

RELOCATION AND DISEMPOWERMENT: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO
GECEKONDU RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS IN TURKEY THROUGH THE
EXAMPLE OF BEZIRGANBAHÇE HOUSING PROJECT

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in Turkey through the Example of Bezirganbahçe Housing Project

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Thesis Abstract

Ceren Kuşcuoğlu, “Relocation and Disempowerment: A Critical Approach to *Gecekondu* Resettlement Projects in Turkey through the Example of Bezirganbahçe Housing Project”

This thesis examines the changes in the daily lives of the ex-*gecekondu* residents, who have moved to Bezirganbahçe Social Housing Project, after their houses in Tepeüstü and Ayazma neighborhoods were demolished. In Istanbul, *gecekondu* settlements that happen to be located in “strategic” locations in terms of urban rent are being subjected to big scale urban transformation projects within the scope of neoliberal urban policies that are based on place-marketing through re-planning the city as “global city.” Meanwhile, the residents of these settlements, without any right for participation in decision making process, are forced to empty their houses and move out to government housing projects. Throughout this thesis it is argued that this relocation in Bezirganbahçe not only aggravates the economic situations of the residents, but also transforms their relationship with the physical space; and this transformation leads to a change that penetrates into the daily lives. These changes in turn, instead of empowering the residents, push them to a more isolated form of living, depriving them of their social networks and subjecting them to constant social control and exclusionary practices. In this respect, focusing on changes in relationships among the residents and changes in perceptions towards the physical space and the neighbors is the main goal of this study. At the same time, the link between all these processes and neoliberal urban policies is scrutinized in detail.

Tez Özeti

Ceren Kuşcuoğlu, “Relocation and Disempowerment: A Critical Approach to *Gecekondu* Resettlement Projects in Turkey through the Example of Bezirganbahçe Housing Project”

Bu tez, Tepeüstü ve Ayazma gecekondu mahallelerinin yıkımı sonrasında Bezirganbahçe Toplu Konut Projesi’ne taşınmış olan gecekondu sakinlerinin gündelik yaşamlarındaki değişimi incelemektedir. İstanbul’da kentsel rant anlamında “stratejik” mekanlarda bulunan gecekondu mahalleleri, kenti “küresel şehir” olarak yeniden düzenleyerek mekanı pazarlamak üzerine kurulmuş olan neoliberal kent politikaları kapsamında büyük çaplı kentsel dönüşüm projelerine konu olmakta, burada yaşayanlar ise hiçbir karar mekanizmasına dahil edilmedikleri halde kendilerini evlerini boşaltmak ve taşınmak zorunda bulmaktadırlar. Bu tezin temel iddiası Bezirganbahçe’deki bu yer değiştirmenin sadece ekonomik koşullarını zorlaştırmakla kalmadığı, aynı zamanda bireylerin mekânla olan ilişkilerini dönüştürmekte olduğu; bu durumun da gündelik yaşamlarına kadar nüfuz eden bir değişime neden olduğudur. Ve bütün bu değişimler, bireylerin sosyal ağlarını parçalayan sosyal kontrol ve dışlanma pratikleri yoluyla, bireyleri güçlendirmek yerine her anlamda daha izole, daha kendi içlerine kapalı bir yaşama doğru itmektedir. Bu bağlamda, çalışma boyunca toplu konutlara taşındıktan sonra bireylerin fiziksel çevreleri ve komşuları ile olan ilişkileri ve algılarının değişimi üzerine odaklanmak temel amaçtır. Aynı zamanda bütün bu süreçlerin neoliberal kent politikaları ile ilişkisi de detaylı olarak incelenmiştir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On a warm spring day in Bezirganbahçe, as I was strolling down the housing project, thinking about how I can contact people and how I can ask the questions in my mind without appearing too “sarcastic”- since I had doubts of my own regarding how to ask questions to relocated people who might still be suffering, I first approached a woman who was sitting in the bank near the playground, knitting on her own. I just introduced myself and asked her if I can pose some questions to her. The answer was plain and simple: “I’m busy taking care of my children.” Then I came across a family and asked the same questions to the father. He replied: “Well, *I will talk to you only if you come from the press. You can then at least be able to pass on our grievances. The others come here ask us questions. Then what? Nothing. Why should I share my troubles with you ? How can I know that you are not a municipal employee?*”¹

These reactions were beyond my expectations at that time, since I had always thought that the relocated people would be more welcoming and willing to talk to me as a channel of making themselves heard to a wider public, and in general I had the idea that people would like to talk about their problems. I was quite wrong. I saw that people were feeling insecure, distrustful, and very careful and selective about whom to talk. Though I convinced the father for an interview later on, my first day in the field was a disappointing one for me. I felt as if I was using the people, turning them into ethnographic objects as well as feeling a bit discouraged about the progress of my thesis. On the one hand, it had discouraged me for my fieldwork, but on the

¹ Original: “*Valla kusura bakma. Basından mısın? Basındansan konuşurum ancak. En azından şikâyetlerimizi iletirsin. Buraya geliyorlar, soruyorlar. Sonra? Hiç. Neden sana derdimi anlatayım? Ne bileyim senin belediye adamı olup olmadığını?*”

other hand it created more curiosity and helped me remain alert about my assumptions for the rest of the field study. Throughout the rest of my visits, I faced over and over with certain suspicion at first as well as certain sarcastic approach towards the objectives of the research.

The very general aim of this thesis is to try to see the impacts of the urban transformation projects among the residents whose lives were affected by the relocation. I also want to discuss the new urban development projects based on neo-liberal agendas and their contribution to the changing of the city space and people's relationships with their surroundings. On a more specific level, this thesis will examine the daily experiences of the residents of the Bezirganbahçe Housing Complex after their relocation from the *gecekondu* settlements in Ayazma and Tepeüstü regions, in terms of changes in physical environment and their relationships with the neighbors as well as their changing perceptions about housing and security. This thesis will make every attempt to try to understand how these changes and the large scale urban transformation projects (hereafter UTPs) are to be identified within the bigger picture of neoliberal urban policies.

Studying Bezirganbahçe Public Housing Project

Bezirganbahçe is one of the low income public housing projects, established by Mass Housing Administration in 2006 in Halkalı İstasyon region within the borders of Küçükçekmece Municipality. It has been launched and advertized as one of the “best-practice” examples of urban transformation projects after 2000s, for it was realized very quickly, and it was implemented as a *gecekondu* resettlement project: As part of this project two *gecekondu* neighborhoods have been demolished and the

inhabitants were relocated to Bezirganbahçe housing project. The reason I chose to study specifically Bezirganbahçe area was my curiosity about what was happening after the resettlement period in the urban transformation projects. I have first noticed this area and the relocation project in a newspaper page where the remaining tenants were interviewed in their tents in the demolished squatter area. After I went through the newspapers and archives about the area, my first impression was that there was not such strong resistance about the resettlement neither by the residents nor by the civil society.² The main focus of the interest for me was that although there was much more publicity about certain other transformation areas, Bezirganbahçe was not as visible as the others were. And despite other projects where strong resistance movements have been occurring, the newspapers had informed the public about Bezirganbahçe as a successful project, being the fastest and biggest transformation project ever. Therefore, the initial question in my mind has been about what happened to the people in housing project rather than being a third page news story subjects in urban transformation news.

As I went to the area where the housing project is for observation and for initial talk with the residents, I observed that the situation was far more complex than assumed by the mass media. The inhabitants were content to move to apartments in some aspects, yet they did remember the *gecekondu* with a romanticized nostalgia. Besides, the views were not always homogeneous. They depended on differing structural conditions and connections each resident had with the space with other actors involved in the process.. Some were better off while the others are on the point of losing all their financial means. But as I began to talk to relocated inhabitants, I realized two major common points in the interviews: On the one hand, it was clear

² Later I have been shown that indeed there was a resistance movement initiated by the residents themselves through certain channels, and it was supported by some civil groups, yet it mostly remained unheard or ignored.

that financial worsening situation was disempowering the residents, but on the other hand I could sense that the residents were speaking from a more empowered angle, claiming their rights, and asking for better conditions of housing and demanding more information about the ways that state and municipality function, and tactics to survive in that environment. Hence the research questions of this thesis focus around two main titles: neo-liberal urban policies and Bezirganbahçe public housing project within this context.

The first title of questions is related to setting the context of the urban transformation after 2000s. I seek to understand how we can explain the direction of the changes in urban management and policies with the establishment of new regulations and institutions; and the social, political and economic dynamics behind those changes in urban policy. In the light of these questions and their answers; the next question aims to understand how the process of urban transformation projects and neoliberal policies have begun to be implemented in Turkey, particularly in Istanbul; and in which ways the policies implemented in Turkey are similar and/ or differ from global trend in rise of neoliberal urban policies.

The second set of questions aims to explore in depth the case of *gecekondu* resettlement projects in particular and their impacts on its residents. I seek to understand here in which ways the lives of the resettled people have changed after moving to government housing units; and how these changes reflect to the daily practices of the inhabitants since most residents spend most of their time inside houses and inside the housing project. Another crucial question is to understand what this change of place from *gecekondu* to government housing project's apartment blocks means in terms of residents relations with their environment and their

perceptions; and lastly how these effects in daily lives are related to neoliberal urban policies and what are the implications of this relation.

This thesis, hence, aims to seek answers to above mentioned questions, through making use of qualitative techniques in the field. To do this, I have conducted fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with the residents who have moved to Bezirganbahçe Housing Project from Tepeüstü or Ayazma neighborhoods as well as two interviews with municipal officials. All interviews with the residents are conducted in their houses of the residents. Besides, the participant observation during my visits to Bezirganbahçe and in the offices of the Municipality has been helpful in terms of the insights gathered from observation. In the first chapter, I go through the neoliberal urban policy literature to identify the existing paradigms as well as trying to map out where Turkey stands within this picture. In the second chapter, I try to explain in detail the urban transformation strategies that were planned and implemented in Küçükçekmece district in particular, and the way the officials approach and justify the transformation projects. Then I move on to discuss the relocation process from Ayazma and Tepeüstü to Bezirganbahçe Housing Project in detail, offering information about the characteristics of the two demolished neighborhoods, the process of relocation and the resistance that has been shown. In the third chapter, upon exploring in detail the conditions in the new housing project, I present and analyze the results of the fieldwork study and show how this case presents itself as an example of neoliberal urban policies. In this chapter, through the interviews conducted with the relocated residents, I seek to understand how the change in physical space reflects into daily lives of the inhabitants, and how it transforms their perceptions and relations. That being examined, I also aim to understand how we can contextualize these changes and the meaning of these

changes within neoliberal urban policies. And in the fourth chapter, I discuss the potential future of Bezirganbahçe Housing Project, taking its relationship with the surrounding space and the relationship dynamics among the residents into focus of attention and conclude that the housing project has the potential to become an urban enclave that contains the powerless.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: NEOLIBERAL URBAN STRUCTURING

Istanbul has been experiencing a different kind of urban transformation after 2000s with the organized marketing and application of revitalization/ transformation/ renewal/ regeneration practices while assuming a competing global city vision together with the predicted precautionary measures for a possible earthquake. Not only the gated communities, residences, big shopping malls and convention centers have been increasing swiftly and engulfing the city, but also the manner in which the city is being discussed, governed, imagined and perceived has been going through a significant change. The public bodies, municipalities and state-led organizations appear as the major actors alongside with the private partnerships they form with big real-estate and construction companies. Meanwhile, the question of housing for the different segments of the society takes on a new meaning and understanding as the lower-classes are pushed away further from the sight of the public, being relocated or through symbolic means, and social and economic divisions between different groups get further crystallized through the reorganization of urban land.

To comprehend these parameters and new developments, and to map out where *gecekondü* transformation projects stand within all these changes, this study will utilize the concept of neoliberalism and its effects on the urban city space. Hence, the very general aim of this first chapter is to discuss the new urban development and transformation practices in the context of new urban policies and neoliberal agendas through a historical understanding, and discuss the urban policies in Istanbul by making use of these conceptual tools to see their effects on housing policies and people who were actually relocated. Since the detailed analysis and

discussion of all the projects is beyond the scope of my thesis, I will be engaging in the theoretical perspective of neoliberal urbanism and then in only a brief account of the neoliberal transformations and projects in Istanbul.

Neoliberal Urbanism: A New Approach to City Space and Changing Context
of Urban Policy Making after 1980s.

Neoliberal Socioeconomic Restructuring within the World

Neoliberalism as a strong policy has shown itself starting from 1970s when the Fordist production system could not survive against the increasing international competition and deindustrialization in the core capitalist countries. What began as a philosophical project has been turned into an economical and political one during 1980s by giving up Keynesian policies and transition into an understanding whose premises are based mainly on the notion of free market, flexible labor, state downsizing, and individualism instead of collective action in a competitive fashion – which is properly named as “roll-back” neoliberalism by Peck and Tickell³. By 1990s, the inherent problems of the neoliberal programs gave way to a restructuring of the policies, -roll-out phase of neo-liberalism- by turning into a more state interventionist type, where aggressive policy making and control and discipline of the populations gained importance. (Peck&Tickell, 2002; Harvey 1989; Jessop2002; Brenner&Theodore, 2002) Therefore, although the state downsizing was a fundamental element of the neoliberal agenda; the fact that these were achieved through intensive “reform” packages for institutions and continuous law making

³ Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002).

process, we can observe that the state institutions have arisen as the biggest actor in applying and even forcing these policies.

The neoliberal agenda has been internationalized through Washington Consensus and international organizations such as IMF, World Bank through encouraging and stipulating the post socialist and/or crisis stricken third world countries to apply liberalization and privatization through reform packages and structural adjustments.⁴ But actually, what is significant on this agenda is the way neo-liberalism embraces not only every area of policy making but also the way it changes the way of perceiving things and becomes the norm, the usual.

neoliberalism was qualitatively different because it inhabited not only institutions and places but also the *spaces in between*. In other words, neoliberalism was playing a decisive role in constructing the rules of interlocal competition by shaping the very metrics by which regional competitiveness, public policy, corporate performance or social productivity is measured.⁵

Neoliberalization depoliticizes the process of economic management and brings in the technocratic discourse which is taken for granted in comparison with other social policy suggestions. In this picture where the rules of the game were determined by neoliberalism, cities emerged as the most crucial media through which the notion of competition has been applied.

⁴ Of course there have been many differences and variations in the ways each country or region has adopted neoliberal restructuring policies. It should be acknowledged that these agendas have come upon already existing structures and power balances, thus the outcome has been unique in each case. For a more detailed discussion on the ways neoliberal adjustments may take shape, see Jessop, "Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Urban Governance" *Antipode*, 34: 3 (2002)

⁵ Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, "Neoliberalizing Space," *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002): 387.

Neoliberal Urbanism

Neoliberal urbanism has been defined by many theorists as an attempt that seeks to entrepreneurialize the cities physically and socially. Through several restructuring of the municipal responsibilities and authorities, along with the attempts to turn the cities into global competitors in terms of attracting investment; the scale and the definition of the city and urbanism have changed significantly over the last 25 years. The public-private partnership over developing and implementing large-scale urban renewal/redevelopment projects, the central government withdrawing its authority on urban planning to local governments, gentrification of historical parts of the city for high-income groups and foreign attractions, the rise of gated communities and the discourse on crime it brings along with are some of the main characteristics of this neo-liberal urban policy (Jessop, 2002; Hackworth, 2006, 2007).

The spatial dispersal of manufacturing and hence global integration of the economic activity has created a new role and shape for major cities; which are coined as global cities in the literature where the production of services and financial/technological innovations has dominated over the production of goods and the managerial positions that control international production and trade processes gave way to a new kind of urban population. (Sassen, 1991, 1994) This shift to service economy, globalization of production and rise of management centers and high-tech industries had a major impact on the new urban order because together with the rise of global cities and their competition for international business and trade, the cities have become the main focuses of the neo-liberal agenda. Indeed neoliberalism has come to represent a strategy of political-economic structuring that uses space as its “privileged instrument”.⁶ Because since the change of scale has

⁶ Neil Brenner and Nick Theodore, “Preface: From the 'New Localism' to the Spaces of Neoliberalism,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002):341-347.

moved from the national towards the local, regional and urban scales, the urban space and urban politics emerged as the “arena” for new economic activities and hence resolving the contradictions of capitalism itself. Moreover, the cities are left in a cycle in which the budgets from the central government are cutback; hence they need to find out new ways of generating income and development. As Swyngedouw et al. argue; “as the financial services sector and profit making via global speculative transactions drain major financial means and investments, such activities simultaneously escape government control and generate very limited local fiscal returns and in such a context the revaluation of urban land remains one of the few means open to local governments to increase tax returns.”⁷ Thus, governing the city has moved towards “new entrepreneurialism” rather than “managerialism”. (Harvey, 1987, 1989; Smith, 2002)

The new entrepreneurialism fosters an approach to urban policy which at the same time encourages a process of public-private partnership and also presents the private sector as a model for the ways in which city governments and other actors should behave.⁸ The new entrepreneurialism focuses on its investments through speculative construction and marketing of the city rather than amelioration of the city’s and its inhabitants’ immediate needs (Harvey, 1989) hence the city and localities within the cities –certain districts, areas, historical parts of the city- are being “re-imagined or re-imaged as an economic, political and cultural entities which must seek to undertake entrepreneurial activities to enhance its competitiveness”⁹

⁷ Erik Swyngedouw, Frank Moulaert and Arantxa Rodriguez, “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002): 552

⁸ Allan Cochrane, *Understanding Urban Policy: A Critical Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 122-124.

⁹ Bob Jessop, “The entrepreneurial city: re-imagining localities, redesigning economic governance,” In *Realizing Cities: New Spatial Divisions and Social Transformations*, eds. N. Jewson and S. MacGregor (Routledge, London, 1997), 28-41

(Jessop, 1997). According to the logic of it, traditional local government applications and welfare systems are costly, inefficient and incapable of providing urban growth and development; instead these systems should be reorganized in a way that internal competition to provide certain services by private bodies should be organized and the people should be directed towards self-help and training programs to find employment and provide their own welfare.

At this point, the crucial emphasis to be noted is the fact that the current urban renewal projects and policies are not merely reflections of the neo-liberal ideology that are clinging somewhere in the theoretical debates, but they are transformed, strengthened through the urban space and modifications in the urban city and its management; hence the urban arises as an important concept and an integral part of the neo-liberalism itself. Indeed, Brenner et al. argue that:

A marked urbanization of neoliberalism has been occurring as cities have become strategic targets for an increasingly broad range of neoliberal policy experiments, institutional innovations and politico-ideological projects. Under these conditions, cities have become the incubators for many of the major political and ideological strategies through which the dominance of neoliberalism is being maintained.¹⁰

What the cities experience in neoliberal urban policies have two crucial aspects. Indeed the elements of this two-folded nature of the urban neoliberal agenda do not contradict, but complement each other. According to Cochrane, the urban policy that comes into the scene as a result of the understandings of neo-liberalism has two related aspects. One aspect is about the production of large scale urban development projects that are commercial and that have become material expressions

¹⁰ Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, "Cities and the Geographies of "Actually Existing Neoliberalism," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 375.

of a developments logic that “views mega projects and place-marketing as a means for generating future growth and for waging a competitive struggle to attract investment capital.”¹¹ In line with this, the local governments become more involved in economic activities such as investments and constructions. The second aspect is about the production of new urban inequalities and new approaches to deal with them. On the one hand large scale urban regeneration plans efficiently displace large numbers of working classes; on the other hand they find effective novel ways of managing the poverty that has increased due to uneven developments; one that seeks to manage the social divisions instead of trying to reduce them.

Although, in this picture, the role of the state looks as if withers away from the scene; what we see in the fields is that there is a strong back up from the state institutions in enforcing, applying and promoting neo-liberal policies in the urban space. In fact, in European cities, as well as in Istanbul, the state is actively promoting and forming partnerships in order to promote massive urban regeneration projects that are planned to attract more investment and increase urban rents while not giving a say to the poor who are living in the area. The restructuring of TOKİ (Mass Housing Institution) along with other state institutions and the legal changes about the transformation areas, which will be examined in the following chapter, are clear proofs of the state’s active and even leading role in these policies.

¹¹ Allan Cochrane, *Understanding Urban Policy: A Critical Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 122-124.

Istanbul on a Neo-liberal Agenda

Regarding these discussions and the proliferation of neo-liberal policies in the world, the case of Istanbul can also be examined through the neo-liberalism lens. What is crucial here is to go beyond a simple comparison or analogy and to toil to see how these policies insert themselves into already existing policies and contexts; and how they shape and are shaped through this interaction.

As Peck and Tickell stress, neoliberalization should be considered as a process whose analysis should focus on change, “shifts in systems and logics, dominant patterns of restructuring” rather than making “binary” or “static” comparisons between then and now.¹² Indeed these policies do come upon the already existing structures and laws and blend with them in specific ways. Therefore, “actually existing”¹³ neoliberalisms are always composite structures whose process is shaped both by worldwide applied neoliberal principals and by specific local political and social contexts and actors. Nevertheless, as much as the local tendencies are crucial in defining the path of neoliberal agendas, the general tendencies should not be ignored. Hackworth and Moriah argue that while seeing neo-liberalism as a contingent process might be a politically useful construction, there is always the danger of overlooking the very coordinated and effective nature of the neo-liberal agenda.¹⁴ From this point of view, in this part of the study, I will analyze the changes in Istanbul’s urban policy by bearing in mind these local and general tendencies.

¹² Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” *Antipode* 34, no.3(2002): 383.

¹³ Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, “Cities and the Geographies of “Actually Existing Neoliberalism,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002):352.

¹⁴ Jason Hackworth and Abigail Moriah, “Neoliberalism, Contingency and Urban Policy: The case of Social Housing in Ontario,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no.3 (2006): 510-527.

