

URBAN RENEWAL AS AN URBAN HEGEMONY PROJECT

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Abstract

There is an organic relationship between capitalism and urban space. This relationship is a dynamic one which reproduces and renovates itself constantly according to the conjuncture of each period and which evolves / changes in parallel with the necessities and rationalities of capital accumulation in historical process. Therefore, neither reproduction of capitalist urban space with the regime of capital accumulation nor the process of restructuring following a crisis in the regime of capital accumulation with spatial organization of capitalism can be compared independently. Today, in the concrete phase that capitalism has reached, urban space has become one of the most important parts of direct capital accumulation under the hegemony of financial capital. In this context, urban transformation projects and various strategies of the process becomes significant with the instrumentalization of space by capital rationality. However, this process carries the internal paradoxes of capitalism into the urban space at the same time, and cities, competing as candidates to be financial centres where the capital has intensified and centralized, also transforms into spaces of violent social polarization. At this point, especially the reformation of squatter settlements has a strategic importance in the process of urban transformation and there are attempts to attach the urban poor, who are the addressee of the process, under a wider urban hegemony project with the strategy of urban renovation.

KeyWords: Urban Renewal, Spatial Segregation, Capital Accumulation Regime, Projects of Hegemony

JEL Classification: Z13 - Economic Sociology; Economic Anthropology; Social and Economic Stratification

1.INTRODUCTION

Urban renewal can generally be defined as the transformation/renewal of some parts of the city that has grown old, become vacant or lost function in time (Kayasu; Uzun, 2009:153). In the related literature in Turkey, urban renewal and urban transformation can often be used interchangeably in the same meaning. This depends largely on what the decision makers or power holders aim with these activities, which tools they will use, physical and human characteristics of the area they will perform these activities and which way they will follow, whether in the process of urban renewal or urban transformation. Either term we use, these activities end up with a serious structural transformation. Inasmuch as Tekeli states (2003:2), when the city is taken as a place of transformation, it refers to a structural transformation. One of the impulses underlying the structural transformation of cities is the fact that they are, for various reasons (immigration, population increase or decrease, change in the consumption patterns, increasing rates of welfare), under a constant pressure of transformation and change.

City literature, especially after 1980, having been considered, it can be seen that issues that were also dealt with in previous periods such as urbanization-immigration, urban development, urban quality, transportation problems, transforming social structures, transformation of squatter housing areas, adaptation to the city, housing, regional imbalances besides new urban research subjects and approaches have started to gain importance in parallel with the agenda around the world (Eraydin 2003). Together with neoliberal policies and globalization, new communication facilities and as a result of this, borders losing importance, cities and regions having more and more economic and social relationships with not only their immediate surroundings but also with many areas around the world, cities changing under the influence of increasing external dynamics and international power balances have led to the emergence of new research subjects. Among the research subjects within the city literature in this period are global city, new production processes, new rent (unearned income)

seeking areas, new division of labor, class stratifications, urban disintegration, new centers, social and spatial transformations.

With reference to urban transformation and renewal, spatial disintegration and differentiation, and the urban poor; new patterns emerging as part of socio-economic dynamics are discussed in this study, in relation to the globalization process.

2.URBAN RENEWAL AND THE GLOBALIZATION PROCESS

The fact that cities are considered as a place of change and are under a constant pressure of change and transformation can be discussed as resulting largely from its organic relation to capitalism. Fate of cities and the course of capitalism are to a great extent interrelated. Harvey (2008) emphasizes that the main policy of capitalism is the constant requirement to find places profitable for production and absorption of excess capital and that urbanization plays a fundamental role in the stimulation of this excess product. Harvey (2008) states with reference to the close relation between capitalism and urbanization that urbanization has played a crucial role in the absorption of capital surpluses, at ever increasing geographical scales, but at the price of burgeoning processes of creative destruction that have dispossessed the masses of any right to the city whatsoever. Assumed to be immanent in capitalism, one last stop of these creative destruction processes can be said to be formed by the globalization process in 1980s.

Especially the period following 1980s is a period of globalization and practices of neoliberal economic policies that left its mark thoroughly on the organizations of production and labour and control mechanisms in the world. In this period just as new hierarchic structures come up pursuant to new division of labour and scales in the world, some unprecedented phenomena and problems are confronted in the cities.

