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**The Production of Autonomous Settlements for the Working Class by the Turkish Socialist Movements**

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# **The Production of Autonomous Settlements for the Working Class by the Turkish Socialist Movements**

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the politicization of squatter housing (gecekondu) movements in Turkey with an analysis of construction and demolition processes in two squatter housing neighbourhoods in Istanbul.

The paper argues that in order to understand the why gecekondu housing and the population living in gecekondu areas have always called attention in political discussions during the different time periods in Turkey.

Gecekondu settlements have been not only a type of housing but they have also been distinctive autonomous settlements because of their foundational, cultural and class related characteristics. However, after 1980s, after the implementation of the neoliberal policies, these settlements have started to lose their autonomous character.

This paper addresses the discussions of 'autonomy' and 'autonomous geographies' by scrutinizing two different settlement experiences from 1970s and 2000s Turkey. The paper compares two gecekondu movements in terms of their organisational structures, historical capacities and goals. It further focuses on the potentials of these two cases to retain anti-capitalistic characteristics.

The first case study is related to the establishment process of the Cayan neighbourhood<sup>1</sup> in Istanbul, a neighbourhood established through the leadership of a socialist movement during the 1970s. In this first example, I examine the establishment process of a neighbourhood by a socialist organisation in 1970s. Although this process was interrupted by the 1980s military coup in Turkey, this example is one of the important

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<sup>1</sup> See about Cayan Neighbourhood establishment, Aslan and Sen, 2011

examples of socialist planning in Turkey where socialist groups tried to establish an autonomous space. This paper aims to analyse this process and examines the anti-capitalist establishment rules.

This is a significant and unique example in the history of (socialist) urban planning in Turkey, where, following the establishment of the neighbourhood, a socialist organisation aspires and solidifies its political domination through the process of reproduction of social relationships spatially. Cayan neighbourhood was established through the confiscation of the public land by a socialist organisation. During the construction phase, architects, planners, who were self-defining themselves as socialist architects and socialist planners, worked voluntarily and generated a, so to say, an alternative social housing and living space. The dwellings were constructed for the workers. This paper aims to find out whether this experience of neighbourhood establishment has anti-capitalists features or not.

The second case focuses on the struggles of the neighbourhood dwellers in Gulsuyu-Gulensuyu<sup>2</sup> neighbourhood against the urban transformation projects and demolition threats, and examines the alternative planning experiments/projects discussions of the dwellers. In 2005, Gulsuyu-Gulensuyu neighbourhood was enunciated as an urban transformation site. Following this declaration, the dwellers in Gulsuyu-Gulensuyu were organized immediately and defeated the urban transformation project with a court action. Following this process, the dwellers of Gulsuyu-Gulensuyu worked on an alternative plan in collaboration with the volunteer academics, activists, experts and professional associations of architects and planners. In other words, the dwellers of the neighbourhood responded to the urban transformation project by producing their own alternative neighbourhood plan. However, this process did not come to a stage where the threats of demolitions in the neighbourhood are stopped.

In both of these neighbourhoods, most of the dwellers in these neighbourhoods have been close to left-wing political parties or socialist organisations. This paper examines the experiences of the dwellers against the urban interventions and discusses the similarities and differences among these examples which took place in different periods.

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<sup>2</sup> See also Sen, 2010

This paper explores the following issues:

- Why do gecekondu construction processes in Turkey designate autonomous characteristics/features?
- How the left-wing political organisations' role has changed in gecekondu neighbourhoods in these two different periods (1970s and 2000s)?
- With regard to definitions of autonomous space and politics, do these two examples have anti-capitalist characteristics?

This field study was executed with in-depth interviews with leading founders and witnesses of the period in Cayan neighbourhood and Gulsuyu-Gulensu neighbourhood between in 2008 and 2009. Furthermore, archival research and content analysis is done with the national and socialist press of the time. The observed daily activities, visual symbols, the way of representation in the press and the expression of dwellers of themselves are also taken into account in that concept.

