulate their opposition. This study analyzes the mobilizations that sparked off in several transformation sites in order to situate them in their broader social, cultural, and historical contexts and to provide an interpretation of their origins, motivations, internal structures, and strategies.

Theoretical Framework

In a recent attempt to address the “narrowness” of theories on social movements, McAdam and Boudet (2012, 2) encourage scholars to move beyond “the overwhelming tendency ... to select on the dependent variable.” They suggest that the field is ineffectively preoccupied with “successful instances of mobilization,” instead of expanding its horizons to the population of “mobilization attempts,” successful or not. Following their lead, my concern in this study is not to explain why the Gezi Park protests emerged. Nor is it to account for the variation in results of different mobilizations. By looking at different geographies of the contemporary urban social movements in Istanbul, I seek to understand the process of movement-building with a focus on the ideas and resources utilized by activists.

Cultural approaches to social movements have long argued that a major part of mobilization entails ideational processes such as grievance interpretation and collective identity formation. Rooted in the symbolic interactionism of Goffman (1974), framing paradigm has sought to fill the subjective gaps in the literature. Accordingly, frames refer to interpretive schemes that help actors “locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” and functions “to organize experience and shape action” (Snow et al. 1986, 464). Individuals have different interpretations of the world around them, and the role of social movement organizations is to provide interpretive frames that align with self-interpretations, values, beliefs, and experiences of potential movement participants. This approach originally sought to account for the

processes of participant recruitment into movements. It later incorporated the idea of “master frames” that present the movement to the larger public during the overall cycle of contention (Benford and Snow 2000, Snow and Oliver 1995). The core concepts are frame resonance and “frame alignment processes” (Snow et al. 1986). The former refers to the credibility of a particular frame based on the social situation of those who are exposed to it. The latter is the process through which movements adjust their appeals to promote themes or opinions that resonate with targeted individuals’ experiences. “Frame disputes” occur when groups split over interpretations of reality and what to do to change that reality (Benford 1993).

Framing approach implies that the interpretation of reality, hence the resonance of a frame, depends on social experiences. Then, a central task of this approach should be to understand how variation in social experiences affect attractiveness of certain frames over others (Walder 2009, 406). However, this important question has not been sufficiently pursued. Frame analyses tend to be limited to description and classification without going into detail about how social experience affects receptivity towards certain movement frames. This is in part due to the “cultural turn” that has characterized social sciences in the last decades, which created increasing dissatisfaction on the part of scholars with the classical Marxist notion that economic interests determine the political/cultural/moral conceptions. However, the idea that individuals’ social experience influence their political ideology and behavior is still relevant to many researchers. This project aims to contribute to the social movement literature by interrogating how variation in social circumstances help certain collective action frames prevail over others.

Another influential strand of theory, which has mainly developed in the continental Europe with the works of Cohen (1985), Touraine (1981), and Melucci (1989), take the identity-work at the center of movement analysis. The New Social Movements (NSM) approach, as it has been

known, argue that movements no longer focus on economic issues or institutional politics. Rather, the “new social movements” of the contemporary era target the civil society. Although both developed simultaneously, what differentiates NSM from more mainstream accounts on “identity politics” is the former’s emphasis on the active *creation* of identity (especially seen in Melucci’s work). Identities are not given, they are rather created by activists. This is a welcome contribution to the North American social movement literature that tends to treat identities and grievances as pre-existing features of the movements. However, this literature’s assumption that activists’ autonomy has expanded so much that they can create identities independent of the larger societal processes is problematic. Here, I pursue a middle ground between the two approaches. The interpretive work of meaning creation and identity formation is never autonomous from actor’s social structural conditions and the larger political processes that set the rules of the game within a given political context. Therefore, framing processes never occur in a vacuum, they are rather shaped and constrained by the political economic context in which they develop. I argue that actors’ social class location is a key determinant of their collective demands and strategies.

In doing so, I employ a class-analytical approach inspired by Bourdieu, who rejects “the perceived obligation to demarcate classes from one another *a priori*” (Weininger 2005, 84-85). For Bourdieu, drawing the boundaries between classes is foremost a political project that cannot be separated from the researcher’s political interests. Reviewing the post-Gezi literature on Turkey’s class structure validates this point. Ever since Gezi protests, social scientists in Turkey have been debating the class background of the mobilization with variegated conclusions. Keyder (2013) provided the first analysis of the class politics behind the protests. He argued that the protestors can be best understood as representatives of a recently flourishing “new middle class” that is dissatisfied with the authoritarian bend of Turkey’s neoliberalization. He suggested that the

participants were pre-dominantly college-educated and have been benefitting from economic growth brought by globalization in the past decades.

Turkey now has some 200 universities and more than 4 million university students; 2.5 million new graduates have been added to the population since 2008. These figures portend a new middle class in formation, whose members work in relatively modern workplaces, with leisure time and consumption habits much like their global counterparts. But they also look for new guarantees for their way of life, for their environment, for their *right to the city*; and they resent violations of their personal and social space (emphasis added).

For Keyder, what separated this new middle class from both the old middle class and the working class was its overwhelming dependence on cultural capital (education, knowledge, skills). The new middle class do not own the means of production (industrial or post-industrial), they are engaged with the production processes through their mental labor. There is also a discrepancy between their objective living conditions and what they subjectively believe they deserve based on the cultural capital they possess. Similarly, Loïc Wacquant, who visited Istanbul shortly after the protests, argued that the Gezi Park mobilized “a fraction of the Istanbul population, the new cultural bourgeoisie of intellectuals, urban professionals and the urban middle class, rising to assert the rights of cultural capital against an incipient alliance of economic capital -commercial interests- and political capital -the state deciding to transform this park into a mall” (as cited in Yörük and Yüksel 2014, 106). These perspectives echoed the “new class” theory articulated by Gouldner (1979), who argued that intellectuals with high levels of cultural capital would clash with the ruling class over the distribution and the use of resources. In a series of interventions, Tugal (2013, 156) also emphasized the middle class character of the protests. “Professionals not only led the movement, but also constituted the core of the participants ... The Gezi resistance appears to be an occasionally multi-class, but pre-dominantly middle-class movement.” Elsewhere, he called

this group of actors “new petty bourgeoisie,” underlining its exclusionary and sometimes antagonistic stance towards the blue and white-collar proletarians (Tugal 2015). Vis-à-vis this interpretation, a neo-Marxist take on the protests came from Boratav (2013). He saw the participation of the new middle class in the protests as conjectural, while attributing central importance to the involvement of white-collar proletarians and the “proletarianized” middle class, mirroring the “new working class” arguments of neo-Marxist class analysts (Aronowitz 1983).

The neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian class analyses of the last century, which influenced Turkish scholars’ interpretations of the protests, suffer from a tendency to treat classes as already existing, pre-constituted entities in the social structure, whether on the grounds of production relations or on the bases of market relations, credentials, and status. This essentialist conception of class depends heavily on abstract typification and argumentation instead of historical analyses of actually existing social relations. Earlier, Wacquant (1991, 51) called this tendency “the urge to solve ‘on paper’ what is not resolved in reality.” Accordingly, classes are not simply there, but they are being made by actors involved in context-specific struggles. A critical line of research in class analysis insists that the understanding of class structure cannot be separated from the understanding of class formation (Thompson 1963, Przeworski 1977). Bourdieu’s (1984) approach to social class is another attempt in this direction. He focuses on the relational nature of classes, which are defined not merely as measurable characteristics, but also as classification struggles through which actors try to distinguish themselves from each other. His version of class analysis is based upon a theoretical framework which suggests that individuals occupy an objective position within the *social space* according to the volume and composition of their capital portfolio. By introducing the concepts of *cultural*, *social*, and *symbolic* capital, Bourdieu moves away from the narrowly materialist conception of class inequality. Among the upper classes, there are those

whose wealth is weighted towards economic capital (industrialists, commercial employers) as well as those whose wealth leans towards the direction of cultural capital (tenured professors). Social space, as a theoretical construct, organizes agents' dispositions and practices. Accordingly, classes in the theoretical sense are:

Set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditionings and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices; and who possess a set of common properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed (as possession of goods and power) or properties embodied as class habitus (and, in particular, systems of classificatory schemes) (Bourdieu 1984, 101).

Similarly, the analytical framework in this study attributes explanatory power to the possession of two forms of capital. First, I demonstrate the importance of ownership of urban land in shaping individuals' political action (*economic capital*). Second, with regard to the manual/mental divide, I discuss the significance of education-based professional knowledge, and the *cultural capital* that comes with it. While identifying the forms of economic and cultural capital utilized by activists, I analyze how access to these resources affect the processes of collective action framing.

Methodology

Fieldwork for this study began with the identification of two social movement organizations operating in different parts of Istanbul: public spaces in the city's relatively affluent districts and the informal residential areas known as the *gecekondu* neighborhoods. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with current and former participants of these organizations, though I also consulted secondary resources and movement-generated archival documents to shed light on the past episodes of urban contention in order to better construct a historical narrative. Participants' level of association with the organizations varied; while some

had quasi-leadership statuses within their respective organizations, most were rank-and-file members with sporadic participation. Most interviewees were recruited during an exploratory participant observation stage, while some were accessed through a snowball technique. The participant observations part included attending the weekly meetings (*haftalık forum*) as well as protest events organized by movement organizations. My own social structural location as the researcher and the social networks of which I am part inevitably impacted the research process: I was able to gain access to the movement activities in the city's center, which are overwhelmingly attended by individuals from (new) middle-class backgrounds, with much more ease. My access to *gecekondu* areas, where mobilization (as I explain in Chapter 4) proceeded in a more restrictive manner, was considerably harder. In those cases, I had to depend more heavily on my personal networks to secure access and snowball sampling to recruit more respondents.

I preliminarily conducted two key informant interviews with academics working on similar topics. These interviews were wide-ranging in scope, with broad questions and little effort to control the direction of interviewees' narratives. By interpreting and analyzing the initial interviews, I narrowed down critical themes and constructed an interview guide to follow in the subsequent interviews. The interviews started with questions on the history of respondents' involvement in the movement (why and how they had become movement participants). This part of the questionnaire also aimed to catch how the respondents recalled the past episodes of the mobilization. Ensuing questions sought to identify how the respondents made sense of the transformation going on around them as well as the strategies they believed would be most suitable to advance their goals. The bulk of the interviews consisted of questions aimed at identifying the motivations and values that characterized involvement in mobilization, the processes of bridging

Table 1: Characteristics of Interviewees

Gender	
Male	10
Female	5
Education	
Graduate degree	5
Undergraduate degree	6
High school or less	4
Occupation	
Salaried professional	7
Academic	5
Self-employed	4
Low-skilled worker	2
Unemployed	1
Out of labor force	1
Age	
20-29	4
30-39	5
40-49	4
50-59	2
n=15	

individual and collective interests in movement-building, and the activist visions of a more just and equitable city/neighborhood.

I conducted 15 interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. Table 1 shows the demographic details of the respondent sample. Respondents ranged in age between 27 and 52. One third of them were women. All interviews were conducted in Turkish. The quotations used in this text are my translations. Two interviews were conducted in offices where the respondents work, while the rest took place in social spaces such as cafes and teahouses. Consent was secured from each interviewee in line with the approval by the Institutional Review Board of Koç University. For the purposes of anonymity, no interviewee is referred to by name in this manuscript. Specific positions of respondents are explicated only where an appropriate understanding necessitates doing so. In some cases, a respondent's gender identity may be changed to further disguise his or her

identity. Even though the sample includes diversity in terms of educational and occupational backgrounds, used as indicators of social class position in this study, the size of the respondent sample is the main weakness of this study. Thus, this study by no means claims to be a representative one, it is a modest attempt to explore variation in activist narratives with a class-cultural lens.

No research is context-free. Therefore, I should remind the reader of the historical context in which this research took place. The fieldwork for this study was carried out over seven non-consecutive months (July-September 2015, and April-August 2016). In July 2015, a month after general elections denied majority to the ruling party for the first time after three electoral cycles, a suicide bomber killed 33 left-wing activists in the southeastern town of Suruç. The attack prompted a set of events which officially ended the “resolution process” with the Kurdish minority. The war between the security forces and the guerillas, this time centered on city centers rather than mountainous terrains, costed hundreds of lives, including civilians. In October, a second bomb attack killed 109 people during an anti-war demonstration in Ankara. Turkey had a snap election in November, which didn’t help balance the country’s increasingly de-stabilized political process. Several more bomb attacks occurred in Turkish metropolises, costing civilian lives and creating fear and insecurity among the urban population.

In a country shaken by extra-ordinary tragedies and political instability, grievances related to urban and environmental problems lost their salience. Most interviewees emphasized that the movement has suffered from these macro-political problems. The weekly or monthly meetings began being derailed (if not cancelled) by heated debates on contemporary events. As a result, activists no longer concentrated on their specific agendas, especially when they had differences of

opinion on what was going on in the country.² Public demonstrations were attended by fewer people than before, most likely due to more people hesitating to attend large gatherings out of security concerns. Mobilization intensified only when the public authorities made a sudden move by announcing a new decision that threatened the immediate needs of certain groups of people. This was perhaps not the most conducive time to conduct fieldwork on social movements, especially for a researcher who was conducting his first-ever independent academic research. The particular political context in which the research was conducted might have affected the narratives of the activists and could partly be responsible for the bleakness of the account provided in the following pages.

Finally, interpretation of social reality cannot be independent of the interpreter's social position, ambitions, classed and gendered experiences, and political beliefs. Face-to-face interviews do not necessarily mean that the researcher shares common interests with the groups that are studied, even though the former sympathizes with the causes defended by the latter. I acknowledge that the methods and the findings of this research are not unaffected by my own class and gender identity and my personal interests as a graduate student who works to receive a degree. With that in mind, I am, as a researcher, fully responsible for the voices that are included and excluded in this study.

² Compared to the residents of *gecekondu* neighborhoods, such differences were less common among new middle class activists. Compared to working and lower middle class participants, they were more likely to hold similar opinions on non-urban-related political issues. In politically turbulent times, they devoted much energy to discuss the kind of strategies and tactics to develop outside urban politics. They were more likely to be involved in other kinds of political struggles as well, such as environmental movements, peace activism, student protests.

Structure of the Thesis

To explore the dynamic processes of movement framing in different settings, this study proceeds as follows: The next chapter provides a review of the theories on social movements to identify the gaps in the literature with regard to the ideational content of movements. Then it introduces the class analysis of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in an attempt to fill the gaps in the existing theories of social movements. Third chapter contextualizes today's movements. It presents an historical account of Istanbul's urban politics, starting from the first emergence of informal settlements in the mid-twentieth century until the neoliberal re-making of the urban landscape in the 2000s, with particular attention to state-society relations and the formation of various class interests in different periods. I analyze the fieldwork data in the fourth chapter, which presents and unpacks the "moral economy" and the 'right to the city' frames prevalent in Istanbul's contemporary urban mobilizations. After drawing the contours of the two distinct geographies of urban contention in Istanbul, namely the *gecekondu* neighborhoods threatened by the urban transformation projects and the public spaces re-developed for real-estate investment, I examine the class-analytical underpinnings of mobilization narratives in these two structurally different settings. Finally, the fifth chapter offers conclusive remarks and implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CLASS ANALYSIS

Despite the proliferation of scholarship on social movements and contentious politics in the last decades, there are still a number of significant gaps in the literature. One of those glaring holes in the literature, and the one that is most relevant to the purpose of this study, concerns the factors that cause ideational and strategic variation among movements. In the following pages, I briefly review the central debates in the social movement theory –with a particular attention to the concept of “collective action frame”– in order to point out the narrowness in the field’s analytical focus. I argue that the literature’s central preoccupation with the factors that make mobilization successful leads to a detrimental apathy towards elements that make mobilization, before anything else, desirable. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce key concepts from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice –field, capital, habitus– and claim that a Bourdieusian approach to social class would enrich our understanding of the ideational features of social movements including the processes of grievance interpretation and strategy formulation.

