

# **The Contemporary Urban Movements and the Formation of the Working Class Identities in Turkey.**

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## Abstract

This paper scrutinizes the interaction between the organizing in places where people live and the formation of working class identities in the post 2000 period in Turkey by focusing on two *gecekondu* neighbourhood resistances against gecekondu renewal projects. The first is in Istanbul Başibüyük and the second is in Ankara, Dikmen Vadi. Both of the neighbourhoods organized against the urban transformation project, which aim to move them to high rise apartments with long term credit payments and build zones of consumption for middle and upper-middle classes to the places cleared from gecekondu dwellers. The research first asks the question whether the movements against the gecekondu renewal projects in Dikmen Vadi and Başibüyük can be labeled as collective working class movement which aim to transform the social position of the working class and second whether the local movements in the neighbourhoods could transform the class subjectivities of the members of the movement. The answer to these questions is given in a comparative perspective within two neighbourhoods by employing field research method on two neighbourhoods together with the theoretical discussions around urban social movements. The research concludes that due to the different patterns of the history of the social context of gecekonduzation in Ankara and Istanbul and the organizational factors between the two movements, the trajectory of the movement in Dikmen Vadi caused the formation of the class identities by forming alliances with other class movements in Ankara however the movement in Başibüyük stuck in its locality and dealt more with the individual property preservation motives of the people in the neighbourhood rather than establishing ties with other class movements in Istanbul to change the social position of the working class in general.

## Introduction

Post 2000 urban politics of Turkey is also the story of the emergence of new urban movements against the *gecekondu*<sup>1</sup> renewal projects both in Ankara and Istanbul. These movements pulled the attention of both the left organizations as well as academicians. Most of these academicians are excited by the fact that a highly militant social movement emerged with social movement tactics as usual in those working class neighborhoods. The militancy in these neighborhoods reminded us some of the *gecekondu* neighborhoods of 70s which were a base of popularization for the left. Moreover, it also excited the left organizations in Turkey since these movements could be a substitute to fill the space left by the declining labor union density in neoliberal era due to informal working schemes. The question was whether these neighborhood movements may be perceived as collective working class action that consciously transform the social position of the working class and in which circumstances may these movements be used as a base to broaden their local activism to broader problems of the working class. This study is also written with the motivation of contributing to the discussion on how the contemporary *gecekondu* neighborhood movements against the renewal projects may be used as a base for the construction of working class identities in contemporary Turkey. Through comparison based on field study in two mostly militant neighborhood movements, it tries to shed light both organizational and structural factors that are both favourable and non favourable for this purpose.

*Gecekondu* renewal projects are basically the destruction of *gecekondu* neighborhoods and construction of a new built environment for the upper middle classes such as shopping malls, luxurious gated communities, tourism or financial centers (Candan and Kolluoglu, 2008). They are the projects which aim to re-create the city space for the upper middle class and relocate the poor mostly to the outer parts of the city in segregated housing compounds with monthly credit payments around 150 TL for 15 years (ibid.). Considering the current informal working scheme and the new urban poverty in Turkey (Bugra and Keyder, 2003), it is not surprising that the residents of these projects resent the projects on the basis of their inability to meet the credit payments. In other words, they are losing their houses which they

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<sup>1</sup> *Gecekondu* (literally means built “overnight”) is the illegal building of the working class similar to slums in developing countries.

use for sheltering. However, this point is not the sole basis for the resident's resentment of the project since after the 1990s, in some places, the gecekondus owners also have used gecekondus and its land for its exchange value. The possibility of building high rise apartments by subsequent amnesty laws in the late 1980s gave the gecekondus holders the incentive of upward mobility in a social economic environment which squeezed the possibilities of a socially secure life through employment and redistributive policies. Therefore, the causes of collective action in these neighborhoods revolve around these two conflicting poles.

Erder (2009) argues that the gecekondus transformation projects point to a fracture in the links between the gecekondus neighborhoods and political Islam by the resistances which are mostly held by neighborhood associations. The academic accounts do not state what political structures fill the gap left by this fracture since the researchers disregard the resistances and focus on the political economy of gecekondus renewal projects. Thus, she proposes that the urban researchers should focus on the resistance front organized around neighborhood associations. The study at hand also aims to contribute to the discussion on the resistance front against the gecekondus renewal projects by comparing two places. The first is in Istanbul Maltepe Başibüyük neighborhood and the second is in the Ankara Çankaya Dikmen Vadi neighborhood.

Başibüyük is a gecekondus neighborhood founded in the 1970s. With the amnesty laws in 1980s, the gecekondus of the 1970s in Başibüyük with one storey buildings transformed into four to six storey buildings yet the inhabitants were not able to utilize the wave of full legalization titles which many of the neighborhoods in Istanbul enjoyed. In addition to the multiple storey buildings, there are also the post 1990 emigrants who due to their late arrival in Istanbul were only able to construct one storey buildings with gardens used as livelihood farming. The neighborhood has been a strong hold for conservative politics. In 2004 local elections, the neighborhood voted overwhelmingly for the conservative AKP by 75% which is much higher than the general share of votes received by the AKP in the elections. Before 2004, the liberal conservative Mother Land party had held the majority. In exchange to votes to these parties, Başibüyük people struggled to obtain their entitlement deeds which had been promised to them before the elections, yet the promises were not kept until 2005 and the Maltepe Municipality(Maltepe Municipality) declared Başibüyük urban renewal area in 2005 clearing the hopes of the people of obtaining entitlement deeds. It also meant the loses of sheltering for people who emigrated in post 90 period and therefore who had no legal right to land. In 2007 the Başibüyük people aggregated around Beatification and preservation of

Nature of Başibüyük Association<sup>2</sup> and formed a movement against the implementation of the project protocol which was signed between Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the Maltepe local Municipality and TOKI (Mass Housing Administration).

Dikmen Vadi is a gecekondur neighborhood in Ankara which was founded by the left in 1970s. The neighborhood was declared as gecekondur renewal area in 2005 by Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Although the post 1985 emigrants to Dikmen Vadi mostly fell on the side of political Islam, due to its roots in the 1970s, the left held authority in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the people who opposed the project was mostly composed of post 1985 immigrants without any legal rights to the land since the part with whom the left was popular left the field due to the better terms offered by the municipality. They were also mostly under the influence of political Islam. However, the remaining people headed by an organization called bureau for right to housing(BRS) struggled against the transformation protocol starting from 2006 and became a major center of struggle against the market based policies of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality.

The two neighborhoods have both similarities and divergences in terms of social structures and the built environments. However, Dikmen Vadi in Ankara and Başibüyük in Istanbul emerge as the most militant and visible ones within the neighborhoods resisting the gecekondur renewals in the two cities. They have been able to achieve to form strong social movements to reject the terms of the urban renewal protocols in their neighborhoods. They have also pulled the attention of the left to their cause by the high militancy of their movement to a degree not experienced for a long time in a gecekondur neighborhood. Nonetheless, Dikmen Vadi's movement proceeded in anti-capitalist overtones with desire to form alliances with other progressive urban movements as well as labour union movements, whereas Başibüyük's movement occurred in tough response to physical threat against the neighborhood but the movement stuck in its local cause and it had really very weak attempts to form alliance with other movements which have a tendency to improve the social position of the working class within the society. The aim of this paper is understanding the causes of the difference between the two mostly militant urban movements in contemporary Turkey to further our knowledge on how the urban injustices in neoliberal urbanization may be used as a base for the construction of working class identities in contemporary Turkey.