### **Socialists in Turkey and the Housing Problem**

*'Previously, the leftists, they were taking this type of land from the land mafia and they made the subdivisions- parcellation and pass it on to the people. In Umraniye/Cakmak, around Turk-is Housing Estate, in Emirgan/Resit Pasa and Kagithane/Nurtepe, those areas were among these areas. Revolutionaries, they never took on or have anything themselves, a plot or a parcel, never. Take it; establish a foundation or an association. Things like that, did not happen. During the construction of the second Bosphorus Bridge and the surrounding roads, around Nurtepe, the situation was similar. There were those who came from Kars, Erzincan; plots were given to those. Hundreds of students helped digging the foundations. They also helped to carry bricks, sand and cement. In fact, they even opened a shop to sell construction materials for cheaper prices. During those days, fascists used to come and shoot at these places and run away.'*

The quotation above provides important information about the organisational power of socialists and their political orientations in urban spaces during the 1970s in Turkey. Here, one can see how socialist groups were important actors in land obtainment, establishing neighbourhoods, struggles against the land mafia or being against the property possessions and providing housing for the poor.

Interestingly, it was only during the 1970s that the radical leftist groups, such as The Revolutionary Way (Devrimci Yol) and The Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol), could retain a leading and constitutive role within the establishment of the gecekondu neighbourhoods. Throughout these years, following the rural migration to urban centres, there has been an increasing need of housing for the working classes. Gecekondu housing provided a solution for this need. These gecekondu neighbourhoods have been formed with regard to the political, ethnic and religious identities of the migrant populations (Erder, 1995, 1996; Ayata, 1989).<sup>3</sup>

Gecekondu houses, constructed by the migrant population, had features of self-help methods. Migrants allocated all of their resources and savings to the construction of these gecekondu and they were obliged to buy the land from the informal land market.<sup>4</sup> During those years, the state was loosely controlling the public urban land, and this enabled the expansion of the informal land market and increased the number of land brokers- intermediaries. However, over time, the impact of mafia gradually became prominent in informal land market.

During the construction of the gecekondu houses, another important factor has been the use of local political networks by the migrant groups (Erder, 1996; Kurtoğlu, 2004). The role of socialist groups was very important in local politics as mentioned earlier (Aslan, 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> Sencer Ayata (1989) indicates the importance of the link between urbanisation and being from the same place/village during the 1960s. Ayata states that different migrant groups tend to cluster according to their place of origin.

<sup>4</sup> In Turkey, the widespread opinion considers gecekondu dwellers as invaders of the public land. However, the result of the field research indicates that, the land is bought from the informally from the land brokers.

The development of gecekondü areas in Turkey started in 1940s and by the 1970s they have become part of the political and economic processes of housing. By the 1970s, gecekondü dwellers grab the socialist movements' attention. For socialists it was not very difficult to establish networks with the working class groups as during those years, since they were also important political actors in trade unions.

As Castells (1983) mentioned this 'possibility' previously, the relative homogeneity of the living conditions had an impact on the consciousness about the urban problems. This also had impact on the urban housing market and its opening to the different social class or groups. The squatter houses were constructed around the industrial basins by the workers, especially by those who were organized in trade unions. In other words, socialist organisations which were politically active and influential in these areas defined their spatial policies especially in relation to protecting certain housing areas from the fascists and the street battles among the different political groups of 1970s.

During the 1970s, gecekondü neighbourhoods were important localities for the urban working classes and the urban poor. This type of accommodation was the only economic gain these groups could attain. It is possible to define gecekondü housing as unprofitable housing. In other words, socialist organisations developed an important impact/pressure to stop the business relationship with the land mafia and the gecekondü developments. The expression of 'rescued zones/regions' in a way represents the defence and protection zones not only against the fascists but also against the land mafia:

*'These houses-properties were the only facilities the poor population had. In most of these gecekondüs, there was no electricity, water or toilet. The construction materials used in the se gecekondüs were wood, tinsplate or bricks. Majority of our people, who did not have any means to pay the rent of a flat in big cities, they had to dwell in these houses where they were burning-hot during the summer and freezing during the winter.'*

Cayan Neighbourhood was established in 1970s and the appropriation of the land, planning process, the construction of the gecekondüs and the distribution of the houses to the dwellers, all were done by the socialist movement and its willpower. When the interviews with the founders of the neighbourhood and the related printed materials

from socialist journals were considered, one can see that socialist groups were aiming to establish and extend their base by establishing relationships with the working classes and their social and economic needs. The houses of the Cayan neighbourhood were constructed on an industrial basin and the area attained a neighbourhood status in 1972. Nowadays, there are 2000 households live in Cayan neighbourhood and most of the gecekonddu houses are now transformed into apartments. Most of the residents, 70 %, in the neighbourhood are tenants. When one strolls around the streets of the neighbourhood, it is still possible to see socialist slogans or graffiti on the walls of the houses. Most of the street names were chosen from female names. The daily ambiance of the neighbourhood clearly shows the political identity of the place.