2.1.Urban transformation and Global cities

As a response to the structural crisis that globalization faced during the 1970s, the restructuring process led to significant changes and transformations in the urban area. In this period when the capital got through its national borders rapidly and globalized; exchange value rather than use value of cities was given prominence and cities, having been rapidly integrated in the market rules, were redefined and took on new functions in the global scale. Cities now became the places where

nation states that were claimed to have "worn away" in the globalization process, local powers that were claimed to be at the forefront and the international capital all sought rant, usually in cooperation. Aspiring to this mission, many cities eagerly went into severe competition with each other in the global scale, mostly getting the support of their own national states and local organizations. This process that found itself in the conceptualization of "Global City" has got a new tendency with which development policies of neoliberal globalization process could be achieved based on and via these global cities. One characteristic of the new order is that the cities giving the necessary service to the capital come into prominence. İstanbul has got an important place as one of the cities that the transformations emerging in this period mostly took place. Emphasizing that the new world gave into the capital logic, Keyder claims that we live in a world where the global capital invests in wherever it wishes and dooms other places with stagnation and exclusion (1996:104). What is to be done for İstanbul to be one of the cities at the forefront according to Keyder is to "sell" it:

"Although an attempt to sell İstanbul seems to use the already scarce resources against the aims of equality, justice and fulfillment of basic services, a broader perspective shows that unless such an attempt is made current resources will not grow, but a better integration in the world economy promises to develop the opportunities in the future. Moreover, again basing upon the new way of the world economy, it can be mentioned that no more will national economies support cities but vice versa. Therefore, investments made and resources allocated to globalize İstanbul will deeply influence the future of Turkey as well (Keyder, 1996:105).

It is generally accepted in the related literature that cities gaining the status of "global city" by successfully integrating in the neoliberal globalization process where competition is the basic value have a hierarchic structure in themselves and have some characteristics distinguishing them from other "ordinary" cities. For instance, sometimes the existence of headquarters of big companies, international banks and strategical company services are considered among the distinguishing characteristics of global cities, and sometimes the existence of a big financial center/financial markets, headquarters of transnational companies, establishment of international institutions here, rapid development of the specialized services sector, being an important center of production sector, existence of global transportation and communication networks, being at a significant point of transportation, a large population and several different criteria are listed among

these characteristics. The basic characteristic of global cities in this sense mainly consists of the significant growth in the service and informal sectors and the fall in the manufacturing sector (Öktem, 2005:30).

Enrichment dream that neoliberal globalization promises via global cities and that takes hold of the majority seems to have considerably slowed down recently.

It is seen in the global scale that global cities are places where not only wealth but also poverty is reproduced, socio-cultural, political, economic and spatial dissolutions come up sharply and deepen. In addition, an urban opposition (group) challenging these dissolutions/exclusions and especially organized in center countries is rising rapidly again from the heart of these global cities. Just as Mulgan stated, it is not a coincidence that the defects of neoliberalism also emerged in these cities with their most apparent forms while the rebellions in the cities reached the boiling point and transportation systems collapsed. Likewise, it can be said that neoliberalism caused its biggest destruction in cities or its most direct and bare results are seen in the “global cities”.

In the neoliberal globalization process, it can be said that the migration to metropolitan cities neither was prevented nor decreased. The phenomenon of migration has a great importance as for the new employment profile, spatial profits, socio-cultural and political results of the process in question. Boratav explains one of the most important factors underlying the inability to prevent migration in this new period with the destruction that neoliberalism caused in agriculture. Various strategies and policies of neoliberalism in agriculture caused large groups of villagers to break loose of the agricultural production process. Presenting this process remarkably particular to Turkey and emphasizing that neoliberal policies cause a significant erosion on agricultural prices, Boratav states that this erosion has created a sense of breaking loose from production at a scale unprecedented in the history of the republic (2008:72-73). This break realizes without a pause in the flowing migration despite all precautions taken. Subjects of the migration in question flow rapidly into the informal sector as unskilled labour in worse conditions than previous generations, especially in line with the subcontracting tendency immanent in the industrialization strategy of the neoliberal globalization process. Öncü and Keyder state in this sense that globalization process, privatization and increasing competition decrease the number of workers who have social security in formal relations and more prevalent subcontracting relations in current industrial sector cause the informal employment to gain importance in the industrial sector (2003.24-28). The

abovementioned informal employment, on the other hand, can be said to include conditions, beyond working without social security, even wages below the minimum wage are received irregularly, or not received at all. This process finds its spatial projection in the change and transformation in the case of squatting.