Pickvance's calling on looking at contextual factors besides organizational factors in understanding the militancy of urban movements is at the core of the difference between the

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<sup>2</sup> *Başibüyük Güzelleştirme ve Doğayı Koruma Derneği*

trajectory of the two movements. In this regard, the response and the action of the local state to the movements in relation to the social and economic context of the history of gecekondü emerges as the contextual factor that defines the suitable paths for the variance in the two movements demands. In other words, the existence of homogenous property structure in Dikmen Vadi created a suitable environment to adopt the demand of right to housing to struggle against the renewal decision whereas the heterogeneous property structure property structure in Başbüyük were more favourable to the formation of a local centered movement which inhabited both the demand of right to housing as well as individual gain through market value of the gecekondü land. However, the formation of a community of a people with working class collective identity in Dikmen Vadi forces us to focus on the organizational factors of the movement since the left is mostly disrespected in most of the working class neighbourhoods in Turkey as is the case in the marginalized neighborhoods of the neoliberal countries (wacquant 2007, Gough et al., 2006). In this regard, the endeavor of the leadership to form a solidaristic community of people which cater the daily livelihood strategy of its members while lowering the sound of traditional left statements within the movement. Understanding the organizational tactics of the movement contributes us the ways in which, within favorable circumstances, the left may become popularize in a marginalized neighbourhood. The field account of this process will be given within the background of the theoretical discussion around urban social movements.

This study is based upon my my field research in both of these neighborhoods between March 2009 and February 2010. I have made in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with movement leaders as well as participants. I have also attended weakly meetings in both neighborhoods and attended some of their demonstrations.

## Theoretical Discussion

The issue at hand is to understand the causes of urban contention in capitalist urbanization and how it is related with the formation of the working class collectivises. In this section, a brief overview of the literature will be given and then manipulated to understand the rise of the urban movements in post 2000 period of Turkey. The discussion serves to understand how the social and economic context of gecekondü is translated into the urban movements against gecekondü renewal projects in post 2000 period. It also allows us to

question the role of the movements in constructing working class collectivities in contemporary Turkey.

The relation between objective inequalities within capitalist urbanization and how the working class responds to it has long attracted the interest of the Marxist critics. The city created an environment in which the structural inequalities are experienced both at work and off work. The contradictions in the working place have long been the theme of the analysis yet the spatial segregation of the city along class lines in living places also pulled the attention of the urban critics on the injustices of spatially segregated neighborhoods and its relation on the formation of working class collective identities. These issues have derived and continue to attract the attention of Marxist urban critiques to understand the links between capitalist urbanization and the injustices it creates among people. These writers share one goal despite their political and methodological differences to understand the ways in which cities act as strategic sites for capitalist commodification processes and also as sites of contention (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009: p. 178). Engels was the first among the Marxist urban critic to point on these issues in his mostly celebrated work *The Conditions of The Working Class In England* how capitalist urbanization creates working class neighborhoods with poor urban services and housing in his detailed account of Manchester at the beginning of the 19'th century (Engels, 1843). He meticulously delineates the harsh living conditions of the working class districts in Manchester which are enclosed so as to conceal the poor neighborhoods from the gaze of the middle-upper classes. It is these problems in the neighborhoods as well as in production environment which makes the working class conscious of its position within society and organize against it.

Engels lays an outlook on the urgency of understanding the urban grievances in the formation of the working class collective identities and Katznelson follows Engels' path to understand the role of the cities in the formation of the working class (Katznelson, 1993). He states that whether progressive or not, the emergence and the militancy of the urban movements need to be analysed to understand how it affects the formation of the working class. For Katznelson, the formation of the working class encompasses four lines of development. One is the Marxist structural class analysis explored in Marx' *Capital* in terms of the relations of exploitation in the production process. The second level is "how actual people live within determinate patterns of life and social relations... at work and *off work*"(italics are mine) (ibid.: 208). The third level is on the linguistic and cognitive dispositions, the ways people represent their experiences. Class exists at the fourth level, "if its members act self consciously through movements and organizations to affect society and

the positions of the class within it”(ibid.: 209). Katznelson does not view class formation as a specific outcome of a particular consciousness such as *revolutionary* consciousness. He rather investigates under what conditions a class understanding of social life experienced at the second level of class can develop at the fourth level. He seeks to find the urban roots of this question.

Due to Castells’(1977) popular focus on the progressive collective consumption scope for urban movements to progressively challenge the capitalist order, the literature on urban movements tends to attach a progressive character to any urban movement (Pickvance, 2003). However, the movements do not occur in a vacuum disregarding the norms of the social and economic conditions of a given national context. Therefore the very injustices the urban programs create can give rise to movements which intensify the injustices in society. What the critics tend to perceive as class based movement of the working class neighborhood may end up a NIMBY<sup>3</sup> kind of conservative movement which just protects the property relations that are unevenly distributed in a given neighborhood. That is, unlike what most “Urban Social Movement” researchers expect, the movements can be quite non progressive and this again needs careful scrutiny by researchers at least to learn the lessons that can be extracted from these movements

Whether progressive or not, the urban movements against the urban transformation mostly reside as important variables for the formation of working class subjectivities. (Katznelson, 1993). However, as Katznelson states that neighborhood organizing may both create a split consciousness among the working class or act as areas to further the formation of collective working class identities.

Thus, we may divide the urban movements into progressive and conservative urban movements and analyse under what conditions may a class a class understanding of social life experienced at the second level of Katznelson’s categorization of class can develop at the fourth level.

For this purpose, I particularly find the debate in urban movement literature on the effects of political context to understand the character of the urban movements (Pickvance, 1985). The debate was mainly between actor oriented writers who focus on the mobilizing capacity of the organizations and the structuralists who bestow importance on favourable and un-favourable contexts for the movement success. I argue that employing the structuralist perspective helps us to understand which political contexts may be favourable for the

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<sup>3</sup> NIMBY stands for not in my back yard.



emergence of the militant progressive urban movements. However the existence of the favourable contexts is not the sole condition for this purpose. That is to say a poor organization within a favourable context may end up without any urban movement incidence and therefore the organizational features should also be considered to understand the rise of progressive urban movements. In this regard, I find Castells'(1977) former work on urban movements especially important when considered with Pickvance's discussion on the effect social and economic context on urban movement. First I will briefly lay down the politicization thesis of Castells and Nicholls' strong and weak tie formation discussion before passing to Pickvance contextual factors. A combination of the both perspective will be utilized to understand the militancy and the incidence of the urban movements in contemporary Istanbul and Ankara.

Castells has a class-based theory of the production of the city according to which the state is a battle ground for the demands of capitalist class and the masses (Castells, 1977). His concept of politicization, outlined in his famous article *City, Class and Power* is the major thesis in his theory of the city and the urban movements. Castells starts his thesis by stating that for the reproduction of the working class, spaces of collective consumptions in the city have to be established. The capitalist class can not afford collective consumption for the reproduction of labour; therefore the state intervenes to sustain these provisions. Nevertheless, the working class also demands better management of collective consumption units by the state. Therefore, the intervention of the state is the result of the class struggle between capitalists and the working class. Castells calls this sphere of collective consumption the secondary contradiction of capitalism after the one in production and argues that the state intervention in the city for the clearance of this contradiction politicizes the urban conflicts by articulating the class content of state policies. Thus, the intervention of the state in collective consumption units is the so called politicization thesis of Castells and it is this dual struggle of capitalists and the working class for collective consumption which make the quality of the collective consumption units in a city.

Castell asserts that for the defense and the better management of collective consumption units the urban movements have to collaborate with labor unions and socialist parties(ibid). In his later work Castells argued that the movements have to be autonomous from other left organizations, the collaboration of the urban movement with other urban movements and labour unions and parties remained as an important element in order to be successful (Castells, 1985). Moreover, the urgency of a progressive urban movement to form weak ties

with other urban movements and unions is also stressed by Nicholls(2008) in his article in which he discussed the relation between the cities and the emergence of social movements.

Nicholls argues that cities facilitate the generation of strong and weak tie groups with two processes (Nicholls, 2008). First, it enables the formation of resource rich groups bound by strong norms, trust and solidarity to each other. Second, by the spatial proximity of different groups, cities also enable the proliferation of these strong resources with other social movements by weak tie networks. Discontented with common problems such as work, neighborhood renewals, schools and hospitals, people meet repeatedly about their concerns and when this happens “there is a greater likelihood that strong norms, trust, emotions and interpretive frameworks develop” (ibid.: 845).