Resource Mobilization and Political Process Theories

Scholars of social movements from various countries and disciplinary backgrounds –most commonly political science and sociology– emphasize three broad sets of factors in explaining the development of social movements: (i) the forms of organizations –formal or informal– available to them, (ii) the *structure* of political opportunities in which movements emerge, and (iii) the processes of meaning-making and interpretation that mediate between structure and agency (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). In a 2009 article, Andrew Walder advances the argument that research on social movements tend to disregard the questions of political orientation by overwhelmingly focusing on the process of mobilization. In the last three decades, he argues, the

central question posed by social movement scholars has been restated as the following: “Given certain motives (or grievances) in a subpopulation, under what conditions and through what processes are these motives translated into *effective* group action?” (Walder 2009, 394, emphasis added). This agenda emerged with a focus on the subpopulation’s command over organizational resources. It later merged with macro-level historical approaches that highlight the dynamics of contention between the mobilizing subpopulation and the political institutions. Finally, it expanded to incorporate social constructivist studies on political culture with emphasis on the role of framing processes in recruitment. The resulting synthesis, Walder argues, overlooks political ideas and beliefs of the movements.

The role of ideas and beliefs in movement emergence have always received some degree of scholarly attention, but this attention has followed a pattern that is neither stable nor harmonious. Marxists scholarship in the twentieth century has debated contentiously about the role of mobilizing ideas and beliefs. Some argued in a deterministic fashion that the revolutionary class consciousness and the ideology it entails would develop spontaneously when the material conditions were right; others contended that such consciousness had to be externally stimulated. In the post-war era, social scientific attention shifted from an analytical interest in the sources and character of mobilizing ideas and beliefs to psychological states of mind that render certain individuals susceptible to such ideas. The classical model on collective action, developed in the 1950s and 1960s, upheld a pluralist view of society in which actors contested each other within the realm of institutional politics (Dahl 1967). From the standpoint of pluralism, extra-institutional action in such an open and responsive system was an anomaly. Why would any rational actor bypass the normal mechanisms of political claim-making and engage in unconventional action? The pluralists’ answer was straightforward: social movements were not rational political activities.

Bundled with other forms of collective behavior such as panics, crazes, and riots; movements were considered to be motivated by psychological factors that produced irrationality. One version of the classical model, rooted in the Parsonian tradition of structural-functionalism, argued that a well-integrated and stable society required an order in which elements of each system and subsystem could maintain in a state of equilibrium. Rapid structural shifts unbalanced the equilibrium and made societies prone to disruption. Individuals who were most affected by change resorted to collective action to remedy their problems. Kornhauser's (1959) mass society thesis asserted that modern societies lacked an extensive structure of intermediary institutions by means of which individuals could feel attached to the social and political life. The resulting anxiety and alienation led isolated individuals to extreme behavior in order to escape atomization. Collective behavior theory, as elaborated by Smelser (1962) and Turner and Killian (1972), emphasized the role of severe social strain as an antecedent for movement emergence. Processes like industrialization, urbanization, and various forms of economic stagnation could disrupt the normal functioning of the society, thus ignite instability and insurgency. This line of reasoning was also championed by some strands of modernization theory in political science (Huntington 1968). In another version of the classical model, derived largely from the role theory, Davies (1962) and Gurr (1970) exemplified the relative deprivation approach. Their core argument was that the discrepancy between a person's subjective expectations and objective conditions provided an impetus for violent behavior to redress dissonance. The status inconsistency created a psychological frustration that bred aggression and made individuals potential recruits for violent movements. In all versions of the early post-war paradigm, the causal sequence moved from some underlying structural force to the disruptive psychological impact it had on individuals. The sequence was completed when

the psychological frustration was accompanied by a set of shared ideas and beliefs about the sources of discontent and the ways to redress it.

The social movements that emerged in the late 1960s challenged the core assumptions of the classical model that dominated the social scientific discourse on collective action in the post-war era. The next generation of movement researchers, who studied the wave of progressive movements around civil rights, feminism, peace, and environment, and whose work constituted the core of today's social movement studies, were dissatisfied with the description of protest as a manifestation of emotional frustration and violent impulses. Drawing on the political science literature on interest groups and political competition as well as the sociological conflict theory and elite theory, they saw protest as a political activity as rational as routine institutional politics. Accordingly, political power is concentrated in the hands of a few groups, referred to as "polity members" by Gamson (1975) and Tilly (1978), depriving outsiders of any input in decision-making processes. Protest then becomes a political tactic designed to further a group's goals, not a psychological reaction to frustration. This paradigm shift, however, represented more than just a disagreement between functionalism and the conflict theory; it veered the theoretical focus of social movement studies from *why* to *how*.

Consequently, the emphasis on the sources of discontent completely disappeared in the works of social movements scholars. The first group of critics, including McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977), developed the resource mobilization theory. They foremost problematized the social psychological premises of the earlier model that associated participation in movements with psychological pathologies such as anxiety and irrationality. As one theorist argued, protestors were "at least as rational as those who study them" (Schwartz 1976, 135). In order to address the free rider dilemma proposed by rational-choice theorist Olson (1965), they underscored the amassing

of resources by movement organizations to bolster their leverage in the political arena. The main argument was that the expansion of the economy in the United States had brought by a rise in the discretionary incomes of potential challengers. As income increases, the absolute and relative amount of resources available to people also increase. Resource mobilization theory, in its entrepreneurial form, holds that a possible solution to the free-rider problem is shifting the attention away from individual cost-benefit calculations to the pooling of resources in organizational venues. It believes, as Wilson (1973, 55) argued, “since societies are rarely stable, in equilibrium, or without strain ... the forces which have the potential of producing social movements are always present in some degree.” Because the normal world is never free from structural strain, mobilization theorists concentrate on identifying the contingencies that trigger movement activity. In their own words, McCarthy and Zald (1977, 1215) searched “for a perspective and set of assumptions that lead to a de-emphasis upon grievances,” thus downplaying the significance of deprivation and grievance in favor of the availability of resources.

On the other hand, scholars who advocated the “political opportunity structure” thesis argued that neither intense grievances nor extensive resources were sufficient to mobilize a group. This approach shifted the focus of inquiry from the movements themselves to the larger political process in which they emerge.³ What makes social movements possible, accordingly, is the

³ The term “political process model” was used by Doug McAdam (1982) to designate his theory of movement emergence as outlined in *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. The book provided a criticism of both the classical collective behavior paradigm and the early resource mobilization theory. However, the distinction between resource mobilization and political process models blurred over time, and the emerging synthesis that compounded “political opportunities”, “mobilizing structures”, and “framing processes” (discussed below) came to be known as the “political process theory”.

opening of political opportunities of which actors could take advantage. The term “political opportunity structure” was first used by Eisinger (1973), who compared the protest movements in different American cities by focusing on the degree of openness or closure of their respective political systems. He found that some cities preempted protest by encouraging more accessible political mechanisms to redress grievances. Tilly (1978) later contributed to this emerging perspective by introducing ideas about repression and facilitation. McAdam (1982) placed even greater emphasis on the broader environment in which movements mobilized by examining factors such as demography, migration, and political economy. A parallel development was Skocpol’s (1979) state-centered view on the outbreak of revolutions, which brought the analysis of political environment into the center. These studies’ primary concern was examining the impact various structural changes had on the emergence of the movements. Focusing on the mobilization of groups -in terms of how they organized, recruited members, and achieved their aims- they re-defined the scope of theoretical questions. The emerging tradition excels at explaining the variation in movement activity and outcome by describing the historical and institutional backdrop for major episodes of contention, but falls short of accounting for the “substantive content” of movements (Walder 2009, 198). In result, the intellectual horizon of the studies on social movements has become limited to the process of mobilization, paying much less attention to the questions about the social and political conditions that generate motivations for collective action in the first place. The puzzle that has interested most scholars since the 1970s has been concerned with the internal and external conditions that facilitate or obstruct the mobilization of people around pre-existing identities and pre-defined interests.

Framing

Resource mobilization and political process theories shifted the focus of social movement studies from social psychology to organizations and politics. For the same reason, they have been criticized by scholars with social constructivist perspectives. The proponents of resource mobilization and political process theories fail to acknowledge the extent to which material conditions such as economic threats or state repression are themselves subject to differential interpretation and thus do not necessarily generate grievances sufficient to mobilize deprived groups. The variation in the subjective interpretation of objective conditions was a theme that was hinted at during the early years of the field's development. For example, Turner (1969, 391) argued that the emergence of a movement was partly dependent on its ability to re-define a problem as an "injustice" that needs to be redressed rather than a mere "misfortune." Likewise, Piven and Cloward (1977, 12) suggested that "the social arrangements that are ordinarily perceived as just and immutable must come to seem both unjust and mutable" for movements to emerge. Even McAdam (1982, 48), whose work has been considered the canonical piece in the political process paradigm, stressed the crucial process of "cognitive liberation" on the part of challengers as an insufficient but necessary condition of mobilization. "Mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations," he argued. However, the ideational aspect of movement building did not figure predominantly in the mainstream perspectives on social movements that emerged in the 1970s.

It was in response to this theoretical void that some scholars came to appreciate that grievances and motivations cannot be taken for granted. Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford's (1986) article on "frame alignment processes" suggested bringing the ideas back in by seeking a middle ground between social psychological and structural approaches. Framing perspective is

rooted in the symbolic interactionist principle that meanings arise through interpretive processes rather than naturally or automatically attaching themselves to situations, events, or objects (Goffman 1974). In contrast to the dominant view of social movements as carriers of pre-existing ideas and goals, the framing perspective views movements as agents actively engaged in the creation and reproduction of meanings for their constituencies. That is, “they frame, or assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford 1988, 198). “Collective action frames” are the products of this framing activity that social movement organizers do on a regular basis.

Framing perspective arose amid the theoretical debates within the resource mobilization camp, thus tends to speak to the ways in which collective action frames are utilized by social movement organizations to mobilize support. Accordingly, organizations must attempt to link their interpretive frames with those of potential supporters, a process called “frame bridging” in the literature (Benford and Snow 2000). Framing processes are constituted in part as movement participants negotiate a shared understanding of a problematic condition that they believe is in need of change, assign responsibility regarding what or who to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in a concerted effort. Snow and Benford (1988) delineate these aspects as the three core framing tasks of movement organizations: “diagnostic framing” (identifying problems and defining grievances), “prognostic framing” (suggesting solutions and selecting strategies), and “motivational framing” (establishing consensus and building a *rationale for action*).

The early frame-analytical theoretical interventions were well-received within the field of social movement studies. The perspective then became quickly integrated into the existing

framework (for example, see McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, Tarrow 2011). However, the incorporation of the cultural elements of movement building has proceeded rather so narrowly that the framing concept tends to prove inadequate for grasping the multidimensional ways in which culture shapes collective action. According to McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald's (1996, 6, emphasis added) definition, framing refers to "the *conscious, strategic efforts* by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action." Such strategic effort are undoubtedly important in movement building, but treating the cultural elements of mobilization merely as strategic tools ignores that culture also shares action in ways that are not always intentional or instrumental (for example, see Swidler 1986). Seen in this way, culture also constrains and enables framing processes in a manner that may not even be recognizable to actors themselves.

This line for criticism of the framing approach was particularly argued for by Steinberg (1998, 1999). Referring to the process theorist Tilly's (1993) concept of collective action repertoires, he argued that "discursive repertoires" restrict the set of meanings available to challengers. Framing perspective tends to pay insufficient attention to the context-specific emergence of discourses, rhetorics and meanings that movement participants articulate. In contrast, frames are often discussed as if they were self-contained and pre-given packages of meaning to which movements select to find the one that fits or resonates best with the sensibilities of their potential recruits. (Goodwin and Jasper 2004, Crossley 2002). This is in part due to the rationalist bias of many movement scholars, who tend to dichotomize frames as either successful or unsuccessful. Therefore, frames are usually taken into analytical consideration as "independent variables" that predict positive outcome or the lack of it (Snow and Oliver 1995). For example, Gamson and Meyer (1996) argued that the extent that political opportunity structures facilitate

movement success is dependent on whether or not they are framed correctly; Cress and Snow (2000) examined how different collective action frames affected the variation in the outcomes of 15 homeless social movement organization in eight American cities. However, as Steinberg (1999, 743)) argues, frames are more than material resources which actors can pick up to mobilize support. The assumptions of the rational choice theory that underlie the resource mobilization and political process theories miss the social constructionist notion that frames are also constitutive aspects of actors' subjectivity from which they cannot necessarily detach themselves:

It is problematic to characterize social movement framing as both an exercise in reality construction of genuinely held senses of injustice and identity, while simultaneously holding that activists and [social movement organizations] strategically manipulate and align frames to mobilize consensus. This can create an excessive voluntarism, vitiating the understanding of discourse as a stock of contested codes and meanings that impose boundaries on the ways in which people understand and represent their lives.

In sum, the development of the field of social movement studies since the 1970s has neglected questions about the origins of actors' social and political ideas, beliefs, and dispositions. The orthodox Marxist notion that all social and political interests are essentially determined by the economic interests of social classes is out of fashion; and the classical model's treatment of movement participants as irrational agents has no more appeal. Research on social movements tends to focus exclusively on the processes through which extant political ideas are translated into effective collective action and the factors that make mobilization successful whereas it overlooks the conditions within which actors interpret grievances and formulate political demands. As Walder (2009) argues, the idea that actors' receptivity to different ideas (or frames) has something to do with their social circumstances should be re-instated as a guiding principle of scholarship in social and political behavior. How does variation in individuals' social circumstances or

experiences affect their responses to different frames? What makes a certain frame more attractive in specific settings and not in others?

Bourdieu

This section argues that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice can shed light on the shortcomings within the social movement literature as discussed earlier in this chapter. Even though Bourdieu himself did not specifically deal with social movements in his writings, his work can be seen as a synthesis of structural and cultural approaches to social movements. The significance of Bourdieu's theoretical framework for the study of social movements is well-illustrated by several works such as Eder (1993), Crossley (1999), Bloemraad (2001), Goldberg (2003), Haluza-DeLay (2008), Tugal (2009b), and Husu (2013), among others. The Bourdieusian framework, which arguably attempts to overcome dualisms such as structural and constructionist, objective and subjective, material and cultural, allows us to investigate the preconditions for movement emergence in different social spaces and the determinants of cognitive schemas within which actors define their interests and take their political positions.

The fundamental starting point of Bourdieu's class analysis is that class is more than simply the production relations (in the Marxist sense) or the market relations (in the Weberian sense). Class is also about the principles of *distinction* in the social and cultural sense, the differences in the condition of life that are tied up with those principles, and the positions and "dispositions" associated with them. Social world, accordingly, can be portrayed as a *social space* constructed based on the principles of distinction. In the Bourdieusian version of field theory, understanding an event or a social phenomenon requires examining the social space within which the interactions occur (see also Martin 2003). Thus, Bourdieu's concept of fields is compatible with the central premise of the political process theory, that is, wider societal structures and processes influence

the emergence and development of social movements. It also allows us to identify, map, and explore the structural conditions within which grievances and demands arise. Fields, as social spaces, are conceptualized as structures of distinction between individuals, groups, and institutions, where the position of each agent is determined based on the distribution of different forms of resources that have currency in that social space (Bourdieu 1985).

