FROM GLOBAL URBAN PERIPHERIES
TO ISTANBUL’S GECÊKONDÚ NEIGHBOURHOODS
BUILDING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY?
Century of the City

• IN THE 21ST CENTURY HALF OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION LIVES IN CITIES

• THE PROJECTION IS THAT IN 50 YEARS’ TIME, 2-THIRDS OF HUMANITY WILL LIVE IN CITIES
Qualitatively as well

Cities as spectacular *phantasmagonic* assemblages and heterogenously disjointed collection of *amalgameted tecno-natural configurations*

Swyngedouw 2009
Cities Constitute:

• The condensed materialization of a global cosmopolitan order.
• The apex of the 21st C condition
• Hubs of *rhizomatic* worldwide networks

Swyngedouw 2009
The Polis is Dead!

THE POLITICAL CITY AS:

- a site of interaction, public/political encounter, discussion, negotiation, consensus,
- a site of dissent, disagreement, dissensus,
- a place of gathering, of communication of information & interchange,
- a place for protest, resistance, mobilization, insurgency, uprising...
Long Live the Consumer City!

- Increasing privatization of public spaces
- Public interaction based on the model of commodity and capital flows
- Civil liberties and the right to public space eliminated in the interests of enhancing the quality of urban life + security (9/11 Syndrome)
• Spatial restrictions on where to speak, to mobilize, to protest,
• Exclusions caused by zoning, real estate values and privatization,
• The Mall Effect: Consumerism as the ascending value
Shopping malls, multiplexes and box stores proliferate, as do fast-food and artisanal market-places.
“Quality of urban life has become a commodity, as has the city itself”

• “The defence of property values becomes… of paramount political interest …”

Harvey 2008
“Passification by Capuccino”
Zukin 1995
“The Post-Political City”
Swyngedouw 2009

• “...the neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism,

• and its cognate of political withdrawal from collective forms of action, becomes the template for human socialization.

• ...ideals of urban identity, citizenship and belonging—already threatened by the spreading malaise of a neoliberal ethic—become much harder to sustain.”

Harvey 2008
“The Post-Democratic City”:
“Global restructuring and decline of democracy & enfranchisement”
Swyngedouw 2009

- Implementation of urban policies in favor of global capitalism
- Many state functions transformed to non-state/quasi state bodies;
- Serving developer interests at the expense of everyone else.
- The emphasis on economic competitiveness that tops every city’s list of objectives causes (policy reoriented away from redistribution to competition),
- Priority to growth at the expense of all other values,
• The loss of the social function of cities;
• The commercial exploitation of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights;
• Deepening social, economic and gender inequalities;
• The absence of democracy and social participation in decision-making processes that are in the public interest;
• An increase in insecurity despite the rise of police and military violence;
• The dramatic increase in forced evictions as a pillar of capitalist urbanism;
• The criminalisation of social movements
• The environmental degradation,
• Forcing the poor to live in high-risk areas;
• The failure of governments to comply with regulatory frameworks established at national and international levels to ensure the right to housing...

RttC Alliance
Where Are We Going to Build Our ‘Agora/s’?
‘Right to The City’
1) Appropriation
Lefebvre 1968

• The right of inhabitants to physically access, occupy, and use urban space,

• Not only the right to occupy already-produced urban space,

• also the right to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of inhabitants
‘Right to The City’

2) Participation:
Lefebvre 1968

- Enfranchises all citizens to participate in the use and production of all urban space (control away from capital & the state/ towards urban inhabitants),

- which means control over urban social and spatial relations.

Purcell 2003
City as an ‘ouvre’

- When solely the exchange value of space is preferred over its use-value, ‘city as an oeuvre’ is suppressed,
- The use value aspect of urban space as the primary consideration in decisions that produce urban space.
- A clear priority for the use value of urban residents over the exchange value interests of capitalist firms
“Right to The City is like a Cry and a Demand”

LEFEBVRE 1968

- “A radical alternative that directly challenges and rethinks the current structure of both capitalism and liberal-democratic citizenship.