The main aim of this organisation was to appraise the political capacity of the working class and to establish a political base. The dominance of the Alevi identity in the neighbourhood has a specific importance. In Turkey, the Alevi population constituted the base of left-wing political parties. Furthermore, Alevis have been predominantly involved in socialist political parties and organisations. This resulted in the alienation of Alevis from the dominant/mainstream religious identity defined by the state and made them the

For this reason, the Alevi population, who migrated from rural areas to big cities, settled in certain neighbourhoods. This is still evident today in Turkey. In other words, despite the class differentiations, the spatial concentration of Alevis in certain neighbourhoods is related with the religious identity.<sup>5</sup> Cayan neighbourhood is one of these neighbourhoods where Alevis have been spatially concentrated. However, although the narratives about the establishment of the neighbourhood denote a political autonomy for a certain period, the narratives about the later periods indicates that these circumstances did not last.

### **Socialist Organisation Constructing A New Neighbourhood!**

Halil G who was involved in the construction process of the neighbourhood tells about their experience on gecekonddu construction and its different phases:

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<sup>5</sup>See, Erman, T. (2003) and also see Erman, T. and Göker, E. (2000)

*"In 1970's people needed houses. People were tenants. What else could we do, there was land available here. "Land division commission" had already distributed Kagithane area, however the land we now reside on (Cayan Mahallesi) had not yet been distributed. 3 people were in control of the division here; Fettah, Pala and Hamdi. One of them was a coal dealer, the other was a conveyor and last was a greengrocer"*

*"...at those times, these lands were used in growing vegetables. The vegetables were transported with carriages to the market for selling. Then we started to come together and have discussions. We were 40 people. The field that we call as 1<sup>st</sup> field were cultivated with wheat It was in control of a guy called Hamdi baba (father Hamdi). He was from Gumushane. He had a business partner in local authority who was from Erzincan Refahiye, a member of Alibeykoy Local Authority (municipality) Assembly. I don't know whether I should pray for mercy for his soul or not but he has recently been murdered by one of his tenants. I don't know the details."*<sup>6</sup>

The information above indicates state's involvement in the process of opening the industrial valley to the settlement via Land Division Commission.

Involvement of socialists was not enough to replace the state's insufficient existence during the process. It was mainly because the motive behind those two actors' involvement and their methods were completely different than each other.

Socialist group gained the land through its own resources and power. Then the planning was completed by voluntary architects, experts and organisation's sympathisers. A centralized planning approach was followed. Planning which consisted of physical and social planning, such as gaining the land, housing stock, type of housing (including the heights), class dimensions of users, public services such as transport, education and so forth, names of the streets and all produced by a political structure.

Houses were planned as one storey within a garden. It was banned to construct pillars in houses. These were the measures taken to prevent the extensions and adding storeys

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<sup>6</sup>Halil G., who was involved in the construction process of the neighbourhood, 2009



regarding houses. These measures also were to prevent any commercial use of the properties. The weaker points that can trigger the market driven intentions were tried to be eliminated through planning.

In Cayan neighbourhood, organisation designed and planned the decision making process. While the neighbourhood was constructed around “political correctness”, it produced its autonomous and untouchable boundaries within the city's integrity. There were no state, neither market power in the process of gaining the land, planning and project designing. As organisation were already in “power struggle” with the state, it also achieved this result through enforcing existing legal and institutional structure. Restrictions around extensions and adding new storeys to the houses were mainly to prevent the houses to involve with the market relations.

Attempts to increase the economical value were banned. These measures were taken around properties' physical characteristics. Everyday life in the neighbourhood didn't exuberate to market relations. Neighbourhood obtained a political environment after settlers became political and involved in political activities. This political environment brought power to fight for essential needs against legal limitations. Committee members were responsible for the attempts that are demolishing the rules of capitalism and that are out of capitalist reasoning. Statutory institutions were complaisant towards people. Needs were met through that complaisance and the solidarity within the neighbourhood:

*“We were really suffered for this neighbourhood. There were no electricity neither water supply. We were struggling for those. We sorted out electricity problem ourselves via the closest utility pole. We were finding cables; one day, this is a really private thing to share by the way, but there was a gendarmarie station in Kagithane, there was a cable over a huge plane three. I went there, cut and took it. Obviously, not for myself, for the neighbourhood's electricity problem.”*