In contemporary societies, Bourdieu argues, there are three major forms of capital. First and foremost, there is economic capital, which refers to the sum of one's wealth, income, and property ownership. Second, actors also have what Bourdieu calls cultural capital. This is a famous and sometimes misunderstood term, which Bourdieu variously uses to refer to tastes and preferences as well as educational credentials and formal knowledge that actors use to accumulate further capital (for an overview, see Lamont and Lareau 1988). It basically encompasses all cultural attitudes that are mobilized for social differentiation and selection, "[including] a certain mode of using language, i.e. having an elaborate, extended vocabulary and 'correct' grammar, ... a capacity to articulate and formalize abstract principles of, and logical relations between, items and experiences in the world, whether in relation to art, the natural world, the social relations" (Atkinson 2015, 62), thus seen as fundamental indicator of class position. The concept of cultural capital makes Bourdieu's approach to social class strikingly different from that of Marx, who had dichotomized classes on the basis of their relations to the means of production. For Bourdieu, by contrast, the twentieth century obscured the class structure by means of the partial separation between the ownership of and the control over the means of production, the growth of public-sector and non-profit employment distinguished by the importance of mental labor vis-à-vis manual labor, and the increasing salience of technical and cultural forms of knowledge. Third, Bourdieu also talks about social capital, which refers to resources based on the social networks

within which actors are embedded and which can be used to accrue other forms of capital.⁴ Actors within a particular society occupy an objective position within the social space according to the volume and composition of their capital portfolio. Among the upper classes, for instance, there are those whose wealth is weighted towards economic capital (industrialists, commercial employers) as well as those whose wealth leans towards the direction of cultural capital (tenured professors, artists).

Agents and groups of agents are ... defined by their relative positions within [the social] space. Each of them is assigned to a position or a precise class of neighboring positions (i.e., a particular region in this space) ... The active properties that are selected as principles of construction of the social space are the different kinds of power or capital that are current in the different fields. Capital, which may exist in objectified form - in the form of material properties - or, in the case of cultural capital, in the embodied state, and which may be legally guaranteed, represents a power over the field (at a given moment) and, more precisely, over the accumulated product of past labor (in particular over the set of instruments of production) and thereby over the mechanisms tending to ensure the production of a particular category of goods and so over a set of incomes and profits. The kinds of capital, like the aces in a game of cards, are powers that define the chances of profit in a given field (Bourdieu 1985, 724).

Furthermore, position in the social space organizes agents' dispositions and practices. Much of Bourdieu's best-known work is grounded on the relation between the "position" in the field and the "disposition" of actors, in other words, how location in the social space shapes actors' experiences, life chances, and position-takings through what Bourdieu calls *habitus* (Bourdieu 1998, 1984). *Habitus* is another famous concept Bourdieu contributed to social science, referring

⁴ Bourdieu does mention a fourth form of capital, called symbolic capital, which refers to all the other three forms of capital when deemed legitimate and therefore recognized.

to “the mental structures through which [actors] apprehend the social world” (Bourdieu 1989, 18). It determines “[our] complex of durable dispositions, propensities, or inclinations to do certain things, our tastes and our likes, but most fundamentally it is how we see, appreciate and value things” (Atkinson 2015, 66), and varies according to actors’ location in the social space. The notion of habitus points to the significance of social-structural location in shaping action. For the same reason, it also fills the gaps within the movements literature with regards to grievance interpretation and framing, implying that collective action frames take different shapes depending on the social circumstances within which they emerge. Based on their material and social conditions, different groups tend to have different habitus, thus different levels of attentiveness to different frames.

[Social agents] are, rather, bearers of capital and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 108).

This suggests that the resonance of a frame will also depend on the capital portfolios of potential adherents. The grievance interpretation process operates based on the relative amounts of economic and cultural capital actors possess. In other words, the variation in the demands and strategies of different movement groups can be attributed to the differences in the structure of the capital their members possess. Position in the field determines the nature of the interests and demands put forth by the movements.⁵ Therefore, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus shares similarities

⁵ This also suggests that issue-framing is more than just a strategic maneuver undertaken by movement entrepreneurs: “The successful preacher is one who formulates for the groups or classes he addresses a message which the objective conditions determining material and symbolic interests

with the framing perspective in social movements literature; but, in contrast to most accounts of framing, it also pays attention to the social conditions within which frames come into being. As Crossley (2008, 93-94) argues:

The differences between the habitus of manual and white collar workers can be explained by reference to their respective distances from “necessity;” that is, how far removed they are, in economic terms, from a situation in which they would be unable to provide for their biological needs for food, shelter, etc. Manual workers often live so close to the breadline ... that their lifestyle is little more than a functional adaptation to the exigencies of survival. ... Richer individuals, by contrast, enjoy sufficient distance from the imperatives of survival that they are free to pursue more aesthetic concerns. ... This is true of the culturally rich who enjoy distance from material necessity but whose real resource advantage, relative to others, is their culture.

Bourdieu’s class analysis suggests that individuals who share a similar position also shares similar work and life conditions. The proximity in the social space, according to Bourdieu, tends to generate an intersubjective proximity that manifests itself in cognitive as well as physical closeness. Actors who are located closely in the social space tend to have similar position-takings, making it possible for them to act as collective actors in light of their similar interests. Bourdieu calls these groups of actors *probable classes*:

On the basis of knowledge of the space of positions, one can separate out *classes*, in the logical sense of the word, i.e., sets of agents who occupy similar positions

of those groups have predisposed them to attend to and take in. In other words, the apparent relationship between prophecy and its audience must be reversed: the religious or political prophet always preaches to the converted and follows his disciples at least as much as they follow him, since his lessons are listened to and heard only by agents who, by everything they are, have objectively mandated him to give them lessons” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1996, 25-26).

and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. This "class on paper" has the *theoretical* existence that is that of theories: insofar as it is the product of an explanatory classification, entirely similar to those of zoologists or botanists, it makes it possible to *explain* and predict the practices and properties of the things classified - including their group-forming practices. It is not really a class, an *actual* class, in the sense of a group, a group mobilized for struggle; at most, it might be called a *probable* class, inasmuch as it is a set of agents that will present fewer hindrances to efforts at mobilization than any other set of agents (1985, 725).

Finally, Bourdieu's approach to social class can help alleviate certain impasses put forth by the "end of classes" thesis. Over the past decades, the class analysis of social movements experienced a crisis. Working class movements all over the world have declined either by appeasement or suppression. As Aronowitz (1992, 15) notes, the political context of the post-1970s has been marked by "a discernible decline in politics in which class, rather than race, gender, or ethnicity was a crucial element." The grammar of political claim-making has shifted from class-based interests that seeks to remedy material deprivation through redistribution to other issues, arguably novel (cf. Calhoun 1993), that have been variously conceived as "post-materialist" issues, "recognition" struggles, and "identity politics" (see for example Inglehart 1990, Fraser 1995, Bernstein 2005, respectively). The change in the nature of social movements was soon reflected in the studies on movements. Political economic and class-analytical research on social movements disappeared from the literature, especially in the United States (Hetland and Goodwin 2013).

Concurrent to the crises of class analysis in social movements, several commentators have proclaimed the death of social class as a useful explanatory category. The developments within capitalism and the changing dynamics of the economic structure arguably made class irrelevant. As early as late 1950s, Nisbet (1959) argued that class analysis was abortive outside of historical

interrogations because of the economic changes that have altered the class structure such that the majority of occupations did no longer fall into the established class categories. More recently, sociologists and political scientists have argued that economic factors lost their deterministic power in identity formation, and cultural issues have assigned increasing prominence to non-class-based identities such as gender, ethnicity, and life-style (Pakulski and Waters 1996, Clark and Lipset 1991, Vanneman and Cannon 1987). These arguments paralleled the post-modern and post-industrial accounts of the modern society (Bell 1973, Touraine 1971, Beck 1992, Crook, Pakulski, and Waters 1992).

On the other hand, a Bourdieusian approach to class analysis rejects the treatment of social classes as already-existing entities in the social structure. In this sense, Bourdieu resonates the arguments made by E. P. Thompson (1968), who argued that classes do not exist objectively, rather they are *made* through collective action and struggle. Wacquant (1991, 51) called this tendency a “fictitious goal” based upon the “urge to solve ‘on paper’ what is not resolved in reality.” By replacing the concept of class structure with that of social space, conceptualized as the multidimensional distribution of the various forms of capital among social actors, Bourdieu exemplifies a refusal of an objective understanding of classes flowing directly from the economic structure. His framework invites scholars to study the material and symbolic struggles over class and between classes, to engage in comparative and historical investigations of how actors located in various positions on the social space do or do not act as collectivities, and to examine the dynamic relationships between various actors in the social space as well as the role of state in these classification struggles.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: URBAN POLITICS IN ISTANBUL AND THE FORMATION OF THE URBAN MOVEMENT FIELD

This chapter provides a historical account of the urban social movement *field* in Istanbul with particular attention to the state-society relations and the development of various forms of capital. The information presented in this chapter is mainly derived from secondary sources on Istanbul and its political-economic history; however, the data collected for this study also helped create a cohesive narrative on the formation and development of the *field* of urban movements. Existing literature on urban social movements identifies three main types of relationship between the state and various urban mobilizations (for an overview, see Eraydın and Taşan-Kök 2014). The first type includes clientelist policies that developed in response to residents' demand for fair collective consumption and better living opportunities in cities. The second type emerged after the retrenchment of the Fordist welfare regimes and the national developmentalist states. Referred to as "new entrepreneurialism," this type administered innovative and participatory forms of government. Finally, the third type involves the coercive pacification of challengers into neo-liberal urban management through authoritarian and punitive state interventions.

Correspondingly, a tripartite periodization can be sketched out in Istanbul's urban politics. The first period covers roughly between 1950 and 1980, when Turkish political economy was dominated by state-led industrialization efforts that set in motion rapid urbanization and massive migration. This period was characterized by a lack of comprehensive urban planning and inadequate housing policy. Urban movements that developed in squatter settlements formed by migrants demanded better access to collective goods and in some cases combined their struggles with other left-wing organizations. In the wake of the 1980 military coup, Turkey abandoned its mixed economy model in favor of economic liberalization. In this period, aspirations to become a

“global city” attracted huge volumes of investment, re-drawing the contours of social and economic life in Istanbul. A new form of urban government that made room for greater cooperation between the state and civil society appeased the oppositional demands of urban movements. New forms of collective action, now including middle class participants as well, emerged around issues pertaining to local culture and autonomy. The third period, which covers the post-2000s era during which the government’s neoliberal administration of the urban land market became increasingly authoritarian, have engendered mobilizations in both the city’s informal neighborhoods who lost the advantages granted to them by the previous wave of urban populism and the middle class activists who are feeling aggrieved by the economic and cultural ramifications of the neoliberal urban policy which entails wide-spread commodification of public land to the benefit of private interests.

Clientelist Urbanization

Istanbul lost its privileged status as the seat of political power and economic activity in the early Republican period. This was a three-decades long process that accompanied the nation-building efforts of the republican elite. According to Keyder (1999c), in the early republican period, Istanbul signified a multi-cultural history that needed to be censored for the successful realization of the national ideals. The new regime abandoned Istanbul and invested heavily in Ankara, the state’s new capital in central Anatolia, which was showcased as the republican version of urban modernity to the detriment of the cosmopolitan Istanbul. Statist economic policies of the inter-war republican regime focused on developing the inner parts of the country. The growing nationalist sentiments simultaneously translated into hostility towards religious and ethnic minorities. The size of the non-Muslim community in Istanbul, once constituted the backbone of the financial activity, dramatically shrank. Many Armenian and Jewish families felt forced to leave the country

under the burden of punitive legal mechanisms, if not outright violence, while their properties were being nationalized. As a result, before 1960s, Istanbul lost a sizeable portion of its middle class (merchants, shopkeepers, artisans).

The city's situation significantly shifted as of the late 1950s. Food shortages and the subsequent rise of the black market during the 1940s had created a new group of provincial profiteers, who moved to Istanbul to seek better investment opportunities and later became the nucleus of the city's new industrial elite (Keyder 2008). Following a decade of free market triumphalism with an agrarian populist discourse, Turkey's post-1960 economic development was based on a state-protected import substitution industrialization (Öniş and Şenses 2007). Istanbul regained its status as the center of economic growth, hosting large-scale, state-subsidized manufacturing enterprises alongside a large number of small-scale, labor-intensive, informal businesses. The state's failure to implement successful land reform in the countryside, coupled with increasing mechanization of agriculture, provided a push factor for migration out of the rural areas, whereas the ever-expanding formal and informal job market in Istanbul afforded a strong pull factor. The population in Istanbul rose from over one million in 1950 to three million in 1970, seven million 1990, ten million in 2000, and finally around fifteen million today.

The supply of inner-city land Istanbul was far too limited to accommodate the large influx of rural migrants. The social housing policies, on the other hand, had always been inadequate. Although the shortage of housing was recognized as a national problem as of the 1940s, government's housing projects remained limited to the employees of state economic enterprises and civil servants. Redistributive policy in the area of housing included provision of subsidized credits by governmental agencies; however, most mass housing projects supported by the

government ended up developing middle and upper-middle income housing units instead of providing low-cost housing to migrant workers (Buğra 1998).

Due to the unaffordability of rent, the newcomers started squatting the available public land at the outskirts. Squatter housing on public land came to be known as *gecekondu* (literally translated as “landed overnight”). Like in many other cities in the developing world (Gilbert and Gugler 1982, Fernandes and Varley 1998, Harms 1992), these settlements have become the most popular source of housing during the following decades. In an urban context where the government was either unable or unwilling to address the housing needs of the masses, *gecekondu* was the only viable option. The state’s initial reaction was to combat informality, but soon enough it was acknowledged that the cheap labor force in the squatters was vital for both the city’s burgeoning industrialists and political actors who needed consolidated electoral constituencies. In result, in the absence of a sound low-income housing policy, *gecekondu* settlements not only provided a “moral” solution to the housing needs of the workers, but also generated a platform for long-lasting patronage relations between the politicians and the voters.

In most *gecekondu* areas, collective action continued after the initial settlement in the form of campaigning for collective goods. Keyder (1999a) notes that the settlement went on demanding more and better access to municipal services once they evolved into neighborhoods. The periphery of Istanbul was run by newly established municipalities, which had relatively higher autonomy and a need to establish popular legitimacy in the eyes of the local residents. Pressured by electoral concerns in the context of a recent shift to multi-party system, both central and local governments were sympathetic to collective demands. Accordingly, *gecekondu* reality was officially recognized in the *Gecekondu Act* of 1966. The law legitimized squatting and authorized provision of basic public services (Erman 2001). The migrants’ relationship with the state went through a dramatic

transition once they left their rural hometowns and became urban dwellers. In the countryside, their interaction with the state had been intermediated by local notables such as the *muhtar* (the elected head of a village) or large landowners to whom they were economically dependent (Özler 2000). In the urban setting, however, they enjoyed greater economic and political independence, which put them in a more direct contact with the local and national politicians. Karpat (1976, 198) argues that the act of negotiating “transformed the traditional and mythical *devlet baba* [father state], an aloof, authoritarian semi-deity, into a living government, into a human organization that could be manipulated to do or undo certain acts.” Accordingly, the political behavior of *gecekondu* settlers operated largely on the basis of clientelist negotiations. While their votes went to conservative political parties throughout the 1950s and 1960s; CHP [Republican People’s Party], shifting from an elite cadre of the center to “the left of the center” of the political spectrum, gained large support among the residents in mid-1970s, particularly due to its promise to issue title deeds to existing *gecekondu* settlements (Özler 2000).