- Questions the growing power of capital and the increasing inadequacy of liberal-democratic political structures as a means to check that power.

- A radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond”

Purcell 2003
Harvey 2008

• “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.

• It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization”
Harvey: A Question?

Q: “...the urban and peri-urban social movements of opposition, of which there are many around the world, are not tightly coupled; indeed most have no connection to each other. If they somehow did come together, what should they demand?”

A: “The answer ...is simple enough in principle:

• greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus.

• Since the urban process is a major channel of surplus use, establishing democratic management over its urban deployment constitutes the right to the city.”
R2C as a Revolutionary Form of Appropriation

• R2C is less a juridical right, but rather an oppositional demand, which challenges the claims of the rich and powerful

• It is a right that exists only as people appropriate it (and the city).

Mayer 2009

• It is a right to redistribution, not for all humans, but for those deprived of it and in need of it.

Marcuse 2009
A radical demand

• “Lefebvrian right to the city is a demand, about democratizing cities and their decision-making processes.

• Not a set of claims for inclusion in a structurally unequal and exploitative system, in the current system as it exists.”

Mayer 2009

RATHER A RADICAL DEMAND TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM
Change in Meaning of the Concept

• It became a specific kind of demand: A claim of citizens, a citizen right, a right articulated within the framework of urban citizenship and its legal, ethical, and performative term.

• As an enabling right to reach other rights in the city

Holston 2007
• Building their own shelter and way of life, actually appropriating the city’s soil through some from of illegal residence and demanding legalization and legal access to resources by mobilizing and organizing in grassroots.

• Articulation of this appropriation as rights of urban citizenship, the right to inhabit the city becoming a right to rights that constituted an agenda of citizenship

Holston 2007
Insurgent Citizenship:
The global peripheral urbanization produces new kinds of active citizens and citizenships

THE RELEVANCE OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS:

• INVASIONS, LEGAL BATTLES, AUTOCONSTRUCTION. HAVING CONTRIBUTED TO THE BUILDING OF THEIR OWN LIVING SPACES THUS TO THE CITY, THE INHABITANTS FEEL A PRIDE, NOW AS BEING PART OF THE CITY, ACHIEVING THIS THEMSELVES, A SENSE OF URBAN CITIZENSHIP

• THUS R2C ACTUALLY EVOLVES FROM THIS INSURGENT CITIZENSIP- THE RIGHT TO CHANGE AND EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO CHANGE . .

Holston 2007
Brazil: From insurgent citizens to protagonists of a struggle for a democratic Constitution

• The neighborhood associations also forged new horizontal confederations of citizens concerned with housing, land conflicts, infrastructure, human rights, and urban administration that became city-wide and even national movements.

• The most significant was their massive participation in framing the 1988 Constitution at the end of military rule.

Holston 2007
RTC in Brazil

• “They fought not only to make the Constitution formally democratic. They insisted on participating directly in its elaboration.

• Their objective was to insure that it embody their experiences—those of modern urban working classes—as a basic source of substantive rights and social justice.”

• City Statute is inserted in the Constitution in the 2001 amendments (after pressure from social movements)
1st Phase: 
The Gecekondu Building as Insurgent Citizenship

• Solving the housing issue by occupying (and thus appropriating) the state lands and building gecekondus with the help of friends.

• The process once initiated thus, broadens, as demands for other urban facilities/services ensue.

• …urban social movements, especially in their struggles for reaching urban services, have influenced and changed the city both physically and socially.

Aslan 2004
2nd Phase:
Resistances against the injustices of the Global City Aspirations

• Urban space being shaped by local authorities state actors (TOKI) & global corporations

• Urban Transformation/Renewal Projects triggering forced evictions/ demolitions

• Privatization of schools, hospitals, cinemas, urban spaces…
From productive to reproductive space
Factory to Neighbourhood

• According to Katznelson, Marxism neglected the question of urbanism in relation to working class.