*“..lately solicitors from DISK <sup>7</sup> came over, then lieutenant came. We explained our problems; said we are in dark. He said “I will keep an eye you” and left it over there... we were sorting out electricity issue in those ways. We get the water from the very early days. There was a*

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<sup>7</sup>Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Trade Union

*tank over the hill. We digged a waterline, installed the pipes and builded 4 public taps with our own resources and own money that we collected amongst ourselves. People were queing to those taps to get the water. It went like this for a year or so and then it was legally sorted and they have supplied water to the houses.”*

As it is obvious from the quotation below that there weren't enough statutory regulations regarding the access to urban services. The principles that are outlined by the political organisation during the construction period of the neighbourhood were mainly focused on to solve the problems of the dispossed working class people around housing without too much focusing on the theoretical development. It is understood from the interview notes and from other gathered information that there were no political debates around those issues. It hasn't been foreseen that the use value which is produced by the centralised exchange value will regress or even abolish.

There were a lack of state control over the process of gecekondü production in those years and also socialist organisations had a strong grassroots support. Therefore 'secured right to possession” (Engels, 1992:12) was thought to be protective enough and there were no effective measures taken against private law property right. In other words, although the Cayan neighbourhood was constructed by a socialist group, it remained within social and legal boundaries of the private ownership because of the lack of enough measures to be taken.

Local leftist politics of the time (CHP<sup>8</sup> and socialists) draw a distinctive line between<sup>9</sup> profiteers who were speculating the land and gecekondü people and it gave tolerance to gecekondü with their policies in favor of corporatism. This privilage made the possession situation remain uncertain and it became the most fatal issue regarding neighbourhood's future. Hitherto, the involvement of the socialists in the process was in order to meet the housing needs of poor working class who were in need of land mafia. Therefore gaining land processess were falling under the remit of radical political organisations.

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<sup>8</sup> Republic Popular Party

<sup>9</sup>Vatan, 9.12.1977

Pickerill and Chatterton (2006:2 ) define the notion of “autonomy” as a social-spatial strategy. Autonomy which is consisted of certain localities also formulated as a political call out with the term “autonomous geographies”(pp,2). The proposal to produce autonomous geographies suggests to experience the everyday life within collectiveness rather than within capitalist relations. Therefore, it is a “praxis” as a struggle moment and combination. (3) In Cayan example, there is a claim that socialists were the focus point of the struggle against existing market relations and mafia power and they emerged as a constructive and regulating power through the space producing process. In that sense it is “praxis”.

Furthermore, the experience presents an autonomy of a will-power that is questioning and challenging the dominant legal and social norms. However, there is a centralised structure in decision making process in terms of the direct relationship between the democracy and the term itself (Katsiaficas, 2006; Martinez, 2012:6, Pickerill and Chatterton (2006:3). In other words, it is obvious that Cayan neighbourhood was constructed through centralised decisions rather than non-hierarchical decision making process. In short, rather than an autonomous geography which is constituted of mutual aid strategies through capitalist relations, they produced it through a political movement against state and market relations. As a matter of fact, there is a direct control on neighbourhood life.

Mayer (2013) determines the following regarding house squatting: Claiming housing as a right has a great potential to win mass support. This determination puts the practice of housing claim on a legitimate ground as going beyond the existing legal limitations and regulations in general terms. Therefore the need for housing and claiming the housing through enforcing the existing capitalist limitations and legal regulations, historically became the momentum of urban movements.

### **The Slums In The Neoliberal Era: Destruction and Resistance**

The second case that would be considered in this section is not the history of establishment of neighbourhood but the destruction. In this case, the experience of making “alternative planning” as a reaction strategy against destruction threat would be

investigated specifically. The common point in both cases along with the founding histories is the similarities of social and political fabrics in both cases. Today the neighbourhood is under the influence of leftist policies and the majority of population is composed from Alevi's <sup>10</sup>

In each of the examples, the socialists have carried out important roles. In the first example, the socialists have carried out the founding role where as in the second example they have important roles in the development of the neighbourhood, especially in the accession of services and infrastructure (Bozkulak, 2005; Aslan, 2008).

Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood, is one of the first neighbourhood that has faced destruction threat by the enunciated of the urban transformation in 2004.<sup>11</sup>

Although the establishment of the neighbourhood has started by the 1950s the real development has been realized by the 1970s. As it is stated above, the socialist left was strong in this neighbourhood as well as it was widespread in the country. Neighbourhood was built just nearby the industrial basins as a typical labor class neighbourhood.

The demolition and as a consequences the "dispossession" threat of the neighbourhood comes into the agenda by the urban transformation policies that are shaped by the neoliberal policies in the first stage of the 2000s. These changes could be evaluated as a result of the developments in the market mechanisms after 1980s, in accordance with market relations and exchange value concepts the reutilization of the rent by the capital class and mechanisms of transmittion of accumulation for themselves.

Parallel to the expansion of market relations after 1980, capitalist class gained further ascendancy on the city space. By this way, the realization of money-capital that has expanded in parallel with Istanbul's being finance-capital center.

The AKP goverment came into power in 2002, and by 2004 has begin to define the space and urban policies on the basis of the urban transdormation (Sen, 2008). As the urban transformation projects focused on destruction of old slums this has changed by the

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<sup>10</sup> As a different belief segment Alevi's especially feel more close to leftist policies because of their secular policie. This fact is still valid.

<sup>11</sup> This has been on the agenda by the Maltepe E-5 North zone plan that was legalized in July 2004.

years. From now on the restructure of all of the spaces are defined in accordance with this policy. The authority of TOKİ<sup>12</sup> as the implementing institution of these policies has been expanded and strengthened. For the municipalities in order to apply urban transformation projects precondition of signing a protocol with TOKİ is obliged. So that, centralization in the control of all of the rural authorities become possible. The neoliberalization of capitalism has reintroduced “accumulation by dispossession” as a way to solve the problems of flagging capital accumulation (Harvey 2005).

The urban transformation policies have been on the agenda considerably by a revanchist discourse. According to TOKİ president, the areas that would be covered by the urban transformation was justified under two main titles. The first justification was the definition of these areas as the sources of crime and terror.<sup>13</sup> The second problem was the migration for TOKİ president and he suggested that the migration of poor segments to İstanbul should be prevented.<sup>14</sup> Another main reason was explained as the necessity of building high resistant building against to earthquake. Urban transformation primarily come into the agenda in the neighbourhoods that are called with the political identities. Although the implementation stage has started in the neighbourhoods such as Ayazma<sup>15</sup> and Sulukule<sup>16</sup> that in all of the aspects “the bottom segments” of the society lives.

The urban transformation of AKP are based on the destruction of the slums. These destructions leads to the process disposesion<sup>17</sup>. While the urban transformation has created a widespread of construction facilities, on the other hand for the middle classes and the working class segments that are povertized to own property by the morgage loans has been promised widely. In other words, the dominant ideology is supported with the idea of owning a property that is supported by borrowing and counter -attack of

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<sup>12</sup> Turkish Mass Housing Institution

<sup>13</sup> The statements of TOKİ president Erdoğan Bayraktar have been characterized as a target of the slums. “According to us the roots of the terror lies back to slums, üniversitesi, chambers and capital groups should support in order to end slumming.” <http://www.emlakkulisi.com>; Okuma Tarihi; 8 Eylül 2008

<sup>14</sup> “We can’t prohibit the migration but in order to prevent the migration of penniless peoples and concentration of the poors to İstanbul. We need to take some measurements in condition of solving the security problem of İstanbul, by preventing the sheltering of the people that aim illegal ways, we can achieve the urban transformation.” <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2360145>: 23 Oct. 2009

<sup>15</sup> Ayazma is a location where mostly Kurdish people who had migrate to the city obligatory lives. .

<sup>16</sup> This neighbourhood is a Gypsy dwelling that has a historical roots and value.

<sup>17</sup> Bartu ve Kolluoğlu (2008) and see Uysal, Ü.E. (2012)

dominant classes against to the slums.<sup>18</sup> As stated by Castells (1997: 161) in 1977 the urban ideology is being widespread appropriate to the dominant classes. Therefore the autonom areas of 1970s would be defragmented and the solidarity networks would be weakend so that prevention of being a strong actor against to the capital classes would be provided. Furthermore leftist politics are not successful in the organization of these segments any more. This also makes easier the integration of these segments to the capitalist accumulatin process and makes it more difficult to go back in terms of political and material terms. The influence of left leaning groups and leftist political parties have been particularly weak.