The strong tie groups is useful for the formation of social movements the members of which risk their time, energy and wellbeing for other members, but without the weak tie networks the movements will not utilize the collective power of the strong tie groups’ resources and, moreover, as Nicholls writes “the multifaceted character of urban issues (i.e. redevelopment, housing, transit) can serve as a useful ‘*push*’ for developing these types of connections”<sup>4</sup>(ibid.). In other words, without the collective action of these strong tie groups, individual groups can not create a socially just city. Here comes the important questions: how do these weak ties form? And how do they gain importance for the movements?

Tarrow and McAdam put the importance of brokerage in the formation of weak ties ( Tarrow and McAdam, 2005; in Nicholls, 2008). They define brokerage as the “connections between two or more unrelated agents which are created through the mediation of a third-party broker.” Brokers can be common acquaintances, a mediating organization or meetings for a common cause. The spatial proximity of these unrelated communities in an urban system may facilitate the formation of brokers and the more they meet in these events, the more they develop connections between themselves for a common cause and this causes the accumulation of knowledge in a range of political and geographical terrains. It is this knowledge which, Nicholls argues, shifts the focuses on particular issues to a focus on multiple issue areas. Castells stresses the need for a grand coalition with labour unions through the mediation of the party (Castells, 1977) whereas Nicholls have a more broader definition of collaboration of different urban movements in order to achieve a socially just city.

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<sup>4</sup> italics mine

Byron criticizes Castells' insistence on looking at progressive leftist movements and disregarding the conservative movements of the suburbs (Byron, 2005). According to him, this omission of conservative suburban movements which seeks the preservation of the property rights of some of its members caused the failure of his theory to understand the link between Neoliberal policies and its electoral relationship with the suburban area. It also failed to understand the conservative movements in the suburbs in relation to Neoliberalism which was centred on private consumption and exchange value rather than collective consumption and use value. To reiterate, Byron argues that in the Neoliberal age, private consumption rather than the collective was promoted and movement trajectories changed accordingly. In other words, the collective consumption perspective of the pre 1980 urban movements lost its significance and the urban movements which radically opposed the state policies were co-opted by the new governance of the local municipalities (Mayer, 2005).

I find the knowledge created through brokers necessary but not a sufficient condition to extend the movement's cause to multiple issues due to the existence of conservative movements seeking individual gain for its propertied members. Therefore, we need to understand the contextual factors in order to understand the rise of conservative movements in neoliberal era or new progressive urban movements flourishing in the western world that promise hope for challenging the social economic system (Mayer, 2009). The question is to find which contextual factors are more convenient for the urban movements to form strong ties around collective consumption demands and with consciousness to form weak ties with other progressive movements within the city. The answer of the question changes in different national contexts but Pickvance's framework lays us a general outlook for this purpose.

Pickvance does not assume a progressive nature for urban movements and asks the question of under what contextual conditions an urban movement may emerge and become militant (Pickvance, 1985). Pickvance categorizes the urban movement demands into four types. These types are: Type 1 movements for the provision of housing and urban services, Type 2 movements over access to housing and urban services, Type 3 Movements for control and management and Type 4-defensive movements. Defensive movements are important concerning our topic since it is the physical threat to the "housing and neighborhoods such as demolitions, urban renewal, or commercial redevelopment" (Pickvance, 1985: p 40). Pickvance asserts that there is no assumption here that "movements of these four types are progressive from a left point of view." This is also true for Type 4 movements which include the movements against urban transformations: "Territorial conflicts may take on anti-

capitalist overtones when the threat is from developer, but that may be coincidental to the concern to preserve the status quo” (Wieviorka, 1980 and Mayer, 1982. in Pickvance, 1985).

He rather proposes to set sub models when various contextual factors are present, a certain level of urban movement incidence and militancy will be reached. At this point, Pickvance maintains, the decision of which contextual factors has to be given to assess the militancy and incidence of urban movements (Pickvance, 1985). These factors are rapid urbanization, state action, political context, middle class and the general economic and social condition. I bestow special emphasis to the general economic and social condition of Turkey regarding the gecekondu issue. The general economic and social condition refers to “the level of demands placed upon the state by citizens, or of expectations of state intervention” (ibid.). Therefore, Pickvance contends that the neoliberal shift which calls to shrugs off the responsibility from the state in collective consumption units transforms the conception of people for the demands that can be made upon the state.

The contextual factors stand as the prime factor for the emergence of a militant progressive urban movement. However, as stated above given a favourable context, the organizational differences also matter for the success of the movements. In this regard what has to be done in a comparative study is to asses the important contextual factors to define the movement’s character and then analyse the organizational differences within this contextual factors. Considering the urban movements against the threat on the physical built environment of the gecekondu neighborhoods in the neoliberal era I find the general economic and social conditions of a country needs further scrutiny, especially for Turkey’s social context of gecekondu which will be discussed later on. This discussion will tell us in which contexts may gecekondu be labelled as collective consumption unit and may be used by the left within Castells framework as a space of construction of working class collectivities. Beside this, the local state action is also important as the two urban movements are subjected to two different local municipalities with different urban renewal policies and different tactics to co-opt the movements. After laying down the contextual factors, the organizational factors, will be given importance. The different organizational tactics in relation to strong-weak tie formation in the two different neighborhoods will be discussed.

### The Social and Economic Context of Gecekondu in Turkey

Fragmented property structure in gecekondu neighborhoods stand at the core of the formation of strong tie groups against the gecekondu renewal projects. It also defines the local

state action in co-opting the neighborhood movements. The local state action first and foremost affects the housing stock within a gecekondu neighborhood, through gecekondu renewal projects. Secondly, the local state action affects the movement trajectories by allocating different incentives for different propertied groups in order to fragment the unity of the movement. In this section, I am going to focus on how the land property structures in gecekondu neighborhoods affect the formation of different urban movement demands and the response of the local state to these neighborhood movements. For this purpose, I will briefly lay down the changing social context of gecekondu from 70s to the late 90s and post 2000 period. The government's changing outlook towards the gecekondu neighborhoods and the changing meaning of gecekondu land for the residents will be the main themes of the discussion.

In the gecekondu literature, the history of gecekondization in Turkey is mostly divided into two phases (Aslan, 2004): the first is between 1950-1980 and the second is the post 1980 period. The first period encompasses the emergence and the incorporation of gecekondu by the influx of rural populations to the big cities of Turkey, namely, Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and the second phase is the one in which the established order of gecekondu was legalized by the subsequent laws and the gecekondu started to lose its legitimate ground in the eyes of the middle classes due to its transformation in its meaning, that is due to commercialization. I add one more period by dividing the post 1980 period into two and I will analyse the period starting with 2000 by the introduction of urban transformation projects in the big cities of Turkey. The process is held by the authority of the local municipalities and the central government through TOKI and epitomizes all the conflicts that reside within and outside the gecekondu neighborhoods. It is this period in which the gecekondu owners remobilize for the established order of the pre 2000 period. This remobilization means individual property rights for some gecekondu owners and demands for the right to housing depending on their terms of gecekondu ownership. To understand and thoroughly discuss this two-tiered situation, we need to understand the first two periods of gecekonduzation. These two periods form the background of the contemporary discussions on the gecekondu renewals and the resistance to it. As stated above, for all the periods, I will first and foremost focus on the changing meaning of gecekondu and its land for the gecekondu inhabitants before passing to the translation of this meaning to the formation of urban demands.

First Period of 1950-1980: Construction of *Gecekondu*

As Collective Consumption Units

Many accounts of the making of gecekondu in Istanbul link the process of mechanization of the agriculture in 1950s as the initiator of the rural to urban immigration (Tugal, 2008) which caused the rise of gecekondu in big cities of Turkey. For the period, the influx of the people to the city was desirable for the Import Substitution Industrialization period of Turkey (Keyder, 2005)..