• Yet, the working class has experienced effects of capitalism in their neighbourhoods and public spaces as well.

• “Therefore politics in a neighbourhood is a variable in the formation of working classes”.

Deniz 2010
However, the struggles of working class neighbourhoods need to be closely studied to perceive the relevance between

• their mobilization in defence of their living spaces (mainly against UT)

• and the contribution of this struggle to the creation of a mobilized front against the injustices of the system, as a veritable R2C movement.
The revival of people’s power while resisting urban transformation projects.
‘POLIS’ IS BACK

TALANCILARA, RANTÇILARA, TOKİYE HAYİR!
SARIYER SARIYERLİLERİNDİR
SARIYER MAHALLE DERNEKLeri PLATFORMU

25/12/2010 17:19
“Movements may utilize central civic space and even overrun the center, yet they are fundamentally manifestations of peripheries.” Holston 2007
The neighbourhood becomes the Agora
Reinvention of the Notion of the Political

• “What we are going to see is the reinvention of the notion of political.

• The notion of rights will become rights to the city and that will mean rights to things like housing and rights to water…

• Invention of new political forms of membership, which will enable people who are truly marginal to claim their rights to the city”

Sassen 2011 (BBC News)
A Global Struggle: very hard/ yet opportunities are multiple…

• “…because the metropolis is now the point of massive collision—dare we call it *class struggle*?—over the accumulation by dispossession visited upon the least well-off and the developmental drive that seeks to colonize space for the affluent.”

Harvey 2008
TOKI ve KÜÇÜKÇEKMECE BELEDİYESİ;
VERDİĞİN SÖZLERİ TUT!
AYAZMA MAĞDURLARI
The language and stance of the resistance changed / from needs oriented to rights oriented

• “They gave us strength, made us clutch to each other.”
• “Our spirits would go high when a visitor arrives”
• “For our future, for our kids, for a life with dignity, right to housing, to be able to reach a life of virtue... we are here.”
• “Fighting not only for the right to housing but also for other rights and for others’ rights.”

Baysal 2010
Giving solidarity to urban movements against the 3rd Bridge while demanding housing rights for Ayazma tenants!
SARIYER+ AYAZMA : IN SOLIDARITY WITH ATAKÖY NEIGHBOURHOOD
Dikmen V Başıbüyük

• ‘‘…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 Başıbüyük 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”.

Mehmet Baki Deniz 2010
Başibüyük

• “What do you think about us? Who do you think we are? We are just ignorant people. We have problems in our right to sheltering. Why do we care about other things? We are not as conscious people as you imagine. We first have to solve our problem. We want help for this cause. After solving our problem then we may think of others”.

Deniz 2010
Dikmen Example

• Not only mobilize the people for various demonstrations but for activities for the creation of an environment worth living, especially for the children.

• It also used both legal channels and demonstrations to provide municipal services, such as transportation and cheap bread kiosks to the neighbourhood.

Deniz 2010
Dikmen: Class based activities
The threat of demolitions is over. However, the political activity of the neighbourhood is still vibrant

- They attended with 1000 people to ‘May 1st ’ celebrations in 2010 in Istanbul, Taksim Square.

- 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

- …they decided to use the open land in Dikmen Vadi for collective livelihood farming and try to extend to it people of Ankara

- They also persuaded UTEA and the confederation of public sector workers (KESK) to plant trees. 5000 trees are planted and waiting to grow.

Deniz 2010
Gülsuyu-Gülensu Discourse

• “Without unifying our struggles in the neighbourhoods of the labour and furnishing a centralized unity (unity not only of labour populations, but a unity encompassing all those spheres of the opposition such as academicians, architects, engineers, planners, lawyers) and failing to establish the center where an alternative process with professional tools can be created, our defeat will be inevitable.

• *If we can create a unity here, we will be able to create the Istanbul of working classes.*”

Şen 2010
HAYDİ TEKEL İŞÇİLERİYLE DAYANIŞMAYA!