The clientelist nature of the state-society relations was shattered during the late 1970s, when the country’s economic model faced substantial challenges in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis. The economic downturn affected almost all sectors of the society, extinguishing the optimism of the immediate post-war era. Moreover, the economic crises inflated a political one. Left-wing organizations gained larger ground among the urban poor as well as the students. The social conflicts were being increasingly articulated in terms of class and inequality. *Gecekondu* neighborhoods, in addition to universities, became the central locus of the social movements of the era. While the pre-1970s *gecekondu* mobilizations tended to be disconnected and weak, they proved to be a larger and more stronger political force in the late 1970s (Aslan 2004). Some *gecekondu* neighborhoods that became the sites of radical politics, where young militants

volunteered to help poorer migrants with construction, spreading revolutionary ideas and recruiting members, came to be known as “liberated zones” [*kurtarılmış bölgeler*] (Tugal 2008).⁶

Istanbul as a “Global City”

Political polarization of the late-1970s, coupled with the deteriorating economic conditions, paved the way for a military coup d'état in 1980. The dictatorship of 1980-83 subdued the militant activism both in factories and *gecekondu* neighborhoods, while simultaneously leading the country from state-led developmentalism to a free market economy in line with the standards set forth by the Washington Consensus (Keyder 2004, Öniş 2010). Turkey witnessed drastic developments during the 1980s, all of which aimed at creating an open, competitive market fully integrated with the world economy. After the restoration of electoral democracy, ANAP [Motherland Party], a center-right party that represented a coalition various interest groups including most significantly the export-oriented industrialists, led Turkey's path towards further neoliberalization. The new government's pro-market stance aspired to integrate Turkish economy into the global markets. In the urban political field, this meant making Istanbul an emergent global, at least regional, center for finance, culture, and tourism. In the 1980s and 1990s, the city's transformation was mainly analyzed in light of the growing literature on global cities (Keyder and Öncü 1994, Keyder 1999b, Aksoy 1996, see also Friedmann 1986, Sassen 1991).

⁶ Some studies claim a direct link between the leftist opposition of the 1970s and today's *gecekondu* mobilizations (for example, see Ünsal 2014). Although some radical left-wing organizations are still active in some neighborhoods, the data for this study (presented in detail in the next chapter) suggests that activist narratives tend to avoid making such a connection. The revolutionary wave of the 1970s is commonly associated with “anarchy” in today's political lexicon.

In the early 1980s, the national government passed several local government reforms that would change the future of Turkish cities. First was the implementation of a new model of municipal governance, which oversaw the establishment of metropolitan municipalities whose authority could surpass the legislation of the dozens of smaller district municipalities in large cities as well as the hurdles of bureaucratic checks and balances operating from Ankara, thus creating an all-powerful post of metropolitan mayor. In addition, financial resources allocated to municipalities were rapidly increased for the purpose of making cities more attractive to global investment. The national government of the period worked in close coordination with Istanbul's mayor, Bedrettin Dalan, another ANAP politician, whose policies directed the national funds into investment-friendly projects designed to enhance the global image of Istanbul. Large-scale infrastructural projects, including new highways and a second bridge over the Bosphorus, were undertaken to attract foreign investment. Multinational corporations opened high-rise office buildings in Istanbul's newly developing business districts, in parallel to the construction of numerous luxurious hotels reserved for international business-people and tourists. These projects led to a dramatic transformation in Istanbul's urban landscape (Keyder and Öncü 1994). Even though protests from various segments of the society emerged, they were rather inchoate and ephemeral.

Istanbul's path to globalization also produced significant transformations in its economic and social base. There was a notable shift from manufacturing sector to finance and services. Employment in the service industry -including marketing, accounting, consulting, telecommunications, banking and finance, and real estate- skyrocketed. The increase in the size and power of young urban professionals employed in the service sector led to the emergence of a "new" middle class around the globe. Unlike the bourgeoisie and the traditional petty bourgeoisie,

this new middle class does not own any means of production. On the other hand, unlike the working class, the new middle class exerts some measure of effective control over organizational assets and autonomy over the conditions of work (Wright 1997). In the post-1980 Turkey, intense urbanization, market liberalization, rising enrollments in higher education, and the expanding participation of women in the labor market contributed to the rise of a new middle class with “strong global attachments, ... technological literacy, cultural resources, language skills, and institutional involvement” (Emrence 2008, 54). On the other hand, in addition to the steady fall of industrial wages, the newly emerging relations of outsourcing and subcontracting moved the production processes from large enterprises to small-scale, specialized, flexible units, thus expanding the scope of the informal market (Aksoy 1996, Buğra 2003). In result, social polarization between the two poles of the social spectrum became more visible, in terms of income levels, education, spaces of residence, consumption habits and daily life practices (Keyder 1999c, 2005).

The consequences of structural adjustment were quite unpopular. Wages declined, income distribution deteriorated, various subsidization mechanisms disappeared, social expenditures diminished, unemployment, de-unionization, and informal labor grew exponentially. Nonetheless, ANAP managed to garner significant popular support especially in urban areas throughout the 1980s. According to Keyder and Öncü (1994), the party’s popularity among the urban poor stemmed from its discovery of urban populism. This involved a series of “amnesties,” implicitly condoning the appropriation of the public land, followed by the provision of greater infrastructural investments and services. Increasing demand for the limited supply of urban land created a speculative housing market in Istanbul. Having acquired a quasi-ownership status of their dwellings, *gecekondu* residents could enjoy the lucrateness of the urban housing market. Indeed,

in a welfare regime that was grossly inadequate in providing social protection (Buğra and Keyder 2006), ownership and rent-seeking became an informal redistributive policy and an important mechanism through which the urban masses could cope with the insecurities of economic liberalization and declining wages, and without which a more dramatic level of inequality could emerge (Baslevant and Dayoglu 2005). Retroactive grant of certain claims to squatters and the tolerance towards their entrepreneurial make-over helped maintain an urban populist coalition, consisting of employers looking for cheap labor, politicians seeking votes, and working-class communities in need of affordable and sustainable housing.

The amnesties not only changed the legal status of the *gecekondu*, but also transformed its physical characteristics. Once the squatters were to a certain extent confident that their houses were not going to be demolished in a foreseeable future, they began physical renovation on their buildings. After some time, *gecekondu* dwellings ceased to be slum-like settlements with one-story units and turned into concrete, multiple-storey apartment blocks (Buğra 1998). The apartment units are usually inhabited by extended family members, if not rented out to incoming migrants. Living in such an arrangement works as a poverty prevention mechanism in case of temporary unemployment (Keyder 2005). Furthermore, the legal and physical improvements in many *gecekondu* settlements were accompanied by a change in the nature of socio-economic relations within the neighborhood. *Gecekondu* settlements became “an undeniable aspect of the urban land market with an important commercial potential which could be entrepreneurially exploited” (Buğra 1998, 311). Therefore, many *gecekondu* neighborhoods were no longer sites of precariousness and marginality, rather became areas where various social groups rushed to gain some profit from rapidly rising land values. A new form of housing construction, commonly referred as “build and sell” (*yap-sat*), emerged out of a cooperation between squatters and small

capital owners. In this arrangement, the landowner, who have no resources to improve the building, gets an entrepreneur to demolish and replace it with a multi-story apartment, and then the original owner and the developer share the revenue from newly created apartment units (Enlil 2011). The entrepreneurial upgrading of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods created an economically stratified community. Many residents improved their economic conditions by renting out apartment units in their buildings, while some others had to rent these units due to limited economic resources. The stratification intensified especially after the number of Kurdish migrants escalated in the 1990s, fleeing from military campaigns against the guerilla movement, who mostly ended up as tenants in old *gecekondu* neighborhoods, occupying a distinctly lower status in the social hierarchy (Keyder 2005).

Erman (2001) argues that the “apartmentalization” of *gecekondu* signified that the ex-rural migrants occupying Istanbul’s periphery was becoming increasingly integrated into the urban life without necessarily assimilating into the modern urban lifestyle. The dominant public discourse on *gecekondu*, therefore, shifted from “the disadvantage Other” to “the undeserving rich Other,” leading to a widening cultural gap between *gecekondu* residents and the modernizing urban elite. The *gecekondu* population was defined as a sub-culture, distinguished by its peculiar combination of rural and urban lifestyles. She also observed that a new discourse in media and academia began to perceive *gecekondu* residents as a threat. A “stigmatizing topographic lexicon” (Wacquant 2007) emerged, embodied by the term *varoş* that denotes the informal neighborhoods at the outskirts of the city and carries a strongly negative connotation. According to Erman, the term has political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Culturally, it refers to the incapability of people from the *varoş* to become adapted to the urban lifestyles, norms, and values due to the limits of their educational background and cultural capital.

The social polarization of the late 1980s and early 1990s were further exacerbated by the political developments. In the run-up to the 1994 local elections, all major political parties except the Islamist RP [Welfare Party] embraced a pro-globalization stance, which was then becoming increasingly unpopular among the lower classes (Özler 2000). By alluding to those who were excluded by the global city project, Islamists secured a shocking victory in the elections. Islamists' victory in the elections frightened the seculars, who felt uneasy with the religiously-themed cultural refashioning of Istanbul (Bartu 1999, Bora 1999). Under Mayor Erdoğan, the Istanbul metropolitan municipality increased control over alcohol consumption and introduced more and more Islamic symbols and practices into public places (Çınar 2005).

The 1990s also witnessed the blossoming of Turkish civil society (Keyman and İçduygu 2003), leading to a growth in the number of middle class organizations as well as the emergence of various forms of identity politics (Ayata 1997, Şimşek 2004). Erman and Coşkun-Yıldar (2007) note that new forms of local mobilizations emerged in Istanbul (as well as Ankara) in this period. The new middle classes in the city's modern neighborhoods built grass-roots initiatives to protect their local identity vis-à-vis the growing ideological threat of Islamism. According to the authors, mobilizations in places like Cihangir and Beyoğlu was centered around political-ideological divisions along the lines of secularism versus Islamism, and aimed at defending their cosmopolitan identities against the politically induced cultural re-structuring of the city which they perceived as undesirable.

In parallel to the emergence of new middle class mobilizations in the 1990s, the rising economic inequality within the city also triggered a search for an "unpolluted life" by the middle and upper-middle classes of Istanbul. Moving out of their apartments in the relatively heterogeneous inner-city neighborhoods, professional Istanbulites started settling into gated

communities in newly flourishing suburbs (Öncü 1997, Geniş 2007, Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008). These compounds are self-contained, guarded living spaces, usually with their own shopping areas, sport centers, and cafes. For the executive, technical, and professional elites, who have international connections and global consumption habits, enriched under the impact of the globalizing economy, they provide a refuge from not only the physical insecurities but also the cultural chaos of the city center (Keyder 1999a, Enlil 2011).

Therefore, Istanbul entered the current period of neoliberal urbanization with increasing political and cultural polarization. *Gecekondu* residents benefitted from the urban populism of the post-1980 era by means of the amnesties granted to them amid rising land values, whereas the newly-emerging, upwardly-mobile, and globally-connected middle class citizens felt increasingly insecure about the cultural transformation of the city.

Political Islam and “Bulldozer Neoliberalism” in the 2000s

The military intervention in 1997 temporarily interrupted the Islamist mobilization; yet a moderate wing of the outlawed RP, under the leadership of the former Istanbul Mayor Erdoğan, re-grouped under the umbrella of AKP [Justice and Development Party], and won a landslide victory in 2002 general elections. Even before becoming the Prime Minister, Erdoğan already jettisoned his anti-liberal, pro-poor stance, and adopted a pro-business discourse, acknowledging the economic rationality of attracting the global capital and tourism into Istanbul (Bora 1999). AKP’s neoliberal economic policies were initially implemented without much resistance from the urban masses, who agreed to the reconstruction of the city, and the economy as a whole, with a religious flavor (Tugal 2007, 2009a).

As the growing literature on urban neo-liberalism suggests, contemporary cities compete to secure an advantageous position in the global market by transforming their urban landscapes in

a way that is conducive to market-friendly capital investment and accumulation (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002, Harvey 2005). In addition, while neoliberalism is supposed to create markets independent of any kind of state intervention, the “actually-existing neoliberalism” entails a dramatic intensification of coercive and punitive state intervention to protect the market-oriented logic (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Wacquant 2012). The AKP rule in Turkey has been marked by a full-scale neoliberalization of urban political economy. One of the main policies of the AKP government in the last decade was radical re-organizing the urban space through large infrastructural investments, construction boom, and ambitious urban transformation projects (Aksoy 2012, Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008, Lovering and Türkmen 2011, Türkün 2011, Yalçınan et al. 2014). The neo-liberal “spatial fix” of AKP was complemented with a “political-cultural fix” that highlighted conservative values and authoritatively downplayed various sources of resistance (Gürcan and Peker 2014, Karaman 2013a, Lovering and Türkmen 2011).

AKP came to power in the wake of an unstable period of financial distress. The early-2000s were marked by neo-liberal structural adjustments in association with the IMF, the World Bank, and the EU (Öniş 2010). Financial liberalization brought financial expansion, making Turkey an “emerging economy” with an unprecedented volume of capital influx:

There was a huge and increasing volume of money searching for opportunities around the globe, and the Turkish economy was considered to be a surer bet than most. This money found its way through the banking system to new real-estate development corporations which financed both the construction firms and the buyers. Foreign capital also arrived in form of partnerships with local developers. In as much as financialization, meaning the preference for liquid assets, was the prevailing tenor of the global conjuncture, most of the investment thus occasioned sought to identify speculative opportunities. Istanbul, as a city where population

continued to increase and where both office buildings and residential stock were in dire need of upgrading, seemed to provide such opportunity” (Keyder 2010, 29).

An essential component of Istanbul’s construction-focused neoliberalization project involved the re-configuration of balances of power among various actors in the urban land market. Over the last decade, AKP government changed urban legislation very frequently, adapting regulations that suit its current agenda (Türkün 2011). On the one hand, in line with the neoliberal emphasis on local governance, AKP government further increased the power of municipalities, broadening their jurisdiction, encouraging them to create partnerships with private enterprises, and giving them the authority to designate urban transformation projects (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008). On the other hand, the government transferred planning authority in certain key areas from municipalities to central government institutions such as ministries and, more prominently, TOKI [Mass Housing Administration]. TOKI, a hitherto insignificant governmental agency founded in 1984 to address the country’s housing problem, now became an enormously powerful and effectively unaccountable real-estate actor (Lovering and Türkmen 2011, Eraydın and Taşan-Kök 2014). Yet, TOKI’s ascendancy in the urban land market did not happen at the expense of the private actors. Rather than monopolizing the land market, TOKI intervenes to manage the market in a way that awards certain private interests (Türkmen 2011).

TOKI’s dominance in Istanbul’s urban political economy paralleled an increasingly negative discourse on *gecekondu*. In the 2000s, the official approach to and the mainstream portrayal of *gecekondu* (now *varoş*) neighborhoods mostly associated these dwellings with

criminality and social disintegration. In the words of Erdoğan Bayraktar, the former head of TOKI⁷:

Today, the *gecekondu* is one of the most important two or three problems that Turkey faces. It is well known that such things as terror, drugs, psychological negativity, health problems and oppositional views all come out of *gecekondu* zones and irregular areas. For this reason, a Turkey that wants to integrate with the world, that wants to join the European Union, must rid itself of illegal dwellings . . . Turkey cannot speak of development without solving the *gecekondu* problem (in Lovering and Türkmen 2011, 82).