Turkey never had fully functioning formal and universal social policy provisions (Buğra, 2008) and the state did not implement any formal social housing project for the benefit of the poor.<sup>5</sup> Beside this, as the workers could not afford the formal houses in the housing market, the gecekondu solution to housing problem filled this gap between the state and the market (Işık, Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). In this process, the state conceded to the illegal occupation of urban territory that was due to the history of urban land in Turkey, mostly belonged to the state.

It is this period which gecekondu emerged as a collective consumption unit which is both approved by the bourgeoisie and constructed and modified by the working class. The gecekondu had clear class content within it protecting the immigrating poor people from the market relations (Pınarcıoğlu and Işık, 2001). The gecekondus in this period were built by the people who would live in them and therefore were constantly modified by the habitants (Pınarcıoğlu and Işık, 2001). One crucial point to remark for this period is that the gecekondu lands and the houses built on them were used for their use value instead of its exchange value. The gecekondu areas not only fulfilled housing need of the immigrants but also protected the new workers from the commodification processes of the market.

Although the gecekonduzation period mostly occurred in tandem with the state's tacit approval, there were cases in which this patronage based mechanism was broken (Aslan, 2004). Aslan remarks that by 1975 the socialist left groups both in Istanbul and Ankara decided to intervene in the gecekondu construction process. Their aim was to break the illicit links which pushed the poor workers to pay informally for the bare state land to mafia-like organizations backed by the local representatives of the state such as the police and the local municipalities. The left in Turkey in those times tried to sustain the sheltering right of the workers as a form of collective consumption unit. The intention behind politicizing this housing necessity was to popularize their socialist agenda among the working class by showing a small niche of a socialist way of life which would be possible after the revolution.

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<sup>5</sup> There are a few exceptions to the situation. One example is the Istanbul Güngören Tozkoparan housing compound which was built in 1967 for workers in congruence with gecekondu Law No : 775

Therefore, the neighborhoods became the emerging cores of the socialist movement in the late 1970s

The intervention of the left could have happened in an environment in which the left and the labour unions were strong and the gecekondü was believed to be the legitimate solution to housing problem of the poor. However, by the end of the 1970s, with the crisis of the ISI period, these conditions started to erode.

As mentioned at the beginning, the smooth incorporation of the immigrants into the big cities by the tacit approval of gecekondü construction occurred within the framework of ISI industrialization. Therefore, the fall of the ISI period also signalled the end of one period for the gecekondü neighborhoods. In the next section, this transformation in the gecekondü neighborhoods and its meaning in our context will be discussed.

### The Second Period: A Conflicting Structure of Gecekondü as Both the Place of Collective Consumption and Individual Property

The new period could be argued to have put an end to the wide interclass alliance mediated by the state and strengthened the conflicts between the classes. Data on income equality shows that the income gap between quintiles widened from 1978 to 1994 (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). In addition, the increase in the share of informal employment in total employment created considerable challenge against the employment-based social security system in Turkey (Buğra, 2008). That means the decline of the possibility for access to retirement benefits and health care provisions for considerable portions of the workers. All in all, the new people immigrating to Istanbul lost their relatively socially secure environment in the 1970s and have been left with their own destiny.

One could expect a rise of militancy among the working classes in this environment of neoliberal policies yet the urban land reforms concerning gecekondü settlers were able to achieve to regulate the expected social unrest among the gecekondü settlers (Öncü, 1994; in Buğra, 1998). The changing meaning of gecekondü which was the characteristic of the period was the story of how the working class were incorporated into the existing neoliberal system (Tuğal, 2008). This changing meaning can be found in the incorporation of gecekondüs into

formal urban land market which could be used for its exchange value and in this regard, the subsequent amnesty laws in 1980s for gecekondu neighborhoods are the key to understanding the process. These amnesty laws gave the gecekondu owners the right to reconstruct their one storey buildings up to 4 storey and make profit through selling or renting the apartments to new comers (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). Moreover, the fully legalization of the buildings were left to the decision of the local municipalities. Therefore, the neighborhoods which had political ties with the local municipalities could incorporate their buildings to the formal urban market whereas the others such as Başbüyük could not materialize the benefit of legalization and just watched the subsequent incorporation of nearby neighborhoods to the urban formal market.

Buğra asserts that under the absence of a formal housing policy and liberalization of urban land by laws enacted in the post 1980 period, the positive reciprocity given to gecekondu in the 1970s by society inevitably has transformed into negative reciprocity. Whereas in the 1970s, the gecekondu were legitimate solutions to the housing problem of the poor and the conceding of public land invasions was seen in terms of positive reciprocal relations, the commercialized character of the gecekondu in 1990s led the public opinion to view gecekondu as places of illegitimate gain and the gecekondu owners as thieves exploiting the urban land. There is another major change in the image of gecekondu for Turkish public; that is the so called discussions evolving around the term *varoş*. This term also constitutes the construction of the negative attitude towards the gecekondu owners.

The term *varoş* indicates the denigrating discourse of the middle classes on the people living in gecekondu (Serpil, 2005; Yılmaz, 2008; Aslan 2008). *Varoş* expresses the time and space dimension of the paupers of the 1990s (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008) similar to Wacquant's depiction of the new neighborhood affected by double violence: One from the neoliberal policies materially worsening the livelihood of the people and the marginalizing stigmatizing lexicon used to delineate the neighborhood by the media and the state therefore the emergence of the term is a precluding factor on forming collective identities to oppose the state's policies (wacquant, 2007).

The denigrating discourse *varoş* and the commercialized character of some of the gecekondu neighborhoods will be manipulated by the TOKI which took the control of the commercial use of urban land in post 2000 period and will be discussed in the next subsection in relation to urban transformation projects. Before that I want to return to the consensus of gecekondu literature on the integration of gecekondu to urban land market.



The increasing commercialization of gecekondu neighborhoods is a theme mostly visited in gecekondu literature of 90s. However, not all the gecekondu neighborhoods lost its character in the 1970s due to the subsequent amnesty laws passed in 90s. These neighborhoods were not put into formal urban land market and acted as centers to protect the paupers from the ills of the lack of employment and social security benefits. Especially the neighborhoods in Küçükçekmece Istanbul namely, Başakşehir, Şahintepe and Ayazma (Baysal, 2010) constructed by the Kurds who emigrated to Istanbul in the 1990s are the examples of such neighborhoods. Another example can be the huge “gecekondu planets” in Ankara mainly in Dikmen Vadi and Mamak where one can see with her bare eyes the preservation of gecekondus with one storey buildings and gardens to grow vegetables for daily use. Besides, the same process occurs for the parts of gecekondu neighborhood which were constructed after 1985 without any legal right to stay and which uses its one storey building for its sheltering purposes. These neighborhoods-Başbüyük is one of them- inhabit residents holding Tapu Tahsis waiting for fully incorporation to formal urban land market to build high rise apartments as promised in the law and the ones without any legal right to land due to coming after 84 with their one storey building. That is why the gecekonduzation of the 1990s did not create all out commercialized gecekondu but a hybrid structure that is composed of both the gecekondu as “usual” and the ones built in commercial terms by the subsequent amnesty laws. This hybrid structure is an important variable in the formation of the resistance between different neighborhoods and within the same neighborhood against the gecekondu transformation projects.

Post 2000 period marks the end of the opportunities for the new immigrants to share the rent value of urban land. Now the state mostly succeeds in checking the encroachment of its land and claims full control over the commercial rights of its land. This also means the introduction of urban transformation projects which aim to clear the gecekondu neighborhoods and create empty land for commercial use in the hands of TOKI and local governments. How this is translated to the social context of gecekondu in terms of the reaction against the transformations will be analysed right after discussing the last period of gecekondu journey of Turkey: the urban renewal projects.