2.2.Globalization and Squatter Houses

Urban renewal and urban transformation practices increasing in the neoliberal globalization process created a significant structural transformation on the case of squatter housing. While the squatter housing areas with the potential of creating rent witnessed these renewal and transformation practices, the ones that didn't either marginalized being pushed out of this process or transformed into low quality structuring areas. Especially the squatter housing areas that were pushed out of the informal sector and left to the transformation process have become the residence area of the social group employed in the informal sector and called "the new urban poor" in the related literature. Squatter housing areas' getting rapidly drawn into the renewal and transformation process, especially in the case of Turkey in the urbanization process, as one of the most important means of integrating with the city and adapting to the modern society, leads to the loss of this function. Squatter housing areas contributed not only to social integration but also to social solidarity with the social, cultural and economic functions they assume. Especially, alongside the economic motivation behind squatting, the case of "fellow countrymanship" was able to take effect in the integration of the immigrants to their neighborhood and the formation of social networks and accordingly acquisition of social capital by which way it helped finding jobs, getting informed about financial opportunities, or maybe getting support in hard times (Öncü; Keyder, 2003:20-22). Squatter housing areas, which almost came to an end in the urban renewal and urban transformation process, in Keyder's word, became important resorts of transition from the informal housing market to the global housing market, getting quickly involve in the mass housing process (2009:188). Thus, the current separating line is drawn between the residents of squatter houses and the ones able to move onto high-rise flats, rather than the old legal/illegal distinction. Therefore, as a result of the urban transformation that squatter houses went through with the urban renewal process, a new kind of relationship can be stated to have occurred among the residents (property owners/tenants) there; and because the function the squatter houses assumed came to an end and this process combined with the erosion of social state, this process caused large masses to marginalize. Davis indicates that tenants are the least

visible and the weakest group among the squatter residents and that they are unable to receive compensation or be transferred to another place in case of reformation or renewal (2010:61-62). Renting their houses is the basic way for poor dwellers to turn their properties (formally or informally) into cash; however, this way generally develops in an exploitation relationship with poorer people. Concordantly Sönmez, who has been dealing with the practices of urban transformation/renewal projects in Turkey, states that the tenants primarily were economically affected by the outcome of Dikmen Valley Housing and Environmental Development Project put into practice in 1991, and squatters living as owners were also negatively affected (2006:124). While the tenants of squatter houses were completely left out of the project, squatters described as “right holders” were debited in proportion to the size of their property and obliged to pay the difference between the price of the flat they were given and the price determined for their land. In addition, it is usually stated that the houses they obtained at the end of the project are not at the same value with their squatter houses. It is stated in another research conducted in Denizli that squatters were obliged to move to high-rise buildings having been debited and some of them soon sold or rented their houses because of hard living conditions and moved to nearby villages (İçli; 2011, 43-57).

As mentioned above, it can be said that the rent expected to be created by the squatter housing areas subject to the urban transformation and urban renewal projects affect the structure and quality of the houses to be built in that area to a great extent. In this context, Atkinson states that there is no guarantee for areas in severe collapse to be aimed at in the restructuring process, some patterns could focus on areas where considerable improvements can be realized rapidly with low costs, and others on areas having the potential of significant development in order to draw the private sector investments and therefore to maximize stability and economic development (2005:96). This is because cities have significant functions not only about creating value but also about transferring the value. Tekeli thinks that the city land creates various types of rent as an important tool of speculation. The city, thus, plays an important role not only in creating a plus value but also in its distribution among groups (2011:237). If the difference between the value of the squatter house and the value to be created after the transformation is little, the result will usually shape in accordance with the result that Sönmez (2006) reached from the outcome of the research he conducted in Ankara 19 Mayıs Neighborhood. Accordingly we can say that high-rise apartment type settlement that emerged together with transformation and called organized housing zone will

have a low-quality structure and the construction material used in these buildings that are produced by low-capital property developers using traditional construction methods will be low-quality and the houses will lack modern comfort elements. If the rent created increases significantly, the outcome will most probably be “displacement” for both squatter house owners and especially tenants as a result of urban renewal and urban transformation projects. The increase in value of new houses is shared between the entrepreneurs constructing them and their new dwellers (Şen, 2010:323). Yaman’s findings as to the “urban transformation” process realized in Ankara Dikmen Valley and its outcomes shows that these old squatter housing areas increased in value as a result of the urban transformation process, the rents increased substantially and accordingly it is no more possible for the old squatters making their living in hard conditions to live in these areas (2011.140-180). The reason is that as a result of this process, not only the old squatter tenants but also the right holders found this area expensive and moved to cheaper neighbor hoods of Ankara. Some of the right holders rented these houses, others sold them. In consequence of the urban transformation practice, the old squatter housing area became a residence to new dwellers – middle and high income groups.