### **Resistance, atlernative planning and autonomy**

The first reaction against to the project in the neighbourhood was to provide the cancelation of the project that also become on of the specific case in Turkey.

The neighbourhood association <sup>19</sup> has succeded to organize 6000 objection in 10 days. In this short period the association successes to set up relations and dialogoue with NGOs, Professional chambers and experts. The leaderhsip of the organization compose of the people that own high political and social experience has increased its efforts to strength the ties with the citizens of the neighbourhood.

Although the municipality, as a result of these objections follows a different tactics; withdraws the plan and instead of it prepares the “*urban renewal*” project.<sup>20</sup>

This high political sensitivy of the neighbourhood aims to go beyond the objection of the plan and the project and the neighbourhood with their own efforts starts to organize the involmment of the planning process. From now the neighbourhood itself comes into the fore as an active actor. For this, the idea of the street represantative has been evolved with the collobaration of the association.<sup>21</sup> In order to prevent the urban transformation a platform that also enlarged to other neighbourhoods is aimed to set up. By this

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<sup>18</sup> For this title Şükrü Aslan approaches and new results of his researches consist of important information. See Aslan, Ş. (2004; 2006; 2008)

<sup>19</sup> This association has a structure that is lead under the leadership of the leftist people and aims to resolve the problems of the neighbourhood and arranges some social activities. The most active period of the associations starts with this objection process.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Gülsuyu-Gülensu Güzelleştirme Derneği, Sosyalist Barikat, Issue number 34, October 2005

<sup>21</sup> Some meetings with Maltepe municipality has been held. The municipality declared that they will apply the plan that the neighbourhood approves. Meetings were also held with the Metropolitan Municipality The metropolitan municipality give the authority of developing a specific urban transformation project to Mimar Sinan University. Meetings with the university were held twice.

experiment, considering the case of organizing an urban movement some important stages were being realized. The first, is that the real searching process is the choice among being political and as a more technical issue being legal-judicial.

The second dimension that is taken into the attention is the use of more political discourse by the association periphery and the people who thought that they would be the victims: “ *Here, if we are able to create a central unity, we would be able to create labourers’ Istanbul*”.”<sup>22</sup>

The central unity is defined as; “*...not only with the participation of the working classes but with professional support/participation from the the opponent academicians, architects, engineers, urban planners and lawyers , if we could not be able to create an alternative process our defeat would be inevitable..*”<sup>23</sup>

Although in spite of these the neighbourhood members that participate to the protests could not called themselves as a part of a political wing. As it seen in this case, the discourses and propositions belongs to the leftist wing experiences. As it is cited above the axis of the urban opposition aimed to be analyzed. This axis is searching for a more center based opposition in favour of labor.

This experience differs from Çayan neighbourhood that was lived in 1970s in case of demanding and need to a more professional networks mentioned by the members of the neighbourhood. In this experience this professional groups/networks have been already political actors even organized so that they provide their political contribution as a natural part of their political activities. In fact, Gülsuyu Güleusu cases aims to go forward by using discourse and tactics of global social movements. Rather than the direct strategies that contradicts with the government they search for the ways to eliminate the injustice that is caused by the project.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Gülsuyu-Güleusu Güzelleştirme Derneği, Sosyalist Barikat, Issue number 34, October 2005

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Although as it is seen in case of Başibüyük<sup>24</sup> the resistance of the neighbourhood against to the urban transformation was suppressed by the merciless violence of the police. In this stage, the solidarity among the neighbourhood don't weakened even it strengthened.

Another dimension is about to get out of the axis of the neighbourhood in order to be successful. The increasing efforts of being organized and powerful clearly comes into to the forefront hand in Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood.

*“ For Istanbul in general they have kept communication with other neighbourhoods that face with the same problems. Several efforts in order to unify the activities have been realized.”<sup>25</sup>*

The province municipality's and TOKİ's attitudes without any compromise against to destruction of the slums, leads to the neighbourhood members to search for other alternatives in order to increase organization power. Gülsuyu-Gülensu and besides Başibüyük<sup>26</sup> neighbourhoods participate to several meetings and symposiums in the cities like İstanbul and Ankara in order to describe the problems they have faced and declare the need for the support.<sup>27</sup> Solidarity usually transformed into the platforms and occasions for debates in search of unity.