### The Third Period: Post 2000, the Direct Intervention to the Gecekondu by the Urban Transformations

This period is not the first intervention of the state to spoil the integrity of the social structure of gecekondu. The second period also caused the fragmentation of the social structure of the gecekondu based on eligibility to enter the urban land market which is explained above. In the second period, the urban rent of the gecekondu is permitted to be used by some if not all of the gecekondu owners. However, in post 2000 period AKP leadership decided that the rent value of the urban land more favourable than electoral power of gecekondu neighborhoods (Keyder, 2010). *Gecekondu* renewal projects that are only one type of urban transformation projects are the tools to materialize this purpose in post 2000 period.

In this period, both Ankara and Istanbul have gone through big urban transformation projects both in gecekondu neighborhoods and in old historical sites as in Istanbul's case. These projects have catered to the capitalist investment motives of the neoliberal urbanism rather than the needs of the people as claimed by the government (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008; Kurtuluş, 2009; Erder, 2009; öktem, 2006; Menaf, 2010). The urban transformations have occurred in two fields (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008). The first field is composed of the mega projects in the city centre such as the ones in Galataport and Haydarpaşa port to create tourism centres serving international conferences and fairs or the renewal of historical neighborhoods of Istanbul which are filled with urban poor since the 1980s. The second field is the gecekondu renewal projects which aim to clear the gecekondu areas, rent value of which has increased due to proximity to middle-upper middle class neighborhoods. The cleared land is left to the trading decision of the TOKI and the municipalities. In Ankara, we have seen the mushrooming of the shopping centers all around the city but mainly in the land of the public enterprises which have been privatized in AKP period (Yaşar, 2010).

The dominant ideology in transforming the two cities is the world city argument which is the urban manifestation of neoliberalism (Harvey, 1986; Brenner, 2001; Öktem, 2006; Türkün and Yapıcı, 2008). According to this argument, the city needs to be marketed for international tourism and financial flows to foster its economy and to create employment for its residents and the AKP led Ankara and Istanbul municipalities furthered the idea that both Istanbul and Ankara need to be transformed to have a share of international money flows. To understand the neoliberal urbanism in Turkey, the AKP's operations on restructuring the cities should be analysed (Türkün and Yapıcı, 2008).

The full control of the urban rent in the post 2000 period by the government led by the AKP has been achieved by the modifications done to TOKI and the municipality laws. TOKI was founded in 1984 for the purposes of building affordable housing for the poor yet it mostly served the housing needs of the middle and upper classes (Bugra, 1998). In the AKP's reign

by subsequent modifications to the TOKI law in 2003, 2004 and 2007 (Şengül, 2008) TOKI acquired massive authority over the regulation of urban land. These are the ability to expropriate the urban land for urban transformation projects, cooperation with private companies for construction projects, cooperation with municipalities for gecekondu transformation projects, and the ability to take over state owned land without any cost (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008).

TOKI mostly implements housing projects for high income groups and claims that with the revenue generated from these projects, it subsidizes housing compounds for the poor and therefore remains a social housing agency as dictated in the TOKI law. However, TOKI needs new land for the sustenance of this income generation policy from either open state land or clearing gecekondu neighborhoods by gecekondu renewal projects and this causes the relocation of the urban poor to places which are away from the place where they make their living and therefore deteriorates their living conditions of the poor. Second, the terms of payment of the social houses together with the monthly housing compound payments of the houses are more than the payment capabilities of the contemporary urban poor who have ad hoc informal employment opportunities with insecure incomes (Bugra and Keyder, 2003). In sum, TOKI model despite its claim to the contrary deteriorates the living conditions of the urban poor by moving them to the outer parts of the city with unbearable debts.

Erder asks whether the silence of the middle classes and academics towards the projects is because of their tacit approval of the demolitions of gecekondus which they assume are places of unjust gain or as spaces which look contrary to the good aesthetics of the city (Erder, 2010). As Erder suspects, the discursive shift in the state's manifestation of gecekondu together with the media representation of the term *varoş* may well be reflected on the middle classes. The silence of the media and academia against the projects except the ones in historical sites such as Tarlabaşı or Sulukule projects (ibid.) are the signs of the success of the government in persuading the public. However, the projects have created reactions from the gecekondu residents in most places.

The gecekondu renewal projects are physical threats to the social structure of the neighborhoods and the response of the neighborhoods to the demolitions should be understood within the changing social context of gecekondu from the 1970s to the 1990s. That is why the two-tiered structure of the social context of gecekondus is an important variable in understanding the various responses within different neighborhoods. To reiterate, by 2000, we had two types of gecekondu neighborhoods. The first type is the one which still resembled the gecekondus of the 1970s with gardens and one storey building. They are the ones which stand as examples of the

neighborhoods that were not commercialized by the Tapu Tahsis law and amnesty decisions. For these people without Tapu Tahsis, the projects dispossess them from their houses which they only use and expect to use for sheltering since the renewal protocols assumes the people without Tapu Tahsis non eligible for subsidy on the TOKI houses.

The second type is composed of neighborhoods which have a heterogeneous type of building stock. It consists of both one storey buildings of emigrants of post 1985 period and the multiple storey buildings waiting for the full legalization to increase their market value. The urban transformation projects clear the materialization of the property incentive given by the 1984 Tapu Tahsis law to gecekondur residents by transferring the urban rent to the control of the state via TOKI and therefore provoke the residents against it (Erder, 2009). Therefore, they are the neighborhoods which are more likely to form conservative movements in line with Byron and Mayer's argument about the causality between neoliberal urban policies and the rise of conservative movements.

Erder alleges that although the AKP led municipalities tried to mobilize its networks in the neighborhoods to persuade the gecekondur residents for gecekondur renewal projects, the dissident voices and organized movements in the neighborhoods indicate that the established ties of the political Islam in those neighborhoods have eroded and a new one has filled this gap. She argues that the newly emerging urban movements define the local politics in these neighborhoods. In Istanbul's case, this new group is the neighborhood associations working against the gecekondur renewal projects

The two groups of gecekondur neighborhoods have two different ways of inclination of responding against the projects. My argument is that the first type of gecekondur neighborhoods gives solid ground to form a movement for right to sheltering. Therefore it also gives opportunity for the left organizations to popularize in those neighborhoods and to form ties with other progressive movements. Thus, the movements of these neighborhoods are likely to base on collective consumption demand of housing and if it succeeds in forming weak ties with other gecekondur neighborhood movements and progressive movements of the left, with a leadership eager to translate the militant particularism of the local to broader problems (Harvey, 2000), the residents' subjective views on their positioning within the society may be transformed. However, the second type of neighborhoods are more involved in preserving the individual property rights of its people and therefore less engaged with progressive movements of the left.

As mentioned at the beginning, highly militant Başibüyük and Dikmen Vadi movements differ in the content of their political organizing. Dikme Vadi not only struggled against the

physical threat to their houses but also they formed close ties with other progressive movements of the left whereas Başbüyük stuck in its local cause without any organized incentive to form weak ties with working class movements. As stated in the theoretical framework, this difference in the two neighborhoods will be analysed in two analytic categories. First the property structure of the two neighborhoods and the local state action against it will be prioritized as contextual differences and then the organizational differences would be laid down in conjunction with contextual differences.

### Contextual Differences

The local state action as a contextual factor that is translated into the social and political context of gecekondu in the two neighborhoods is the major contextual factor that defined the trajectory of the two movements. I argue that the state action as contextual factor to the movements created a neighborhood which I categorized as type one in Dikmen Vadi with mostly gecekondu without tapu tahsis and a type two neighborhood in Başbüyük which have residents with both tapu tahsis and without tapu tahsis. This difference created a suitable structural condition that paved the way for the emergence of the difference between the movements. Now I will briefly mention how the local state action differed in the two neighborhoods.