Istanbul: Becoming an Entrepreneurial City

The transition from managerial to entrepreneurial city in the case of Istanbul has begun after the general elections of 1983 where the *ANAP* (Motherland Party) won the elections and again won in fifty four of the seventy one cities in local elections of 1984, including Istanbul. A neo-liberal economic model has been adopted where financial markets and trade was liberalized, capital mobility has been enhanced and state subsidies were transferred from industrial sector to tourism, export-import, and real estate markets. This meant impoverishment of a large section of the population with the decrease in the public sector, cuts in social spending and suspension of union activities. The transition was carried on more or less smoothly. Both internal dynamics such as the political and social environment after the coup in 1980 and having suppressed most of the dissident voices in the country, the support of Turkish business circles for internationalization and liberalization and external dynamics like Turkey's increasing importance for Europe and USA have created appropriate environment for such a neo-liberal transition (Öktem, 2005). As a result of these economic and political changes, Istanbul emerged as the urban core of the national economy due to its locational and historical significance. In this era and afterwards, the creation of the urban infrastructure has been considered as one of the top priorities for governing Istanbul to make the city a global competitor.

The urban government was restructured in ANAP period, by introducing a two layered municipal system composed of metropolitan mayor and district mayors, transferring authority from the central government to metropolitan mayors. From then on, agencies such as Master Plan Bureau or Water Supply and Sewerage Authority were under the control of metropolitan mayor. This decentralization has continued when the municipal services such as garbage collection, street repairs were

handed down to district layers from the metropolitan mayor. This two tier system of local governing contributed to the increase in entrepreneurial style not only in terms of decentralization but also for the fact that district municipalities undertook the traditional patronage politics, the metropolitan municipality has had to respond to powerful economic groups to claim its legitimacy (Keleş, 1990; Keyder and Öncü, 1993). The discovery of ANAP's urban populism (Öncü, 1991), consisting of deregulation of residential property market through legal amnesties and allowing shanty town owners to turn their dwellings into multi-storey apartments, provided them with the support of the urban population especially in Istanbul, despite the widening of the income gap between economic groups. At the same time, the new legal arrangements gave way to the metropolitan governments to increase the local taxes and charges on a variety of activities (Keleş, 1986).

In addition to the legal changes and the populist style of amenities and discourses, increasing integration with the world economy through the governments' efforts to liberalize trade, encouraged export-oriented production, and highlighting the importance of tourism for national economy brought about the arrival of foreign banks and foreign investment and companies venturing for their interests in a newly emerging international market and construction of new deluxe hotels to accommodate this arriving population of businessmen and tourists (Keyder and Öncü, 1993). Moreover, the metropolitan mayor Bedrettin Dalan, himself took on entrepreneurial projects, initiated and facilitated projects such as the clearance of Golden Horn by transferring the industrial businesses away from the center and turning this area into a open-air historical museum, creating business centers/districts in certain parts of the city, then construction of highways and throughways to facilitate access and transportation to these centers, encouraging the construction of

shopping malls, and big luxurious residential units, all eventually have changed the urban core and structure of Istanbul considerably.

Between the years 1989-1994, *SHP* – Social Democratic People’s Party has won metropolitan municipality of Istanbul, with Nurettin Sözen becoming Istanbul metropolitan mayor. SHP municipal government, although accepting the global city vision for Istanbul, has been more interventionist and cautious with their attitude towards big capital investors and rent speculators and has chosen to go for the global city project on a more cultural scale. (Öktem, 2008) Most municipal resources were transferred to shanty towns in the form of bringing municipal services as part of social state, partly due to Sözen’s choice of populist alternative rather than entrepreneurialism (Keyder and Öncü; Keyder, 1999). However, this trial of balance between the big capital owners and the social state mission has been considered as unsuccessful, since it caused conflict with the central government, and slowed down the implementation of big-scale projects, seen as populism, and caused massive economic burden for the municipality itself.

1994-2004, *RP*- Welfare Party- (later *FP*, after *WP* was suspended) has ruled in Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. During 1994 local elections, while all parties had constructed their discourse on turning Istanbul into a global city, *RP* has stressed on social justice, fighting with corruption and social values. Their success in the elections has been considered as a victory of the shanty town dwellers, as most of their votes had come from poor parts of the city. But as soon as they got the local elections, *RP* also conformed to the global city vision, with some modifications according to their political and religious agenda (Aksoy and Robbins, 1996; Öktem, 2006). The elites of *RP* considered Istanbul as the center of Islamic world, a symbol

of the “Islamic justice”¹⁵ and built their notion of global city according to this vision. They have conducted plans in order to make Istanbul a center of technology, science and international commerce trying to balance all these developments with their social and cultural values. But RP and later FP failed the cooperation with the big capital owners which was necessary to carry out such big scale projects and the Islamic capital that supported the party lacked the accumulation of capital; thus most projects had to remain in the discourse level.¹⁶

In this section, I tried to briefly summarize the neo-liberal turn of governing Istanbul beginning from 1980s in line with the changes in national policies. In the next section, following this framework, the changes in 2000s will be analyzed in the light of this background information, trying to emphasize the novelties of this new era in terms of scales, legislations and attitudes to the housing issue.

Istanbul in 2000s

What could be seen in Istanbul in the beginning of the twenty first century is the proliferation of neo-liberal policies on a very massive scale. On the one hand, the construction of new business centers, shopping malls, entertainment and accommodation complexes has continued with growing numbers and also increasing urban rents and values, and new lands have been opened for construction for several types of housing and gated communities; on the other hand parts of the city with significant historical background and potential for tourism have been renovated/redesigned through gentrifying and sending away the marginalized, poor sections of the society further away from the city centers. Since the value of the

¹⁵ Tanıl Bora, “Fatih’in İstanbul’u,” in *İstanbul, Küresel ile Yerel Arasında*, ed. Çağlar Keyder (Istanbul: Metis, 2000), 71-73.

¹⁶ Binnur Öktem “Neoliberal Küreselleşmenin Kentlerde İnşası: AKP’nin Küresel Kent Söylemi ve İstanbul’un Kentsel Dönüşüm Projeleri,” *Planlama* 2 (2006).

urban land is determined not only by itself but also through its proximity and relationship to other landed properties; the regeneration policies are directed at emptying the “distress” areas and its residents for future added value. All these are justified and based on “public interests” like becoming a world city and ready for Cultural Capital 2010, meeting the housing needs of the increasing population, strengthening the building stock of the city against a very possible earthquake.

The rationality of these projects is mainly based on opening certain places for high-income groups; because the process works more like an elected “middle-high class democracy”¹⁷ but applies less a democratic process than elitist decision making and application procedures. Kurtuluş constructs this new kind of urbanization as “patches.”¹⁸ Instead of massive construction of modernist cities in 1900s, she argues that the symbol of the new urbanization is patches for the capital flows to the available land or to the land that’s been made available by the government for increased rent and that capital creates patches without any relation whatsoever to the surrounding environment. Thus, it is very possible to see high-rise residence or a convention center bordering a shantytown neighborhood; but as the construction of the convention center increases the land value, sooner or later the surrounding area is evicted forcefully or through market and the area is gentrified. This notion of patches has been and still descriptive and useful for understanding the neo-liberal urban development patterns. But what is novel in the twenty first century in Istanbul is that the governing bodies have been introducing big scale urban projects for commercial development, historical renewal and redevelopment of squatter settlements.

¹⁷ Asuman Türkün and Hatice Kurtuluş, “Introduction” in *İstanbul’da Kentsel Ayrışma*, edited by Hatice Kurtuluş (İstanbul: Bağlam, 2005), 16.

¹⁸ Hatice Kurtuluş, “Economy Politic of Urban Transformation”, speech in *Urban Transformation Symposium*, Istanbul University, on 09.10.08.

Burkay argues that what is radically different in the 2000s than the previous neo-liberal urban policies is the further extension of the urbanization perspective of the 1980s to the previously uncovered segments of society. This perspective aims not only at centering the cities on new economic sectors like services, finance and marketing but also at marketing the city as a commodity in order to take advantage of being a “world city.”¹⁹ Also we can see the increasing partnership of local governments with private bodies, academicians and NGOs in the form of projects, symposiums about specific areas or problematization of urban issues, or competitions for big-scale areas such as Kartal and Küçükçekmece. Furthermore, through macro forms of transformation, the population living in the area that is chosen to be transformed is affected much more severely; as they are relocated, impoverished or forms of employment are diminished. Urban divisions between different economic groups become clearer through concentration of each group in certain parts of the city, and the city starts to be defined through these social groups and their spatial positioning within the city.²⁰ The combination of the two dominant models of neo-liberal housing; mainly gated communities and squatter resettlement projects indicates that while some people are secured the others are controlled in this new definition of the urban city.

Bartu-Candan and Kırılı²¹ argue that there are three axes of the urban transformation discourse and projects: the new laws that extend the sphere of power of the local governments, the new governmentality language and the discourse on

¹⁹ H. Burkay, “Social Policy of Urban Transformation: Social Housing Policies in Turkey from the 1980s to the Present,” (M.A. thesis, The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Bosphorus University, 2006), 78.

²⁰ Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu, “Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A gated town and a public housing project in Istanbul,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 5-46.

²¹ Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kırılı, “Kentsel Dönüşüme nasıl Karşı Durulabilir?,” *İstanbul Dergisi* 60 (2007): 69-70.

urgency. In the following pages, I will give a brief introduction of the law changes concerning urban transformation made after 2000. But I find the other two axes crucial in the sense that they resonate through all the catalogues I have reviewed and all the interviews I have made through the course of this thesis, and therefore they should be mentioned here as well. The new language consists of new jargons and concepts such as flexibility, effectiveness and transparency that are continuously being used by local government reports, brochures, interviews, and press speeches. According to Candan and Kırılı, while on the one hand the new laws turn the city into a sphere of neo-liberal applications and procedures, on the other hand this new language conceals this process and creates an impression of real effective government, participation and transparency. Similarly, in all the booklets, and the interviews, the informants and the introduction letters especially stress the vision, transparency, scientificity and sustainability. The third axe is that the discourse on urgency created around natural disasters such as earthquakes and around the ones that are “naturalized disasters” such as migration, traffic, crime and population increase, all of these feed on the impression that all these problems could only be solved with a large scale urban transformation, and thus the proposed projects become urgent and inevitable in such an emergency perception.

When *AKP* (Justice and Development Party) came into power in the general elections of 2002, and then won the mayorship in 2004 local elections²², *AKP* has defined itself as “new conservatism”, by stressing its advocacy for democracy, individual liberties and free market economy; always reiterating that they have a secular ideology and are against using religion for political purposes. The economic

²² Until the local elections of 2004, the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan was Ali Müfit Görtuna from Virtue Party (FP), After his party was closed in 2001, he served as an “independent” mayor until the elections, and we can argue that he did not conflict with the central government, although he didn’t openly defend or lead the projects.

program of the party was based on neo-liberal discourses such as the decentralization of the state, paving up the privatization, increasing competition and competition power of Turkey and strengthening good governance and civil society.²³ AKP also seems to have been giving much importance to concepts such as marketing, image making, strategic planning and urban transformation projects in relation with the urban city. AKP defines the driving engine of the economy as the real sector; consequently in their governing era, the scale of the urban construction and urban transformation projects have increased significantly.²⁴ In this perspective Istanbul has been defined by several party actors as the main core of elements for boosting Turkish economy and hence the discussion and implementation of several cultural and commercial projects such as Haydarpaşa Port, Galataport (which have been criticized severely by the public and certain professionals because these would damage the historical heritage), and Söğütözü Congress Center have been more salient in this era as well as the transfer of certain state institutions such as Central Bank has become a widely discussed public debate. Meanwhile, the Islamic capital that has gained strength and become wealthier has been involved in the construction and real-estate sector including Taşyapı and Kiler Group.

In the case of 2009 local elections, the discourse of AKP about competing global city seems not to have changed in terms of urbanization. Prime Minister, in his speech of introducing once again Kadir Topbaş as the party's candidate for Metropolitan Municipality, stressed the differences made in the city in four years with regards to becoming a center of attraction, and stating that their goal was to increase the number of hotels and construction of a big facility since Istanbul would

²³ AKP Party Program, 2001. http://www.belgenet.com/parti/program/ak_2.html

²⁴ Binnur Öktem, "Neoliberal Küreselleşmenin Kentlerde İnşası: AKP'nin Küresel Kent Söylemi ve İstanbul'un Kentsel Dönüşüm Projeleri," *Planlama 2* (2006): 53.

be hosting major international events such as IMF General Meeting in 2010.²⁵ The mayor Kadir Topbaş also stresses in many of his speeches about what kind of a mayor Istanbul deserves, as being a global city, that is to become European Cultural Capital, and also compares himself with Bedrettin Dalan of 1980s, as to their successful investments.²⁶

Another interesting difference in the 2009 election campaigns is the justification base for the urban transformation projects. As stated before, the main line of argument behind the massive transformation projects was the earthquake of 1999, and strengthening the stock of buildings against natural disasters, along with the global city vision. When the economic crisis of 2008 hit the economy and unemployment figures have been increasing, Kadir Topbaş seems to have begun to justify the urban transformation projects on the basis of creating employments. In one of his election speech, he stressed that they are initiating a new phase in the urban transformation projects; hence “If we declare a certain region as transformation area, the people of that region will continue living there. We will provide employment to people during the development of the project and after the project and facilities have been completed. ... If we build a hospital, or a market, the residents will be employed in these facilities. We will initiate this system first in Kartal Sub-Region Urban Transformation Project.”²⁷ This discourse doesn’t specify the details of the housing problems of the already existing residents, or their resistance to their prospective relocation to government housing units.

²⁵ <http://www.akpartiistanbul.com/haber.aspx?id=604>

²⁶Topbaş’s speech in one of his election meetings: “ Demagoji yaparak siyaset olmaz. İstanbul zarif insanların yaşadığı bir şehir ve İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanlığı da zarafet ister. 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti olan İstanbul zarafet ister. Belediyeye geldiğimde sadece Topbaş’ı kovacağım demek, nasıl bir nezaketsizliktir. Bu söz nezaketen söylenmez. Bunlar Sayın Dalan’ı da belediyeden yuhalarla uğurlayan bir zihniyettendir. İstanbul’un geldiği noktada yiğidi öldürseniz bile hakkını verin, mert olun, dürüst olun” <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=17055>

²⁷ <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=17049>

Legal Changes, New Role for Institutions

As a result of 2004 local elections, the mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was once again the member of the ruling party (AKP) and 24 out of 32 municipalities in Istanbul voted for the same party. This fact alone made the changes in laws and regulations easier, as the coordination between two levels of government is much coherent and organized. Besides there have been new institutional arrangements within the municipal organization.. One of the most important of these arrangements was the establishment of *İMP* - Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Agency (hereafter IMP) in 2005. The center has been established under *BİMTAŞ*, which is a semi-autonomous enterprise that was established by *İBB* -Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2005. Following this, the city's strategic planning and project work have been transferred to IMP by a contract. In this center, a significant number of professionals, urban planners, architects work or provide consultancy in the preparation of development plans and projects. The center defines its mission as: "the formulation of the city vision to secure a global city status, producing strategic plans of Istanbul as important tools that would bring about a valuable perspective to define and actualize the city's economic possibilities and potentials based on a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the natural, historical and cultural values of the city."²⁸ The center also has actively been involved in the designation of flagship project design competitions where international architects such as Ken Yeang and Zaha Hadid were selected with their futuristic designs for Küçükçekmece and Kartal projects, respectively.

²⁸ IMP Booklet, 2006.

Legal Arrangements after 2004

A series of legal arrangements has been made by the AKP government in order to prepare the basis for the massive urban transformation projects. These changes have further strengthened the already existing municipal powers and authorities. Here, I provide a brief list and content of these laws which have passed, or changes made in the existing articles and those that are still under consideration in the parliament after 2000²⁹:

- The Law of Metropolitan Municipalities (2004, numbered 5216) this law entitles metropolitan municipalities the right to designate and determine project areas and carry out urban development and transformation projects. IMP was also founded through this law.
- The Law of Municipalities (2005, numbered 5393): Under 73rd article of the law the municipality is entitled with the right to “apply urban development and transformation projects in order to rebuild and restore the old city parts, create new housing, commercial and industrial areas, technology parks and social facilities, in order to take measures against earthquake risks, and to protect the historical and cultural fabric of the city.”
- The Law concerning the Northern Ankara Entrance Urban Regeneration Project (2004, Law numbered 5104): this law can be considered as the first specific legal arrangement about urban transformation since its goal is stated as “improving the urban life quality and providing a more healthy residential order through developing physical and environmental outlook of northern Ankara entrance”.

²⁹ For a more comprehensive account of the legal changes concerning urban renewal and their comparison with older laws, see Pelin Pinar Özden, *Kentsel Yenileme*, (Ankara: İmge, 2008).

- Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties (2005, Law numbered 5366): This law aims to conserve the immovable cultural and historical through revitalization, restoration and reconstruction, to take precautions against natural disasters in these regions and to develop commercial, cultural and housing facilities.
- The Draft Law about Regeneration Areas (2006): Still being deliberated in the parliament commissions, and according to the public opinion, this draft law seems problematic as it takes in all rural and urban areas within its scope, and local governments are given the authority to designate transformation areas, aggregate the property rights for this purpose, creates problems within the hierarch of planning top-down scale (if the development plan doesn't conform to the master or higher plan, the higher one has to be changed within three months).³⁰

One significant and common characteristic of these changing laws is the vague language used. The definition of spaces such as “dilapidated”, “distress”, “historical areas” tend to offer very broad definitions; and thus very much discretion is left to the decision-making authorities and to the arbitrariness of the policy implementers. This way, the legal opposition becomes a very much difficult enterprise.

³⁰ For criticisms and comprehensive analyses of this draft law, see Nil Uzun, “Yeni Yasal Düzenlemeler ve Kentsel Dönüşüme Etkileri”, *Planlama Dergisi* 2(2006); Özgür Eren. “Toprağın Rantı, Rantın Yasası”, in *Express* 4(2008).

Mass Housing Agency (TOKI)

Mass Housing Agency seems to have become the biggest actor in the housing sector not only in Istanbul, but also in many other cities of the country due to its reorganization and the new responsibilities and authorizations the institution gained through legal arrangements.

TOKI- Mass Housing Agency (hereafter MHA) has been established in 1984 as part of the Prime Ministry Mass Housing Undersecretariat. Until the rule of AKP government, it was monitored by the Auditing Commission and Prime Ministry Higher Auditing Commission. But after AKP government, the Undersecretariat and the Auditing Commission have been abolished. MHA has been made subject to the control of Court of Accounts for a short period, the public body which has a mandate to inspect the public offices financially. But before any single auditing, MHA has been taken out of this institution's mandate.

In 2003, with the Law No. 4966, Housing Undersecretariat has been suspended and some of its duties have been transferred to MHA. Mass Housing Agency has been reattached to Prime Ministry on January 2004. Besides, with another change made in Mass Housing Law numbered 2985, new responsibilities have been given to the agency. In accordance with these changes, MHA can establish companies or participate in a company in housing sector, develop project inside and outside Turkey, build housing, infrastructure and social facilities, realizing profit-making projects in order to create resources for itself, and it is authorized to take the public lands free-of-charge by suggestion of the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement and by the approval of Prime Minister.³¹ Following these changes, the agency which originally functioned as a "disbursing agency for government

³¹ Erdoğan Bayraktar, *Bir İnsanlık Hakkı Olarak Konut* (Istanbul: Boyut, 2006).

encouragement of private initiative in housing construction”³² became a much flexible and autonomous body that can create income, develop and implement projects by itself. It would be right to say it began to work more in the form of a private company.

The priority of the duties of MHA has been stated as providing support for those who cannot afford to own housing under market conditions. For this reason, it is stated that % 83 of the houses constructed or under construction have “social housing” quality.³³ For the remaining percentage, MHA is constructing housing sites for high-income groups in order to generate financial resources for the institution. Transparency seems to be one of the main justifications of the actions of the agency. In the websites and booklets of MHA, the figures and the numbers and information about the biddings are stated under the name of transparency. This creates the illusion that the agency can be monitored due to this information flow, and actually this may be considered as part of what Wacquant calls the neoliberal newspeak³⁴. With the legal amendments, MHA has got much authority and autonomy to publicize lands, develop and implement housing projects, but as an institution it can only be monitored by Prime Ministry Higher Monitoring Agency (*BDYK*) and State Monitoring Agency (*DDK*) which are different from jurisdictional authorities such as Court of Accounts.

³² Çağlar Keyder ve Ayşe Öncü, "Globalization of a third-world metropolis: Istanbul in the 1980s," *Review* 17 (1994):403.

³³ Erdoğan Bayraktar, *Bir İnsanlık Hakkı Olarak Konut* (İstanbul: Boyut, 2006).

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, “Neoliberal Newspeak: Notes on the New Planetary Vulgate,” *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2006): 2-5.

As of today MHA has 119 projects within the borders of Istanbul, either completed or under construction, and these projects include 71.722 housing units; both for low-income and high-income groups.³⁵

Housing and *Gecekondu* Transformation Projects in 2000s

Concomitant with the neoliberal urban policies, the policy making and implementing bodies developed certain prominent patterns of approaching the issue of *gecekondu* in Istanbul. In this part, I will briefly conceptualize the changing way of taking up the issue and its reasons, by comparing the post-1980s era and post 2000s³⁶

While the neoliberal turn had been focusing on the claim to become a global attraction for the sake of Istanbul after 1980s, the migration flow to Istanbul had been continuing, but this time around for a different reason. While the population of Istanbul was 4.7 million in 1980, it reached 7.3 million in 1990 and 9 million in 2000.³⁷ The migrant flow before 1980 was mostly due to rapid industrialization and thus the need for labor and the flexible housing conditions the governments have allowed for in exchange for this labor need; post 1980s migration pattern was different; most migrants who came after 1980 were mainly from eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey who were forced to migrate due to the ongoing armed conflict between the Kurdish guerilla and Turkish army. This time there was neither enough work to subsist them, nor the clientelistic politicians that were eager to exchange benefits in terms of illegal housing in public lands. As a result of the policy

³⁵ <http://www.toki.gov.tr/programlar/uygulamatakip/ilharita.asp>

³⁶ For the history and analysis of *gecekondu* issue in Turkey and Istanbul, see Tansı Şenyapılı, "Charting the Voyage of Squatter Housing in Urban Spatial 'Quadruped'," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* Thematic Issue 1 (2004).

³⁷ www.tuik.gov.tr; www.istanbul.gov.tr

choices of the urban coalitions, new manufacturing centers were developed outside of Istanbul. Shantytowns which were originally built to be close to the centers of manufacturing remained behind as residential units without any economic logic as producers left the city”³⁸ Besides, these forced migrants were further impoverished because, first, they were not part of chain migration, thus they lacked the necessary networks that the former had been operating in Istanbul, and secondly they mostly had no more a “hometown” to return to, since they were either demolished or economically devastated due to the conflict.