2.3.Urban Transformation and Labour

Neoliberal Globalization process, as mentioned above, needs not only labour but also skilled labour, which is usually named as “new middle class” and described as a social group generally seen in metropolitan cities, employed in the service sector and skilled jobs required by rapidly developing international, national and local economies, having high incomes and global tastes. Thus, this class can be said to benefit from international commerce, financial capital and accordingly banks, insurance companies and intermediaries with financial investment and consultancy companies, and the dynamics and development in fields of public relations, communication, media, advertising and marketing (Kurtuluş; 2005a:113; Şen, 2005:150). In conjunction with the transformation of cities into areas of rent seeking and speculative gains in the neoliberal globalization process, entrepreneurs in various scales (construction and real estate sectors, speculators, etc.) and the new middle class became the center of the process and the rest of the city was completely left out (Şengül, 2009:143-144). It can be concluded in this context that the urban transformation process is shaped in parallel with the expectations of the high income group and urban transformation itself emerged in

order to produce housing areas for the middle and high income groups (Güzey, 2009:186-187).

2.4.Urban Transformation and Spatial Differentiation

One of the basic characteristics of neoliberal globalization process shapes on this axis, sharpening class differentiation spreads to the spatial area leading to spatial differentiation/exclusion process. Harvey states that spatial differentiation is roughly generated by powers emerging from the capitalist production process and it shouldn't be interpreted as a product of people's autonomous and spontaneous preferences (2002b:169-170). Spatial differentiation describes a condition, in advanced level of which individuals have no other choice than adaptation and interpersonal social relations are replaced with interthings/objects market relations. Spatial differentiation is becoming widespread in not only cities characterized as "global" but also medium or even small scaled cities. Findings of researches conducted in cities like Denizli (İçli; 2010, 2011) and Adana (Çopuroğlu; 2006) also reveal that spatial differentiation is spreading and economic and social inequalities are increasing. Spatial exclusion can be defined as a condition of having problems in access to and benefiting from certain spaces due to several reasons. Spatial exclusion got two products mingled to a great extent. The first is the majority's excluding the individual because of his place/geography of living, despising him, exposing him to discrimination. For instance, for the ones obliged to live in a depressed area with bad reputation because they have no other choice, this condition can mean an insult to their identities and a decrease in the respect to themselves. For most residents, the society they live in indicates an area of fear and blame instead of a preference and pride, and sometimes the bad reputation of a neighborhood is inscribed for the people living there (Andersen, 2005:154). This perspective may create the concept of "oblivion" of people living in certain areas. The second is the condition that, independent from the opportunities of access to individual/household financial resources, the individual cannot get entirely, properly involved in the social life because of the quality and quantity levels of public services in their geography (Adaman; Keyder, 2005, 9-10).

Kurtuluş states that spatial differentiation is getting clearer with the rapidly increasing population that "doesn't want to integrate with the city", besides the squatter population that "cannot integrate with the city". This differentiation process brings about a process of exclusion, especially closed settlements become

a strategic tool of this process. In a research he carried out on İstanbul, Kurtuluş divides closed settlements in the metropolitan area into three groups. The first type of closed settlement area developed in quite a large area, as sub cities in the modern sub city fringe of the new middle class. Dwellers of these areas also develop a common sense of spatial belonging. The second type of closed settlements are the ones that reply a demand originating from cultural capitals which the new rich of İstanbul (who are rapidly increasing the financial capitals of the city) are trying to transform by means of safe investment need and conspicuous consumption. It is usually impossible here according to Kurtuluş to talk about a common spatial belonging. The reason is the variability of demand and the fact that the dwellers of such settlements often change houses due to the trend in the luxury housing market. The third type of closed settlements are the ones which, radically self-enclosed, bring property owners a strong spatial belonging. These settlements, less in number than others and holding the most expensive houses of İstanbul real estate market, provide the dwellers with prestige rather than investment. This spatial differentiation process starts first with the privatization of land and its going non-public with walls and barriers; ends with various security measures separating it from the squatter or poor country pattern around it (2005b:166-181). Davis, more acutely and quite incomparably, defines the process as “minimization of urban area” with reference to the Los Angeles example in America.