In terms of contextual factors, the major difference lies in the way the two different local state actions manifested itself in the neighborhoods. The manipulation of the property relations in the neighborhoods created the difference. As stated in the introduction, at the beginning of the movements both of the neighborhood had varying property relations. First of all in Dikmen Vadi, the transformation is being implemented by the Ankara metropolitan municipality whereas in Başbüyük, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Maltepe Municipality and TOKI is responsible agents of the transformation which brings a more hesitant state action to fragment the collectivity of the movements. In other words, Ankara Municipality could enjoy authority without the intervention of TOKI or local municipality yet in Başbüyük the three tiered authority structure complicate the implementation of the projects. The way this structural difference in state action is translated into the property relations in the neighborhood is the major difference in terms of contextual factors in the two neighborhoods.

Observation of the two neighborhoods' transformation protocols gives us the content of this difference. Dikmen Vadi's protocol presented more lucrative agreement for the holders of Tapu Tahsis in relation to one who does not have legal paper to hold their houses. Therefore after 6 months of waiting through the end of 2006, most of the Tapu Tahsis holders left the

neighborhood and deconstructed their buildings by themselves as they built them 30 years ago. By 2007 there were 800 houses out of 2000 and by 2009 650 houses left out of 1800 houses Dikmen Vadi. The remaining ones were predominantly households without Tapu Tahsis. In sum, the property structure was almost homogenous among the participants of the urban movement in Dikmen Vadi.

Başbüyük's protocol, on the other hand, and the oral wordings of the municipality could not succeed in persuading the Tapu Tahsis holders to sign the protocol with TOKI and the movement continued with heterogeneous property relations. The expectations of the Tapu Tahsis holders is more than just a house since most of them are eager to extract profit from their houses. However, the ones without Tapu Tahsis are anxious to lose their right to sheltering and in various occasions resist to the profit motives of the Tapu Tahsis holders. This conflict between the two groups sometimes translated into open clash in the process of the movement nevertheless the majority of the participants both with and without Tapu Tahsis remained silent until the visible attack of the state by massive force were halted and a change in the ruling of the Maltepe municipality brought hopes of favourable negotiation with the municipality.

In sum, Başbüyük throughout the course of the movement remained as a type 2 neighborhoods which both consisted Tapu Tahsis holders and people without tapu tahsis whereas Dikmen Vadi emerged as a type 2 neighborhood with a homogenous property regime. Therefore, the contextual factors that the urban movements flourished in both neighborhoods worked in opposite direction in the two neighborhood. Housing in dikmen vadi functioned as a collective consumption demand in which the working class tried to defend against the intervention of the Ankara Municipality whereas in Başbüyük it functioned as both collective consumption unit as well as individual gain source. How this contextual differences are translated into the organizational tactics of the two neighborhood is the theme of the next section.

### Organizational Differences

Understanding the causes of the movement underlines the points which the community in Başbüyük was formed at the beginning of the movement. As stated in the statement of the thesis, Başbüyük's community was formed in relation to the coalition between the people with Tapu Tahsis and without paper. The leading team of the Başbüyük organization mostly composed of people with Tapu Tahsis who has both time and money to spend for the

movement yet it claimed representation both for the Tapu Tahsis holders and the ones without it.

To form a strong tie group within the neighborhood, the Başbüyük Assosiation had one major obstacle which it found as an un-favorable contextual factor to overcome. It forced the organization to continuously readdress the movement' demand in order to hold the unity of the movement. I will first lay down the latter effect before moving to the former effect.

The organization presented the movement as the struggle to preserve their right to sheltering yet for the holders of Tapu Tahsis the reason for attending the movement were more than preserving their houses as discussed. The conflict between the group which had high expectation for profit from their land and the ones without did not become apparent in the beginning of the movement due to the success of the organization in showing the Maltepe Municipality(MM) and TOKI as the common enemy for all yet as the intervention of the Maltepe Municipality (MM) proceeded, the organization lost some of its members due to the problems that arose out of this conflict. One of the forerunners in the organization conveys the problem in the following: “The property relations are really complicated. We used to say to the people without Tapu Tahsis, be tough against the municipality’s offers or else you will lose your house. We said to the holders of Tapu Tahsis “be silent, your paper does not mean anything for the state”<sup>6</sup>

However, the responses of the people were not that as smooth as the organization would like to have. On the one hand, the organization right from the beginning of its establishment strived to persuade the people that the transformation would bring misery to all the households in the neighborhood; on the other hand the municipality tried to prove the reverse. In principle, the association demanded the abolition of the urban renewal protocol and distribution of legal construction rights for the residents. However, when it became evident that this is not possible, they started to negotiate with the local state to obtain better terms from the protocol. The clashes with the police was the main instrument of the association to be a legitimate actor in representing the neighborhood and it also helped the association to form the strong tie group in Başbüyük.

Scenes of people living in gecekondü fighting with the police for their houses are not a peculiarity in the history of gecekondü, as Aslan points out (Aslan, 2004). We still hear news of clashes between police and newly built buildings in the gecekondü neighborhoods which

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<sup>6</sup> *Bu mülkiyet işi bizi gerçekten zorladı. Tapu Tahsis Tapu Tahsisi olmayan, belgesiz insanlara, dirençli olun belediyenin tekliflerine karşı diyorduk, yoksa evinizi kaybedersiniz. Tapu Tahsis Tapu Tahsis sahiplerineyse, “aman ha sesinizi çıkartmayın, Tapu Tahsis Tapu Tahsisinizin devlet için bi önemi yok” diyorduk.*

were mostly expanded in 90s<sup>7</sup>. They are mostly spontaneous actions in reaction to the demolitions. However, In Başbüyük's case we see an organized militant resistance against the erection of construction site in an open area in the neighborhood that has been used as the water source of the neighborhood when city water works had not been set up. The clashes lasted three months and the people were severely affected by the presence of the police force in the neighborhood:

The worst horrible thing was the gas bombs. I have a breathing problem and once I stayed at the hospital for a week. They were so harsh...We weren't able to stop our youth. They threw stones at the police day and night and the police beat the boys very bitterly. In one of those accounts police beat my son and then sued him for throwing stone to him. His trial still continues. In fact he was not throwing on that moment but the police chose him.

As the quotation shows, the clashes were tiring and the association had to let the initiation of the construction of TOKI houses in may 2008. It achieved the aggregation of the people with its cause yet it failed to prevent the construction of the TOKI houses in Başbüyük and it also could not prevent 150 people from signing the agreement for the TOKI houses.

The successful propaganda of the organization had convinced the people that to protect their houses they had to prevent the construction of the TOKI housing compound. The very presence of the TOKI protocol in Başbüyük was now seen as the real enemy against their right for sheltering for the majority and hope for economically moving up for the Tapu Tahsis holders. Therefore, the problem was not forming a unified action composed of both propertied and non-propertied members of the neighborhood against TOKI and the municipality as one important study claims (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). The source of the high rate of women participation in the movement came from non-propertied members<sup>8</sup> although the leaders in the association came from male and mostly propertied households. However, the problem was the lack of the translation of the militancy of the local to other movements which was necessary to form a grand coalition of urban movements against urban renewals.

In sum, the heterogeneous property situation within the neighborhood caused the association to be constantly busy with the sustenance of mutual trust and norms necessary for

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<sup>7</sup>The contemporary pattern still follows the deconstruction of buildings which are illegally built prior to local elections. Here is an example of destruction of 60 illegally built buildings in Sultanbeyli just before the last local elections. (Sultanbeyli'de Yıkım Gerginligi, June 2009)

<sup>8</sup> Interview with one of the forerunners among the women in the movemet.



strong tie group formation and therefore the leading group could never translate the militancy of the movement to broader problems. In other words, except in small occasions, weak tie formation with other movements could never be materialized due to the problems in strong tie formation.