Along with the changing characteristic of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods, the policies that have been sustaining them have gone through transformation as well. What is also striking in this new organization of transformation is the positioning of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods within the dominant discourse. While during the era of rapid industrialization, the *gecekondu* was seen as a source of welfare for the migrants who have migrated to Istanbul to work in the factories; as the neoliberal era turned cities into global commercial sites intense in service sector instead of production centers. The *gecekondu* seems to have lost its practical purpose and electoral importance. As the cities themselves have become objects of consumption; the land becomes scarce and the right for housing becomes a commodity itself.

The moral economy of urban land use seems to have reached its limits mostly because of the conflicts of interests between new sources of demand for land ... Formerly populist politicians now respond to these market-mediated demands rather than to a potential constituency of

³⁸ Çağlar Keyder, “Globalization and Social Exclusion in Istanbul,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, 1 (2005):124-134.

immigrants. They have shifted their allegiances from populist developmentalism to neighborhood upgrading under capitalist logic.³⁹

So, as a result of the changing socio-economic conditions and the status of the cities, for the first time *gecekondu* issue has been approached with this much systematic, holistic and decisive manner rather than former policies in the form of amnesties and partial legitimization. Thus, the discourse on *gecekondu* shifted from being a political tool for the electoral politics to one in which they are explicitly announced as the cancerous bodies of the city, sources of disease, crime and danger; and public housing projects are marketed as the only solution to eliminate the illegal housing, hence all the baggage of problems the name was loaded with.

Given this picture MHA has become the main actor in the squatter transformation projects in 2000s. In order to quicken Squatter Transformation/Urban Renewal projects, *Gecekondu* Transformation Branch Office has been established within MHA on May 17, 2004. The main system that the institution uses is to agree on protocols with the local municipality, and carry out squatter transformation projects either through relocation or through transformation in the same place. If the residents (the property owners) accept to buy the house that MHA will build, the value of their property is accepted as the down payment and the remaining amount to be paid is divided into monthly payments.⁴⁰ But of course, which shanty town settlements to be included in the transformation projects, and which are left out is still a highly debated issue, and the choices that have been made until now brings into mind the question of increasing urban rent by certain decision makers.

³⁹ Ibid.,130.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed analysis on the change in housing policies after 1980 until now, see Helin Burkay “Social Policy of Urban Transformation: Social Housing Policies in Turkey from the 1980s to the Present” (MA thesis, Bosphorus University, The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2006).

Conclusion

Considering all these developments, what has been happening in Küçükçekmece as one of the biggest scale projects in Istanbul carried out by the partnership of MHA, Küçükçekmece Municipality and Metropolitan Municipality indeed provides a fruitful example of the way Istanbul is being re-imagined and redesigned; - apart from the fact that the field I have studied for this thesis project is within the borders of this municipality- since the projects conducted here range from high-rise apartments to elimination of squatters and relocation to government housing as well as planning and implementing of massive scale prestige projects. In all these projects, the strengthening of the region's construction stock against the risk of earthquake goes hand in hand with the emphasis on being a part of global cities. Hence, the next chapter will be explaining and analyzing the recent developments that have been going on in this region of Istanbul.

CHAPTER 3

VISIONS OF A NEW URBAN ORDER: KÜÇÜKÇEKMECE MUNICIPALITY

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research field under question in detail. My goal in this part is to draw a picture of these two demolished *gecekondu* neighborhoods by utilizing information such as the demographic distribution of population, property structure and employment status, and then discuss relocation process of this population into Bezirganbahçe government housing project. Therefore brief background information on Ayazma and Tepeüstü *gecekondu* housing, the property relations and ownership structure that existed before clearance and the process of implementation of urban transformation and relocation project will be examined in this chapter to comprehend the research field of this thesis. Along with these, the resistance movements that have occurred and the reasons for the failure of these resistance movements will be looked into in this chapter.

Before proceeding to introduce and analyze the above mentioned issues, it is also crucial to take a wider look at the district level as a more comprehensive unit. The image and vision of Küçükçekmece as the “Small Istanbul” that is reinforced and promoted by the municipality, and ongoing housing and commercial development projects within the district in line with this vision should be mentioned and analyzed in this study since they constitute an important part of the meaning of the *gecekondu* removal/relocation project under question. For this purpose, before discussing Bezirganbahçe urban transformation project, I will give a comprehensive account on the planned/implemented/alleged urban transformation projects within the borders of the district and then move on to describe Ayazma and Tepeüstü regions, and how, when and in what terms their residents have been relocated to

Bezirganbahçe Housing Complex. To accomplish these, this chapter will base its claims and information on the booklets, brochures and books published by Küçükçekmece Municipality, personal interviews with municipal officials as well as making use of the newspaper clippings related to the vision of the district, and declarations of the officials involved in the process.

A Brief History of Küçükçekmece District

Given the land it occupies, Küçükçekmece is the second largest district in Istanbul. Throughout 1950s some of the migrants coming from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia had settled here, and then together with the increasing migration to Istanbul, the district population has increased considerably. This increase has been multiplied with the incentive on establishing industrial zones and housing cooperatives construction activities. As such the population increase between the years 1965-70 has succeeded 100%⁴¹. Küçükçekmece has become a municipality by separating itself from Bakırköy municipality in 1987. In 1990, Avcılar district, due to its rapid development as an industrial area and university settlement, has been separated from Küçükçekmece and hence the municipality has finally reached today's borders. According to the information stated in the municipality's website, population of Küçükçekmece in the 2007 census is 785.392. Most of the population is composed of low-income laborers and government employees.

⁴¹ www.kucukcekmece.bel.tr

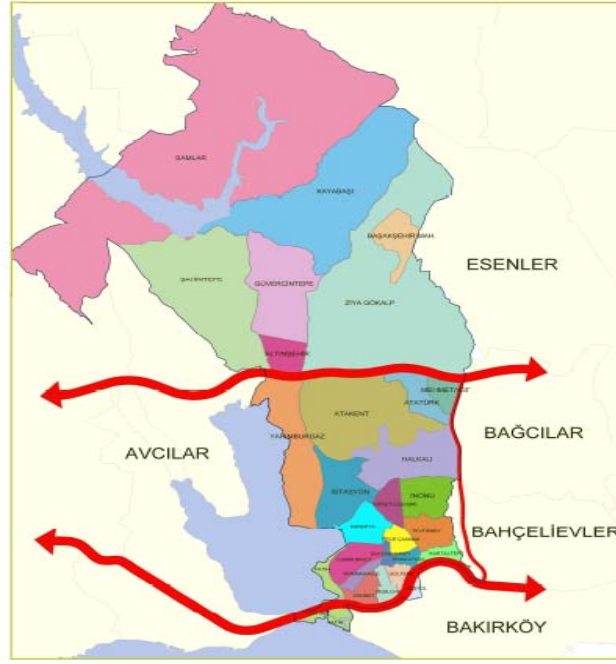


Figure 1. Map of Küçükçekmece district

Despite its seemingly low-income population and being far from the city center, Küçükçekmece is an important municipality within the municipality's wider dream of being a significant location of global Istanbul since it is located in a strategic geography in many ways: it is close to Atatürk Airport (2 kms), it contains rivers and lakes which are both economically and ecologically valuable assets, the Olympic Village is located within this municipality which is thought to have a big tourist attraction potential and three important roads cross at the district; Trans-European Motorway goes through the northern part of the district, E-5 (major highway of the city) passes through southern part of the district and on the east of the district passes Media Express roads. The district contains massive stock of housing and industrial development areas. Furthermore, the current local government sees Küçükçekmece to be a major attraction center for 2010 Cultural Capital of Europe, and it aims to transform the urban Küçükçekmece district as to attracting more tourism and tourist

investments for this purpose. Thus how to re-plan and transform the district becomes fundamental issue in both economic and political arenas.

A major complex within the district is the existence of İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone, which was officially set up in 1985, mostly with the aim to move the small and medium sized enterprises in historical Golden Horn region to outside of the city center. There are currently 30.000 offices; most enterprises focus on production of leather products, shoe, machine replacement parts, textile and metal, furniture. The existence of this complex is significant in the sense that it attracted more migrant workers and employees to the region for the prospective opportunities. So this fact gave way to a substantial demand for accommodation in the district causing massive construction of *gecekondu* settlements which then became targets of demolition projects in the 2000s.

Urban Transformation Projects: Municipality's Role and Other Actors

In fact Küçükçekmece stands out as the district where major transformation projects are carried out on a massive scale in comparison with other districts of Istanbul. The municipality's vision concerning their investments and activities includes continuous reference to Istanbul's being the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2010. Hence all the activities ranging from slum clearance to building cultural centers or sports facilities are justified or marketed on the basis of suiting this notion of European Capital of Culture to the extent that Küçükçekmece is called as the "cultural district of the European Capital." One of the most prevalent discourses that is also stated by the local municipality is the modernization discourse blended with some kind of urban entrepreneurship that adopts a global city vision. In the strategic plan prepared by

Küçükçekmece Municipality⁴², the four strategic goals are listed as follows: (1) creating a modern district by realizing planned development, (2) increasing the living standards of the people living in Küçükçekmece, (3) increasing efficiency and productivity in municipal services, and (4) becoming a center of attraction. For these purposes, the municipality has established an Urban Transformation Office to carry out and manage different kinds of projects. The officials in this office mainly stressed the aim of the projects as the urbanization of the district, using a modernization discourse, along with taking measures against a prospective earthquake. The success of the projects according to these engineers and officials is the scope and the pace of the transformation which is to set an example for other urban projects. For this large scope and fast pace, the officials that I've interviewed in the Urban Transformation Office imply that the political will of their mayor and the officials stating that they have spent at least four times more of the budget in comparison with the sum of all previous mayors. As the most evident proof of this political will, the strategic plan that had been created even before it was made mandatory by State Planning Agency was shown.

The political will of the mayor is actually significant concerning Küçükçekmece as his speeches and his actions are mostly about the urban transformation and his visions of the future of the district. The current municipality of Küçükçekmece came into power in 2004 elections. Indeed, right after they won the elections, an international symposium has been organized with foreign and national academicians, public and private sector members contributing as speakers focusing on the major issues in urban regeneration and especially focusing on

⁴² Küçükçekmece Municipality Strategic Plan, www.kucukcekmece.bel.tr

Küçükçekmece District as a pilot workshop area.⁴³ Some of the findings of this symposium that are relevant to my research area will be mentioned later on in this chapter as well.

The municipality's major plan seems to have been focusing on Olympic Village and its surroundings and with the argument of strengthening and increasing the housing stock of various types which surround the Olympic Village. The municipal records define all the areas surrounding the Olympic Stadium as 'Sub-regions of the Olympic Village'. Therefore these areas should be regenerated in harmony with the Olympic Village which means all the residential regions here that are illegal and/or look "unhealthy", "distressed", or "physically and economically deprived" are to be removed or transformed. Moreover, on various occasions the district mayor stressed that, the biggest problem of the district is illegal housing and unplanned settlements. In order to alleviate this "problem", several urban transformation and *gecekondu* transformation projects have been initiated including the demolition of Tepeüstü and Ayazma regions which will also be discussed in detail in the next part of this chapter. On the other hand construction of luxurious residential units such as Olympiakent and Bosphorus City have been changing the outlook and housing patterns of the district.

Apart from creating land for new housing complexes, and establishing local facilities such as community centers, parks, schools and hospitals which are the regular duties and services provided by the municipalities, several flagship projects and large scale urban development projects have also been implemented and are still on the agenda today. I will briefly mention some of the projects that are on the agenda of the local municipality and are used in the March 2009 local election

⁴³ "Istanbul 2004 International Urban Regeneration Symposium: Workshop of Küçükçekmece District", 27-30/11/2004, Lütfü Kırdar Congress and Exhibition Center, Istanbul.

booklet as examples of good governance and better municipal services. One of the projects is to establish a theme park – it is said to be Europe’s second largest, Asian’s first Disneyland- in the old Halkalı Garbage Heap that will include commercial units, hotel, cafes, restaurants, cinema, zoo and funfair; and the other one is to establish Eurasian Performance Center which is said to be the biggest center in Turkey.

Indeed the local municipality is not the only actor that has been conducting planning projects for Küçükçekmece. Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Agency⁴⁴ (hereafter IMP) and Metropolitan Municipality are also actively promoting and creating plans about the future of the district. The abundance of the projects and future visions seems confusing, as some of them are only in their project design phase and it is hardly possible to get clear information about the schedule of completing some of the projects. But when we look at the overall picture, it becomes obvious that IMP and Greater Municipality act in coherence with the plans of the local municipality. Though there are different institutions and parties involved in the planning and implementation phases, all serve for common purpose of increasing the rent from the urban land.

According to the master plans that had been created by IMP, Başakşehir part of the municipality is defined as a special project area in order to meet the demands of the people who work in İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone, and the people who are

⁴⁴ The agency has been established under BİMTAŞ, which is a company that is established by İBB in 2005. After this, the city planning and project work have been transferred to İMP by contracting. Thus, IMP –where mostly architects and city planners are employed- has become a main actor in Küçükçekmece Urban Transformation as well as in many other districts and municipalities. Its main responsibilities are listed as creating master plans for city environmental arrangements and master plans. What IMP mainly does is to create a master plan in which the geographical area is divided into functional parts each of which is then specifically designed for a definite purpose. The master plan prepared by IMP consists of reconstruction of houses, clearing of the lake and river basin, developing projects for tourist, residential, and industrial and cultural areas. Although the agency is seemingly very active with many departments designed and working for various districts and projects in Istanbul, it seems that their legitimacy is still a question for the local municipalities and for the scholars studying urban planning.

to be relocated to the mass housing areas around the region. According to the proposed plan, this project area is designed as a complex of Cultural and Congress Center, Industrial, Service, Tourism and Housing units and public open air spaces. A national urban design competition has been initiated for Başakşehir.⁴⁵

Cultural and touristic visions for the district focus mainly on the organization of the Olympiad Village and the area around it, and this vision becomes clearer in the international competition on the Küçükçekmece lagoon area. Actually the surroundings of the lakes including the parts that are inside Avcılar Municipality are planned as cultural and tourist spaces as a whole. For example, the east side of the lake that is inside Avcılar is designed as fairground; the surrounding of the Olympics village designed as the cultural and residential facilities. And the inner-outer waterfront where the sea and the lake come together is specifically planned to be a cultural and tourist recreational area that is to be cleared from illegal and/or disorganized housing and opened for “public” use. There has been a competition initiated for this area in cooperation with Greater Municipality of Istanbul and Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Agency in 2006 (Küçükçekmece-Avcılar Inner-Outer Waterfront Urban Design Project), in which international architects have competed with their visionary projects for the waterfront area. There were three projects competing for each that are to be elected by an international jury. How the competitors were selected became an issue in the press and architectural forums during that time. At the end of the competition, Ken Yeang’s project has been selected for Küçükçekmece which consists of green areas, marina, an aqua park and a seven-star hotel. In the announcement of the winners, Greater Municipality Mayor Kadir Topbaş stated that all the projects are visionary projects for Istanbul and

⁴⁵ Başakşehir has become a separate municipality right before 2009 local elections. Several other neighborhoods of Küçükçekmece such as Kayabaşı, Ziya Gökalp, Güvercintepe, Altınşehir and Şahintepe have also become part of this new municipality.

stressed that the project area is going to be a major tourist attraction after these architectural plans are applied by giving examples of Bilbao and Los Angeles following Frank Gehry's special design buildings.⁴⁶ He also stated that if Istanbul is to be opened to the globalized world, the entrance doors of the city should be increased and alternatives should be created and through the vision of this Küçükçekmece is to be created as a tourist attraction. Yeang's project is still on hold as the municipal officials stated that there are some legal and procedural issues to be dealt with along with some changes in the original design.⁴⁷

In the IMP's planning, there is also the plan for creating a financial area within the borders of the municipality due to its advantaged position with the airport and main highways. İkitelli –Ataturk Airport axis, unofficially named as Media Express Highway, was included within the master plan as “special project area”. In the project report⁴⁸, it is stated that with the increase of the media centers in this axis, the previously industrial area has began to carry a potential for becoming a regional service area and citywide activity center. And its proximity to Istanbul's biggest airport makes this place to be planned as a top-level financial center with fast communication networks and high-tech density.

⁴⁶ “Topbaş, Kartal ve Büyükçekmece projelerini açıkladı”,
<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/04/05/son/sonsiy18.asp>

⁴⁷ However, Yeang's first Project is launched, as of 2009, in Başakşehir “Tulip Turkuaz” and marketed as the first “bio-climatic” housing estate in Turkey. For a detailed information regarding this housing complex, visit <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=5137860>

⁴⁸ 1/25000 ölçekli İstanbul Nazım İmar Planı – “Özel Planlama Alanları ve Özel Proje Alanları” /BİMTAŞ-İMP.

The Neo-liberal Urban Policies and Küçükçekmece Municipality

As the ongoing activities described above in the Küçükçekmece district indicate, the process might be considered as part of the competitive urban transformations that is also being carried out in a similar way in other parts of the world. Large scale urban development projects such as theme parks, Olympiad Village, housing complexes, and the discourses that are created along with them seem to have dominated the vision of the district and these projects are presented as an opportunity to strengthen the position of the district within Istanbul, to create new employment areas for the regional population that is to say as if the transformation in that way is necessary and essential for the district to continue developing. To this end, several measures have been taken by the local and national authorities including changing the laws and procedures that would allow for the demolition of the housing stock and would change the responsible bodies for the decision-making. So eventually this led to creation of new institutions/agencies to deal with several aspects of transformation. In this way the urban transformation becomes no longer only a spatial project in itself but it stands out as a major neo-liberal policy tool that also transforms the political and social arena.

The way urban transformation is carried out also has implications to transform the municipal governing style, the meaning of being a right holder to the place and the way the services are presented. As Swyngedouw argues, “this process has been the dominant mode of institutional organization and suggests a shift from a system of representative urban government to one of stakeholder urban governance that is centered on newly established institutional arrangements”⁴⁹ The semi-

⁴⁹ Erik Swyngedouw, Frank Moulaert and Arantxa Rodriguez, “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002) :561.

autonomous new structuring of MHA, the establishment and including of IMP agency whose boundaries and responsibilities are blurry, and partnerships with private bodies and/or NGOs in the implementation of projects and social programs makes the projects and processes multi-bodied complex structures and this complex structure provides that the decision making process about the projects are carried out in a rather confidential way. As a result of this public information is either limited or reduced to only technical details. As the responsibility is diffused among different parties in this scheme, the opposition usually cannot find itself the proper authority to voice the opposition and make its voice heard. Therefore a problem of accountability arises. On the other hand, through international design competitions, symposiums and conferences about the urban transformation, the process gains an outlook of transparency, efficiency and gains legitimacy by using the advantages of scientific and technical discourse's hegemony. Meanwhile, the local municipality becomes the client, the enabler and partner at the same time in different levels. It might even take up the role of mediation between the private stakeholders and the subjects that are included in the transformation.

On the other hand, the coalitions formed between the local and national political power holders, and real estate developers and elite coalitions that are in favor of large scale urban development projects or urban rent out of these projects marginalize certain social groups and their opposition to the process even if these groups turn out to be the ones who have been subjected to relocation or losing their property rights. The fact that prime minister is also facilitating the process legally and politically since the local and national government are from the same party, and most private stakeholders and companies in the urban transformation are known to be close to their circles politically, and contributing to the discourse of

marginalization by labeling *gecekondu* areas “distress areas” and “tumors of the city”⁵⁰ are crucial in this sense. Meanwhile, the social programs related to urban transformation are usually defined on the basis of place, through a “target area” approach; that is to say physical upgrading is always on the forefront. Although these large scale projects are presented also as a remedy for the poverty in the region, a spatial definition of development instead of a social one⁵¹ is adopted that target transforming places rather than structural conditions of people’s lives. All these are in tune with the neo-liberal policies that replace more traditional redistributive mechanisms and structural development logic with one that promotes dismantling of government, greater flexibility in conducting services and primacy of the market demands.

Coleman argues that since the perception of cleanliness of the space is integral to realization of the profit making in the neoliberal city, “current practices of neoliberal social control can be perceived as geared towards hiding or denying certain forms of unwanted and incongruous behaviors and activities at odds with neoliberal city visions”.⁵² In this scheme, economically marginalized people are targeted as the high risk group who are perceived as “unable to learn the lesson that neo-liberalism now expects from them”⁵³ Hence, to restore the social control over the socially excluded groups, massive urban relocation projects appear as ideal

⁵⁰ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech in TOKI Housing Convention, April 8-9, 2006, Istanbul Lutfü Kırdar Convention Center

⁵¹ Erik Swyngedouw, Frank Moulaert and Arantxa Rodriguez, “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy,” *Antipode* 34, no.3 (2002).

⁵² Roy Coleman, “Images from a Neoliberal City: The State, Surveillance and Social Control,” *Critical Criminology* 12(2003): 26.

⁵³ John Pratt, *Governing the Dangerous* (Sydney: The Federation Press, 1997); quote received from Roy Coleman, “Images from a Neoliberal City: The State, Surveillance and Social Control,” *Critical Criminology* 12(2003).

places to further alienate these groups from the city, as well as disempowering them through certain discursive mechanisms, which in turn allow for the better marketing of the city. And the fact that the project planners and urban designers assume the guise of technical and neutral players in the urban scene renders this process of adopting a pro-capital vision at the expense of marginalization of poor invisible and justifiable in the eyes of the public.

Gecekondu Transformation Projects and Bezirganbahçe Case: Introducing Tepeüstü and Ayazma Neighborhoods

Bezirganbahçe Housing Project is a major and important example of these forms of neoliberal urban social control. Clearance of these two *gecekondu* settlements is harmoniously conducted with the other transformation projects within the district that center on Olympic Village and the residential and touristic facilities to be constructed around the village. The relocation of Ayazma and Tepeüstü residents into Bezirganbahçe housing project in Halkalı in the north of the district fits within this urban transformation model of neoliberal design. The way it is carried out did not provide any participation opportunity to the residents in decision making, and the government social housing has turned out to become the neoliberal reservoir for the marginalized populations who are disconnected from the macro economic sphere and considered as the “risk group”. In the end, those who could not afford the expenses of relocation had to move out to further locations; while the remaining ones in Bezirganbahçe still face struggles in many aspects. For the fact that it has been the biggest *gecekondu* transformation project implemented in Istanbul and within the

borders of Küçükçekmece Municipality has mostly led to highlighting of the numbers and technical details instead of the social consequences of relocation.