Istanbul's urban transformation was undertaken with a sense of urgency to deal with the imminent disasters that awaited Istanbulites. In the early-2000s, after the disastrous 1999 earthquake, there was a huge public debate about the city's level of preparedness for a future disaster. Accordingly, the government initiated projects to strengthen the housing stock of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods susceptible for destruction in case of an earthquake. In addition to natural disasters, various social problems such as crime, political extremism, over-population, and chaos were seen as obstacles for Istanbul's healthy development. A consensus emerged within a new "urban growth coalition" (Keyder 2005, Yalçınan and Thornley 2007), insisting that the *gecekondu* settlements as well as the ex-industrial neighborhoods inhabited by the urban poor needed urgent re-development. In such a setting, *gecekondu* transformation projects have been publicized as a necessary solution to "irregular urbanization" in Istanbul and hence become legitimized (Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008).

⁷ Bayraktar later became the Minister of Environment and Urbanization. He infamously became a person of interest in the corruption scandal in 2014.

Existing research on the *gecekondu* transformation projects mostly focus on the displacement and relocation of the local population. *Gecekondu* residents who are dispossessed of their houses are offered to buy a unit in TOKI's low-income housing complexes, usually located in areas remote to job opportunities. This schema prescribes an initial down payment (10 to 40% of the full price), and then the residents are obliged to pay monthly installments to TOKI over the course of fifteen to twenty years. If the residents fail to do so, TOKI re-claims the ownership of the apartment. Therefore, TOKI's *gecekondu* transformation projects accomplishes, on the one hand, despite the discourse on social integration, to cleanse valuable urban land from "unwanted" people, opening spaces for upscale residential and commercial development, making *gecekondu* residents face harsher economic, cultural, and social exclusion; on the other hand, to integrate *gecekondu* dwellers, who already live under precarious conditions, into the lucrative neoliberal housing credit market (Karaman 2013b, 2014, Bartu Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008).

The next chapter comparatively analyzes the mobilization narratives in *gecekondu* areas threatened by urban transformation projects and the public spaces in and around Istanbul that are being increasingly (re-)commodified for private investment. Even though there has been a renewed scholarly interest on urban movements since the Gezi protests in 2013 (for example, see Erensi and Karaman 2017), a comparative approach to the ideas, beliefs, and demands vocalized by various groups of activists in different geographical settings is still lacking.

CHAPTER 4 FORMS OF CAPITAL AND VOCABULARIES OF MOBILIZATION

This chapter presents and unpacks the collective action frames promoted in two distinct geographies of urban mobilization in Istanbul. The ongoing transformation of the city proceeds on two fronts. On the one hand, it includes the demolitions in *gecekondu* areas that accommodated generations of migrants in order to make space for the construction of upscale residential and commercial complexes; on the other hand, it involves the commodification of public and undervalued private land in the city center for real estate development. I argue that the spatial context from which the mobilization arises leads to the construction of two conflicting collective action frames based on the various forms of capital at stake in each setting.

In *gecekondu* mobilizations, ownership of land, or even ownership claim in the form of title deeds, gives the holder symbolic capital vis-a-vis the tenants, a discrepancy abused by the public officials or private interest-groups in order to divide (and rule) the movement. Through negotiations with their opponents, the symbolic capital can be turned into economic capital, the amount of which is uncertain and dependent upon negotiations. The class-culture of *gecekondu* owners gives them a set of dispositions through which they can leave aside their non-material differences for the sake of common material interests. They see property as the only form of capital which might make them have a better standard of living. The *gecekondu*, which has always been the main mechanism through which Istanbul's working class reproduced itself, continues to be the only means for upward mobility. On the other hand, the public-space mobilizations incorporate anti-commodificanist concerns together with post-material, cultural values. Unlike the *gecekondu* mobilizations, there is heavy participation in these mobilizations on the part of city's tenants, who

Table 2: Collective Action Frames

	<i>Diagnostic</i>	<i>Prognostic</i>	<i>Motivational</i>
Informal Neighborhoods	Demand for transformation	Proactive	Pre-existing boundaries
	Material concerns / exchange value	Open to negotiations	Ideology-blind
Public Space	Conservationist / NIABY (not-in-anyone's-back-yard)	Reactive	Open boundaries
	Post-material concerns / use value	Disruptive	Ideology-driven

have no material stakes in the urban land market. Therefore, their grievances tend to stem from a symbolic concern over the use of urban land where cultural capital plays a greater role.

Gecekondu Mobilizations: The Moral Economy of Upward Mobility

My decision to refer to the concept of “moral economy” is inspired by Ayse Bugra’s (1998) analysis of Turkish housing market, where she uses Thompson’s (1963, 1971) framework as laid out in his famous essay on the eighteenth century food riots in England. According to Thompson, the riots was an outcome of the conflict created between traditional morality of public consumption and the logic of market economy where the satisfaction of human needs were left to impersonal forces. Regarding how the participants interpreted their situation, he argued: “It is of course true that riots were triggered off by soaring prices, by malpractices among dealers, or by hunger. But these grievances operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc. This in its turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor” (1971, 78-79). Using Thompson’s framework, Bugra (1998, 306-307) argues that the reciprocal relations between the *gecekondu* settlements and public authorities

generated “a moral legitimacy as a form of need satisfaction complementing the deficiencies of formal mechanisms of exchange and redistribution.” As in the historical example provided by Thompson, the Turkish *gecekondu* was characterized by principles that favored a morally-defined understanding of human relations over the contract-based conventions of the market. What makes the Turkish case different is that *gecekondu* residents do not face a tension between pre-capitalism and capitalism; their grievances derive from the dissolution of the clientelist bonds they established with state authorities. What they demand is not exclusion from the ever-growing market, but inclusion based on “the unequal treatment of the unequal” (Bugra 1998, 303).

In Istanbul, the first *gecekondu* buildings appeared in the late 1940s and their numbers increased to a few thousands in the 1950s. The history of collective action in the informal settlements also goes back to as early as the 1950s, when the newcomer migrants acted collectively to secure a livelihood in growing industrial cities (Karpas 1976). *Gecekondu* buildings themselves are products of this mobilization. Migrants, using their pre-established networks based on hometown and kinship ties, designed and developed shelters and transportation lines (*dolmuş*) on their own initiative. However, collective action in this early period was not necessarily confrontational since the political elites opted for taking advantage of patronage linkages with the ever-increasing number of urban dwellers instead of alienating them from the political processes. Even though the state’s response towards informal settlements with ideologically and religiously dissident populations were harsher (Aslan 2004), the tensions between these predominantly leftist neighborhoods and the security forces (who sided with right-wing paramilitaries) primarily stemmed from non-urban grievances. The socialist movement and the student activism of the period considered the *gecekondu* areas as primary battlefields where the masses should have been organized. The mobilizations in these neighborhoods, therefore, were not necessarily urban, but a

manifestation of the greater social turbulence along the left-right axis. With the ongoing migration from rural Anatolia to industrial Istanbul, the number of *gecekondu* buildings skyrocketed to around two hundred thousand at the turn of the century. Moreover, due to the clientelist nature of urban policy-making and the passage of amnesty laws since the 1980s, most *gecekondu* areas that used to consist of single-storey buildings with rather large yards transformed into four or five-storey apartments. In the 2000s, more than 75 percent of all the inhabited land in Istanbul consisted of *gecekondu* areas or regions otherwise considered as “irregular developments.”

The post-2000s ascendancy of the real estate industry in city’s productive economy, making construction the primary modus of economic growth, shattered the moral economy underlying Istanbul’s *gecekondu* neighborhoods. The increasingly salient “global city” discourse, shared by state authorities and major business groups investing in the construction sector, envisioned Istanbul as a center for business, finance, and tourism instead of a manufacturing hub employing migrant workers.⁸ Informal settlements (that used to be peripheral but over the time

⁸ This shift was also evident in the authorities’ changing discourse towards *gecekondu*. The moral legitimacy of squatting diminished as the political frames on *gecekondu*-residents emphasized rent-seeking and criminality. The following quote from Erdogan Bayraktar exemplifies the new discourse that characterizes the current approach to squatters: “Today, the *gecekondu* is one of the most important problems Turkey faces. It is well known that such things as terror, drugs, psychological negativity, health problems and oppositional views all come out of *gecekondu* zones and irregular areas. For this reason, a Turkey that wants to integrate with the world, that wants to join the European Union, must rid itself of illegal dwellings ... Turkey cannot speak of development without solving the *gecekondu* problem” (as cited in Lovering and Turkmen 2011, 82). According to the interview data, in several instances of *gecekondu* mobilization where the relations with the government became especially confrontational, state authorities arrested movement organizers with accusations of “organized crime.” At least in one instance, the allegations included the term “terror.”

became integral) amply provide undervalued land to create surplus value for the real estate sector. As one neighborhood organizer described it: “When [the developers] see small apartments with large yards in a neighborhood, all they can think of is turning those spaces into newer and bigger buildings; they just cannot stand seeing an empty piece of land” (May 16, 2016). The current wave of mobilizations in Istanbul’s *gecekondu* areas emerged in response to the interruption of the moral economic policy-making that characterized Istanbul’s housing market for decades.

According to Snow and Benford (1988), when collective actors identify problems that they purport to address and assign blame or cause for their problems, they are framing *diagnostically*. Diagnostic frames also provide an understanding of what the ideal situation should be like if the population had no problems. In Istanbul’s *gecekondu* neighborhoods, the recent rise of the real estate market has turned the question of informality into a major field of contestation. Although the patronage linkages they have with the politicians have helped some squatters gain certain concessions (by means of several amnesty laws granted by successive governments, especially during the election cycles), many *gecekondu* owners continue to have a long-standing problem with official property rights. Especially in the neighborhoods that used to be dominated by the so-called “land mafia,” there is still significant confusion about the ownership of specific parcels. The state of insecurity felt by the inhabitants in these areas creates a demand for formalization. A *gecekondu* resident remarked:

There is an expectation of change. The neighborhoods want to change. What do I mean by change? In many neighborhoods around here, our biggest problem is the chaos of *ownership rights*. You know how these *gecekondus* were built, you know about all those processes. The families feel uneasy about the security of their properties. My family has been living here for more than thirty years, but in any given day some stranger might come by and claim that this is their land. (May 4, 2016)

I conducted the interview with him in his neighborhood, after a subway ride from the city's center. I was expecting to have a rather longer walk from the subway station to arrive at the neighborhood, but the walk was surprisingly short. I passed by a well-secured gated community on the way. The neighborhood was just across the block, demonstrating a sharp contrast with the modern structure of the upper middle class housing complex I just passed by. The developers who had built the gated community has been seeking to build an adjacent one in the nearby *gecekondu* area. The residents were resisting them for almost a decade. The first migrants, he explained, settled in the area in 1950s, which was then an empty land that belonged to the treasury [*hazine arazisi*]. The location was attractive because it was close to the factories where migrants looked for jobs. However, Istanbul's expansion over time has put the neighborhood in a very central location. Right now, it is quite accessible from the main transportation routes, close to the city's north-bound subway line, and a few minutes' drive away from the central business district. Like most other informal neighborhoods around Istanbul that are targeted by controversial urban transformation projects, it is an attractive location for upper middle class families. The activists in the area believe that the public authorities aim to exploit their insecurities to legitimize the transformation that would eventually replace existing residents with "richer" families with better-established ties to the city's changing economy.⁹

While activists' discursive framings mainly focus on the importance of legal status of their properties, they also point to a desire for the re-construction of neighborhoods' physical structure. "If the country's economy is growing and everyone else is moving into new, modern apartments that we see on the television, don't we also deserve to live in better places" (May 4, 2016)? Many

⁹ For a discussion of urban transformation projects as "state-led property transfer," see Kuyucu and Unsal 2010.

of the apartment buildings in *gecekondu* neighborhoods had been built through self-help networks, often-times using cheap and low-quality materials, and pose a stark contrast with the stylish outlook of the apartment complexes recently built around the city. Therefore, physical transformation of neighborhoods' poor infrastructure may be seen as a positive prospect many residents look forward to. Another interviewee told:

Neighborhoods demand transformation. And the public authorities know that. They are aware of the demand and they provoke it. The question is: How? How are these neighborhoods going to transform? Is it going to benefit those who live here or not?
(July 28, 2016)

From the residents' vantage point, benefitting from the projects primarily means not being displaced from their neighborhoods. In the earlier cases of urban transformation in Istanbul, the residents of *gecekondu* settlements were violently evicted from their land and forced to move into TOKI buildings at the outskirts of the city. However, one activist clarified that such cases of coerced eviction and forced migration no longer occurs.

In fact, forceful destruction is not that prevalent any more. It happened in Sulukule, Tarlabasi, and Ayazma.¹⁰ What we now deal with is not demolition. They don't

¹⁰ The urban poor of Ayazma came to Istanbul in the latest wave of domestic migration. When they arrived in the late 1990s and early 2000s, they did not have a network of hometown ties that could have helped them find housing and jobs. Plus, coming from the southeastern part of the country where the armed struggle with the Kurds is intense, they were faced with nationalist prejudice and despisal. Lacking both the economic and social capital, they were unable to mobilize. Their displacement from Ayazma went largely unnoticed. "The first and the fastest transformation projects targeted the weakest social groups in Istanbul's entire urban population. For example, the Kurds in Ayazma, and you know, not just Kurds, the Kurds who have migrated after the 1990s. They were oppressed on the grounds of both ethnicity and class. They were the ones who had the

really come to your door early in the morning with police officers. Unless you want that, unless you sign up for that, they won't suddenly drag you out of your home. Let's establish that. What is happening in Gaziosmanpasa or Sariyer today does not involve people being forcefully displaced. Therefore, what we try to do is *setting the bar higher* [*çıtayı yükseltmek*]. (August 4, 2016)

According to Snow and Benford's (1988, 1992) framework, *prognostic* framing identifies the actions that collective actors take and the possible solutions that they propose to solve their grievances. It also specifies strategies, tactics, and targets. Contextualized within a political process where Turkey had several elections one after another, activist narratives tend to acknowledge the political leverage *gecekondu* residents have on the authorities. They especially refer to 2009 and 2014 local elections, in which *gecekondu* votes seemed to swing election results in several key districts from one political party to another. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss whether contemporary form of *gecekondu* mobilizations is "successful,"¹¹ but the relative decline of immediate threat has encouraged residents to take a more proactive strategy. Unlike what I had expected to find before starting the fieldwork, most activists on the ground are focused on developing tactics that would maximize the residents' share of economic return out of the projects, instead of resisting forced displacement. "We have moved *beyond the right to shelter*" (August 4, 2016). Their focus is on securing the best deal that would improve their livelihoods in terms of higher property values. Another resident acknowledged that her neighborhood's physical transformation is making it a more attractive place upon which the existing residents should capitalize:

most difficulty in integrating into the city. Also the ones for whom it was hardest to build solidary networks." (April 3, 2016).

¹¹ On social movement outcomes, see Amenta et al. (2010).