## Dikmen Vadi

As stated in the introduction, Dikmen Vadi's movement falls into fourth type of Pickvance's typology of urban movements, namely defence movements against the physical threat of the urban transformation projects to the municipality like the one in Başibüyük. The movement created a community of people with eagerness to participate demonstrations in the socialist agenda of the Ankara left. In this section, strong and weak tie group formation will be analysed together with the structure of the leadership to translate the militant particularism of the local with the broader problems of the working class.

Two points need to be re-stressed before passing to the organization of the movement. The property incentives of the Tapu Tahsis holders in Başibüyük did not exist in Dikmen Vadi since the tapu tahsis holders evacuated the neighborhood due to the better terms of the project. The second point is that the deserters were mostly the socialist base of the neighborhood since they were the ones who constructed their *gecekondu* with the help of socialist groups in 70s prior to Tapu Tahsis law. The remainders and therefore the people who participated to the movement were mostly the people without any legal right to land. Moreover, as in Başibüyük they were in the organizing sphere of political Islam in Turkey.

Although weakened by the influx of the people after 1985 and desertion of the people with left affiliation due to the terms of the project, the neighborhood embodied people with affiliation to a left organization, namely *Halk Evleri* (HE) who acted as leader for the movements. They constructed a *gecekondu* building and named the place as the Beureu for Right to Housing(BRS). This place was used as the office of the movement.

Therefore, in terms of the organizing body the neighborhood differs from Başibüyük. The leadership included people with left organizational background who strenuously strived to translate the strong ties formed in the neighborhood to the service of the formation of weak ties with other left progressive movements both urban centered and not. They have formed strong ties with mutual trust and solidarity feelings between the members keeping in mind the belittling of the left in the parts of the neighborhood without Tapu Tahsis. Although Dikmen Vadi is not a neighborhood where social solidarity ties are fully eroded, Wacquant's depiction

of the advanced marginal neighborhoods with disrespect for left politics were reflected in the neighborhood.

Two processes were important in the construction of a community of people who risked their time and energy for the cause of the movement. One was the desertion of the people with tapu tahsis who were more politically active. I asked the remaining people how they had felt about the presence of a socialist group in BRS at the very beginning of their movement. One of them said “it was like embracing a snake when you fall into the sea”<sup>9</sup>. However, the desperateness of the people in the face of threat of losing their houses could make them form a community with a left group. Most of them pointed to the presence of the leader of the movement who lived in Dikmen Vadi and who was a member of Halk Evleri in their trust towards Halk Evleri.

The formation of solidarity and trust among the remaining members of Dikmen Vadi was first due to the feelings of desperateness in the face of a powerful municipality with a project to demolish their house. The grievance was well directed by the BRS which was established by the Dikmen Vadi people with the support of Halk Evleri. Therefore, the choice of the BRS to be autonomous from political groups including Halk Evleri and the Halk Evleri’s sudden yet powerful support of a group of people who felt they had been ousted by the state and their religious communities was vital for the formation of strong ties among the people. This cause of protecting their right to sheltering was the primary reason behind their gathering. In the first period between June 2006 and February 2007, their demonstrations were all to express their cause. Nonetheless, as one of the Dikmen residents told in August 2009 that is 3.5 years after the commencement of the movement, their movement has transcended this cause: “our endeavor has ceased to be a struggle for our houses. We will continue to resist in other areas. We do not think about the houses. Our purpose was our houses yet as we observed other things our ideas changed”.<sup>10</sup> This change was of course due to the successful political organizing the BRS had done in the neighborhood. The tactics of organizing in this living place should be mentioned but before that we need to note a dramatic event during which the community tested its strong ties in a massive attack by the municipality to demolish the houses. In February 2007, a long day of clashes occurred between the police and the people. The police could not succeed to clear the resistance and the houses could not be

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<sup>9</sup> Denize düşen yılana sarılır hesabı. Focus group one.

<sup>10</sup> *Biz bunu şöyle bizimki ev alma işinden çıktı biz müca. Her türlü devam edeceza. Ev felan bizim aklımızda yok. Maksadımız evdi ama bazı konuları gördükçe düşüncelerimiz değişti*

demolished. The event became a major incidence that fostered the formation of solidarity ties between the people and the confidence that they may oppose to the state's policies:

None of us had faced with police before. There was a lack of consciousness among the people. We managed to get over it until "1 February". We learned that when we get out to the streets we may defend our rights.<sup>11</sup>

The effect of the confidence they obtained in the first period and the presence of strong trust ties among themselves was immediately reflected upon the content of the meetings they attended. From February 2007, they did not only attend meeting which were for their local cause. These were mostly the meetings on which the Halk Evleri political agenda bestowed importance in those days. Here is a small list of the meetings the Dikmen Vadi people attended: Construction of crossroads at Kuğulu Park which is a green leisure area in Ankara in February 2007; attendance to a mass meeting to protest the charging of health care in neighborhood health care centers together with the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), the Union of Health Care and Social Service Workers (SES), Dev Sağlık İş( union of Health Care blue collar Workers) and Turkish Dentist Association (TDB); joint meeting to seek the right to shelter with other neighborhoods subject to urban renewal from all over the country with which HE had ties; protesting by making fire in Dikmen Vadi against the demolitions in Tuzla Şifa Neighborhood in September 2007 and Küçükçekmece Ayazma in November 2008 as a sign of solidarity with other gecekondu neighborhoods; attendance at "the society has social rights" mass meetings of HE in 2008 and 2009<sup>12</sup>; a mutual meeting with ODTU students and instructors to protest Melih Gökçek is for his announcement which implied that some parts of ODTU Campus could be illegal and subject to demolition.

In 15 May 2009, the municipality assembly announced that the project was cancelled. In the decision, the reason for the cancelation was given as court decision which had abolished the transformation protocol like the one that had happened in Başbüyük. A person who held land Tapu and unsatisfied with the expropriation value of the protocol had opened the case. The court decision canceled the protocol, not the urban transformation decision. The AMM decision announced that it had abolished the urban transformation decision. Melih Gökçek announced that because of the court decision, they would not be able to enforce the project which they planned (Gökçek'in Son Umudu TBMM, 22 October 2009). The BRS

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<sup>11</sup> "Komşularımın hiç biri ben dahil hiç birimiz polisle karşı karşıya gelmemiş insanlardık. bir bilinçsizlik var toplumda ne oldu one şubata kadar bunu aştık. bir şeyleri sokağa da çıksak hakkımızı savunuyoruz. Haklı olunca Polis de bir şey demiyor kimse de bir şey demiyor nihayetinde sen oturduğun evi savunuyorsun. " a woman from focus group one.

<sup>12</sup> I was in the meeting field in 2009 and there were 600 people form. Dikmen Vadi and this made 10% of all the people that attended the meeting.

argued that the decision had been made due to the militancy of the movement of the people. I also believe that the municipality's inability to clear the remaining people from the place was part of the reason behind the cancellation because the same court decision had been given for Başbüyük's protocol yet with small modifications, the then Maltepe Municipality held the validity of the protocol by issuing the case to higher court. The municipality chose not to continue the project and Melih Gökçek had asked for a new law on urban transformations to be able to continue urban transformation projects. (ibid.)

### Translation of the Militancy in Dikmen Vadi: The Organizing Strategy

The organizing strategy of the BRS is important considering the belittling of the left in contemporary marginal neighbourhoods (wacquant, 2007, Gough et al., 2006 ). This strategy included creating a community which caters for the livelihood strategies of the people and a lowering the voice of the traditional leftist tone in both public statements and in weakly meetings of the neighbourhood.

The BRS leadership was not in the field out of their good will for the people. Their presence in the field had only one purpose: that of contributing to the struggle of working class by forming a community willing to oppose the neoliberal policies of the state. Therefore, all the organizational arrangements by the BRS were handled for this purpose.