In order to understand these dynamics and the consequences, brief information on the characteristics of these *gecekondu* neighborhoods, ensued by the process of relocation into government housing will be provided in this part of the study. One point should be stressed here before giving an account of these two neighborhoods - Ayazma and Tepeüstü - that no longer exist. Although the transformation and slum removal consists of two neighborhoods there is a general tendency in both academic and municipal circles to focus on Ayazma more. This could be associated with two main reasons. Firstly, Ayazma was relatively more populated than Tepeüstü. Secondly, the resettlement process in this neighborhood has been more problematic since the tenants who were not given any rights and had nowhere to go but live in the tents (until the end of 2008)⁵⁴ This situation had attracted more public and media attention. Lastly, Ayazma neighborhood is largely comprised of Kurdish population who had to migrate from conflict-zone homelands mostly in 1990s. Hence, Tepeüstü neighborhood is mentioned less than Ayazma in the reports, news or academic studies, and most of the statistics and information are usually based on Ayazma, or they tend to carry out the discussion of the two neighborhoods only by means of Ayazma. Being aware of this constraint, I would like to note that the information I will provide below also has got the same limitations as well.

⁵⁴ According to statistical information 75% of the residents were owners of the houses, and the remaining were tenants. At the end of 2008, the remaining tenants who continued to live in tents in demolished Ayazma until that time, have finally been given the right to move to Bezirganbahce houses as well.



Figure 2. Map of Ayazma and Tepeüstü

Both Tepeüstü and Ayazma neighborhoods have been established in the late 1970s, and their populations have increased during 1980s and 90s due to increase in forced migration from the east because of the ongoing conflict between the armed guerillas and the military. The migrants in Ayazma are mostly from the eastern part of Turkey. The early comers were mainly from Erzurum; but then from various cities including Diyarbakır, Siirt, Adıyaman while Tepeüstü has more mixed population including migrants from the Black Sea Region. 60% of the total area is public land; the remaining parcels belong to different private bodies. The locations of the neighborhoods are important. They border with İkitelli Organized Industrial Zone, Trans European Motorway and are close to Olympic Park (Ayazma is right beside this Olympic complex).

Lacking detailed demographic information about Tepeüstü, there is a detailed survey conducted in Ayazma by Küçükçekmece Municipality producing statistical information such as age, gender, occupation, literacy, and property relations

.According to municipal records obtained from the survey and zoning studies conducted before relocation in 2004, the population in Ayazma was estimated as 7800, with 1800 single units, and in Tepeüstü the population was 1900 with 380 building. 22% of the housing stocks in Ayazma had been built between 1987-1992 while around half of them (47%) were built between the years 1993-1998. The main population in Ayazma is of Kurdish background although there is no official estimation regarding the ethnic background of the residents, my interviews and observations during the fieldwork for this thesis proved the obvious. When I visited the people who used to live in Ayazma in their new houses in Bezirganbahçe, almost all informants that I visited spoke Kurdish among themselves while the houses were decorated in a way to signify their ethnic identity, and the only TV channel that was watched was one of the Kurdish channels received through the satellite dishes they had. They state in their oral accounts that they have migrated to Istanbul mostly either in search for jobs, or as a refugee, they fled the clashes and suppression they faced by the state in their hometown. The major reason of the residents for moving to Tepeüstü neighborhood was its close location to Organized Industrial Zone as the initial settlers have moved in search for employment in this industrial hub.

In both neighborhoods, 50% of the population is below the age 35. 30% of the population has completed their primary education; among those who have a regular job in these neighborhoods, 62% used to work in manufacturing industry⁵⁵. According to this survey results of Küçükçekmece Municipality, conducted in 2004

⁵⁵ Since all the statistics were based on 2004 research of the municipality when the residents were still living in slum neighborhoods, they don't give us valid information about the employment situation after the relocation.

in Ayazma⁵⁶, 48% of the inhabitants were born in East Anatolia; and 28% of household heads have first come to Istanbul 6-10 years ago; another 28% between 11-15 years ago. 81% of the household heads have stated that they have come to Istanbul for job opportunities. Regarding the reason why this neighborhood was preferred, employment takes the first place in responses with 55% and the reason concerned with children and relatives is mentioned as secondary with 31%.

According to Perouse⁵⁷, who has been studying the changes in Ayazma and Küçükçekmece in general since 2000, Ayazma is a real *gecekondu* neighborhood for various reasons apart from consisting illegal housing, but also from a geographical and symbolical point of view. Ayazma doesn't have a proper transportation way. You can reach Ayazma through having to overcome several obstacles and connecting separate roads that have no proper connection with one other. Moreover it doesn't exist as a separate neighborhood in any official maps. Socially and economically, it also has the characteristics of *gecekondu* since the population is migrant and not stable - the flow of migrants continues as the residents also are mobile due to employment opportunities, They lacked the proper public services such as water until very recently before the relocation, and Ayazma is defined through its insecurity and poverty. The lack of drinking water and proper sewerage system actually has caused many child deaths in the neighborhood since the community provides their water from the two public fountains that often mixes with the sewerage water. In this respect, these facts constitute Ayazma as an outcast neighborhood that has to be

⁵⁶ Dilek A. Özdemir, Pınar P. Özden, and Sırma R. Turgut, eds., *Istanbul 2004 International Urban Regeneration Symposium: Workshop of Küçükçekmece District* (Istanbul: Küçükçekmece Municipality Publication, 2004), 280-285.

⁵⁷ Jean-François Pérouse & Kamel Dekhli, (2002/01, *İstanbul Dergisi*); Jean-Francois Perouse, *Modern Türk Sinemasında İstanbul Varoşlarının İşlenişi: "Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk/ Hejar"* Filmindeki Ayazma Mahallesi; text of the speech in Kabalcı Bookstore, 2007.

removed. The locational properties and other housing characteristics also apply for Tepeüstü.

The tenure structure within Ayazma is also complicated. The percentage of those who own formal title deeds in Ayazma is 32%. When the Tepeüstü and Ayazma neighborhoods are considered together, the percentage of private property arises to 56% and of the remaining 44% belongs to the treasury.⁵⁸ However, this percentile information remains vague about those who don't own formal title deed but have achieved to obtain *tapu tahsis* (deed allocation) documents. According to Zoning Laws, *tapu tahsis* document does not provide property right to the person, but it grants a personal right to de facto use of the property. Yet the document guarantees property right on condition that the subject area receives a formal plan later on. These documents were mostly provided to residents through populist policies and politicians in exchange for votes in the elections.⁵⁹ This vague positioning, which was implemented during the amnesties given to *gecekondu*s especially in 1980s, complicates the tenure structure within the neighborhoods, especially in determining the right-holders in urban transformation projects. In Ayazma, one fourth of the population would live on rent. The number of tenants is also a complicated issue because the residents of *gecekondu* neighborhoods rent their houses or live on rent mostly through unofficial connections and interactions. Predominantly kinship and neighborhood relationships define and determine the terms of tenancy rather than the official contracts.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sırma Turgut and Eda Ceylan, “*Bir Yerel Yönetim Deneyiminin Ardından*” (İstanbul: Alfa, 2010), 66.

⁵⁹ This document was first legalized in 1984 with the Redevelopment Law.

⁶⁰ Throughout my interviews, I have also spoken to the tenants. Most of these tenants – and also other property owners- told me that the terms of tenancy were not always defined with official contracts. For example, there are situations where the tenants live on the smaller building in the garden of the

When the Olympic Stadium had been constructed in 2001, Ayazma has become a neighbor with this futuristic complex. The stadium was marketed during the construction as being one of the biggest and most popular stadiums in the world. Hence the surrounding areas have become a potential for increased urban rent and Ayazma and Tepeüstü neighborhoods have become one of the main targets for the transformation. Mass Housing Agency, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Küçükçekmece Municipality signed a protocol in June 2004 for the construction of Bezirganbahçe Housing⁶¹, and the constructions have begun on March 2005 eventually finalizing the project in 2006. According to this protocol, the local municipality was responsible for determining and informing the right holders for the new housing complex, the evacuation of the squatter area, and demolition of the houses in the land. And the Mass Housing Institution had to build the social housing complex on municipal lands, and the use of the evacuated Ayazma and Tepeüstü land has been given to MHA with the permission for construction and sale to the third parties in conformity with Olympic Village and related plans.

The tenure structure within the existing *gecekondu* neighborhoods has also defined who has the right for housing within the context of the urban transformation project (UTP). The municipality's definition of "rightful ownership" consists of two categories: illegal occupiers and property owners. The illegal occupiers were granted with the demolition price of their houses in their ex-neighborhoods, the ones who have *tapu tahsis* documents were to be granted with partial compensation for their land along with the demolition price, and those who own formal title deeds were to receive full compensation for their land and full demolition value. The amounts were

main house that the property owner lives, in exchange for certain services/ some amount of money, or as a result of kinship ties.

⁶¹ Istanbul-İkitelli (Ayazma ve Tepeüstü)- Halkalı Bölgeleri Kentsel Yenileme (Gecekondu Dönüşüm) Projesine ilişkin Protokol," June 2004.

to be determined by the construction unit prices set by the Ministry of Public Works and Resettlement. Meanwhile, the tenants, who were the poorest and least powerful category within the neighborhood, were not included within any kind of plan in the context of UTP and left outside to their fates.

The construction of the housing project has been finalized in a surprisingly fast pace and the key delivery ceremony had been conducted in September 2006. It was also promoted by the municipality and MHA as the biggest and quickest mass housing project that has ever been implemented by the government. As the first step, as the municipality explains, 945 *gecekondu* owners who were “squatting the public land” have been resettled to new housing project. The project includes 55 blocs and 2640 houses with two bedrooms and one living room, in total ranging from 84 to 95 square meters. 943 families from the squatters will pay between 200-250 TL per month for a period of 180 months, at the end of which they will own their flats. The wreckage compensation for the demolished houses will be considered as the down payment for the new housing units in Bezirganbahçe. Meanwhile, emptied Ayazma and Tepeüstü regions are intended to be included in a larger project that includes the enlargement of Olympics Village and Congress Valley and other facilities related to them, casting doubts on the legitimacy of the squatter resettlement project itself.⁶² Aziz Yeniay, mayor of Küçükçekmece since 2004, considers this urban transformation project as one of the most successful projects applied in Turkey.⁶³

⁶² As of December 20th, 2009 the biggest construction companies Ağaoğlu, Avrupa Konutları and Soyak have bidded to win the tender to construct 4.000 housing units in Ayazma. For details, see http://www.emlakkulisi.com/28614_emlak_gyo_nun_ihalesine_ilk_raund_galibi_ali_agaoglu_oldu

⁶³ www.kucukcekmece.bel.tr, “Başkanın Mesajı”.

The Procedure of Clearance and Persuasion

As mentioned previously, in the 2004 symposium on urban regeneration and Küçükçekmece workshop, Ayazma has been one of the workshop themes together with another neighborhood on the western part of the Olympiad Complex under the title “Olympiad Village and its Surroundings”; with the justification of the statement “the existing profile of the surrounding areas not only fails to match with the function to be newly allocated to the area, but also embodies plenty of fundamental problems like construction safety, urban quality, and healthy physical and social environment.”⁶⁴ Ayazma is defined as a neighborhood that is “disintegrated from and located at the outskirts of the city with a population profile which may be considered as “the others”, who try to hang on to the city, indeed to life as under extremely primitive conditions of living at a sub-area likely to be most prestigious one in the Istanbul Metropolitan Area.”⁶⁵

Actually the workshop on Ayazma neighborhood in the International symposium (one of the participants of the workshop was the mayor himself as the director of workshop) concludes that the participation of the local residents in the decision-making is very crucial to complete the regeneration properly. The symposium concludes the workshop by saying “if the residents (private owners) do not want to move, an alternative plan should be put into implementation.” The survey results indicate that the residents in Ayazma would not prefer to leave their neighborhood but they would like the area to be improved in terms of services and transportation. Major reasons of discontent with their place of residence arise as the lack of infrastructure and scarce employment opportunities. Nevertheless, in spite of

⁶⁴ Dilek A. Özdemir, Pınar P. Özden, and Sırma R. Turgut, eds., *Istanbul 2004 International Urban Regeneration Symposium: Workshop of Küçükçekmece District* (Istanbul: Küçükçekmece Municipality Publication, 2004), 309.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

these problems, according to the survey, 96% of the residents stated that they would prefer a single-storied house with garden, and 51% of the residents declared that they are happy to be living in Ayazma. However, as the protocol between the municipality and TOKI had been signed five months before the symposium was held, the implications of the workshops did not have significant impacts on the neighborhood's transformation already in the making.

Although the municipal officers in Küçükçekmece Municipality insistently stress that, they convinced squatter residents and talked to them about moving to government housing, and they signed contract agreements willingly. Actually this does not mean that they were involved in the planning and timing of the new residences. During the interviews the informants have stressed that the process of signing the contracts, although they have a signature on the agreement on transformation, is one-sided since the municipality officials have only informed them about would-be transformation, providing no more details until the last minute. Moreover, the remaining tenants who were not given the right to move into Bezirganbahce Housing, had to live in tents in the demolished areas around two years. Only after the active support of several NGOs and civil initiative, and after the media's attention to the tenants, the issue has been resolved. One of the municipal officials admits that although the original letters were promising that everybody would be given the right for relocation including the tenants, she said that this has not been possible due to legal constraints at the time. In one interview I had conducted with the transformation office of the municipality, the informant, after a question about situation of the tenants of the slums that are demolished has brought up the issue of who may have a right to the city. He specifically argued that the people who had migrated to Küçükçekmece from various regions of Turkey simply

did not and could not claim the identity of Küçükçekmece They “would immediately leave the town if they found the money”, therefore they did not have any right to have a say in the transformation of the town. But the official claimed that those people who have been living in the district since generations have a historical identity and bond with the district, therefore the municipality should take their views into consideration and cooperate with them. Having this opinion in mind, here is another example from Küçükçekmece Municipality’s booklet of urban transformation about how the process of resettlement is realized. The passage explains how the compensation for the slums is calculated and how the process of agreement with the residents is carried out:

Each building is given an analysis number and all the construction information, information about trees, ownership are collected in a database according to this analysis number. The groups have given the letters declaring the required documents by the municipality to residents explaining the necessary information about the urban transformation project. Besides, the buildings have been photographed from three sides in order to determine the qualities of the building.

After all the information about the land is transferred to the database, right ownership determination forms have been prepared. In this form, all the personal information about the right holder and its building are included. Also the value fixation of the building is stated in the form. While fixing the value of the building, in accordance with the type of construction “Ministry of Public Works unit prices” are multiplied by “building construction land square” and the total value is calculated. “Rate of corrosion due to age” is also calculated and deducted from the cost value. Also the value of the trees is calculated by multiplying the unit prices according to the type, age and length of the tree.⁶⁶

Ayazma –Tepeüstü Kentsel Dönüşüm Projesi, project booklet, Küçükçekmece Belediyesi.

As the project booklet indicates, the procedure and the project have been carried out one-sidedly. There is no trace of any kind of participation from the subject that will be relocated, and all issue has been defined as mere technicality. But the mayor defines the aims of squatter transformation and the subsequent social projects aimed at relocated people as “re-gaining the people in the region as productive, leading and participant conscious urban individuals”⁶⁷ For this purpose, social programs have been initiated in the new housing area to provide training, literacy education and employment for the relocated people. In the next chapters, along with dealing with the changes in the daily practices and relationship with the municipality, which are the main questions of this study, I will also undertake the details and an evaluation of these social programs as well as trying to find what this discourse actually means for the subjects who have experienced the relocation.

Relocation and Resistance

The process of relocation has been initiated with the signature of the protocol between Mass Housing Institution and Küçükçekmece Municipality in 2004. As stated above, although the municipal records and statements indicate and emphasize that the residents were convinced and informed about the relocation, the interviews indicate that most dwellers lacked sufficient information about the extent and condition of relocation project. All informants stated that they had been misinformed/ before and during the process of slum removal and signing contracts. Informants who used to live in Tepeüstü generally state that they were not even explained well about the monthly installments. One informant even stated that for a while they thought that the new blocks would be allocated to them for free. On the

⁶⁷ Ayazma –Tepeüstü Kentsel Dönüşüm Projesi, project booklet, Küçükçekmece Belediyesi.

other hand, it seems that in Ayazma there was more awareness and a better organization of resistance, which was reflected in the media as well. One male informant, who had been one of the last ones to accept to move to Bezirganbahçe, explains that they were hearing rumors about relocation and transformation projects from time to time. But until the very last moments the process has been carried on very silently, by convincing, or making the individuals sign the contracts one by one, in order to prevent a possible resistance movement.

...Then came the water utilities in 2004. All of us subscribed to receive the service. We thought 'ok now they will not demolish Ayazma'. Later on they came to name and give number to the streets and doors. Again we thought 'Ok, it is more certain now that the neighborhood project is being established.'⁶⁸

Another male ex-resident of Ayazma also comments on the process:

It was very interesting. I go and ask the municipality, and they say that you are provoking us for demolition in this way and we don't have any information about such a project. When you come and ask us, it means that you ask us (municipality) to come and demolish your houses. Then the response came to the petition saying that our area is included in urban transformation project of municipality and we'll be contacted in a short while.'⁶⁹

From these oral accounts regarding the process, we can understand that the municipal officials actively made use of the tenure ownership situation of the residents for their arbitrary decision making and implementation process. Not only the lack of information provided to the residents, but also the way the officials approach the residents with a threatening language when questions are raised indicate that the situation of not having formal title deeds has become a source of powerlessness among the residents in their interaction with the municipality. Moreover, since the

⁶⁸ "Su geldi, herkes abone oldu sözleşme yaptırdı. Biz de dedik tamam Ayazma yıkılmıyor dedik. Sokak numaraları kapı numaraları verdiler sonra gelip. Biz de dedik hiç yıkılmayacak. Mahallenin projesi belli olmuştur"

⁶⁹ "Çok ilginçtir ben belediyeye soruyorum, siz diyor belediyeyi kışkırtıyorsunuz, belediyenin böyle bir çalışmadan haberi yok. Siz gidiyorsunuz soruyorsunuz belediyeyi gelin evimizi yıkın diyorsunuz. Sonra dilekçenin cevabı geldi, işte sizin bölgeniz belediyenin kentsel dönüşüm kapsamına girmiştir kısa bir sürede sizle konuşulacaktır."

calculation of the amount of money to be reduced from the cost of new flats was based on the square meter of the area that the residents had in Ayazma and Tepeüstü, it seems that the process of convincing the residents for signature of the agreement documents has turned to a way of bribery; offering less amounts of installments/ more than one flat in exchange of early consent given for the relocation. Informants often tell that, in order to be convinced, some families made deals with the municipality to calculate the land more than it actually is, so that the installment amounts would be lower. Or, informants state that some families who had made agreement with municipality to convince other residents were awarded with more than one flat in exchange for their loyalty. In such a vulnerable and ambiguous situation, some residents have felt the need to choose their personal gains over collective action for protection of their families and future. Under these circumstances, sustainable organized resistance became impossible to carry on, leading to tensions among the inhabitants. In fact one of the leading figures in the resistance movement in Ayazma has told me that while in the beginning they were acting together with Tepeüstü. Then they began not to show up in the protests as promised. Such examples also influenced the relationship in the new housing area among the neighbors.

In fact there are stories of resistance from Ayazma side, but they were limited in number. Although the inhabitants tried to form a resistance movement, beginning from 2005 through community meetings, protests and public declarations, they mostly remained unheard and the movement lost its pace after a while. In the meantime, those who tried to resist the process were mostly overlooked; even some of them had to deal with accusations that lead to harsh indignations. The families

who did not want to accept the relocation were backed off with accusations and rumors regarding their personal lives.

The property structure indeed is an important factor in deciding the fate of resistance movements in relocation projects. Kuyucu and Ünsal state that the strength of the resistance movement very much depends on the existing property structure. In their article where they compare the resistance movements in Başbüyük and Tarlabası- two other succeeding major urban transformation projects being implemented in Istanbul- they conclude that while in Tarlabası, the residents were formal owners of the buildings, the resistance was possible through legal means and certain achievements were made in this manner. In Başbüyük, however, where the ownership structure is quite similar to Ayazma, it was more difficult to continue a collective resistance movement since the municipality actively took advantage of this illegal situation to prevent any dissident voices and after certain time, the movement gradually evolved into personal bargaining of the residents with municipal officials.⁷⁰ In Ayazma as well, we see a similar situation. The efforts of the individuals to create a collective resistance soon lost its pace as the residents have felt the need to secure their own families. On one hand, those who have title deed/ *tapu tahsis* documents were able to resist the relocation; on the other hand those who do not own title deeds felt themselves having to agree with the offer of the municipality with the fear of remaining homeless. Besides, while those who are categorized as “occupiers” were provided with one option – that is relocation to Bezirganbahçe in exchange for paying the remaining amount within monthly installments. Those who owned title deeds in Ayazma were provided with three options: They could choose to remain in Ayazma, and have right to buy the buildings that would be built in Ayazma with the

⁷⁰ Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal, “‘Urban Transformation’ as State-Led Property Transfer: An Analysis of Two Urban Renewal Project in Istanbul,” *Urban Studies* (2010): 4.

amount of the worth of their property reduced from the actual price, or they could choose their flat(s) – depending on the square meter of the land they own- either from Kayabaşı or Bezirganbahçe housing projects. Still 258 families are living in Ayazma and Tepeüstü regions (both title deed and *tapu tahsis* document owners), waiting for the blocks to be constructed in Ayazma region to finish and move to their own houses.