There is too much rent [*rant*] here. They say that the area is in the disaster zone. That's not right. This is one of the most earthquake-resistant places in the city.¹² What they really want to do is to replace local people with rich people. Why do you think they built a new shopping mall in this neighborhood? They are also building new roads and subway lines. They also want to bring rich people. (September 22, 2015)

In a similar vein, an official owner of a *gecekondu* building argued:

This is how it works: The municipality finds a contractor [*müteahhit*], one that they know, that they are connected to. The contractor estimates a price. It includes their own profit, plus profit for the contractor, plus profit for the investment partner who provides the money. So, there is nothing left for the local people. They say, 'Well, we renovated your building, and now you will live in this one-bedroom unit.' Or they give you 1 lira for your apartment. But you know that this place is worth 10 liras, maybe it will even be worth 100 liras, who knows. (September 17, 2015)

Since 2012, when the infamous Law No. 6309 was passed by the parliament, giving public authorities control over designating certain neighborhoods as "risky zones," most urban transformation projects operate under the framework of disaster (i.e. earthquake) protection.¹³ The legal framework allows citizens to challenge such decisions, so the first step neighborhood

¹² I did not cross-check whether there was any scientific truth to this statement. However, another interviewee mentioned that they were working on a digital map project that juxtaposed the urban transformation areas and the earthquake risk zones (identified by Japanese engineers). He told that, according to their findings, there was almost no overlap between the scientifically-recognized earthquake zones and the actually-existing locations of urban transformation projects.

¹³ Further research should investigate why some neighborhoods mobilize against this law while others do not. Since this study's sample includes respondents only from the neighborhoods that are mobilized (in other words, the sample is selected on the dependent variable), it is beyond the scope of this chapter to make arguments about the determinants of movement emergence (or lack thereof).

activists usually take is opening court cases against the local government. Activist narratives cohere around building “consensus mobilization” (Klandermans 1984) on the importance of court cases that challenge the authorities’ decision.¹⁴ Pursuing a legal battle requires certain technical expertise that the neighborhood residents tend not to have and for which they depend upon the work of volunteer lawyers specialized in land tenure cases.

We were told that we should file a collective lawsuit [*toplu dava*]. We thought that it would speed up the process. Then our cases were rejected. The court said we should have opened the cases parcel by parcel. ... That means every single family living on every single parcel should prepare a separate document. That takes too much time and energy. Perhaps this is not what you as a scientist imagine when you think of the urban movement; but we have to do this, we have to fight on this level. You can’t reject this as a strategy. Right to the city? Sure! Participatory democracy? Sure! These are only one side of the coin, ideological side. On the ground, you also need a very burdensome battle that includes negotiations and boring technicalities.
(April 21, 2016)

The decision whether to file a collective lawsuit or individual lawsuits is far from a trivial one. Even though the data collected does not allow making nuanced arguments about the disputes between *gecekondu* activists with different levels of cultural capital,¹⁵ interview data reveals that there have been frictions between local residents and other activists in the case of some

¹⁴ This does not mean that activists look down upon earthquake risk. The specific strategy to follow is determined on a case-by-case basis: “The place may actually be prone to earthquakes. This is important and we are sensitive about it. If there is an earthquake risk, then we have to find another strategy. We can even fully cooperate [with the public authority] in such a case.” (August 4, 2016)

¹⁵ I did not have a chance to attend any strategy meetings in *gecekondu* neighborhoods, which are closed to public attendance with almost no exception. Participation in these meetings would have required a more standard ethnographic methodology.

neighborhoods. Filing a collective lawsuit does not only save time and allow activists to concentrate on one single case, it also has the potential of becoming a legal precedent [*içtihat*]. Having a legal precedent is considered advantageous for full-time activists who also work on other neighborhoods, whereas it does not have much significance for the local *gecekondu* owners who are not necessarily involved in other similar struggles in Istanbul. The professionals who work on urban transformation tend to see the locals' reaction as self-oriented.¹⁶

The discursive and strategic disagreements between activists from different social structural backgrounds resonate with some strands of recent theorization on environmentalism around the globe. Guha and Alier (1997) points out a fundamental contradiction between “environmentalism of the poor” and “environmentalism of the rich,” underlining the difficulties in creating long-lasting alliances between the two. The difficulty arises from the tensions that are animated and sustained by crucially differentiated material conditions. It is important to note that their categorization of the “poor” is not limited to people who experience absolute poverty to the level of deprivation, rather it refers to groups that have limited access to social and economic capital that facilitate movement success. The “poor” as a classification reflects the actors' ability to negotiate the terms of integration into market relations. As such, the poor's environmentalism stems from concerns about control of the (re-)productive resources their livelihoods depend upon, in contrast to environmentalism of the “rich” whose dissent primarily concerns the protection of the environment for post-material sensitivities (see also, Arsel, Akbulut, and Adaman 2015). In Istanbul's urban social movement field, the residents of *gecekondu* neighborhoods are not necessarily “poor” in terms of their quality of life or material well-being either.¹⁷ However, their

¹⁶ On “militant particularism,” see Harvey (1996).

¹⁷ See below for a discussion of the class composition of neighborhood activism.

understanding of “urbanism” parallels Guha and Alier’s classification in so far as their urban dissent originates from material livelihood concerns.

According to Snow and Benford (1988, 1992), the final task of framing, *motivational* frames, defines the boundaries of the community that acts collectively, describing the group of actors and potential actors and inciting them to act together. An important implication of their framework is that the various tasks of framing are interconnected; motivational frames are employed as “rationale for action” in a way that is constrained by the diagnostic and prognostic components of the movement discourse. The centrality of economic capital in *gecekodu* mobilization affects boundaries of the collective identity neighborhood activists uphold. Therefore, the ownership of property proves to be the single most important factor in mobilization dynamics.¹⁸ “In [the neighborhood organization], there are no tenants. There is no tenants’ movement anywhere in Istanbul. It is not possible” (June 2, 2016).

Within the boundaries on resources and strategic options set by the political opportunity structure, any social movement must manage several dilemmas. One of the most immediate strategical dilemmas faced by challengers is the question of recruiting members. The literature on social movements suggests that material incentives enhance recruitment (Olson 1965), but fail to maintain commitment when authorities make concessions (Piven and Cloward 1977) or when mobilization requires “high-risk activism” (McAdam 1986). In the case of Istanbul’s urban mobilizations, the latter poses a vital problem that discourages participation indiscriminately since

¹⁸ This finding is consistent with the existing literature on Istanbul’s urban social movements, which have repeatedly demonstrated that mobilization in transformation neighborhoods is strictly divided between owners and non-owners (for example, see Kuyucu and Ünsal 2010, Karaman 2014).

the government's increasing authoritarianism and the strict policing of any collective-action attempt makes mobilization extremely risky. The former, however, provides a strategic dilemma only for the *gecekondü* mobilizations, where, in some cases, the authorities may opt to make some compromises to prevent collective action. When I asked neighborhood activists how they interpret the successes and failures of their own efforts, their narratives highlighted the importance of building an indivisible collective identity.

Our biggest problem is that the resistance tends to be divided. In comparison to the rest of us, some people in the neighborhood -mostly the property owners who hold an official *tapu*, who have some resources that they can use against the public authority- can choose to get engaged with the project. They can be more amenable to sit down on the negotiation table. Of course, the authorities know about that, and they manipulate them to divide the resistance. (April 16, 2016)

Therefore, a crucially important aspect of neighborhood organizing is being able to discourage residents from acquiescing to projects' demands. This is especially harder to maintain in neighborhoods with heterogeneous property structure divided between legal property owners, semi-legal property owners (basically, people who own the apartment but not the land on which the building is located), squatters, and tenants. Encouraged by the possibility of obtaining rents from rising property values, estate owners may be willing to leave collection action and negotiate individually. Consequently, an important task of *gecekondü* organizers is to persuade their neighbors that an alternative transformation, one that is not initiated by a top-down approach, is possible. Doing this sometimes entails moving beyond making agitative speeches in neighborhood meetings. As one local organizer explained, residents can sometimes be unimpressed with political arguments which they believe do not lead to concrete outcomes. Thus, movement entrepreneurs sometimes resort to alternate tactics to recruit bystanders to their causes. This particular person, in collaboration with his brothers, did so by rebuilding his apartment building amid the ongoing court

cases, hoping that the physical renovation of parts of the neighborhood would discourage other residents from giving in to authorities' pressure. "We did this to show that we can do this ourselves, we don't have to work with developers who only care about their own profits" (May 3, 2016). Restoration in this case does not only enhance his economic well-being (his income from leases automatically increases when the apartments is renovated), it also becomes a symbolic act of resistance that organizers could use to impress potential adherents.

"Right to the City" and Its Discontents

As in many other countries in the developed and the developing world, the term "right to the city" has recently gained substantial intellectual currency in Turkey. The term was first coined by the French philosopher and urban scholar Henri Lefebvre, who defined it as "a cry and a demand" (Marcuse 2009, 189), in the wake of the urban revolts in the 1960s. For Lefebvre (2003), urbanization signified an outright transformation of society and its everyday life through capital. Rejecting both the tradition urban sociological understanding of cities as mere containers of social processes (for example, see Park and Burgess 1984) and the orthodox Marxist approaches to cities that sidelined urban issues as inconsequential to the industrial production processes (Castells 1977), he saw urbanization as *the* engine of contemporary capitalism and the main mechanism through which working people are exploited and alienated from basic citizenship rights. His analysis of urbanism conceives urban space as the primary battleground of political struggles in the name of democracy, social rights and justice. The "right to the city," in other words, refers more than to a simple *judicial right* but rather to a normative claim ("a never-ending struggle") that is invoked by local struggles to form alliances across time and space between various actors including housing activists, leftists, artists, and cultural workers, who all feel aggrieved by the contemporary forms of urban policies entailing commodification, gentrification, and displacement.

It represents the right to inhabit the city in a way that reproduces urban life on new terms, that are unfettered by the colonializing logic of exchange value, and to remain unalienated from urban processes. It is a slogan that has an alleged potential to bring together “*deprived* and excluded groups with culturally alienated, *discontented* groups” (Mayer and Boudreau 2012, 280, emphasis added). Similarly, Marcuse (2009, 190) notes that the movements around the “right to the city” are motivated by both material and cultural interests. The “demand” aspect of the movement comes from “those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled,” in other words, the exploited working class. In addition, the “cry” dimension consists of “those superficially integrated into the system and sharing in its material benefits, but constrained in their opportunities for creative activity, oppressed in their social relationships, guilty perhaps for an undeserved prosperity, unfulfilled in their lives’ hopes.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Marcuse, like many other academics using the “right to the city” discourse, refrain from referring to classes. But the “criers” in his narrative sound very similar to the Gouldner’s (1979) “new class.” Gouldner argued that a formidable alliance emerged by the late 1960s between the technical intelligentsia and humanistic intellectuals, against the dominance of centralized state structures and the private capital-owners. The key concept he develops is the notion of “culture of critical discourse,” which stems from the possession high cultural capital gained from educational credentials. The “new class” may not be directly in want, since the skills/credentials they hold position them in a relatively secure place within the income distribution, but they experience cultural alienation. This is even more true for the (new) middle class in Turkey, whose secular, democratic, and meritocratic ideology is threatened by an ever-tightening Islamic authoritarianism (Keyder 2013). In his analysis of the rising new middle class, Keyder (2014) draws attention to the modernization of Turkish economy in the post-1980 period. Accordingly, the post-industrial shift in the economy brought the logic of markets –and the professional business management norms it entails– into every sphere of the life-world not only in cities like Istanbul but also in provincial Anatolian towns. This process entailed the development of a business production system

By aspiring to connect the “cry” and the “demand,” scholars and activists using the “right to the city” frame try to accomplish a task that the mainstream theories of social movements have long been accused of ignoring: developing theoretical statements that are relevant and useful for activists on the ground (Bevington and Dixon 2005). But, the emphasis on the scholarship-activism tie naturally leads to a normative bent in the “right to the city” camp of meta-theoretical argumentation. Instead of understanding and explaining the dynamics of identity formation and mobilization, narratives of “right to the city” are concerned with building bridges between mobilizations (against the neo-liberal reconfiguration of social and political life in general) that are dispersed across time and space. This implies that, *diagnostically*, in the last instance, all struggles are the same. The state, in cooperation with finance capital that has become enormously powerful in the late twentieth century, attacks all aspects of citizen life.

I think the middle classes in the city’s center and the lower classes in the periphery are experiencing more or less the same thing. You cannot differentiate their interests from one another. Maybe the middle classes are not losing their houses,

that increasingly relies on “experts,” thus creating a new middle class who demand “new guarantees for their way of life, for their environment, for their right to the city; and [who] resent violations of their personal and social space.” According to Keyder, what makes this growing social stratum “new” is its “relative autonomy” from the employers based on the educational credentials and the knowledge-based skills they possess. They rely more on their mental labor than manual. Even though they don’t own the means of production, they have some control over the decision-making processes during production. In Erik Wright’s (1997) terms, these features position them in a “contradictory” location. Gouldner also noted that the “new class” is flawed; its commonalities with the lower class leads to a universalistic discourse that encompasses all but the ruling class, yet at the same time it could be self-seeking in using its special knowledge to advance particularistic interests (Gouldner 1979, 7).

but when certain places transform into exclusively business- or tourism-oriented areas, their everyday experiences are also being affected a lot. (July 28, 2016)

In line with the central premises of the right to the city discourse, this is a strong, unifying statement; however, it overlooks the fact that the stakes in different fronts are fundamentally different. Even though the adversary may be the same for different actors, they still have different stakes to lose, as well as different resources to mobilize in response, based on their positions in the social space.

The promotion of Istanbul as a “global city” had been on the agenda ever since the 1980s. The city’s then-mayor Bedrettin Dalan (1984-1989) initiated a set of large-impact projects during his term in order to transform Istanbul “from a tired city, whose glory resided in past history, into a metropolis full of promise for the twenty-first century” (Keyder and Öncü 1994, 19). His successors continued this vision, but the city’s globalization followed an intermittent and piecemeal pattern up until the mid-2000s. Today’s urban movement emerged somewhere in mid-2000s, in reaction to the government’s increasing emphasis on economic growth via urban transformation projects. Interestingly, activist narratives suggest that the diffusion of the urban movement did not follow a centrifugal path. It began in the periphery and spread into the city center afterwards. The first mobilizations occurred in *gecekondu* neighborhoods such as Gulsuyu-Gulensu, Sulukule, Basibuyuk, among others. This was a surprising development to many observers, exciting leftist organizations as well as academics, because all but one of these places had had no political collective action experience beforehand. Leftists were enthusiastic as they interpreted it as a counter-hegemonic oppositional consciousness emerging against the AKP at a time when economy was booming, trade unions were shrinking in numbers and strength, and the government’s religious tone was dividing the public further along cultural lines. Academics perceived it as a natural experiment in which they could apply and test their alternative visions for

cities and society. Urban mobilization, or “resistance” (*direnis*) as activists usually call it, diffused into city’s center only then.²⁰ One interviewee recalled:

I was a student at the department of urban and regional planning. The first two years were horrible. I was hopeless. In my third year, the *gecekondu* struggles made me realize that you can’t think of the *social* questions independent of the *urban* questions. Before then, we were indifferent to urban issues. We spent all our time thinking about the labor and the labor movement. What was happening in *gecekondu* areas made us change our minds, and, personally, I started feeling positive about my *profession*. (April 22, 2016)

A significant turning point was the declaration of Istanbul as the 2010 European Capital of Culture. Kadir Topbas, Istanbul’s mayor since 2004, immediately announced a concerted planning initiative to produce a new masterplan for Istanbul. The new initiative partnered with European Capital of Culture consortium to speed up Istanbul’s transformation. The most controversial part of this transformation centered around Taksim and Beyoglu districts. With central government’s backing, Istanbul 2010 Agency proposed to renovate Taksim’s symbolically charged Ataturk Kultur Merkezi (*Ataturk Cultural Center*), host to several theatre, opera, and exhibition halls. Opposition groups critical of Islamization of public sphere under AKP rule condemned the project, arguing for the center’s preservation as a symbol of republican cultural codes. AKM was closed, but its fate is still undetermined; the building sits empty on the eastern edge of Taksim Square. However, other projects in and around Taksim has been successfully implemented. Emek Sinemasi

²⁰ I use the term “resistance” with caution. It implies that all mobilization emerges *in response to* a policy or project implemented by the government. It is true that most mobilizations occur only after the authorities make the first move (The Gezi Park protests are a perfect example). But collective action in the city happens not only defensively but also proactively ever since the first migrants arrived.