On the other hand the power bloc was followed. Since one of the main actor of the resolution process would be the municipality. In this process, always for those who struggle two divergences are being faced. Whether the municipality or the government? The approaching rural elections and the possibility of social democrat administrations instead of AKP has shifted the debate into another direction.<sup>28</sup>

## **Alternative Planning and Collectivity**

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<sup>24</sup> See Sen (2010) and also Kuyucu, T. and Unsal O. (2010 ).

<sup>25</sup> Erdoğan Yıldız, Özgür Üniv., Seminer Sunuşu, 2009

<sup>26</sup> As a consequences of urban transformation it is an important neighbourhood that face the destruction threat and resist against to this. This neighbourhood also differs from others because of its structure that gives support to right wing politics. Although after the threat of the destruction the support given to AKP was withdrawn.

<sup>27</sup> Together with the representatives of Başibüyük Neighbourhood association and Gülsuyu and Ayazma neighbourhoods from İstanbul a meeting of Ankara was held and experiences in different districts of Dikmen Vadisi and Mamak that struggle against to urban transformation for 3 and half years were shared.

<sup>28</sup> After the rural elections instead of AKP that owns the %72 of the votes, a candidate from CHP is elected.



Alternative plan was supposed to be a plan, that would not be a clash applied to the neighbourhoods from above by force but a plan created by the neighbourhood including the requests and needs of those living in those neighbourhoods. This plan study emerged as an alternative to the urban transformation policies and projects. The idea of an alternative plan was first proposed by the Solidarist Planning Group, yet this proposal gets quickly identified in the neighbourhoods without being thoroughly examined with regards to its meaning.

City plans in Turkey qualify as legal documents and they get produced by processes determined by the responsible institutions. But “alternative planning” was attempted to be produced through the participation of those living in the concerning neighbourhoods other than public processes. This planning process consist of methods that are non-institutional. But it also includes the expectation of approval by the competent state authority. This means that for providing the implementation of a plan produced by the citizens, the citizens, concerning authorities, academics, activists contribute to the realization of the concerning plan. The planning process targeted at the same time the constitution of a social organization including the street units. Therefore, every citizen in the concerning streets will integrate its own needs and expectations for the plan through this method. But using the term “self management” for this type of street units will be a bit too assertive.

Whilst political radicalism was decisive for the foundation of Çayan neighbourhood, in this particular example a different leftist standpoint aiming to have a distance to that discourse can be seen. The principle it is founded on is to provide the “citizen participation”. Manifesting a political perspective was avoided.

Therefore, these two different experiences were shaped by different political subjects in addition to different political backgrounds. The socialists in Çayan neighbourhood had made the dwelling issue of the working class among their own revolutionary targets, and they did so by the means of existing political possibilities and within the framework of their own organizational powers. In the alternative planning in Gülsuyu-Gülensu neighbourhood, an initiative aiming to provide current property possession and usage against the threat of demolition of the properties they already live in, has been initiated. It has emerged as a movement aiming to act against relegation and demolition of the

urban transformation projects. But in both of the cases, the question regarding the solution of “private property” issue remained.

Implementing alternative plans have been criticized on one aspect. This plan has been regarded as an idea substituting itself instead of the duty and responsibility of the state and municipality, thus the law. This planning process has created collective action and common power practices. According to Plotkin (as quoted by Fainstein and Hirst, 1995: 185), defensive anitomies may cause very troubled circumstances. That means that urban movements can discriminate the society having a low income and fall under the domination of property owners. In this experience, an anitomy between those having a property and those having none has emerged. Significant disputes concerning the overcoming of this circumstances have also taken place. Seeing as the planning process and legalising private property was an issue of capitalist terms, the acquisition of an autonomy for the neighborhood with these regards has not been the case. Nevertheless, the planning process has always been associated with the principles of direct democracy in so many terms. The endeavouring of making decisions collectively and not in an hierarchic fashion, the initiative of making the street commities work are examples of direct democracy. But these practices were not long lasting.

Yet the uncertainty regarding resolution of this discrepancy has remained. As a result of that, there are no neighbourhoods with alternative planning yet. But the management of municipality has changed in the following elections and CHP, a social democrat party, has come to power in this region. Nevertheless, CHP has not been able to develop a new discourse or an attitude regarding urban transformation and other neoliberal urban policies. Despite the fact that some of the people having more of a leftist discourse have made some statements, no critical canons within the party program can be seen. Interestingly, the only application being in favor of this group is the deceleration process with regards to the urban transformation projects. In short, during CHP rule, demolitions have taken place.