In fact, Jean Francois Perouse also wrote an extensive explanation about the reasons of lack of resistance in Ayazma about the transformation projects.⁷¹ Perouse provides two reasons. First set of reasons is related to structural conditions: instability of the local population (being relatively a new neighborhood as a result of Kurdish migration in 1990s), the population being in constant need and search for financial resources, the neighborhood being away from the city center and hence invisible in the eyes of intellectuals and artists and not creating any public visibility in the mass media (as opposed to Sulukule), complexity of the property ownership- which causes disagreements among the inhabitants, and the lack of utilizable social identity- that is the impossibility to defend themselves with Kurdish identity due to the suppression that the Kurdish population has historically been facing in Turkey. The second set of reasons are related to the anti-opposition strategies of the local municipality through divide and manage policies that are exemplified through one to one agreements and negotiations mentioned above, and through using compromising discourses and promises in order to convince the inhabitants.

In the end the relocation has been initiated in 2006 with most families moving, through the logistics help of the municipality. Some families resisted along

⁷¹ Jean-Francois Perouse, “Kentsel Dönüşüme karşı Ayazma’da neden yerel bir muhalefet oluşamadı?” *İstanbul Dergisi*, 63(2008): 26-29.

with the ones who were not granted right to housing in the housing project due to being “tenants.” They continued to live in Ayazma until the houses were demolished. Then they moved to the tents, until 2008 when the final agreements were made for the remaining 18 families for whom the mayor promised to pay the rent for one year and then allocated flats to them either in Bezirganbahçe or Kayabaşı housing project. The tenants have moved to their temporary flats in Bezirganbahçe, with the rents paid by the municipality.⁷²

In the next chapters, by trying to go beyond the main arguments of these neo-liberal urban policies and their opposition, my main goal will be to examine in detail what this relocation brings about in the actual lives of the residents in terms of the changes in the daily life experiences and their interactions with the local authorities. Since the relocation into government apartment housing brings about different types of relationship with the space and neighbors, and the imaginary of a “home” changes and/or is tried to change through the process of relocation, and the interaction with the municipality and other official authorities has had to increase considerably as they are called into a legal space that has been designed for them. I believe that the outcomes of this research will be mind-opening and will bring a new perspective on the issue, this time from the point of the view of the resettled subjects.

⁷² At the end of November 2009, the period for one year of rent had just ended, when I had my final visit to Bezirganbahce, one of my informants, who was a member of one of these 18 families, still did not have a solid information whether he would be allocated a house or not. He was still anxious about having to go back to living in tents. As of March 2010, with the efforts of the activists involved in the process, the mayor declared that the houses promised to the tenants were being allocated.

CHAPTER 4
RELOCATION IN PERSPECTIVE: FROM *GECEKONDU*
TO BEZİRGANBAHÇE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

The main goal of this chapter is to analyze thoroughly the changes the residents have gone through after relocation. What the inhabitants have experienced through this relocation was devastating on part of the majority of *ex-gecekondu* residents from several perspectives. As the residents lost through relocation their fundamental means for getting by within the city and as their financial resources melted due to the new layer of costs that was put upon their shoulder, their chance of surviving in the new housing project decreased concomitantly. As Roy rightfully points out, formalization of housing regularizes the irregularity of the payments and transactions, making the regular payments difficult to sustain, therefore causing them to leave their properties to stronger actors in the housing market⁷³. Those who can sustain their living within the housing project face other problems that tend to isolate and exclude them.

The underlying framework behind all these happens to be seeing all these changes in their livelihood as the reflection of the neoliberal urban agenda that is set forth in the example of Bezirganbahçe. What could from outside be seen solely as a social housing project with the aim to improve the living conditions of the *gecekondu* inhabitants actually causes more isolation, impoverishment and devastation for the residents. This outcome by itself makes the project open to criticism. In order to understand the dynamics of this process, there is a need to show the differences and similarities in comparison to earlier *gecekondu* transformation cases. Therefore, the

⁷³ Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no.2 (2005) :147-161.

larger aim of the first part of this chapter is to exemplify and analyze how this case differs from other social housing examples, and what makes this project an example of the neoliberal urban policies. For this purpose, Dikmen Valley Project, one of the earliest examples of large scale urban transformation in Ankara, will be analyzed.

Thinking through Different Examples of Urban Transformation Projects: Dikmen Valley and Bezirganbahçe

Although large scale urban transformation is a relatively new phenomenon in the case of Turkish cities, we see that there are also earlier attempts of big scale transformation projects which involve transformation of *gecekondu* settlements as well. A comparison discussing the similarities and differences of such projects may prove quite useful in showing how the contrasting design and aims may/ may not implicate different outcomes and implementations. Dikmen Valley Project is an important example to look into in this manner.

Dikmen Valley Project (hereafter DVP) is one of the first big scale urban transformation projects initiated in Ankara in 1989 in a valley slope that was supposed to be the main green corridor of the city. But it had been populated with the *gecekondu* settlers since the end of 1950s. The project is one of the first manifestations of the need to approach the urban city as a source of generating income. This attitude surfaced as a point of divergence from earlier urban policies which were focused through allowing for *gecekondu* settlements on subsidizing the migrants flowing into big cities in search for jobs.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Pınar Türker Devecigil, "Urban Transformation Projects as a Model to Transform Gecekondu Areas in Turkey: The Example of Dikmen Valley – Ankara," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 5, no.2 (1995): 217.

The project stands out with the rights planned to be allocated to landowners and inhabitants as well as the participatory model that it had adopted. With these aspects it differs largely from Bezirganbahçe example in the beginning. According to the plan, owners of 1800 (out of 4000) squatter houses in the valley were identified as the title-holders who would benefit from the project and be given an apartment block that would be constructed in the same area without relocation into another area. The tenants in the *gecekondus* were left out of the project. The financial model of DVP also brought about a novelty considering the urban redevelopment policies. The model was designed to enable contracting/finance firms to undertake construction by sharing the rent. This was a public–private participation model, in which a development corporation which had been formed under the Greater Ankara Municipality took the role of coordinating the public and the private firms. Along with the apartment houses built for the squatters, luxury housing for high-income groups and cultural and commercial facilities were also included in the area, especially to provide the necessary financial resources for the project. A significant proportion of the total project cost was financed by the marketing of the apartments located in the luxurious residential towers in the project area.

The project was designed to be implemented in five phases. The first phase started in 1989 and two phases have been completed up until today. The participation model included that the company representatives organized meetings with the squatters in order to reach a consensus about their rights and expropriation costs.⁷⁵ According to Türker-Devecigil, for the Dikmen Valley model, consensus building on value share and trust creation between *gecekondus* owners and project bearers were

⁷⁵ Nil Uzun, “Residential transformation of squatter settlements: Urban redevelopment projects in Ankara,” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 20 (2005): 183–199.

the main successful elements of the participation process.⁷⁶ However, it was limited in terms of the participant groups and the degree of participation. And participation mechanism did not work after 1994 elections. The fact that the project has three tier of responsible parties, Greater Ankara Municipality, District Municipality and Metropolitan İmar (the public project management company whose share holders are composed of Greater Ankara and district municipalities) made the process fragile to political structure of these units and the alliances formed between the actors.⁷⁷

The previous metropolitan mayor was a member of *CHP* (Republican People's Party) while *RP* (Welfare Party) came into power in metropolitan municipality with the elections of 1994.⁷⁸ According to Uzun, "the change of the local government in 1994 was an important turning point for the DVP. As the previous and new mayors of the metropolitan municipality were from different political parties, the project plans have been revised after the election which resulted in an increase in the construction of luxury residential units in the project area in order to maximize the profits from the project."⁷⁹ As a result of the rent increases in the valley after the project, the area mostly has turned into a luxury housing area where the *ex-gecekondu* residents were not feeling comfortable. At the end, the area has been gentrified with the population of the *gecekondu* inhabitants decreasing

⁷⁶ Pınar Türker Devecigil, "Urban Transformation Projects as a Model to Transform Gecekondu Areas in Turkey: The Example of Dikmen Valley – Ankara," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 5, no.2 (1995): 221.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

⁷⁸ *CHP* is the first political party to be established in Turkey after the republic is formed, and it is known to be center-left with social democratic values. Recently they have become to be associated with right-wing ideas, due to their political choices aiming to preserve the status quo. *RP* was an Islamist political party which has been suspended in 1998 for violating the principle of secularism in the constitution. Many of its former members, including the Metropolitan Mayor of Ankara are now members of *AKP* (Justice and Development Party).

⁷⁹ Nil Uzun, "Residential transformation of squatter settlements: Urban redevelopment projects in Ankara," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 20 (2005): 183–199.

38%⁸⁰ According to the field surveys conducted in Dikmen Valley, 22% of the title-holders had sold their houses in the valley since 1997; in 2002, 37% of title-holders were renting their houses.⁸¹

Despite these outcomes, the first two phases of the project have been completed with relative success, with the relatively high level of participation of the residents within the process and the transparency of the project implementation. However, when we come to 2006, we see a different situation. The Greater Municipality of Ankara has redefined the rules and principles of the DVP for the 3rd, 4th and 5th phases of the project. But this revised version has ignored some of the rights that were previously provided to the *gecekondu* residents in the first phases. The plans revised by AKP municipal government reflect neoliberal urban principles, with the one-sided, non-participatory model that ignores the demands and wishes of *gecekondu* settlers, and aimed to build around 8000 luxury apartments along with shopping malls and complexes. The *gecekondu* residents in Dikmen Valley were forced to sign the document without a definite action plan. Their houses were demolished but the new housing to be provided to residents were not provided for a long time, thus leaving the residents in an ambiguous position. In 2009 given the struggles of the residents and public pressure, the court has suspended the implementation of the 4th and 5th phases of the project, and now those who have signed contracts are filing suits to get back the compensation of their demolished houses.

⁸⁰ Nihan Özdemir Sönmez, “Düzensiz Konut Alanlarında Kentsel Dönüşüm Modelleri Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme,” *Planlama 2* (2006): 125.

⁸¹ Nil Uzun, “Residential transformation of squatter settlements: Urban redevelopment projects in Ankara,” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 20 (2005): 183–199.

Despite all these weaknesses and unpleasant outcomes, the results were not as devastating as it has been for Bezirganbahçe inhabitants who feel totally desperate and impoverished. While in DVP, the inhabitants were partly able to participate in the process and when they were not able to participate, they were strong enough to resist the change of the plans. They have formed solidarity associations, filed suits against the municipality and achieved a considerable amount of success while Ayazma and Tepeüstü inhabitants grew even weaker and more isolated.

The reason for the differences in the outcomes should be searched in the initial designs and goals of the projects. While the project initiation was originally aimed at finding a solution for the increasing *gecekondu* housing and providing social housing for the inhabitants and preservation of the green corridor in Dikmen Valley example. In our case it is obvious that the main motivation is to increase the urban rent through transfer of the valuable land from the poor to other wealthier social actors. The goal in the first phase of DVP was transformation on site instead of relocation. The participation of the shareholders of the project has been achieved up to some level. And one of the aims of the DVP was the integration of different social classes. The designs in architecture and the social programs have been planned to achieve this aim although the project has not been that successful in obtaining this end. But in Bezirganbahçe model, the social control is so prevalent that “social integration” could only remain in the discursive level of the project implementers. And the reason for this change in goals and outcomes lies in the neoliberal design that the project was drawn out following that pattern. In this order, DVP example is an interesting case to see how the UTPs initiated with more egalitarian goals have also been transformed to a more aggressive place-marketing tool with the increasing prominence of neoliberal policy formations and implementations.

What the urban transformation project did in Ayazma and Tepeüstü was to accept the already established inequalities within the existing tenure structure instead of developing solutions to alleviate those inequalities. The expropriation value has been decided in degrees depending on the title deeds while those who are tenants are left aside one more time. Therefore, who has benefited most from the urban transformation turned out to be again the ones who were better off, the stronger actors in the *gecekondu* settlements who were either the early comers having multiple houses or those who were lucky to have obtained *tapu tahsis* documents in the election periods. These rules and mechanisms that legally define right over kind of property are vague in definition and implementation. Because since the legal arrangements take into account the pre-existing situation of title ownership which are themselves not fully legal, the arrangements for definition of right owners also remain somewhere between legal and extra/il-legal. And this ambiguity indeed helps transform the property more easily. Therefore according to Kuyucu, even though the project purports to ‘save’ the disadvantaged *gecekondu* populations by turning them into formal property owners, the actual functioning of the market leads to large-scale dispossession and dislocation for the weaker segments of the *gecekondu* population who transfer their property to stronger actors and exit the market.⁸² In this sense, Kuyucu concludes that:

The UTPs implemented in informal housing areas can best be conceptualized as ‘market-making’ tools with which local and central government eradicate a pre-existing market structure and property regime

⁸² Tuna Kuyucu, “Urban Transformation’ or Neoliberal Rent-Seeking: Political Economy of Urban Renewal and Slum Clearance Programs in Istanbul,” *Unpublished doctoral dissertation*, University of Washington (2008), Chapter 6, p.4.

in *gecekondu* settlements and impose a formalized order that no longer tolerates informality and partial commodification.⁸³

This is an important argument in two ways. First of all it well-explains the neoliberal order since real estate sectors has become the main driver of neoliberal urban order as all projects planned and realized within the city are aimed at marketing the place and increasing urban rent instead of creating livable cities for the residents.

Hackworth states that in neoliberalism “real estate became quasi autonomous because cities and capital have become increasingly reliant on it as a sector independent of the rest of the regional economy. Real estate of this sort is arguably the leading edge of neoliberal urbanization at the local scale.”⁸⁴

Secondly, this argument is the key to understand why the urban transformation has failed in providing the conditions for affordable and livable housing and social atmosphere for the relocated inhabitants. It is through these UTPs that the system opens up new spaces for urban rent, and meanwhile the *gecekondu* residents are pushed into undesirable conditions. Not only the economic impoverishment but also the fact that the process of relocation and moving into apartment buildings cuts loose the existing relationship of the residents with the place and with other residents and this fact may also put them in a more vulnerable situation. The residents who are relocated from flexible economic and social conditions of the *gecekondu* to rigid official property structure mostly lose their chances of upward mobility and totally leave the economic sphere. Kuyucu and Ünsal argue that “by creating new property rules, exchange mechanisms, and physical spaces, these projects institute a neo-liberal system in socio-economically

⁸³ Ibid., p.4-5

⁸⁴ Jason Hackworth. *The neoliberal city: governance, ideology, and development in American urbanism* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press,2007), 43.

and legally vulnerable areas.”⁸⁵ The transfer of property instead of alleged social housing program allows us to see the UTPs as part of the neoliberal urban transformation. In the rest of this chapter, I will focus on the daily experiences of the residents to see how these new property rules and physical spaces affect the daily lives of the residents, changing their relationship with the space and with each other.

Bezirganbahçe Housing Project: Relocation, Changing Perceptions and the Problem of Belonging

When I first read the news stories about people moving from Ayazma to Bezirganbahçe, my first reaction was to ask whether the people were really willing to go through this change, and whether they had sufficient means to meet the costs. Because most stories in newspapers were based on how content the people were, offering quotations from the former *gecekondu* dwellers thanking municipality with titles of news stories such as “from muddy *gecekondu*s to modern flats”⁸⁶; only after a while the news from the opposite views begin to be reported. As I thought more about the specific place, following a couple of initial visits, my primary concern was to be able to observe the process of adaptation to new housing, and the challenges met by both residents, and municipal officials. I believed that this transformation would bring about a change both in their perception of themselves, their neighbors and surroundings as well as affecting the relationships formed with their perceptions of “others”. Although, these changes would probably take a long process after

⁸⁵ Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal, “‘Urban Transformation’ as State-Led Property Transfer: An Analysis of Two Urban Renewal Project in Istanbul,” *Urban Studies* (2010):9.

⁸⁶ Refer to http://www.hurriyetemlak.com/real_estate/emlakyasam/haber_detay.php?cid=2886 for an example of these news stories.

relocation surpassing the stretch and scope of my research, I could still sense the emergence of alterations in perceptions and opinions of relocated residents even on some socially and politically controversial issues.

The reason I wanted to conceptualize this chapter around the issue of place and practices was is the fact that the insight that questions of who we are were usually related to the location.⁸⁷ As the location changes through time, self-identity and relationship dynamics also are bound to transform in different contexts. I wanted to find an answer to questions in the context of this specific transformation project: In which ways were practice and place connected? How do the repetition/ rupture in everyday activities produce a particular identity and a sense of belonging to a place? How are places constructed to encourage some forms of practice and discourage others, and how does it reflect in imagination and experience of that space? How would the relocation shape the memory of a nostalgic past and a “modernized” today for those who experienced the change, and how will this “spatial loss” of memories change their understanding of the world?⁸⁸ Therefore, considering all these questions, I think that the concept of home, as studied by many anthropologists and cultural geographers, usually covers more than just a physical entity that has certain boundaries. Rather it is related to “the sense of belonging to some place, in a particular pace which is quite familiar and easily delineated, in a wide area in which one feels at “home”.”⁸⁹ Although the scope of this thesis cannot cover all these questions in such a limited period of field study and maybe it is too early to formulate some answers for some of the questions I had in mind (since it’s only been

⁸⁷ Kevin Durrheim and John Dixon, “Displacing place-identity: A discursive approach to locating self and other,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 39 (2000): 27-44.

⁸⁸ Ayona Datta, “From Tenements to flats: gender, class and ‘modernization’ in Bethnal Green Estate,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no.5 (2006): 789

⁸⁹ Marc Fried, “Grieving for a Lost Home,” in *The Record and the Controversy: Urban Renewal*, ed. James O. Wilson (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 363.

four years since relocation). I wanted to create a point of reference for further studies. Thus, I wanted to approach the concept of home as more than the physical entity but rather as an inclusive wider set of meanings, attachments and relationships which define and shape of belonging and identity. Of course, financial problems of the relocated population were and still are the main points of resentment. Many informants begin the conversation by mentioning the hardships to find jobs, to sustain the family and pay installment and utilities in the new setting. But apart from this, there is another aspect which comes along with the change of home, change of physical environment along with many neighbors remaining and meeting new neighbors in a totally new setting, unwillingly for most. Hence, accepting that the economical problems is the major source of disappointment for those who experienced relocation, I want to go one step further and try to explore what the new dynamics might bring to daily routines of the people who are relocated.

Thus, this part of the chapter begins with the theoretical framework that also integrates the fieldwork findings obtained through interviews and observation. From this perspective, a detailed descriptive narration about the new housing environment that the *gecekondu* owners were located begins and then goes on to analyze how this change of location has affected the daily life and their sense of understanding, themselves as subjects and other people and government. The backbone of this chapter is the interviews conducted with the relocated residents, and the field observations realized during several visits to Bezirganbahçe between the years 2007-2009. Even sometimes in-depth interviews turned out to become unorganized focus group discussions with the participation of neighbors or relatives. The main purpose is to identify how the change in physical space brings about the transformation of the

relationships amongst subjects, subject's relationship to physical setting, and their perception and opinions related to the housing.

My main aim throughout this chapter is to bring the daily practices into the center of my conceptualization; with the belief that the reflection of the policies in daily experience unveils all the contradictions and tensions that the relocation produces among the residents. With regard to change and resettlement, engagement with the daily practices has two dimensions. One is to look at the tactics that the resettled people adopt in order to make use of the space where the subject is positioned without his/her will to the space and to analyze how inverting the given space by certain creativity brings about new forms of practice. In this case, the related example would be to show how the relocated residents who are forced or semi-forced to live in the housing project make use of the spaces allocated to them. They may not directly embrace the discourse behind it, but we might observe them to be creatively personalizing the spaces through some tactics.⁹⁰

The other dimension on the other hand is related to seeking for the ways the change of place and practices in turn create a significant change in residents' ways of thinking about themselves and people around them. In other words, while the individual or collective subjectivities may transform the architecture to produce certain spaces for themselves, the new spaces produced by architecture may also transform the perceptions of the residents at the same time in certain directions. Although these processes regarding the interaction of the residents with the space cannot be separated from each other, and usually develop concomitantly, in this chapter my intention is to focus on the second, in the light of the first dimension. In other words, the main concern is to question how relocation into government housing

⁹⁰ For an example of the use of tactics in spatial relocation, see Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. (Berkeley: 2002: University of California Press)

reconfigures residents' social relations, sense of belonging and subjectivities, and what all these might signal for the future of Bezirganbahçe housing project and the urban transformation projects in general.

Changes in life forms mostly result in changes in practices, perceptions as well as objective conditions of those who undergo the change. When the spatial change is caused by outside forces, when the residents are unwilling to go through, the results may be more challenging; hence the outcome is more controversial. Since the relocation occurs as an intervention into the daily routines of the residents, it creates opposing views in each step of the process. Low and Zuniga argue that interventions that physically shape the urban landscape attract opposition mainly because “they reproduce key symbolic forms that reference deep and still unresolved or irresolvable conflicts among social actors and collectivities.”⁹¹ In the case of a *gecekondu* relocation project, not only already established meanings, perceptions and conflicts are reproduced, but they are also consciously utilized as tools for legitimization of the project and change of the physical environment.

In the example of Bezirganbahçe, the intervention in the physical space seems to have provoked the already established conflicts, prejudices and stereotypes attributed to Tepeüstü and Ayazma neighborhoods and their residents. The image of *gecekondu* as the “tumor of the city”, “home for terrorism and thieves” and the “modern housing” as opposed to these notions, are played upon by the officials and project implementers to justify the transformation. Moreover, it seems that the municipality actively utilized these stereotypes of in order to justify and speed up the process of intervention and relocation. Kurdish identity of the people who have migrated to Ayazma was another conflict-zone that also became the rationale behind

⁹¹ Setha Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, eds., *Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 20.

the control mechanism in the new housing project. For after the moving phase is succeeded, instead of elimination of the stereotypes and prejudices towards the *gecekondu* residents, these stereotypes and prejudices were reinforced strongly as the rationale for over-control and publicization of the private sphere .