Spatial exclusion, with other forms of exclusion it is together and in organic relation with (economic, socio-cultural, political exclusion), gradually reticulates not only center countries but also nearby countries, in exact accordance with the spirit of globalization. Differentiation/exclusion forms in question correspond to “urban poverty”, a new type of poverty that is defined in organic relation to them and gradually increasing. The exclusion process in question, together with the increasing poverty, also drew the attention of international institutions and organizations, to the extent that it has a potential of serious threat against the reproduction of capitalist system. “Anti-poverty”, for instance, was first brought to the agenda at the beginning of 90s, United Nations General Assembly declared first the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17th October), right after that the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) and the first decade of it (1997-2006). Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development given by the United Nations in 1995 played the founder role in bringing “eradication of poverty” to the development agenda (Özdek, 2002:2-3). And in the 1997 development report of United Nations, poverty was dealt with not only in the

context of income poverty but also in the context of depravity from living condition and poverty was defined as violation of human rights (Koray; Alev, 2001.453). European Urban Charter, adopted in 1992, can also be considered in this context. It is also emphasized that individuals and families with limited social and economic opportunities should not be abandoned to the market mechanism conditions only, the cost of the renovation of old house patterns should not be burdened on groups living here with low socio-economic levels, and every individual and family should have the right to a safe, strong house. In the second European Urban Charter adopted in 2008, after European villages and towns were recorded as the leading powers of current wealth and important actors of the globalization process, the existence of an annoying tendency towards increasing poverty was accepted. It is stated that serious social and spatial differences continue affecting large groups in populations, in addition to deep social gaps between different neighborhoods, there also are environmental differentiations. It is also recorded in the European Urban Charter that there is a serious worry about spatial inequality processes, the out of hand increase in the prices of land in city centers, parallel ghettoization in city boundaries, and walled “closed settlements” emerging in some areas and promoting a spatial discrimination that is breaking up the towns. It is stated in this context that the main aim of urban policy is social and spatial adaptation.

The reasons for this case to draw attention are rapidly increasing and sharpening poverty as a result of neoliberal globalization and its becoming subject to the spatial exclusion process, in addition, these excluded spaces starting to appear as various crime centers. Besides, appearance of urban poverty as a significant basis for rapidly organizing social and political opposition found its reflection also in urban reconstruction and strategies and policies. Organized-disorganized protest movements occurring all around the world with an increasing acceleration also revealed the fact that urban renewal or urban transformation practices are not largely accepted by the society. Researches showed that the participation of local residents subject to the projects is generally ignored, which brings to the agenda that, at least in the center countries, urban renewal projects should be hegemonic, in other words, basic needs and expectations of the project subjects and characteristics of the region should be taken into consideration and the consent of the local community subject to renewal should be gained. Turok emphasizes that the transformation attempts with a strong social dimension have an active local participation, the aim of which is to make the transformation meet the needs and lead to local “appropriation” to some extent as for strategy and resulting activities

(2005:27). Active participation of local community in the process of determining and practicing the strategy can bring the transformation programs in legality, credibility, local understanding and a sense of belonging. And this, according to Turok, makes them adopt these programs. Likewise, it is now generally accepted that the most important factor determining the success of urban renewal and transformation process in the social dimension. It is assumed that a successful renewal or transformation process should take into consideration the native land, awareness level, ownership pattern and user profile, cultural characteristics, customs and traditions and education level, satisfaction with the region and economic condition of the community involved in this process (Jacobs and Dutton, 2000, quot. Özden, 2008:75-76).

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, search for a new livable, sustainable and populist urban renewal and transformation (Tekeli,2011:127) is the product of a long haul experience that especially the center countries went through, in which projects ignoring the social dimension have long been practiced and the negative outcomes are obvious in our day. The success of renewal and transformation process can achieve its purpose with the participation of not only international and national organizations/actors but also the local community. If this case is ignored, the actual loser of the transformation process is the whole city with regards to the created environments. The renewal and transformation process of neighboring countries is far from catching up with this stage; rather, it is much more destructive and forcible.

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