(a historical movie theater on Istiklal Street) was demolished in 2012 to be replaced by a shopping mall, but not without protest. The previous attempts to stop transformation around Taksim had been weak, limited to online petition campaigns and court cases filed by civil society organizations (most notably, professional associations such as the Chamber of Architects and the Chamber of Urban Planners). But the resistance at Emek attracted huge numbers of bystanders. The protests were unable to stop the demolishment, but the level of support behind them encouraged the core group of activists to organize. A few months after, they held a city-wide meeting called “Urban Movements Forum” (*Kent Hareketleri Forumu*). The forum was scheduled to convey days before the 6th European Social Forum in Istanbul, and organizers framed the purpose of the meeting in parallel to the discussions and ideals of ESF participants. This is when the discourse around “right to the city” gained salience. It was no longer a movement situated in a particular setting, but a larger movement that brought together different people from all around Istanbul (even Turkey) in defense of their “commons” (*müşterekler*). In their manifesto, they propagated:

Our goal is to spread our right to the city beyond shelter and access to urban facilities, to the city as a whole. Defending the right of the residents of Tarlabasi to stay put in their neighborhood, defending Hasankeyf and Emek, while at the same time opposing the third bridge and hydroelectric power stations, struggling against the marketing of our schools and hospitals to capital are all parts of this whole (istanbulurbanmovements.wordpress.com 2010).

This narrative resonates with the academic arguments on the unifying potential of “right to the city” discussed earlier. Discursively, though not an outright rejection of capitalism, the right to the city frame has a strong anti-commodification stance.

We stand against *the marketing of our cities to capital* via urban transformation/renewal projects based on exchange value and profit. We are against the appropriation of our cities, which are our living spaces, including

neighborhoods, public spaces, schools, hospitals, parks, shores, natural, historical, and cultural heritage (ibid.).

The struggles in the city center, therefore, share a similar reaction against the market fundamentalist logic of urban transformation projects with the *gecekondu* mobilizations. However, in terms of *prognostic* framing, whereas the activists in *gecekondu* areas demand (some sort of preferential) inclusion in the market, the right-to-the-city activism portrays a categorical refusal of marketization/commodification. The middle-class defenders of the urban commons lack access to resources that can help them partake in the burgeoning real-estate market. Transformation, in other words, is a game they feel they are bound to lose.

I think one of the underlying causes of the Gezi or other similar protests was the class-based crumbling [*örselenmek*] of the young, middle class people who joined them. They may have used other tools, other narratives. But, these middle class people, at least a portion of them, are aware that the economic transformations that have taken place throughout the 2000s have battered [*hırpalamak*] them as a class. They are also aware that this process has had clear spatial manifestations. Like those people living in *gecekondu*, they understand, or at least make sense of, the reasons why they are being pushed away [*ötelenmek*] from places like Taksim. The protests are the manifestation of this anger. In Istanbul's entire population, this segment of the middle class has the lowest home-ownership ratio. They are all tenants. They have nothing to win in the ongoing process. (July 28, 2016)

The ideal urban life, accordingly, is one that advances the *use value* of urban space at the expense of its *exchange value*. This is especially the case when the transformation site in question is a culturally or historically significant venue. "If the building is officially designated as a cultural heritage site, then we say you can't leave its fate to the property-owner's discretion" (April 22, 2016). Activism in the urban center, therefore, does not only target the public authority endorsing the project, but also involves a battle against the property-owners and private investors who want

to maximize their financial gains. Activist narratives suggest that the current legal scheme that oversees transformation in Istanbul's central, commercial districts disproportionately favors the property-owners. In contrast to the *gecekondu* neighborhoods, the transformation in the center takes place on the building level rather than on the basis of zones. When a building is deemed to be risky by the authorities, only the property-owner has a legal right to challenge the decision, whereas the tenants are usually forced to evacuate the building with no legal channel of opposition. The nature of property relations in central transformation areas allow an alliance between the activists and the tenants, who are usually small shop-keepers or managers [*esnaf*] whose immediate livelihood is at risk. "This is a struggle between competing visions for Beyoğlu. When we look at Beyoğlu, we see something else, we see the shop-keepers on the corner, we see the second-hand bookseller; but they see a huge shopping mall" (April 27, 2016).

Despite the apparent cross-class solidarity within the activist groups,²¹ the framing process draws on themes such as spatial history and belonging. The organizers at Emek protests, for instance, urged Istanbulites to support the cause for the sake of protecting their own history at the movie theater:

I stand by Emek Sinemasi! For the countless movies I watched in its beautiful hall,
for that I held my lover's hand for the first time here, to stand behind my personal
memories and history. Emek is mine, Istanbul is mine!
(<http://emeksinemasi.blogspot.com.tr>, accessed on December 28, 2016)

The *motivational* dimension of the right-to-the-city activism highlights post-material values and beliefs. One of the central tasks of motivational framing done by social movement organizers is to delineate the boundaries of potential adherents. A striking difference between the two kinds of

²¹ For example, local organizations in Beyoğlu and Beşiktaş have sizeable *esnaf* participation.

mobilization attempts this study investigates is the scope of the collective identities they promote. On the one hand, due to the centrality of economic capital in movement-building, *gecekondu* mobilizations target primarily, and sometimes exclusively, the residents of their respective neighborhoods. Their organizational activities focus on attracting individuals with vague and unformed ideas in order to shape and transform their political outlooks. On the other hand, the public space mobilizations in the city center operate by aiming to bring together like-minded individuals and to mobilize them for objectives that they all understand and about which they all essentially agree beforehand. Even though some participants of their activities are not necessarily well-conversant with the dynamics of neoliberal urban governance or the debates around the “right to the city,” they agree upon an alternative vision for Istanbul, one that favors the citizens’ demands vis-à-vis the capital owners closely affiliated with the government. As was the case with Emek, the more recent mobilizations in Taksim/Beyoğlu (as well as other districts) continues to draw themes around spatial history and belonging that encompass an all-inclusive collective identity:

Places like Beyoğlu or Kabataş are significant for all of us. They are an important part of our identity and belonging [*aidiyet*]. When you destroy these places, it strips people off of their identities and belongings. They are parts of this city’s collective memory, but now they are doomed to disappear from that memory. (June 15, 2016)

The strong alliance between the property owners and the public authorities at the expense of the users/consumers and the tenants makes defiance of private property rights and the logic of exchange becomes an important element of the mobilization tactics. In the case of Beyoğlu’s famous Narmanlı Han, activists demanded the building to be socialized for the benefit of the common good:²²

²² At the height of the controversies surrounding Narmanlı Han’s (one of the oldest buildings on the İstiklal Street that was destroyed in 2016 to be turned into yet another shopping mall)

This place has been a home to generations of artists, writers, painters; and it should continue to be so. The former owner sold it to someone who now wants to renovate the building entirely and change its *meaning*. The place should be kept open for public use, as a library or a theatre hall, or what have you. (April 11, 2016)

However, unlike the public authorities in *gecekondu* areas who sometimes opt in for making compromises to local opposition groups, authorities in central Istanbul tend to disregard activist demands (see also Eraydın and Taşan-Kök 2014). In several cases between 2013 and 2016, activists resorted to direct action in the form of occupations or squatting in order to underline the use value of the urban land vis-à-vis its exchange value. One activist commented on the importance of *interstitial* strategies that challenge the prevailing logic of urban policy-making:²³

I believe we should focus on opening small breaches within the existing system. We cannot possibly bring about a revolutionary wave that would change the entire system as it exists. In the aftermath of Gezi there have been some experiments in places like Besiktas and Kadikoy. Yes, they didn't last long; but they showed that another way is possible, that it is possible to create alternative lives and spaces that defy the dominant logic of market and exchange that are imposed on us. I mean, wasn't Gezi itself something like this? (June 15, 2016)

transformation, the owners of the property placed a large banner that said “This is a private property!” at the entrance in order to keep activists away from the building. In response, the activists created another banner: “Narmanli Han is not a private property!”

²³ I use Erik Wright's term refer to strategies that envision transformation as a long-term “process of metamorphosis in which relatively small transformations cumulatively generate a qualitative shift in the dynamics and logic of a social system” (Wright 2010, 228). In his framework, mobilization strategies at *gecekondu* areas would fit the *symbiotic* transformation classification.

When Deprivation Meets Discontent

The right-to-the-city frame calls for an ideological unity between various actors in the city threatened by a top-down approach to urban politics. Activist narratives, as well as the motivational frames present in movement documents, point out the similarities between struggles in different parts of the city.

Local struggles have their own reality, nevertheless it is important to seek ways for a united struggle and to try to sustain them both ... We have to project local issues to the entire city, making sure that Başbüyük residents come to protest the third bridge; those struggling for the Ataköy shore-line come to the defense of Tozkoparan. (istanbulurbanmovements.wordpress.com 2010)

Mobilizing people from different backgrounds, however, is not an easy task to accomplish. This is not to deny that there may be, or have been, individuals from a *gecekondu* neighborhood participating in a protest at Taksim, or vice versa. However, the imagined “bridge” between actors located at different places has never materialized. *Gecekondu* residents did not mobilize for city’s public places, and struggles in *gecekondu* areas failed to garner widespread public support, or in most cases, even sympathy.²⁴ The case of Sulukule was an exception.

Located at the edge of Istanbul’s historical peninsula, Sulukule was home to Istanbul’s Roma population for centuries. Its valuable location made it a prime target of urban land market speculation ever since the 1990s. Accordingly, the neighborhood received its fair share of stigmatization by government officials as part of a larger tactic of cultural disparagement of informal settlements around the city. Despite its centrality, the neighborhood’s main point of

²⁴ The perception of *gecekondu* residents as the “undeserving rich” (see Chapter 3) is still prevalent among the middle-class Istanbulites. Note that the middle-class activists themselves do not adhere to this viewpoint, but they do complain about the prejudices common among potential supporters.

contact with the outside world was the entertainment houses (*devriye evleri*) run by local families, private clubs featuring live music players and belly dancers (Karaman 2014). The demolition of these places on the charges of prostitution and drug trade adversely impacted the livelihood of local residents, most of whom earned their living in the entertainment sector (Uysal 2012). A joint protocol by the IBB, the local municipality (Fatih) and TOKI signed in December 2005 declared Sulukule as an urban renewal site.²⁵ The project proposed to tear down all existing structures in the neighborhood and replace it with “Ottoman style” buildings for the sake of, in the names of then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, “saving Sulukule from its current monstrosity” (as cited in Karaman 2014, 296). The socio-economic problems in the neighborhood was exploited by the public authorities as a legitimation strategy. The mayor of the Fatih municipality told reporters: “The people are living in really squalid conditions. Most have no electricity or water. The infrastructure is inadequate and as mayor of this district you should definitely do something about such a chaotic situation” (Tait 2008). Less than a year after the project was announced, the cabinet ordered expropriation of the dwellings. Most residents had to leave Sulukule because of the high costs associated with moving into new houses.

Sulukule Platform was established in 2007, bringing together local and non-local activists including professional associations and NGOs. Arguing that the project was a tool of

²⁵ As a “counter-framing” technique (Benford and Snow 2000), and unlike most other cases, government abstained from using the term *kentsel dönüşüm* (urban transformation) in Sulukule’s case. Instead, they preferred the term *yenileme* (renewal). Authorities knew that the association of the neighborhood with the Roma population would invite criticism from third parties including most significantly international actors like the European Union. Therefore, they emphasized that the project was only going to renew the physical structure of the neighborhood without altering its social and cultural fabric.

dispossession, not transformation, they aimed at attracting domestic and international attention. The platform organized several conferences and events, the most popular of which was the “Forty Days and Forty Nights” festival which involved musical performances and art exhibitions highlighting the cultural impeccability of the Roma population as well as academic panels and workshops.

This was the main strategy: The Roma population, I mean, Istanbul’s gypsies, is an inseparable part of Istanbul, and Sulukule is the place where this population is most densely located and most authentically living. For the sake of Istanbul’s cultural life and cultural capital, this concentration must be protected. This was what everything was based upon. That’s why there were festivals, Roman music nights. Cultural identity of the residents was at the center. (July 28, 2016)

Though it did not change the outcome, the platform’s framing strategy was successful in terms of intriguing bystander interest. Sulukule became an emblematic case of urban transformation in Turkey, attracting massive interest from academia, media, and the general public. Activist recollections, on the other hand, point out the frictions that characterized the dynamics of mobilization. The property structure in Sulukule, which was mainly composed of formal housing units, strengthened owners’ hands vis-à-vis the authorities. The activists were unable to successfully bridge the private-property-based demands of residents with the identity-oriented frame of the main platform. Some residents hesitated to adopt the identity-focused strategy, either due to the inter-ethnic tensions within the neighborhood or the perceived priority of economic interests. Therefore, the grass-roots capacity to resist the project was severely diminished. The failure of the Sulukule mobilization led the middle-class activists in Istanbul’s urban movement to re-consider the principles of engagement with the neighborhoods in the periphery.

When neighborhood transformations were at the center of the discussion, and this was before Gezi put it roughly, a central point of discussion was how to establish

relations with the neighborhood. Some of us had this principle for example: we will not take to the neighborhood any expertise that they did not ask for. Usually, we were the side that made the first contact. But we did not actually go to the neighborhood without a call from the people in the neighborhood. Some of us rejected and harshly criticized the alternative planning tactic.²⁶ We thought it complicated the outsiders' relationship with the neighborhood. *It blurred the line between the experts' expertise and the residents' needs.* (June 2, 2016)

Boundary-Making after Gezi

I ask myself: For example, is Emek Sineması really a primary problem for people in the periphery? The answer is clearly no! Then how can we make the connection? Connecting them requires staff. But the current staff unfortunately operates by those cultural codes. (July 28, 2016)

Gezi Park protests in 2013 brought urban grievances at the center of the political scene in Turkey. For many activists, it was a long-awaited accomplishment on the part of struggles for urban justice undertaken in various parts of the city. However, the aftermath of the protests had complicated the matters for the activists in as much as the protests had been framed by the government as a wholesale attack against its legitimacy. The initial demands put forth by the organizers had dropped off the map, and the political-cultural battles fought over the Gezi had discouraged many from associating with the emerging movement. The interviews I conducted and the observations I made in the post-Gezi period suggest *gecekondu* residents and the public-space activists took two very contrasting tactics to deal with this. To circumvent the increasing political polarization among

²⁶ Alternative planning was a counter-strategy developed by scholars and students from urban planning departments in consultation with the residents in several transformation neighborhoods. Based on designing a different transformation plan than the one imposed by the public authorities, the strategy aimed at coopting residents' economic demands while at the same time rejecting the original proposal.

the citizens, *gecekondu* organizers took a position that plays down the political differences between the residents. Accordingly, they believe that the ethnic and ideological diversity used to be the main reason that earlier attempts to unite people across neighborhoods failed.