On the other hand, this intervention causes a certain rupture in the daily lives of the inhabitants. This rupture manifests itself in the residents' feelings of security, sense of community and belonging as well as their memories regarding past and their current relations. When a sudden change of space occurs in the life narrative of the subjects, how the past is remembered and the outlook towards the perception of future is also shaped by the relocation. In Bezirganbahçe, it seems that the identity of coming from Tepeüstü and Ayazma was further consolidated due to conditions in the new place and the inhabitants' demand for better housing was strengthened. The relocation project itself also transforms the relationships among the residents, both within the family and among the families. These factors all had and still have an effect on the ways that the relocated families adapt to new environment, and the way they position themselves within their daily practices in the settlement, and towards the way they perceive the new environment and their place in it. And since how Bezirganbahçe was planned and imagined in the minds of project planners, officials and politicians reflect their ideas that shape their discourse and these ideas are always subsumed within the plans, so the signs, codifications, representations used and produced by these agents are present in the production of space.⁹² And the production of space in turn affects the way the inhabitants experience that space: "Social construction of space defines the experience of space through which people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting transform it

⁹² Andrew Merrifield, "Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18, no.4 (1993): 523.

and give it meaning”⁹³ Thus the social construction of Bezirganbahçe holds traces of the social imaginary of the opposition between the *gecekondu* and modern housing, as well as the economic concerns that trigger the project in the first place. There is always a tension existing in the space:

Harvey takes issue with the idea that a place can problematically stand for the memory and identity of a particular group of people. It may be true, he argues, that collective memory is often made concrete through the production of particular places but this production of memory in place is no more than an element in the perpetuation of a particular social order that seeks to inscribe some memories at the expense of others. Places do not come with some memories attached as it by nature but rather they are “contested terrain of competing definitions (Creswell, 2004).⁹⁴

On the other side of this competition of definitions there is the everyday experience of the residents, the “lived space”⁹⁵ Lefebvre defines, is produced through the everyday experiences of the residents and is doomed to differ from the original purpose of production of space. For Lefebvre, whose triad of space includes conceived, perceived and lived space, while conceived space stands for the ways in which space is planned and representation of space, lived space is the emotional experience of space that develops through the imaginary and through lived experience of the people in that space, in other words, it is the experience that accumulates in the daily lives of the inhabitants. Hence, although the deeply rooted social imaginaries embedded both in certain space and the subjects within the space shape the experience, the end result is always a hybrid and it holds tensions between both ends. Differentiation between “lived space” and conceptualized space is all the more visible in such a project. While the residents are surrounded with rules and

⁹³ Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 128.

⁹⁴ Tim Creswell, 2004, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub.)

⁹⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Place*, (USA : Blackwell, 1991)

regulations regarding life in the housing project, they constantly try to create their own spaces within the place to alter these rules. However, for Merryfield “lived space is an elusive space which the imagination must seek to change and appropriate. Lived space, therefore, is the dominated, passively experienced space that the conceived, ordered, hegemonic space will intervene in, codify, rationalize and ultimately attempt to usurp.”⁹⁶ Therefore, the discursive realm of the conceived space is in constant struggle to dominate the lived experience of the space, as the structural conditions are mostly in coherence with the conceived space’s discursive realm. In other words, residents’ struggles to alter the rules mostly remain in between failing and being successful. All these tensions are revealed in how notions of family and community and self are created and implicated in the way residents construct new meanings through daily use of space both inside and outside the flat.⁹⁷

As mentioned above; as much as the individual transforms and attaches meanings to space, the construction of the space by the power is a representative of the ideological notions behind the logic of power, and in this case neoliberalism stands out as the major policy tool. Bartu -Candan and Kolluoğlu define Bezirganbahçe as an exemplary of the spaces of neo-liberalism and I agree with their argument. They state that: “In Bezirganbahçe, involuntary isolation and insulation as well as non-relationality with the city, imposed through the reproduction of poverty, create a new form of urban marginality”.⁹⁸ Not only the financial impasse that they are dragged into, but also the effect of social surrounding further isolate and marginalize the population in Bezirganbahçe housing project. Furthermore, by

⁹⁶ Andrew Merryfield, “Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 18:4 (1993): 523.

⁹⁷ Ayona Datta, “From Tenements to flats: gender, class and ‘modernization’ in Bethnal Green Estate,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no.5 (2006): 802.

⁹⁸ Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu “Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 5-46.

playing on the social capital, the perception and desires also go through a certain change. The interpretation of social capital is not merely economic, but also accounts for manner, tastes, behavior—the entire social symbols one can access⁹⁹, and thus the social capital is a determining factor in defining the individual's style of living, choices and perceptions. An individual's social capital is the result of a set of social relations determined by virtue of one's social, economic and political position. All these positions in turn determine the extent of individual's networks of relations and his/her positioning within this network. Hence social capital by itself is a part of power relations. But the social capital is not a result of individual choice (as the development theory suggests), indeed “one does not acquire or squander social capital on the basis of individual choice, rather, one accrues obligation and opportunity to participate in social networks by virtue of one's social position.”¹⁰⁰

In fact, the urban relocation projects within neoliberal urban policies shelter and embrace the notion of social capital in alleviation of poverty, this social capital formation in neoliberal logic rests on the idea that the formation of networks among individuals and communities are beneficial in holding the responsibility from the government, making the subjects support each other in alleviating poverty through these social networks. For Rankin:

The social capital framework enables the architects of neoliberal economic policy to cast the reconfiguration of state–society relations in progressive terms – local capacity building, local self-reliance, net social benefits from reduced transaction costs, and increased returns to human capital. As such, social capital can be expected to fill the vacuum left by the restructuring of the welfare state in countries around the world¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Faranak Miraftab, “Making neo-liberal governance: the disempowering work of empowerment,” *International Planning Studies* 9, no.4 (2004):241.

¹⁰⁰ Katherine Rankin, “Social Capital, Microfinance, and the Politics of Development,” *Feminist Economics* 8, no.1 (2002): 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*,10.

Thus, the inhabitants of the housing project are left alone after the relocation, and only some networks are formed through non-governmental or semi-governmental organizations. However, as much as the social capital is valued, since it does ignore the structural conditions in the picture, I argue that the actual situation may be the opposite, shrinking the social networks of the residents even more. Besides, while the project changes residents' understanding regarding housing and they are relocated with the promise of owning a house – modern housing with facilities and etc. – and called in to “modernization”, in actuality the residents' financial situation is worsened, and the apartment blocks do not fit their needs and desires. Moreover, the relocation is justified on the basis of *gecekondu*s being shelters for “thieves, terrorists etc.”, but in Bezirganbahçe these identities are re-inscribed through official discourse. Power is over-present in the housing project both in visible and invisible manners- visible as the presence of civic police, and police station and invisible in discourses created around the housing project. On the other hand, it is observed that the boundaries of public and private are negotiated and blurred once more. While on one hand the public places are privatized through continuous control over who can do what in the gardens and surrounding environment, on the other hand the private spaces, homes in other words, become publicized in the way that certain measures and rules on “Do and Don't Do” begin to define how the house can and should be used by the inhabitants.

All these indicate that the residents feel themselves disempowered within their new situation in the housing project. In her analysis of literature on how power operates and the notion of empowerment, Miraftab concludes that:

Thus stressing the multidimensionality of (dis)empowerment, the literature highlights the need to achieve change at all three levels. In other words, consideration should be given not only to how A can get B to do what A wants or what B does not want to, but also to how to

influence B's aspirations, beliefs, desires and wants so that B does as A wants with no conflict of interest even apparent. The first effort focuses on the individualized level of the relationship between A and B, and the second on political, social, and institutional forces affecting that relationship.¹⁰²

So the real power lies not only in just getting the individual to do what is wanted of him/her but also in changing the individual desires, relationships and perceptions.

In this thesis, I argue that the resettlement project has been changing the way the residents perceive themselves, allowing them the legitimacy to claim for rights of housing and providing them a sense of comparative consciousness. Yet due to the control mechanism that they are surrounded with, and the further impoverishment because of the economic problems set in the new environment, they are less powerful to claim these rights, hence disempowered. According to criticisms of neoliberal empowerment policies, the people may actually feel empowered without being so, since the discourse on empowerment masks the power of the regime. But in this case, along with being disempowered, the residents in Bezirganbahçe do not feel empowered and this is explicitly stated in all my interviews. This is best understood in their everyday practices. The changes/ non-changes in their daily life in a changed environment caused the residents to challenge the notions of housing, meaning of living in a "housing estate (*site*)", and led to a more challenging stance towards the municipality and government. But since they moved to government housing project, where even the private spaces are publicized in the name of modernization and education of the people, they feel more and more restrained in the way they could act and/or resist. Finally I argue that this process is an example of disempowering in the name of empowering under neoliberal urban policies. To further exemplify my

¹⁰² Faranak Miraftab, "Making neo-liberal governance: the disempowering work of empowerment," *International Planning Studies* 9, no. 4 (2004): 244.

argument, in the coming sections, I will try to show the ways the residents are constrained including their changing perceptions, habits, daily practices.

Of course, not everyone experiences the relocation in the same way. It depends on many factors. For example while those who come from Kurdish background experience the effects of relocation more harshly, those who are financially better-off may speak and experience differently. My main concern here is to try to give a more general picture regarding the majority of the impoverished families.

Changing Place

Administration as Mediator/Facilitator

Changing place, as mentioned previously above, carries the potential of personal and collective problems on the side of the residents. To prevent this, in the first years of moving into TOKI houses, the administration of the settlement and the career center assumed themselves a crucial role in providing a smooth transition. At first, the administration officials were appointed among the municipal officers, and they were mainly in charge of organizing relationships, and the daily problems that the new residents may face. Nevertheless, the structure of this administration had changed in 2008, replacing the municipal officials with the employees from Mass Housing Institution's private entities, and becoming an office solely for technical issues. I've been to the administration office a couple of times in 2007 for interview and observation. And it was an interesting experience to be at that time because the officer whom I interviewed was mainly used as a mediator to find a solution to problems of the relocated. At two times that I have been in his room for interview/observation, there was a flow of residents coming in and out, talking about

their problems, sometimes crying and asking for a solution. Even the family matters among husband and wife were discussed with the administrator to get an advice. Just like the “*muhtar*”, the people applied to housing project administrator for demands regarding services, demands for guidance/advice and official paperwork and for solving the disputes¹⁰³. During these visits I’ve witnessed that, although the efforts of individuals in the office were usually well-meant, the prevailing discourse was to modernize the inhabitants and for this reason the language and the attitude adopted was an elitist one that reinforces the discriminatory perception towards the *gecekondu* residents. The exclusionist language revealed itself during the interviews in the form of arguing that the officials indeed want the best for the residents, but the residents were still not ready to receive and “learn” how to adapt. To the officials, main culprit for the problems in the housing project was the inability to adapt.

Along with the resettlement a municipality led social development project has been initiated called “*Bizim Halk’a*” (To Our People). In the project, the main aim was defined as “to lead the population who lives in the region and guide them in their new living environment”¹⁰⁴. Four main aspects of the project were defined as employment, health, education-information, and socio-cultural development. When I visited the center of the project within the housing project, I observed that there was a certain weariness of the failure of the projects, but they had chosen to interpret the failure as an incompatibility of the inhabitants. The main argument was again related to the characteristics of the inhabitants: “*These people do not want to catch a fish, they just want to eat the fish. What we try to do here is to teach them how to catch the*

¹⁰³ Erder (1996) discusses in her book that the *gecekondu* inhabitants in Ümraniye mainly use *muhtars* office for these three main purposes; I had seen a similar pattern in Bezirganbahçe, only until the people began to perceive the Office as “acting against themselves”.

¹⁰⁴ http://www.bizimhalka.com/kategori_42_Tarihce.html

fish, but it's hopeless."¹⁰⁵ From the inhabitants' point of view, there were simply two reasons for not attending the projects: firstly, these projects and their timing was not appropriate with their daily routines, most of the time the women had to look after the children while men are either at work, or looking for a job. Secondly and more importantly, most of them did not believe in the promises of the projects. The project and the municipality had lost their credibility, in forcing some to relocation, and for those who were willing to relocate; even they were disappointed by their treatment after relocation. Apart from two of my female interviewees, none of my informants had visited the center so far, and the two that visited had participated in seminars regarding mother-child health, and a free doctor check-up.

The people who work here are also aware of the failure of the projects. For this reason they stated that they have ended the employment projects and headed towards "adaptation to city" projects such as female health, adolescence, women's rights and democracy, along with providing information to residents about issues such as how to obtain a green card, how to apply to municipality for formal marriage procedure.

In fact, the aims of the projects are defined as empowering the poor, both in terms of developing them culturally, encouraging them to become active social citizens in the city and the prevention of social exclusion. But as long as the structural conditions remain, all projects are doomed to be unsuccessful since there is no participation and all the funds they take are spent without significant benefit. While women state that they cannot attend the programs for not being able to leave the children home alone. When I personally applied for an employment position to work in Bezirganbahçe as a social worker within the project, the specific interest

¹⁰⁵ "Bu insanlara biz balık tutmasını öğrenmek değil sadece balığı yemek istiyorlar. Biz burada onlara balık tutmasını öğretmek istiyoruz, ama imkansız."

they had in mind was to look for an employee who knew about the EU fund application procedures. It was not much of significance to them that the candidate would be knowledgeable about the area and the people in it. When I shared my views about why people could not attend these projects with them, it was apparent they did not like the fact that I was aware of the situation.

In this respect, I believe that the intentions of the projects and the administration to resolve the poverty and the socio-cultural problems somehow contribute to their maintenance. Bartu- Candan and Kolluoğlu argue that Bezirganbahçe is a good example of the simultaneous processes of symbolic inclusion and material exclusion that is one of the means of neoliberal governance. “On the one hand, a range of “social inclusion” projects are enacted and surveys conducted; on the other hand, residents are stripped off of their material means of survival.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the way the targeted inhabitants are constructed and constituted in the mindset of the employees gives way to formation of programs in the form of charity organizations and interactions similar to teacher-students like relationships. All these turn into a disempowering process, strengthening the stereotypical views about residents and their backgrounds. Meanwhile, these projects; instead of addressing the structural adjustments and measures that need to be taken, eliminate residents’ identity as decision makers/ active participants in the process, and turn them into subjects whose fate depend on the policies of the officials.

¹⁰⁶ Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu “Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 27.

The economy of living in an apartment

Financial problems are the main concerns that effect how the residents experience the location in Bezirganbahçe where out of 55 blocks, 13 of them were allocated to those who come from Tepeüstü and Ayazma. When the resettlement contracts were made, the old *gecekondu*s were considered to be around worth of 10.000 TL (although the amount may change slightly according to the land they had in old neighborhood, and the agreement made) and the inhabitants, have been moved to the new apartment blocks with a debt of 50.000 TL (which they are supposed to pay in 15 years)¹⁰⁷. According to the survey results conducted in Tepeüstü and Ayazma neighborhoods with 100% sample size in the initial phases of the transformation plans, 64% of the households' monthly income is below 600 TL per month and in 63% of the household only one person is employed. And 50% of the population lacks any kind of social security.¹⁰⁸ The residents were supposed to pay around 180-230 TL of monthly installments, depending on the contracts they made with the municipality. Although this seemed as an affordable choice in the beginning, it turned out to be much more costly, since apart from the installment, the residents would now have to pay for apartment maintenance, utilities such as electricity, heating etc. which sometimes amount to more than the total monthly income of the families. With the expenses fixed but the incomes are still unfixed, the families are in constant need of financial resources. Also, there are 18 families in the housing project who were not allocated the right for ownership for a flat in Bezirganbahçe, due to being tenants in old neighborhood. After a long period of living in tents in Ayazma, not knowing what to do next, the efforts had resulted into an agreement and

¹⁰⁷ I have been told that this amount have risen up to 60000 TL, for those who resisted the relocation.

¹⁰⁸ Sırma Turgut and Eda Ceylan, “*Bir Yerel Yönetim Deneyiminin Ardından*” (İstanbul: Alfa, 2010), 101.

they moved to the housing project on rent, their one-year rent being paid by the municipality, with the promise of arranging an apartment after this one-year-duration either in Bezirganbahçe or in Kayabaşı, another low-income housing project constructed by MHA.¹⁰⁹

The families are usually crowded and in general the males in houses are the main supporters of the house, but they work in temporary jobs, mostly in informal economic sector, such as painting walls, distribution of newspapers, working in constructions, from which they hardly ever earn more than around 500-750 TL per month. Sometimes, the elder children also support the family by mostly working as laborer in factories. According to another statistical result obtained from the municipal surveys, in 32% of the households there is no family member that has a stable income.¹¹⁰ But since the income is not stable and sufficient, payment of monthly bills has become a major problem for the families. Some of the families even did not use the heating system the whole winter for fear of increasing bills. In this picture, the house itself, which has to be protective, has turned out to become the major problem in life for the relocated residents. One informant, whose family depends on the income of the father who works as a mechanic in an architecture office, and supports family with 3 children plus elder parents, explains the transformation as:

I mean, it is not like as an apartment that is worth 100 thousand lira brings extra income to us; in fact it takes our money every month. It's like a vampire soaking our resources. It doesn't matter whether it would be worth of 500 billion liras. It's just a shelter that covers us, nothing else.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ These families are still struggling for their housing rights, after this period of one-year has ended in December 2009.

¹¹⁰ Sırma Turgut and Eda Ceylan, “Bir Yerel Yönetim Deneyiminin Ardından” (İstanbul: Alfa, 2010), 149.

¹¹¹ “Yani 100 milyarlık daire bize para vermiyor ki; aksine bizden para alıyor her ay. Vampir gibi habire yutuyor bir şeyler. İsterse 500 milyarlık daire olsun. Sadece barındırıyor beni başka bir şey vermiyor ki”

As obvious from this quote, the change of house alone does not bring about a solution into problems of the people of Ayazma and Tepeüstü, instead they further increase the economic concerns for most of the families. For this reason some families have tended to turn over their rights and also debts to other buyers who can afford to own the housing, and moved to other cheaper housing options. According to Turgut and Ceylan, who were involved in the planning and implementation phases of the projects, 200 households have turned over their rights and moved out to other regions¹¹² This option was forbidden in the beginning by law, the residents were not allowed to sell their flats before their debts have ended, but the fact that this rule has been loosened later shows that the municipal officials and TOKI have also foreseen what's to come after relocation. It is still possible to see that the real-estate offices in the shopping center of the housing complex have two kinds of postings for sales: houses sold including the debt, and other debt-free houses. During my visits I was also informed by the informants constantly about the families who have decided to move-out to cheaper accommodation choices which of course, means moving back again to *gecekondu*, in a further neighborhood.

In fact the municipality had anticipated the need for an extra project, and for this reason it had initiated a center called “Career Center” within Bezirganbahçe which was projected to provide a solution to unemployment, by offering occupational courses (especially for women) and making agreement with some employers to provide jobs for the relocated residents, as well as informing or educating the people in terms of health, reading-writing etc. But as explained in the above section, the efforts seem to have turned unsuccessful. The employment

¹¹² Sırma Turgut and Eda Ceylan, “*Bir Yerel Yönetim Deneyiminin Ardından*” (Istanbul: Alfa, 2010).

projects could not go further than some courses without providing solid employment opportunities.

Another aspect of the financial concerns is related to changing profile of the neighborhood. Now that there are many people from different social and economical backgrounds, it creates certain tension within the family and inter-family relations. Even though the economic condition of the families don't change (although in most cases they worsen due to monthly installment payments), the desires change due to interaction with more and heterogeneous people. One dimension of this changing desires results from the "apartment block" itself. The women I talked to had dreams of changing the furniture to fit to the apartment; such as sofa sets with buffets etc., thinking that their existing furniture no longer fits with the house they live in.

Encounters with people from different segments may also result in changing tastes, desires in consumption habits, which cannot be fulfilled due to unchanged (and even worsened) economic situation. One of my male informants exemplifies the situation through his 8 year old son:

In Ayazma, I would get by on eating bread and onions, but here there is the effect of environment. We cannot live here as we used to. In Ayazma, no neighbor tells what they bought or cooked, kids also don't care about these. But there are people from different backgrounds here. The kids interact with each other. In Ayazma I would give 50 kuruş or 1 lira to my kid, here he tells me that his friends bring 10 lira as pocket money.¹¹³

These changing desires and the inability to cope with them create tensions both inside the house and make the residents feel more and more disempowered in the new environment. As much as their financial capital, their social capital is

¹¹³ "Ayazma da ben kuru ekmeğe soğanla geçinebilirdim, ama şimdi burada ister istemez çevre etkisi de var. Burada o şekilde yaşamaya şansın yok. Ayazma da komşular biz şunu yaptık şunu yaptık demez, çocuklar pek öyle şeylerle uğraşmaz. Ama burada öyledir. Farklı kesimden insanlar da var. İster istemez çocuklar yan yana sohbet ediyorlar, ister istemez etkilenir. Ben ayazma da çocuğuma 50 kuruş ya da 1 lira verirdim rahatlıkla. Ama burada öyle bir şansım yok bakıyor arkadaşım 10 milyon getiriyor harçlık diyor"

interrupted as their changing networks are no longer relevant with their actual situations.

Quality of Physical Space and Environment

The physical characteristics of the housing project are crucial in residents' perspective on the relocation. Having moved from one-storey houses with gardens into high-rise apartment buildings is considered as a major change. Although many informants, when asked about their thoughts and feelings regarding the relocation and new housing blocks, tend to complain about the relocation, it should be kept in mind that, the feelings of resentment and satisfaction in some aspects are intertwined with each other. Thus, it would be misleading to make a totalizing conclusion about the changes either positive or negative. Instead I will be trying to show the complexity of situation, feelings and evaluation of the process of moving to another place.

As stated before, the housing project is comprised of 55 blocks of identical shapes and heights. All the apartments inside are standard, and 11 storey. Quality of the apartments is inarguably low. Although the housing project has just completed its third year after the construction has ended, it doesn't seem so both inside and outside the apartments. The area still demands a high maintenance for environmental services, such as repairing and gardening services and rubbish collecting: But clearly these services are not provided regularly and satisfactorily yet. Besides, all the informants complain about the low quality of the construction. Although the housing project is very new, the cracks in the walls, water leaks from the pipes, continuously failing elevators are some of the problems that the residents commonly experience. And the costs of repair and maintenance add up to their burden. In one flat that I've

visited I have witnessed that the pipes had expanded under the ground and made the ground crack upwards, so the living room floors were no longer flat, and the residents were afraid to open the heating system. When I asked them whether the administration would help them in repairing the damaged parts of the house, for which the residents had no responsibility, the answer was negative. One informant told me that the administrator of the housing project has handed over the master keys of the apartments' utility rooms (such as main electricity controls) to the local repair shops instead of keeping them in the main office, so that in case of a repairing job, they would share the profit that would come from the residents. Therefore, the administration is no longer viewed as a channel for consultancy and help for the problems of the residents.