The BRS in the neighbourhood not only meant organizing the protest meetings and writing the public statements. It also meant the effort to sustain the daily necessities of the people. The most vivid example was the dealing with the telephone service cut off in the place. After many individual tries, they made a public statement in front of the Turkish Telecom Company in March 2008 and immediately after the statement, infrastructure in the neighbourhood was renewed and the phones started to work again. They also protested the cancelling of the public transportation in the valley and the cheap bread selling kiosk. The kiosk had been closed and the municipality buses do not stop in Dikmen Vadi bus station since their struggle started. These services are still absent in the field.

The BRS never used a direct Marxist propaganda to motivate the people for left agitation. Through weekly meetings and public statements it proliferated the vivid examples of how the economic system creates a class-based society which directly affects the livelihood of the people yet apart from that, Marxist education programs like the ones in labour unions

did not occur at least in the first four years. Although Dikmen Vadi was not a neighbourhood where social solidarity ties were fully eroded, Wacquant's depiction of the advanced marginal neighbourhoods with disrespect towards left politics is reflected in this strategy of silencing the Marxist education programs in the neighbourhood. They intentionally lowered this voice and worked strenuously to increase social solidarity ties in the neighbourhood.

Sustaining security in the neighbourhood was one of these. The BRS believed that the security of the neighbourhood was at stake; the lines were cut off by people who sought to make life unbearable in Dikmen Vadi and periodically various construction materials were delivered to Dikmen Vadi. Besides, the BRS building was sabotaged and the BRS alleged that the city mayor was behind the act. Because of all these kinds of events, the BRS made a decision that the place would be checked against strangers. In some months which they suspected trucks coming for excavation, they checked almost all the vehicles passing through the place. All in all, the place was in full control of the BRS.

Another practice was creating a joyful environment for the children. They constructed a playground in an open place near the bureau and declared publicly that they provided a service which the municipality should have done. They organized various free courses such as drama, English, the guitar and primary school curriculum assistance courses for the children in a building constructed for these purposes near the bureau. In all these courses, the volunteer teachers who were mostly university students at a university in Ankara with sympathy to the movement worked. The few children that I chatted with informed me that they wished the bureau always stood there because they really enjoyed spending time there. In fact, the festivals, open discussion sessions with academicians, welcoming of graduate students like me to the field, the visits of foreign left groups from Brazil to India working on evacuations all served to make the neighbourhood worthwhile to live in without the feeling of loneliness which had prevailed at the beginning of the movement. 2006.

### Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I tried to assess the militancy of the movements in terms of their purpose, what they achieved concerning the urban renewal protocols in the neighbourhoods and how

the two movements affect the formation of working class collective identities for militancy in other areas which the market encroaches the workers' lives.

The research reaches two major conclusions to the discussion on collective action in gecekondu neighbourhoods against the urban renewals. The first is that the collective action against the urban renewals in gecekondu neighbourhoods encompasses the challenges which inherited from the social context of gecekondu in 90s. Başbüyük's movement is a case which delineates the reflection of the challenge on the formation of anti gecekondu renewal movement which aimed to transform its residents with eagerness to participate class based movements. The gecekondu, that emerged as collective consumption unit in the 1970s turned into a space of rent for the ones who had the hope of transforming their one storey gecekondus into multiple storey buildings. These were mostly people, who constructed their gecekondus before 1985 and therefore holds Tapu Tahsis which promised them land with entitlement deed for constructing multiple storey buildings in a period. In this thesis, it is argued that the introduction of the urban transformation projects points to the loss of the hope for the neighbourhoods which failed to utilize the urban rent before 2000. Therefore, the drive for the acquisition of urban rent is an important point which drives the collective actions of the Tapu Tahsis holders in gecekondu neighbourhoods. However, for the post 85 emigrants the projects clearly indicates the dispossession of their houses which they use for shelter since the terms of the projects, in the best case, favours the holders of Tapu Tahsis rather than tenants and the post 1985 emigrants.

Başbüyük's movement is explained within this context of the transformation of gecekondu neighbourhoods. It is an example of how the social context of gecekondu in Turkey which created heterogenous property relations within the neighbourhoods, impedes the construction of collective action based on right to sheltering and the formation of collective identities eager to extend the militancy to issues affecting their livelihood. The movement occurred in grand alliance between the Tapu Tahsis holders and the people without legal right to land. The association achieved to connect the two groups. It was able to show the MHA and the Maltepe Municipality as the common "enemy" and the projects which they implemented as contrary to their benefits. The movement also embodied the shelter right of the tenants and people without Tapu Tahsis. It proceeded in negotiation with the the Maltepe Municipality for better terms for the Tapu Tahsis holders. It is thought that the problem of the other group would be resolved after the fixation of assessment value papers for the Tapu Tahsis holders. The dernek was not able to prevent the construction of the first stage of the project and the agreement between the MHA and 153 households which

opposed the association's terms yet it could halt the opening of new stages since for the MHA, there is a risk that people do not sign the agreements and besides that, the dernek received the support of the new municipality mayor which strictly opposes the gecekondu renewal projects implemented by the MHA.

Although the dernek was able to achieve to form a grand alliance to oppose the transformation of the neighbourhood based on the MHA's terms, the militancy of the neighbourhood were not transferred to a grand coalition between the neighbourhoods of the poor against the urban transformation of Istanbul. It also did not motivate the people to establish connections with the movement that was on the agenda of the left in Istanbul. The association firmly insisted on the urgency of their local problems to be solved before the formation of weak ties with other neighbourhoods. They were highly preoccupied with the sustenance of the strong ties within the neighbourhood based on the different property relations. In order to protect this, they constantly sought to revise their arguments according to the new offers of the municipality. That is why the dernek was not transformed into a center of neighbourhood politics where the people mobilize against the marketization policies of the government in areas apart from housing.

The second conclusion is that in gecekondu neighbourhoods with homogenous property structure which did not promise entitled deeds for multiple storey building construction, the intervention of a left organization may transform a highly conservative community into one which makes alliances with the movements struggling against the privatization of health care education system, the rise of city water price, costly transportation, as well as with other anti gecekondu renewal movements. Dikmen Vadi's case is an example of such militancy which in certain occasions acted as center of resistance against the governance of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Abandoned alone by the Tapu Tahsis holders, the community of the movement was composed of people without Tapu Tahsis or tenants. The successful organizing of the leading structure which composed of people with affiliation to Halk Evi and the autonomous but close relation with it, were the reasons behind the success at the macro level. However, at the micro level one observes the mobilization of an organizing in a gecekondu neighbourhood which the Turkish left could not achieve after the 1980s except in number of occasions. The BRS did not only mobilize the people for various demonstrations but for activities which created a living environment worth to live especially for the children. It also used both legal channels and demonstrations to provide the municipal services such as transportation and cheap bread kiosks to the neighbourhood. Collective livelihood farming in the open fields which were also publicized to all the people of Ankara for organic farming and forestation

with 5000 trees financed by various left organizations such as TTB, KESK and UTEA were all done for one purpose: to create a neighbourhood whose members adopt collective identities with eagerness to attend class based movement. In sum, the movement headed by the BRS was initiated as a movement of right to sheltering and the organizing of the BRS acted as a leverage to transcend the local centered demands of the movement. The case of Dikmen Vadi clearly shows that organizing in a gecekondu neighbourhood whose property relations homogenous and built environment is used for its use value can still be a base for the popularization of the left which lost its base in production space.

In this paper, an approach which tries to define a good city by criticize both the movements and the state by laying down the alternative policies for the state as well as organizations is strictly avoided since as Castells (1983) stressed it is the people not the planners which make the city and therefore the reaction of the people within two fields were analysed to have results for the popularization of class based movements in relation to living places that can arise out of the contemporary conflicts in Turkey's urbanization politics. Although the tone of the conclusion is rather pessimist for gecekondu neighbourhoods, structure of which is transformed in 90s, further research is still needed for the analysis of neighbourhood movements to come in coming years in places similar to Başbüyük and Dikmen Vadi.

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