In many places, the relationship between the neighborhood representatives and the residents were not as strong as we thought they were. When the threat was imminent and the need for action was urgent, people were coming together around the associations. But when things relaxed a little bit, or the public authorities changed their tactics, people disappeared. Then we understood that the political representatives weren't that influential. The representation problem was there, always there. It wasn't the only reason, but if you ask me, it was the main reason behind the failure of sustained mobilization. (April 21, 2016)

In the post-Gezi period, however, activist narratives suggest that the premium is put on building a place-based collective identity that attempts to conceal the political-ideological differences. As one interviewee told:

Capital-owners don't differentiate their targets. They are blind. In [our neighborhood], for example, the [transformation] problem affects everyone, both AKP and CHP voters. Then we need to overcome this duality. Because the enemy doesn't acknowledge this duality. This isn't the parliament. We should strip off our party affiliations. I am a nationalist. I voted for MHP [*Nationalist Action Party*] my whole life. But, here in the meetings, I work with even some HDP [*People's Democratic Party*] supporters. (September 22, 2015)

Some even believed that the variation in the level of success among different neighborhood mobilizations depends on how well the participants manage to play down their political and ideological differences.

For example, [*refers to a leftist political organization active in several gecekondu neighborhoods*], even though it looks like a mass organization, its reach is quite limited. Why? Because they have an opinion about every single political issue on

earth. Therefore, unfortunately, its constituency is limited. It is their own decision. They know this. You must surpass daily politics if you want to unite people here. I know that you are an AKP voter, and you know that I am a MHP voter. We can argue between each other as long as we want when the meeting is over. But we won't talk about it during the meeting. We won't allow daily politics to distort our business there. We won't let each other to use those codes while we work together. (September 17, 2015)

This mindset presents a sharp contrast with what I observed in meetings in central Istanbul districts. When the Turkish political scene suddenly darkened in summer 2015, the meetings began to be dominated by macro-level political conversations rather than local urban problems. At times, they even felt like political party meetings more than urban movement *forums*. The activists in the city center position themselves as political actors within Turkish politics in general, rather than being limited to an issue-based interest group. For them, the “right to the city” is a wide-ranging struggle that cannot be maintained unless social problems along other axes of inequality are also resolved. Their position-takings are therefore similar to what Arsel, Akbulut, and Adaman (2015, 17) called “environmentalism of the malcontent.” In their paper analyzing the dynamics of a protest movement against an environmentally-hazardous power-plant construction in northern Turkey, the authors found that the mobilization consisted of on the one hand local villagers whose livelihoods depended on the nature and on the other hand a core group of middle-class activists whose engagement with protest stemmed mainly from a “quarrel with the state rooted in their political history as well as their continuing identification with anti-capitalist struggle.” Likewise, the political resentments that motivate the defenders of the “commons” go beyond the issues pertaining to urbanization, and the latter can easily be sidelined when more urgent problems arise in other aspects of social and political life.

Activists are aware of the frame disputes between the mobilizations in *gecekondu* areas and the commons. One of the interviewees remarked:

I think, at the end of the day [*son tahlilde*], the middle classes in the city's center and the lower classes in the city's periphery are experiencing more or less the same thing. You cannot separate their interests from one another. Maybe the middle classes are not losing their houses, but when certain places transform into exclusively business- or tourism-oriented areas, their everyday experiences are being affected a lot. To underline this, there needs to be some kind of a political intervention. Some people need to design new discourses around this and should bind these different groups together. They needed to... I think our experience in the last ten years as urban movements in Istanbul is the story of continuously trying to create these tools and organizations but failing again and again. (August 4, 2016)

It is true, however, that the Gezi protests helped broaden the support base of the urban movement. Whereas the public-space mobilizations were mostly limited to very central locations such as Beyoğlu and Kadıköy in the pre-Gezi period, they diffused into more residential districts since then. Nevertheless, unlike the *gecekondu* neighborhoods where the projects propose overall demolition of an area, the transformation in formal neighborhoods of Istanbul operate more fragmentally. There are no whole-scale transformation projects in Istanbul's middle class districts. Apartments are being torn down to be re-built as stronger, larger, and more fashionable ones. Describing the transformation of middle class neighborhoods, one interviewee told:

Right now Istanbul looks like a huge construction site. There is a construction going on on every single street. Ask a random person and they will complain about it. 'The apartment where my grandparents live is being destroyed,' 'My childhood is disappearing' ... But, to be honest, these are very *bohemian* problems. I understand the feeling of nostalgia that transformation brings. But, no matter what, those neighborhoods are changing the way the residents want it. Everyone thinks: 'This building is 40 years old. Why should I live in a 40 year-old building? I deserve

better. The apartment that is now worth 500 thousand will be worth 750 thousand.

And safer for the earthquake. Why not? (June 15, 2016)

Therefore, there is no dissatisfaction with the re-generation of the existing physical structure in formal, middle-class neighborhoods. The mobilization in such places tend to organize to protect public areas that the local governments want to commodify and privatize. Gezi Park in Taksim was the quintessential example of a mobilization in defense of a public land. But, they also happen in less central, more residential districts such as Üsküdar and Beşiktaş. In one case in 2013, residents of Üsküdar municipality came together to protest a project on the Validebağ grove, where the local government wanted to bring investment to create “Istanbul’s Hyde Park.” In 1990s, the surrounding neighborhoods had founded an informal organization called Validebağ Yurttaşlar İnisiyatifi²⁷, which lobbied (successfully) for the official designation of the park as a natural site (on which no development could take place). The mobilization in 2013 was led by middle-aged residents who had had some experiences back then. But, younger participants also joined, enthusiastic about urban politics since the Gezi Park protests, having recently discovered urban resistance as a site where they could direct their discontent with politics.

The ascendancy of the new middle class in the 2000s and their politicization during the Gezi Park protests changed the nature of collective action in middle-class neighborhoods. The cultural-focus of the neighborhood associations of the 1990s (Erman and Coşkun-Yıldar 2007) is now infused with elements of anti-commodification. Validebağ activists emphasized that the project was a tool of “rentierism” [*rantçılık*] where the conservative government directed public assets into the hands of partisan capital-owners. This was in line with the anti-commodificanist sentiments that had been present in the Gezi Park. However, the cultural elements have not

²⁷ “Validebag Citizens’ Initiative”

completely disappeared. When the bulldozers entered the grove for the first time, they did so in order to clear a part of the site for the construction of a mosque. This was when a surprisingly large number of residents from the neighboring areas gathered at Validebağ to support the mobilization. The protests, which again turned into an occupy-like encampment for a brief period, attracted not only older middle class residents of the neighborhood but also younger people who recently moved there as tenants. The ownership (or lack thereof) of economic capital was insignificant. What brought participants together was their cultural claim over the land. The protestors organized a tree-planting campaign on the grove. The point was to strengthen the emotional bonds between the residents and the urban space, signifying a post-material response to the government's treatment of urban landscape.

Concluding Remarks

The narrative that presented itself during the interviews suggest that the contemporary wave of urban mobilizations in Istanbul kicked off in the city's informal neighborhoods as the current government's approach replaced the moral economy of informality with an ever-expanding logic of market fundamentalism. The mobilizations in *gecekondu* areas, albeit self-interested and restrictive in nature, encouraged the city's culturally alienated middle class groups, who tend to come from professional backgrounds that are related to urban, environmental, and social issues in one capacity or another, to extend the mobilization into the city center to protect the public spaces against the growing threat of commodification.

However, the class and economy-based opposition to urban politics that could have potentially created a "chain of equivalence" among various struggles in different geographies has been increasingly replaced by a cultural opposition to transformation. This cultural critique incorporates a secular discourse that targets the Islamist-authoritarian themes in the projects, but

it most significantly involves, since most public-space activists are involved with urban policy at a professional level too, an expertise-oriented critique based on values pertaining to the abstract principles of urbanism, planning, and architecture.

This narrative does not deny that there are some bridges between the educated middle class activists and the *gecekondu* residents. The former provides essential resources to the latter in terms of organizational and technical assets. Yet, public-space activists tend to articulate values and ideas that does not seem to correspond to the immediate needs and sensitivities of Istanbul's larger population. Particularly in the post-Gezi period, during which the urban activism began attracting support from a previously-unengaged, economically-advantaged segment of the middle class at the center, the gap between the economic demands of the *gecekondu* residents and the cultural discontent of the public-space activists pose a greater frame dispute between the two kinds of mobilization attempts. In the conclusion, I attempt to explore the class analytical underpinnings of this rift.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Things are getting worse since Gezi [protests]. We are now in a moment when two sides of the movement are going in the exact opposite directions. Middle classes are increasingly trapping themselves in a language filled with protectionism and expertise. Perhaps they are aware of the class dimension. But they refrain from emphasizing it and instead building an opposition around the vaguely defined right to the city [*kent hakkı*]. Think about the project in Kabataş. [The activists] underline the conservation of the cultural heritage, the protection of Kabataş as it is, with the historical piers and mosques and so on. I don't understand what exactly they are trying right now. Are they opposing the construction of the subway? I don't think this can succeed. They say that what is going to be built in Kabataş will look very ugly. What is this, are we becoming a movement around certain aesthetic values?
(July 28, 2016)

Why did the Gezi Park protests have such a negative impact on the urban movement in Istanbul?

This question is beyond the scope of this study, as the protests of June 2013 deserve to be studied independently. Therefore, I will restrict myself to a few observations. The way the AKP government handled the nation-wide protests reinforced the already existing cultural cleavages in the country. Beginning from summer 2013, the ruling political bloc set forward a comprehensive cultural war with the opposition, treating all protestors as puppets of foreign powers alien to local and national values. Even though the authorities made some comments where they distinguished the first three days of protests (when the anti-commodificationist/environmentalist tone was stronger) from the rest, the “right to the city” discourse was unable to diffuse into the other side of the cultural fault-line described in the above quotation. The new middle class failed to surpass the cultural barriers that divided them from the people in the periphery.

What does this tell us about the class politics of Turkey's new middle class, and the new middle classes in general? As Keyder (2013) and Tugal (2013) argued, a relatively better-off portion of the new middle class has benefitted from Turkey's recent neoliberalization. What they suffer from is the impoverishment of social and cultural life. Before Gezi, this stratum within the new middle class had been absent from the urban movement field. Therefore, it was possible for the more precarious part of the new middle class to emphasize the common class-based interests between the educated middle classes and the lower classes. The entry of the economically powerful new middle class as well as the upper middle class into the field complicated the alliance strategies of the urban activists. As the middle class actors in the urban movement field diversified in terms of economic capital, it became harder for them to maintain a class-based collective identity. Instead, they resorted to their cultural capital as the primary means of distinction. Instead of uniting against private capital and the state, they now tend to underline the skills, credentials, and the expertise that set them apart from the rest of the society.

The argument made here points out the shortcomings of the mainstream accounts on the new middle class. The new middle class is usually distinguished from the neighboring strata in the class structure on the basis of its control over organizational assets and education-based expertise. Some analysts, however, further divides this broad bloc into sub-groups according to several additional criteria. Kriesi (1989), for instance, refers to an antagonism between what he calls the "technocrats" and the "specialists," a division that roughly corresponds to Gouldner's (1979) differentiation between "technical intelligentsia" and "humanistic intellectuals." Even though Gouldner himself downplayed the importance of this split, maintaining that the two had common interests based on their common "culture of critical discourse" stemming from the cultural capital they possess, several empirical studies discovered political-ideological differences between

different segments of the new middle class (for example, see Cotgrove and Duff 1980). Furthermore, Lamont (1987) suggested that political radicalism of the new middle class professionals varies inversely with the instrumentality of a professional's knowledge to profit maximization and with the direct dependence of her job on profit maximization. Accordingly, social and cultural specialists, such as the professionals and semi-professionals in teaching, academia, social work, arts, and media, tend to develop more liberal than conservative political dispositions than technocrats in management, marketing, and other corporate employees in the private sector.

I argue that this division (between the technocrats and the social and cultural specialists) is extremely prevalent in Turkey's emerging new middle class and surprisingly overlooked in the scholarly analyses. By calling these actors as "classes," however, I do not automatically attribute them a pre-determined political agency. My argument rather echoes the premises of Bourdieusian field theory and Bourdieu's class analysis. Bourdieu emphasizes that indicators like income, occupation, and education are necessary but not sufficient indices of class position. Class is also a relational concept, and we need to take into account their relations with one another. Classes are not uniform and steady categories, but the classification struggles through which actors distinguish themselves from others in the social space. The narratives provided by my respondents suggest that the social and cultural specialists who started the urban movement in Istanbul in mid-2000s used to associate more closely with the working and lower-middle classes in *gecekondu* neighborhoods. The Gezi Park protests in 2013 changed the alliance of classes in the urban movement field by bringing in the relatively better-off segments of the new middle class into the picture. The new alliance between the different segments of the new middle class widened the gap

between public-space activists and the *gecekondu* residents and intensified the frame disputes that were already there before 2013.

This study has aimed to contribute to social movement theory by connecting social structural accounts of social movements with social-psychological approaches represented by frame analysis. In doing so, it has argued that activists' social structural position affects the processes of grievance interpretation and identity formation. By exploring what motivates individuals to take part in mobilization and examining how participants discursively make sense of their struggles, I have argued that the heterogeneity in actors' class positions leads to fundamentally different collective action frames in different settings. My findings extend existing theories of framing in social movement studies by highlighting the social conditions (conceptualized as access to and control over cultural and economic forms of capital) that influence the salience of a certain collective action frame over another. I have also demonstrated that we should problematize the ideational contents of movements, rather than taking them for granted and narrowly focusing on the resources used and opportunities exploited by movement organizers. Resources and political opportunities affect movement development only in so far as actors themselves attach certain meanings to them.

Actors from similar social structural backgrounds tend to have similar material and cultural dispositions that bring them together in similar position-takings. The historical trajectory of urbanization and class formation in Istanbul, presented in Chapter 3, predisposes *gecekondu* residents to engage with the city primarily on the basis of their economic capital, since their partial control over the urban land has proved to be the main mechanism through which generations of rural migrants secured upward economic mobility in Istanbul. The expectation of economic returns principally collides with the anti-commodificationist sentiments of new middle class activists.

Plus, the cultural dimension of Istanbul's urban transformation, where symbolic battles are fought to determine the legitimacy of certain cultural codes over others, makes frame alignment between the two poles of the resistance even harder to achieve. In the face of growing authoritarianism with Islamic tones, the educated middle class in Istanbul is faced with a fear of loss of legitimacy, thus tend to use a conservationist narrative that resists the penetration of (Islamic) neoliberal logic to their "life-spaces" [*yaşam alanı*].

Social class, therefore, does not articulate itself in pre-determined ways, but comes into picture in strategies to draw distinctions between one another, either based on access to material property or the possession of certain cultural signifiers. Even though they mostly refrain from explicitly associating themselves with a particular class position, the activists I interviewed reflect their social structural position through ways in which they highlight certain forms of values and resources over others. In other words, class politics is "dead" in the sense that classes do not uniformly act upon their pre-existing grievances and identities. Nonetheless, social class background influences actors' self-conceptions about themselves and their position within the field by determining the material and non-material resources available to them at a given time and context.

Further research should investigate the distinctions between alternative forms of new middle-class activism in urban movements, particularly with regard to the differences I mentioned between the corporate technocrats and the social and cultural specialists. Moreover, future research could have a more ethnographic focus to demonstrate the inter-class and intra-class clashes among activists as they emerge on the ground. In designing a research project similar to the one presented here, special attention should be paid to interviewing a larger number and wider variety of activists, both in terms of their movement-related activity and social structural background, in order to better

interpret the factors affecting the nature and dynamics of the ideational and strategic aspects of social movements.



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