Although the informants constantly stress the lack of care given both by the municipality and TOKI officials, in terms of helping with repairing, environmental planning of parks and playgrounds, building trees etc., they think that living in apartment blocks (especially for women) facilitated some part of their daily life in terms of access to clean water, asphalted roads and pavements.

*Ayazma was a cesspool. The dirty water would come from the factory behind. I had to carry my child to school on my back for years so that his pants would not get muddy. Now the school is a meter away. Now at least they care about us. Maybe they care a little only, but since we are not used to it, it feels good.*¹¹⁴ (Female, 42, ex-Ayazma resident, housewife with 3 children)

Apart from the dissatisfaction from the quality of the flats, and the content in terms of facilities, remembering their old houses, people associate it mostly with good memories, and as an important part of their life stories (which is also associated with migration stories) Owning the house, having built it with their efforts in years, and

¹¹⁴ “Ayazma çöplüktü. Arkadaki fabrikanın suları geliyordu. Ben oğlumu kaç sene sırtımda okula taşıdım çamura bulanmasın diye. Şimdi okul bir metre ötede. Şimdi en azından ilgileniyorlar. Belki daha az ama önceden ilgi görmediğimiz için bize çok iyi geliyor.”

remembering the good and bad days lived through in old settlements is part of their stories. Especially when faced with more hardships and unwelcoming attitude by the neighbors combined with the feelings of insecurity, the identity of coming from Ayazma or Tepeüstü is strengthened rather than the feelings of belonging to the housing project.

The environmental plan of the housing project is also problematic for the inhabitants. Until around 2007, none of the facilities were in use in the housing project. The shopping center and the health care center were empty. Later on these facilities slowly began to function. The playgrounds within the housing project are clearly not sufficient for the crowded population of children, and the existence of children outside creates tension among the neighbors. There is no space for socializing within the housing project apart from the occasional arbors that are placed near the playgrounds. Besides, the residents constantly feel the need for gardens and trees, in a housing project where the greenery is hardly ever well-kept and the use of the green spaces is restricted. One male informant whom I interviewed together with his children and wife states: *“The administration did not let us plant fruit trees in the garden. They didn’t let, because they said, those who come from Ayazma would go into the greenery. But we planted a cherry tree in front of the apartment secretly.”*¹¹⁵ As the residents are trying to continue their habits, they feel that they are restricted in doing so, and they try to create their own ways of dealing with this problematic situation, creating themselves spaces and moments to replicate and remember their former place of residence and habits of their old style of living.

To give some account about the houses, the 90 square meter houses are comprised of one living room and two bedrooms, the kitchen is the part of the living

¹¹⁵ *“Meyve ağacı dikmemize izin vermediler ama. Ayazmadan gelenler bahçelere girer, diye izin vermediler. Ama biz gizlice kiraz ağacı diktik apartmanın önüne, bakalım.”*

room from where you can access the balcony (in some houses, the kitchen and living room were separated by a wall). Balconies are used mainly as a continuation of the kitchen where food supply is kept. But some families also use the balconies for domestic animals such as chicks and chickens. I had only access to living rooms and kitchens, and also sometimes “sitting rooms”, which are usually used by women during the day to watch TV, and then turned into bedrooms at nights for the children. Obviously the two-room flats which were designed for small families had to be adapted to the conditions of more crowded families. What surprised me most was the relatively similar furniture design applied by the families. Standard house design for standard houses, as if only certain kind of furniture could be used in the flats. But in anyway, the house is also a way of presentation of the self, especially for the females who spend most of their time at home. And the small differences, details such as the use of colors, posters etc. convey messages that manifest the inhabitants’ way of life. For example, during my visits I was able to understand from which religious sect the families are from, or where they come from, and their ethnic background from very small details.

During my first visits, I realized that on the bulletin boards hanged in front of the apartments, there were papers stating the rules that regulate how to use the apartments and even flats (a full list of do’s and don’ts regarding the use of balconies, elevators, making noise etc.) and advertisement and information regarding installment of utilities such as natural gas and electricity. But as time passed, these rules and brochures gave their place to warnings and legal remarks concerning those who cannot afford to pay the installments three months successively. That much of intervention of state with the rules into the housing units and the within the housing project means for residents that the new residential space becomes an area where

state is excessively present in all aspects of the residents' lives, both in public and private spheres.

Changing Relations

Daily Lives

The relocation into housing project did not signify a certain radical rupture within the daily life of the residents. Instead most of them seemed to be trying to continue old habits and daily lives as it was in their former dwellings. But the structure of the apartment and flat usually aim to change the kind of interaction that takes place among the people, and seriously affects the way daily practices are carried out. Below are some of the examples of the changes that residents experience after relocation. Most crucial of these seem to be the rupture on the steady flow of interaction and conversation among neighbors, which was a major source of solidarity network and important part of the daily social lives of the residents.

Due to financial concerns and the mostly non-central location of the neighborhoods, the poor usually have limited relationship with the city. This is doubly the case for the women who spend most of their time at home. For this reason, they spend most of their free time in front doors or the gardens. These spaces are the mediating places that give the poor the chance to take a breath outside the house where all problems related to poverty are accumulated.¹¹⁶ The lack of gardens in the apartment flats is substituted through the banks and arbors within the housing project. Whenever I visited, there were people in these outside places either chatting,

¹¹⁶ Ersan Ocak in *Yoksulluk Halleri*, "Yoksulun Evi". Original: "Kapı önü ya da bahçe, her şeyden önce yoksulluğa dair her türlü sıkıntının biriktiği evden çıkmanın, fazla olmasa da yoksulluğa mesafelenmenin aracı mekandır." 11-112.

or mothers sewing while keeping an eye on the children who are playing in the playground.

In fact the garden was an important part of the social and economic life in *gecekond* settlements, providing both a safe middle space between the house and the outside world, as well as allowing the owners to grow some of their nutritional needs without having to buy them. The gardens did not simply surround the house, but they were actively used as kitchens, place for cleaning the laundry, sitting rooms, playground for children and so on. They also had an important influence on the household economy. That is why Shillington defines the patios in Nicaraguan barrios as “a space of the house that happens to be outside”¹¹⁷, instead of referring to these places as just a garden area and I follow her logic in the analysis of effect of change of housing structure in Bezirganbahçe. She argues that there is little material separation between the house, garden (*patio* in her case), and domestic activities and this is significant in the way how home is imagined. In the flats, no longer with gardens they can freely make use of, the “house” itself becomes the residents’ main focus of attention since the freedom to socialize in the backyard or in the garden is limited. This brings about two dimensions to daily lives: one is that domesticity seems to have gained importance, and secondly the relationship between the neighbors has been more formalized.

Although the routine of their daily practices do not seem to have changed much, the way they conduct it obviously took a different shape in a new environment. While before, the gardens of the houses, or the streets were the main places for socializing, now neighbor visits became a frequent practice, with one difference. One of my female informants told me that, they began to use the

¹¹⁷ Laura Shillington, “Being(s) in relation at home: socio-natures of patio ‘gardens’ in Managua, Nicaragua,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 9, no.7 (2008): 756.

telephone more frequently than before since there is no possibility of knowing or hearing whether your neighbor is busy or available. Another informant also stated that the women used to come together within the day in Ayazma, chat, spend time, do the handwork together. Now, still they do come together but with one extra burden for them: since the gathering is in flats now, there is more need for constantly cleaning the house since the guests would be hosted and the presence of the women inside the house would make the house dirtier.

Apart from all these, the daily lives are all the more ruptured for those who cannot pay the rents, or monthly installments, causing them continuous depression and worries about the future, not feeling themselves secure in the existing houses. One female informant whose husband is not currently working, and who have not paid the installments for the past two months explains the state she is in:

It's like, when you will go on a journey next day, and you cannot sleep in your bed that previous night from thinking of how the journey will go; I feel like that, always. Always in my mind there is this concern of how we are going to solve this problem.¹¹⁸

These feelings of depression and insecurity usually do not allow the inhabitants to carry out the usual daily work in peace, as they state that they have lost their will and cheer because of thinking too much about the future.

Neighborhood Dynamics

Moving into high rise apartment buildings has brought about a new way of communication with the neighbors. This has two dimensions: one of which is related to the problems faced due to physical condition of the apartment compared to one-

¹¹⁸ "Hani ertesi gün bir yola çıkacaksınız o gece yatar uyuyamazsın onun nasıl gidicem diye düşünürsün. Onun gibi işte. Hep düşünce hep düşünce nasıl yapıcaz diye."

storey building, and the other is related to the intensification of relations due to changing dynamics.

To begin with the changes caused by the physical surrounding, we can say that one of the changes that people state they face most is the difficulty of sharing the common spaces with the neighbors, such as the use of elevators, decision on the rules of the apartment and so on. Disputes regarding the noise that comes through the neighboring flats are also major sources of conflict, especially in houses with many children. Besides, it seems that the sense of community is lost in Bezirganbahçe for the ex-*gecekondu* inhabitants. Through casual encounters during the day, people used to have certain sense of community and neighborhood. But now, the apartment seems to have isolated the individuals from one another:

*When we saw someone, we used to stop and chat for a while to ask how they are doing. Now I get in the elevator, there is someone I don't know. We keep staring emptyly at the walls without a single word.*¹¹⁹ (Female, 28, ex-Tepeüstü resident, lives with her husband and daughter)

There is a general resentment about the way the apartment blocks isolate the people from one another. One informant, for example, argued that since the people here are more preoccupied with financial problems such as how to pay the next installment and utilities, they tend not to spend time on leisure, or just chatting briefly with the neighbors on a regular basis. He states that, because on the way to work and home, people are concerned about their own financial problems, thus they don't even feel like talking or greeting each other even in the elevator. He allegedly related this to the modern life and how it turns the people into slaves/robots. The tension of living in a more heterogeneous community is also reflected in the interviews in the form of resentment from relationships. Whatever is lacking in Bezirganbahçe is perceived as

¹¹⁹ “Eskiden biriyle karşılaştığın zaman, bir selam alıp verirdin, iki çift laf ederdin. Şimdi ben burada asansöre biniyorum, kaç kat çıkıyoruz, boş boş bakıyor herkes, kimsenin hal hatır sorduğu yok.”

an outcome of the way the relationships are shaped in modern housing and its cold ways of communication. Every problem among the neighbors, any cold behavior or indifference is associated with the “modern life” and the changes it causes in people. People are resentful even about the way people do not look in the eyes of each other when they come across in the elevators. Even young people express their discontent with the new setting and relations. For example one of the 15 year old informants whose family I was interviewing added that she can no longer find herself friends to play or spend time with.

*A friend of mine had moved here with her family before us. When I visited her, I realized that she no longer goes out of their apartment, and I was surprised about this. Now I became same like her, and I understand her very well. The relationships here are not like what we had over there.*¹²⁰

The fact that people in the housing project and the neighborhood around come from different backgrounds and places, also produce anxiety over actions, habits and relations.¹²¹ These anxieties sometimes lead to contradicting views and actions. For example, while on the one hand the relocated residents complain about being allocated in different blocs than the other residents of the housing project and they consider this as discrimination but on the other hand, they do not want to live together with other residents thinking that it would be difficult to get along with people who are considered as “cold and unwelcoming.”

As Fried suggests¹²², some may respond to the loss of place and people by accentuating the importance of relationships that remain such as couple relationships,

¹²⁰ “Bir arkadaşım benden önce taşınmıştı buraya ailesiyle. Ben onu ziyarete gittiğimde bakıyordum hiç evden dışarı çıkmıyor. Allah Allah diyordum ne kadar değişmiş. Sonra biz taşındık, bir süre sonra ben de öyle oldun. Şimdi onu çok iyi anlıyorum. Buradaki ilişkiler oradaki gibi değil”

¹²¹ Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: 2002: University of California Press), 115.

¹²² Marc Fried, “Grieving for a Lost Home,” in *The Record and the Controversy: Urban Renewal*, ed. James O. Wilson (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 369.

relations with children and close neighbors which in turn shapes the daily practices of the people. In the case of Bezirganbahçe, the departure from one storey houses into 11 storey blocks has clearly changed the way the families interact with one another. This well-explains the reason that although during the interviews, the informants draw a darker picture in terms of feeling alone; almost all my visits at homes were interrupted (or sometimes enriched) with the visits of either relatives, or neighbors to houses. After all I have been told about the opposite, I was surprised about this. When I asked they said that there are only two-three families they only and frequently see, and they have gotten closer with those families since the relocation.

On the other hand, getting out of the close family-related social circle may result in an opposite direction of change in relations, allowing residents to form different relationships apart from what they had. Another female informant states that, since they used to live in very close houses with their relatives in Ayazma, their social circle of neighbors has increased considerably in Bezirganbahçe. She states that, while she hardly knew anyone in Ayazma, here she had a chance to get to know more neighbors and began having more regular relationships with them.

In some cases, living in a flat also limits the freedom of the women during the day. One of the informants stated that now that their surrounding has changed and neighbors are more heterogeneous. She is now allowed neither to carry out neighbor visits nor host neighbors without the presence of her husband, for fear of security. Her husband now tells her not to “make it a habit for other women to spend the day in their house” since his concern for security has increased and he doesn’t trust the people anymore. Furthermore the same informant says that her husband is afraid that if something happens, none of the neighbors would have heard. Now that the spaces

of home became more privatized, in some aspects it's become less comfortable to maintain the relationships in the old manners. People feel themselves as having to be more selective about whom to accept to their private sphere as well as feeling restrained about their movements within the space.

Another factor that intensifies the tensions among neighbors is the issue of receiving help from certain sources such as municipality, governor's office and other civic social funds (in the form of food, supermarket checks, or education support money for students). As opposed to the neighborhood solidarity network discourse that is attributed to the nostalgic past in the *gecekond*, the dominant theme here seems to have turned around to talking over who received help and questioning why certain people receive help and others do not. This issue has been raised in most interviews that I have conducted, urging the residents to compare and to contrast their situation with that of the neighbors and creating a competitive environment among the neighbors. Here relations with the MHA administration or municipal officials are the main reasons that are attributed to being chosen to receive help which in turn differentiates the inhabitants as being "like us" and "one of them". In the *gecekond*, the common project of trying to get by¹²³ seems to be the major source of sense of belonging and community for the residents, while here the families are individualized, and separated away from one another.

Changing Perceptions

The meaning of living in a "site"

Almost all informants have been complaining about the (dis)organization of the building complex, mentioning its lack of sufficient social facilities, environmental

¹²³ Lynne C. Manzo, Rachel G. Kleit and Dawn Couch, "Moving Three Times Is Like Having Your House on Fire Once": The Experience of Place and Impending Displacement among Public Housing Residents," *Urban Studies* 45 (2008): 1861.

planning and maintenance. One interesting fact that came out is that, although people remember their former houses with good memories, and attaching meanings to those memories, now they begin to compare their new houses with other building complexes that are beginning to develop around Bezirganbahçe. In this sense Bezirganbahçe is for them, in between the *gecekondu* settlements and other more luxurious residential complexes, without fully taking the attributes of either of them. While for example, they are (mostly women) are happy about not having to carry water from fountains to home, not having to walk through muddy streets in winters due to lack of infrastructure, and of being close to public facilities such as school and health clinics, they do not actually see Bezirganbahçe as a real residential site as it should be. They state that, when Bezirganbahçe is compared to other complexes, there are many things lacking, like proper security at the gates, the quality of the construction and social facilities. One female respondent expresses this concern as “*Compared to other sites, it looks as if ours is obviously built for poor people. No pools, no greenery, no security. Nobody cares about us.*”¹²⁴ It seems that the resettlement into Bezirganbahçe, instead of eliminating the unequal conditions of housing among different social segments – as the municipality argued as the main motivation behind the removal -, brought about a new dimension and perspective about how the residents compare the conditions they are in as opposed to others, seeing their houses almost as a caricaturized version of the other close by housing projects.

At this point, Başakşehir arises as the main point of reference in comparing Bezirganbahçe to better housing arrangements. Due to its closer location, the people have an experience about Başakşehir and it becomes the desired other that they do

¹²⁴ “*Diğer sitelere baksana. Onla burayı bir karşılaştı, bizimkinin fakirlere yapıldığı çok belli. Ne havuz var, ne yeşillik çevre düzeni var, ne güvenlik var. Kimsenin umurunda değiliz.*”

not have. Some informants are hopeless as exemplified above and do not expect that their housing project will be improved,. But some of the people I have talked to still were hopeful about the progress to be made in time, as in the case of another male informant: *“There is no environmental planning, but they will do it. Just like Başakşehir. Nothing happens in one day. It will take 20 years of time.”*¹²⁵

All women I have interviewed with, despite stating their resentment about the procedure of slum clearance and the way they were not informed, and financial concerns, also stated the advantages of living in an apartment block in terms of ease of providing hygiene, providing clean water, not having to take the children to school, cleanliness of the asphalt roads (in comparison to the muddy roads of Ayazma on rainy days). However, no matter how much they list the advantages, at some point, in between the sentences, they signify a certain attachment to their old houses, remembering a nostalgic past. The past, despite all disadvantages and difficulties, symbolizes the ideal for them. As one of the female informants’ states: *“If you saw my house in Ayazma, you would think that it was a palace and my new apartment here is a gecekodu”*¹²⁶

Life in the housing project also brings about certain responsibilities and change of habits for the respondents. One of the things that surprised me most was that the “site” had been transforming their habits as well as their evaluation of each other. For example, one respondent, in explaining me the differences of life in the housing project was suddenly complaining about another family from the same ex-neighborhood whose son had just married: *“They organize wedding ceremonies in front of the apartment doors. It’s not a real “site”. And no police ever say anything*

¹²⁵ “çevre düzeni yok ama yapacaklar. Başakşehir gibi. Her şey bir anda olmuyor, 20 seneyi bulur”

¹²⁶ “Sen benim evimi görseydin saray derdin, oraya saray bu eve gecekodu derdin”

about this. We think it will get better in time."¹²⁷ What surprised me most was, while the warm relationships were seen as the positive sides of the old neighborhood, some of the habits were not seen fit for the life in the housing project, and seen as in need to be corrected by the authorities. Considering all these complex positioning of perception of the housing project and housing in general, these may be a result of inability of the residents in situating themselves in the place, since the housing project is neither seen as a permanent residence nor a completed ideal housing project by the inhabitants.

On the other hand, dealing with the errands of the house, and voicing their complaints and financial problems, the residents feel themselves as more conscious of how the bureaucracy and politics work. As one female informant says:

*Before, I didn't know where the municipality is, who the mayor is or who the district governor is and what their responsibilities were. My husband used to work and we got on living. Now I learned everything, thanks to them*¹²⁸

As their everyday contact with the state offices and officials increased, the inhabitants seem to have gained certain level of awareness about the way the daily politics work, and they make use of this in trying to sustain their lives. In fact, the residents state that, they want to take over the administration since they are living in the housing project. It is their natural right to decide for their own neighborhood. But their demands remain yet ignored/or unheard with the claim that the residents are not ready to administer the housing project. Hence, the new information obtained on procedures and the consciousness does not seem to benefit the residents that much, at

¹²⁷ "*Kapının önünde düğün yapıyorlar. Site değil ki. Polisler de hiçbir şey demiyor. Zamanla düzelecek diyoruz*"

¹²⁸ "*Daha önce bilmiyorum belediye neredir, başkan kimdir, kaymakam kimdir nedir. Eşim çalışıyordu biz de yaşıyorduk. Hepsini öğrendim sağolsunlar.*"

least for the time being. The responses they receive from the official institutions are mostly negative.

Being “Poor” vs. Being “Needy”

The relocation has also caused a transformation in residents’ relationship with the officials. Residents also express concern about the perception of being “poor” and having to act as “poor” in front of the officials. They most often feel that the way they are approached by outsiders (i.e. state officials) has also gone through a certain change after moving to Bezirganbahçe, in a negative way. This is clear in the examples of getting help from municipality, or other government channels, which is stated by more than one informant: the necessity to “look poor and needy”, the necessity to “beg.” For example, one female informant told me that, they wanted to apply for green card in order to benefit from free health service. But when the auditing officials came to verify if they were really in need and met the conditions for green card, they were rejected since their furniture in the living room was new. So they were not considered as poor to deserve the card. Another informant complained that in order for her children to be chosen for financial help, the children have to look like “street children”, but she said *“I don’t need their help. For years, I sent my children to school with clean uniform and hair. I cannot send them dirty and looking poor just to receive help”*¹²⁹. It is clear that the residents do not want to feel humiliated in front of the officials, and they are uncomfortable about the perception that there is a standard criterion for looking poor which they need to meet in order to receive support. This example is important and problematic in two ways: First, it conflicts with the notion of empowerment since the residents need to look “in need”

¹²⁹ *“İstemiyorum ben öyle yardımı. Bizi pis düzensiz sanıyorlar. Ben çocuğumu okula kaç sene tertemiz kıyafetlerle saçlarla gönderdim. Yardım gelecek diye pis gönderemem.”*

to receive the support in the form of charity. Secondly, this is signaling certain change in the residents' relation with the state. In *gecekondus*, the self-helping residents now are more in relation to the state, but this relationship is mainly established in the form of asking for charity-like help, which again transforms the subjects' relation to themselves, others and the state in a negative way.

All these information and findings bring us to a conclusion that the area under question has become a significant place where the tensions have risen among parties involved, and where the ex-gecekondu residents are unable to continue their daily lives in a way that they desire socially and economically. Yet, there is also a social control and discourse on security that further intensifies the feelings of resentment and isolation within the housing project which will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5
THE NEW MARGINS OF THE CITY AND THE FUTURE OF
BEZİRGANBAHÇE SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT

Having mentioned the difficulties that the residents have been facing, it should also be noted that, along with the disempowerment and impoverishment that has been doubled with the relocation and transfer of property, the residents who manage to get by within the housing project face problems in their relationship with the surrounding neighborhood and surrounding physical space. Those who can no longer afford a living within the housing project move-out to other *gecekondu* settlements, while those that are able to stay face exclusion and increased social control. The increasing social control within the housing project is multiplied with certain techniques of surveillance, which will be discussed below. Furthermore, the surroundings of Bezirganbahçe are increasingly getting crowded with other real estate investments for upper classes such as Divan Residences, Avrupa Konutları and other luxury estates for high income groups. The overarching stigmatization of the *ex-gecekondu* residents has already begun, by the other residents of the same housing project, as well as by other neighborhoods.