In terms of realization conditions of such experience, the trust being felt towards the public and the state to be corroded is an important factor. The fact that the requests were ambiguous had been in relation with the idea that the project can be cancelled with

negotiation processes as well. The possibility of a termination of the plan has developed in relation with the idea of hindering demolitions and corresponding disseisin.

The most critical and distinctive factor in generation of global principles and the continuation of those is the fact that the property ownership in slums is very frequent. Therefore the proposition of UN stating that the demolitions need to be stopped, for it demonstrates ousting to be a human rights violation, offers a unifying policy.

## **Conclusion**

As examined above, the construction of slums in so many terms bears the quality of self help. They are being made in a self help fashion along with the class based and cultural needs and expectations. The feasibility of the 1970's and the tendency of the socialist and social democrat politics to this issue provided a sort of autonomy peculiar to slums. But in the light of the neoliberal policies of the 2000's and the increasing importance of property ownership, the possibility of alternative planning to obtain autonomy has almost become impossible.

As seen in the first example, the political studies of the 1970's has effected the daily lives as well and the socialists organizations have formed "liberated areas and rebel zones" by also clashing with radical right organizations. The story of the foundation of Çayan neighbourhood shown in the first example is one of those experiences. In other words, a neighbourhood experience founded with the claim of fighting "fascism" within the framework of revolution. That means, it is not a political initiative implemented with an aim and awareness of "an autonomous urban movement". These concepts were never mentioned in the debates too. The organization had goals such as protecting the working class, who had limited access to dwellings and urban services in the framework of the era, from the land mafia, and further meeting their basic demands. Based upon these initiatives, the organization has tried to reach the political capacity of this group. In other words, the organization has found itself realizing a movement having a spatial autonomy. The slum area that was formed does not aim to exclude the state and market relations as a

whole. When it was necessary, it has deformed the legal rules of these two in order to appeal to the basic needs of the public.

But in all these strategy applications, it refers to a standpoint against the market and state rules and regulations in opposition to the existence of a capitalist system operating on global scale.

The controversy referring to the possible creation of anti capitalist relations and conditions by those strategies within a collective framework is a tense part of the issue. How sufficient are local solutions against a system having a global influence?

The situation seen in the Çayan can be summarized as follows: *“Political activity conducted for and on behalf of the public”*.

Despite the fact that the Çayan example managed to reproduce the social relationships politically, it was not able to reproduce the same in economical terms, thus remaining a semi autonomous structuring experience. That is the reason why a structural transformation in reconstitution of the economical relationships in such neighbourhoods since the 1980's has taken place. Suppressing the salaries, extension of accumulation processes based upon inflation and the redistribution of income are some of the pivotal regulatory politics of the era.

The experience examined in the second example demonstrates differences in two different terms. First, the organization of alternative planning experience takes place only through a non hierarchic method. The expectations regarding the plan and the determination of the troubled areas reflects a global knowledge accumulation. Being aware of the experiences in other countries and talking about being propertyless and ousting with groups coming from different countries can create significant awareness. But the implementation process of the plan and the plan as such does not necessarily aim to be anticapitalist. But in moments of general discourse and resistance, critiques stating that the urban transformations serve the interest of capital goals have become prominent. The alternative plan process has targeted to oppose the urban transformation by forming an autonomous process. But this process does not aim to form an “autonomous space”. It does not suggest a settled, transformative and political target. Because it has followed an alternative path aiming to solve the demolitions and

oustings imposed by the current urban transformation project apart from a “collective” or “public” spirited solution aiming to transform the property relationship.

Therefore, it was aimed to provide a solution remaining within the framework of current property relationships against a political patronization policy having caused problems for those living in the neighbourhood.

In both of the examples, both the meaning of space and the daily life as such in terms of autonomy the restructuring initiatives have been stuck in an ambiguous discourse referring to being anti capitalist and collective processes.

In neither of the examples, a full autonomy can be identified, for in neither case a usage value reversing the market logic and space have existed.

Besides, the possibility of movements and practices shaping themselves within local conditions are not likely to be autonomous. In these terms, it has become evident that the urban social movements and struggle experiences need to be formulized in global scale. Furthermore, the topics subjected to struggle are converging. Problem areas such as ecology and environment having a broader social base have now intertwined with oustings and political operations leaving a group of people propertyless.

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