In such a setting, the residents are likely to either move out to other *gecekondu* neighborhoods with the increasing social pressure and isolation, or the ones who manage to remain are likely to face more isolation. Physical proximity without any solid and substantial support systems is likely to create an inner city ghetto out of Bezirganbahçe in the close future. This chapter aims to take a closer look at the factors that push the residents to the margins of the city and lead them to marginalization within the social housing project; and tries to understand what the

future of these settlements may become as a result of the increased social control and surveillance in tandem with the relations that become tenser with the other people living within or around the housing project. The example of Bezirganbahçe case also gives us hints regarding the future of these kinds of settlements and prospective UTPs that are in planning and implementation in other parts of the city.

Relations with the “Others”

There is a certain discourse on security voiced throughout the interviews; which implies that the relocated residents do not feel themselves safe in the housing project. This notion of “insecurity” is verbalized by almost all informants. Fights among the youth of the housing project and surrounding neighborhood, and among neighbors is a common subject that is told throughout the interviews and small talks during my visits. Instead of coalescing and blending of people who come from different locations and backgrounds, it seems that the boundaries have sharpened more, still playing on the stereotypes regarding political, ethnic and class differences. There is a tension among the housing project residents and surrounding neighborhood (which is known to be right-wing), there is tension among the people who come from Ayazma and those who come from Tepeüstü, and there is tension among *ex-gecekondu* residents and other estate residents. As mentioned above, people express concerns about not having close relations with the neighbors who live in the same apartment. This tension most of the time involves the ethnic division. It sounds as the Kurdish identity is historically an easy option to load negative meanings with. This is best exemplified in an online comment to a news story about Bezirganbahçe in which the commentator says: “*Bezirganbahçe estate is the home for rednecks (amele) and*

Kurdish. I cannot believe I live in such a disgusting place. If I knew before, I would never rent the house I live today.”¹³⁰

When I went into one of the markets within the neighborhood surrounding Bezirganbahçe, I had a chance to experience the point of view of the neighborhood through the market owner. Upon my only question to him about what he thought about the apartments, he began to pour out his heart: *“They came here and everything is worse now. They don’t know how to live in houses. They are not used to it. Besides, they attack other people all the time. Because of them, our neighborhood peace is gone.*”¹³¹

I have been hearing similar arguments from the relocated residents as well. They also state that, they are attacked (especially youth) by the surrounding neighborhood on the basis of politics and ethnic differences. Faced with these discriminatory discourses, the relocated inhabitants feel more isolated and insecure. Besides, the stigmatizing vision constructed upon them also affects the value of their apartment flats. One of the real estate officers claims that the flats in the apartment blocks where the relocated inhabitants live are sold in cheaper prices than other flats since those apartments are considered to be more crowded, thus filthier, worse in quality, and more prone to get older due to “incorrect use of the apartment and its facilities such as elevators.”¹³² This view is also shared by other residents, who have bought blocks from Bezirganbahçe though they did not use to live in a *gecekondu* before. Here are some examples, retrieved from an online source:

¹³⁰ “*Bezirganbahçe konutları resmen amele ve kürt yatağı. böyle iğrenç bir yerde oturduğuma inanamıyorum. bu iğrençliği taşınmadan önce görseydim asla oturduğum evi tutmazdım.*” an online comment to a news story about Bezirganbahçe http://www.istanbulburda.com/haber_detail.php?id=2206 retrieved on 28.10.09

¹³¹ “*Buraya geldiklerinden beri herşey kötü. Bu insanlar bu evlerde nasıl yaşanır bilmezler, alışkın değiller. Bir de herkese saldırıyorlar. Sürekli olay. Mahallenin huzurunu kaçırdılar.*”

¹³² Stated on an informal interview with one of the real-estate offices within the site.

*Though the housing project is nice, the people in it have decreased the value so much that it looks like all gecekondus are put up vertically upon one another. From the first floor up to tenth the laundries are hung in the balconies, such an ugly view. The tastes, manners are so different.*¹³³

*Everywhere is rubbish. Inside and front sides of the apartments are dirty all the time. In all weekends there are weddings until late at night, we cannot have a rest. There is no fence that surrounds the estate. Anybody can come in and out as they like, even thieves. Our children are beaten by other residents' children in the housing project. Those children stay outside until late at night and disturb other neighbors. Those children dismount the banks at nights and sell their iron and wood. This is more like a mass gecekondu instead of a mass housing project.*¹³⁴

Thus, along with the risk of the ex-gecekondu dwellers moving-out for not being able to afford to stay; the housing project thus also carries the potential of being left to the ex-gecekondu residents. In this sense, the French banlieues might provide a useful comparison to reflect on the future of Bezirganbahçe. Wacquant states that, during the first formation of the high-rise buildings for the lower classes within the city, it was greeted with enthusiasm that the housing projects would bring integration of different classes. But shortly after that as middle-class families moved-out and unemployment rose, the housing project has turned into a repository for the most dispossessed residents of the French population as the population faced with territorial and class based stigmatization, and discrimination.¹³⁵

¹³³ “Site bence güzel ama oturan insanlar değerini o kadar düşürmüş ki sanki gerçektende gecekonduları üst üste bindirmişler de apartman olmuş. 1.kattan 10.kata sanki çamaşır günü gibi balkonlar çamaşır asılı ve bu kadar çirkin asılır çok kötü bir görüntü vardı.Zevk görüntü kültür görgü çok farklı” retrieved from http://www.haberkulesi.com/haber_oku.asp?haber=1214&SF=2

¹³⁴ “Her taraf çöpten geçilmiyor. Apartman içleri ve kapı önü pislik içinde. haftasonları gece geç saatlere kadar düğün yapılıyor hiç boş hafta yok bizler evimizde dinlenemiyoruz. Site çevresi tel örgü yok hırlısı hırsız istediği gibi girip çıkıyor. çocuklarımız site içinde diğer oturanlar tarafından dövülüyor tartaklanıyor. Gece saat 23,00a kadar herkesin çocuğu dışarda ev halkını rahatsız ediyorlar. K.çekmecenin insanların oturup dinleneceği bankları,yine sitede yaşayan ailelerin çocukları geceleri sökülüp demirlerini ve tahtalarını satıyorlar. Burası siteden çok toplu gece konu gibi” retrieved from http://www.haberkulesi.com/haber_oku.asp?haber=1214&SF=2

¹³⁵ Loïc Wacquant, *Urban outcasts: a comparative sociology of advanced marginality* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA : Polity, 2008), 171.

Therefore it is obvious that physical upgrading is not solely a solution for all the problems. Identification with the place is very crucial in individuals' feeling of integrity and belonging. In Ayazma, the residents were able to identify themselves through the neighborhood and the relationships and networks formed through this neighborhood. However, in Bezirganbahçe the residents are alienated from their place of residence both structurally and by the outside sources. Though Bezirganbahçe now is promoted as a social housing project that is to achieve social integration through inclusion of poor into modern life and modern conditions, the relocation may reproduce stratification.

Providing these examples; there is one cautionary notice. Wacquant warns us not to romanticize past conditions in old neighborhoods/conditions but to keep in mind that the changes have made it more burdensome. In Ayazma, people express that they were stigmatized as well in the examples such that taxi drivers would be afraid to enter the neighborhood. So it might be argued that moving into apartment blocks could be an egalitarian choice that has been presented to them. But the social and economic pressure they are pushed into overshadows this. In other words, this doesn't mean that there was a golden age in Ayazma or Tepeüstü but the new residency further added to the already existing problems of the residents. What is novel here in the new housing project is that the territorial and social stigmatization is leading to dissolution of the place, weakening the bonds, and increased tendency of the individuals into the private sphere of the household, strengthening the feelings of vulnerability.¹³⁶ This is why all the informants express their feelings of insecurity and of being in constant battle within the housing project. This feeling of insecurity is further strengthened with the techniques of surveillance and social control.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 242.

Security, Surveillance and the Existence of Police Forces

Although one of the main arguments of legitimization for urban transformation/regeneration projects were to decrease the rates of crime, violence and conflicts, the resettlement seems to have provided new sources of violence among the inhabitants. One of the explicit manifestations of these new sources of violence results from the increasing tension among the old neighborhood and the residents of the housing project. With the boundaries sharpened between different political views and ethnic stereotypes re-triggered, the residents from both sides feel themselves more insecure. The other is the feeling of being under constant surveillance, on behalf of the relocated residents that results from the state's penetration into housing project and units. The governing of the housing project reaches almost all aspects of the life of the inhabitants, becoming a source of constant control over the residents. Bartu-Candan and Kolluoğlu argue that “In the Bezirganbahçe public housing project, we see the over-presence of urban governance through its monitoring of everyday activities and the regulation of the relationship between the local municipality and the residents.”¹³⁷ This presence is achieved in two ways: First of all, with the blurring boundaries between the public and private spaces, the regulation of inside the flats as a public place –rules on how to use certain parts of the flats- and the public spaces outside being governed as if they belong to private entities instead of the inhabitants – rules on how, when and whom to make use of the public places such as parks, playgrounds- severely restricts the sphere of actions of the residents.

¹³⁷ Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu “Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 11.

Second aspect of the presence of the governance is realized through the ways people over whom there is no legal accusation or charges are made to feel under constant control. The relocation brought about the mechanisms of surveillance by different sources of monitoring the residents. The residents, especially those who come from Kurdish background feel themselves continuously under surveillance. This mechanism of surveillance is provided both by technical apparatus as well as the psychological surveillance established upon the residents. Since the migrants with the Kurdish background are seen readily as a threat to the security of the neighborhood, not only police but also site administrators, some of the residents would be the ones who would help consolidate the stigma attached to those individuals. As a result, some areas would be dubbed as insecure, potentially dangerous locations leading to more unstable relations amongst the residents and calling for more security precautions.

This policy of criminalization of poverty, which provides extensive policing and presence of the state rather than inclusive policies and protection, strengthens the exclusionary practices and perceptions towards the relocated residents. Instead of promoting to solve the root causes of certain behaviors, criminalization helps contain the “undesired” behaviors and population under control by penalizing and surveillance. Wacquant names this close surveillance of problem populations as “social panopticism” of the neoliberal order, which is designed to “check the disorders generated by the diffusion of social insecurity.”¹³⁸ In this way, the potential outcomes that result from the retrenchment of social security measures are pre-controlled by extended social control. In Bezirganbahçe, the examples of these mechanisms are easy to locate.

¹³⁸ Loic Wacquant, “Labor Market Insecurity and Criminalization of Poverty,” in *Youth and work in the post-industrial city of North America and Europe*, ed. Laurence Roulleau-Berger, (Boston: Brill, 2003): 408,415.

The physical apparatuses are not difficult to spot. On 2008, one of the days of my visits, there was a poster hanged in the main entrance of the complex, stating that “This building complex is under 24 hour camera observation.” This two-sided poster looked like a message to all, but not only for the outsiders who may enter the housing project, but also for the residents who are also perceived as potential criminals. There are rumors among the inhabitants that undercover police is also present around the settlement.

What further complicated the feeling of insecurity and being under constant surveillance was the allocation of six of the blocks in Bezirganbahçe as police housing. My informants, when directly asked about what they think about this, were mainly reserved to show their reactions, and tended to emphasize the necessity to live together, but between the lines, it was clear that they felt uncomfortable and felt that this was done on purpose as a tool for controlling their actions.

In one of my last visits to Bezirganbahçe, inside the complex, there was a prefabricated police station just in the middle of the apartments, on the corner of one of them. There is no signboard or a poster stating the name or title of the station. The only indications were the police cars parked in front of the building, and the two stickers on each side of the door: the one in the left is a Turkish flag; the one on the right is the emblem of Turkish Police Forces. I didn't dare ask why the station was based within the settlement – probably the justification was the existence of police houses in the housing project-, but with its mirrored windows from which you cannot see the inside, and from the motorcycles and police cars parked over here and there within the complex, it looked as if serving an observation center. What was the station for? Was it legitimized on the basis of having the police residences in the housing project? Let alone the station itself, the very existence of police cars and

shuttle buses coming in and out throughout the day, or parked within the housing project is a source of discomfort for the residents.

Furthermore I believe that the power operates on the subjects not only through certain techniques as surveillance; but also operates through the everyday experience of the space itself. Throughout my field visits in Bezirganbahçe, I realized that the inhabitants (especially those from Ayazma) do not feel themselves as belonging to the neighborhood. As I quoted above, most of them do not see the housing project as their last stop where they own a house but rather as a transitory space from where they have high potential of having to leave. Therefore this situation gives them constant concerns and troubles, which in turn shakes the sense of security concerning their lives.

The neo-liberal forms of government not only provide direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also characteristically develop indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without being responsible at the same time for them. With the social safety systems retreating, a system is instituted with emphasizing individual responsibility and increased penetration into the lives. The strategy of rendering individual subjects ‘responsible’ for their conditions also gives way to such a controlling mechanism. Because creation and surveillance of neoliberal spaces seek to deny the materialization of inequality,¹³⁹ while the relocated individuals are pushed away and isolated further away from the city, they are at the same time expected to transform their lives from the so called “filthy and criminal” lifestyle into a “modern and orderly” one through their own means and responsibilities. This responsibility falls on their shoulders in the form of social control because when they are not able to achieve this goal, they

¹³⁹ Roy Coleman, “Images from a Neoliberal City: The State, Surveillance and Social Control.” *Critical Criminology* 12(2003): 33.

are made to feel that the controlling gaze will remain upon them constantly. The neoliberal market forces reinforce this two tiered policy by constantly creating the need for urban land, thus the need for emptying the *gecekondu* settlements in marketable areas. The left hand of the state that is the social rights increasingly begins to act in parallel with the right hand of the state, opening the land for its profit. On one hand the state retreats back and leaves the responsibility to the individuals; on the other it becomes aggressively involved in the process by its punitive arms- such as the police forces, regulations and rules that are set within the housing projects. In this order, vast populations are rendered invisible in terms of the social policies; but at the same time they become much more visible in terms of the social control mechanisms that act upon them. This inclusion and exclusion at the same time is utilized as a way of disempowering the residents in neoliberal governing. By placing these populations into government housing units; very efficient places for what Wacquant calls as “social panopticism”¹⁴⁰ it becomes possible to monitor the residents against potential opposition and resistance to the neoliberal policies. Meanwhile the housing project provides a mask that disguises the retrenchment of the welfare policies; with the argument of the policy makers about improving the conditions of *gecekondu* populations. However, social inclusion projects conducted in Bezirganbahçe can only remain symbolic, compared with the exclusion the residents face within the project.

¹⁴⁰ Loic Wacquant, “Labor Market Insecurity and Criminalization of Poverty,” in Youth and work in the post-industrial city of North America and Europe, ed. Laurence Roulleau-Berger, (Boston: Brill, 2003): 408.

Marginalization and Future of Bezirganbahçe

While the *gecekondus* were sources of low-skill laborers for the industrializing big cities, the social housing projects in the example of Bezirganbahçe stand out as the reservoirs that contain the powerless and impoverished groups that are no longer needed. Wacquant argues that, although the historical process of each specific place should be considered, the shape of the new forms of urban poverty show similar characteristics across countries.

It is important to distinguish social condition characteristics of a zone of relegation and the conditionings it entails. ... Some such districts may serve as active and resilient reservoirs of low-skill labor force, others are mere warehouses for supernumerary populations that no longer have identifiable political or economic utility in the new polarized capitalism, and others yet are spatial containers for the ostracization of undesirable social categories and activities.¹⁴¹

In this sense, Bezirganbahçe is the neoliberal equivalent of this kind of enclaves for poor and the ethnically marked populations – mainly Kurdish population in this example. With the flexible social and economic sphere of the *gecekondus* settlement is gone, the residents are called into a fixed, non-flexible world of expenses, rules and style of living where the public space fails to provide and meet their needs, but on top of it marginalizes them all the more, and they retreat into their private spaces; which in turn limits their chance of mobility and solidarity. With the increased density of the high-rise and luxury residential estates surrounding the housing project, it is likely that the differences will become more visible, and the

¹⁴¹ Loïc Wacquant, *Urban outcasts: a comparative sociology of advanced marginality* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA : Polity, 2008), 11.

stigmatization will be more prevalent in the coming years. The residents, already stuck within the housing project due to economic concerns, are likely to feel more enclaved and turn into themselves with feelings of collective marginalization as a result of such development of the area.

This ghetto – like design is also supported by the penal and regulatory means of social control. This is exactly where neo-liberalism shows its roll out face in terms of state’s sphere of action, and this is an integral part of neo-liberalism which is usually evaluated with only the roll back phases.¹⁴² For Wacquant, it is not economic failure but economic success that requires aggressive deployment of the police, court and prison in the nether sectors of social and physical space.¹⁴³ This is the design that aims to manage the populations that are left out with the retrenchment of the social rights, welfare implementations and economic deregulation. Therefore, the small government in economic register turns out to be a big government for those who are deemed to remain at the bottom of the society.

¹⁴² Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” *Antipode* 34, no:3 (2002).

¹⁴³ Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the poor: the neoliberal government of social insecurity* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2009), 308-310.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It could be evaluated as an irony that the name of the housing project is defined as “Bezirganbahçe”, when *Bezirgan* means, a person who is always in pursuit of more profit, but the name surely coheres with how the inhabitants experience of life regarding the housing project, and how they perceive relocation, as serving to the profit of others at the expense of themselves.

Throughout this thesis, I tried to look for answers to questions around the changes in daily lives of the *ex-gecekondu* inhabitants in Bezirganbahçe, in terms of changes in physical environment, their relationships with the neighbors, and their changing perception about housing and security. I tried to understand how these changes and the overall situation resonated with the bigger picture of neoliberal urban policies.

Overall, I choose to evaluate this project as a fitting example for the neoliberal urban projects both in the form of urban transformation and poverty alleviation mechanisms. The role of urban city and regeneration of the urban land in neo-liberalism is explored in detail in the first chapter and related to the case of Küçükçekmece, and Bezirganbahçe in the following chapters. In addition to this, this case constitutes a specific example for the ways neo-liberalism deals with poverty. Şenses argues that the neoliberal approach to poverty is weak in coming to terms with asset redistribution and pro-poor growth, for this reason, rather than integration of the poor into society through labor market, it emphasizes on handouts in cash and/or in-kind assistance. This approach and its tools are instrumental in creating a culture of dependency, which in the final analysis is blocking the way to a

democratic organization of the poor.¹⁴⁴ The structure of the housing project and the process of relocation are congenial with this argument. This is partly why the resistance movements are difficult to sustain and have not led to significant achievement both before and after the implementation of the urban transformation.

What we see in the urban relocation of the squatter settlements is similar. On one hand, the official discourse on public housing assumes that the people will be “modernized” by change of space, moving into apartments and also with the promise of proving a solution to the housing problem of the urban poor. So any deviation from the assumed role that is “led and guided” by the government officials is interpreted as inability to adapt, and this inability is associated with being backward and in this case also with being Kurdish. After all, what could be expected when from the beginning the initiators of the project use similar exclusionist arguments such as Bayraktar (Head of Mass Housing Administration) says: “*It is known that gecekondu areas and illegal housing are the sources of terrorism, drug use, hostile approaches to state, psychological problems, illiteracy and health problems*”¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the organization of the affected population becomes even more difficult with worsened structural conditions, loosening sense of belonging and ever increasing isolation from the city.

It seems that the new housing arrangement- which may be interpreted as the strategy of the neoliberal power- stripped the maneuvering capability of the inhabitants in terms of their daily practices of living, as they are losing their abilities to rely on the support networks, neighborhood relationships and more flexible

¹⁴⁴ Fikret Şenses , “Missing links in poverty analysis in the age of neoliberal globalization: some lessons from Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 38 (2008).

¹⁴⁵ Erdoğan Bayraktar, “Kentsel dönüşümü tamamlayamazsak terörü de bitiremeyiz” retrieved from http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2007/11/13/haber_4AA4DF6AB979476B878FDF60B19BD9F0.html on 13 November 2007.

economic and physical conditions. The circle of control and the economic concerns are so intensified around the inhabitants (though not all of them are in the same situation), they are more restrained in their sphere of action. Moreover, the changing relationship among the neighbors and the tensions between the surrounding neighborhood and the other inhabitants of the housing project deprives them of their old networks, making them feel lonelier and isolated while facing the everyday life.

The situation of most of the *ex gecekonu* inhabitants in Bezirganbahçe may be evaluated as an example of reordering and reproduction of the inequalities, instead of eliminating them. In this way, while the poverty is further made invisible, at the same time the spaces – that have land values- are being made safe for commercial development. In this process, while the economic concerns and the increase of surveillance and social control put the inhabitants into a less powerful position, inhabitants' expectations about housing and expectations from government increase, making them more conscious about the procedures of resistance. However, as much as this consciousness looks like some form of empowerment, it should be evaluated as a way of neoliberal disempowerment, since these expectations cannot turn into actions that would lead to structural changes.

Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis is limited to the fieldwork results obtained through interviews conducted with some of the relocated residents. Further social and economic implications of the relocation in the inhabitants' lives are yet to be seen in time. But my goal here was to open up the discussion about a place whose inhabitants are rendered visible and invisible by different but interrelated mechanisms explored above and possibly to

understand the ways in which the implementation and planning phase of urban transformation caused negative/ positive impacts in the lives of the residents.

Future inquiries taking the policy makers' and implementers' experiences regarding the relocation at the local level would yield valuable knowledge and information as they are also part of the process of change which I tried to explore. At this level a discursive analysis focusing on the actors involved in the UTPs is fruitful in conveying the characteristics of neoliberal order which is still vague in theoretical sphere of social studies. Another point that deserves further research is to understand the differences and similarities of this specific field from others sites of urban transformation/ relocation in Istanbul through a comparative perspective. Obviously this would require a more extensive duration and content of fieldwork but the research would provide fruitful insights regarding whether different subject positions experience the process of relocation differently and what the factors that constitute this differing experience are, if any. From there, could be obtained the areas of potential resistance and of the possibility to change the policies in a way to provide actual social policies that benefit the weakest links in the society.

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