Tekel işçilerinin direnişini selamlamak için; 14 Şubat Pazar günü saat 14:00 de Heykel'de buluşuyoruz.

Bizleri aç, açık ve işsiz bırakan ve iğneden ıpliğe yaptıkları zamları zamlara hayatı çökülmüş hale getiren, yurtınun alınıntınızda kazanıp, tırmaklarınızla kazıyarak yaptığınız olverimiz kentsel dönüşüm adımı altında yakmaya çalışan,

İççine beni siz seçmediniz yar gelip yatmayın diyen,
Anamuzu ağlatınız dıyey yakının üretici köylüye ananı da al git diyen, Eczacısına, doktoruna, bakkalına karşı savaş açıp efelenerek meydana okuyan AKP hükümeti sira büyük sermayeye (patronlar ) geldiğinde karışısmında bütün bakanlarıyla ip gibi sıraya geçerek işçilerini dinlemekte ve bir dedikolduları ile etmemektedir.

AKP ve önceki hükümetler, IMF'nin istekleri doğrultusunda bu vatanın en göze çarpan işçilerimizi yok pahasına yerli ve yabancı sermayeye peşkeş çekmişlerdir. İşte Tekel'de bu işçilere liderden birdir. 147 yıllık bu kuruluş Türkiye'nin en büyük kuruluşlarından arasıda 5.sıradır. 2,5 milyon üretici köylüye iş olanlığı yaratmış ve 30 bin işçiyi bağrında bandırılmıştır. İşte böyle devasa bir kurum ne büyük bakımlık bir iha ile degerinin çok çok altında bir paraya peşkeş çekilmişdir.

Bu özelleştirmenin sonucu olarak Ürünçiler perisan, İşçiler işsiz, Ülke katma değerden yokun bırakıldı.

 Şimdi soruyorum; tekeli adım adım iflasa sürükleyen sonrada yok paahasına peşkeş çekenler kimler?

200 – 1.500 TL arası alınan işçi ücretini 2.500 TL göstermeyeye çalışarak halkı yanıltan, işçilerle karşı karşı getirmeye çalışan başka biri başbakanı sesleniyor;

işçilerinin bu hakkı ve aynı zamanda onurlu direnişlerini bastırmaya ne sizin gaz bombalarınız coğaları ne de bu soğuk havanınla işçilerin üzerine sıkıştığınız sular engelleyeme neyecek a. Söylediniz türlü türlü yalanlarla işçilerin birliği bozamayacakınız.

mücadeleyi Gülsu - Gülsunu Halkının mücadelesi sayıyor ve maddi manevi her türlü zigimizi bu direniş başarıya ulaşmacaya kadar sürdüreceğimizi ilan ediyoruz. Çünkü bu direniş ve Tekel işçilerinin direnişi değil, tüm Türkiye işçi sınıfı ve emekçi halklarının direnişidir.

İşçilerinin kazanımı hepimizin kazanımı olacaktır.

Yaşasın İşçilerin Birliği, Halkların Kardeşliği

SUYU - GÜLENSU HALKı
Failleri Belli.
Kayıplar Nerede?
CREATION OF A PERMANENT URBAN SPACE
Temporary urban space
WITH MASSIVE SOLIDARITY & SUPPORT FROM ALL MOVEMENTS

Questioning the injustices in the system as a whole
“RTC is not a completed political architecture”
Purcell 2002

• “It is not a completed political architecture but a door to a new and contingent urban politics”
  Purcell 2002

• Looking for the threshold: Insurgent to Revolutionary?
• RT Shelter/Housing/… / to RT change the city
• And the Capitalist System ??
Concluding…

• “The rapidly unfolding recession is thus intensifying the breaking points around which urban social movements have been rallying, suddenly validating their claims and arguments about the lack of sustainability and the destructiveness of the neoliberal growth model.

• Such a situation enlarges the window of opportunity for the Lefebvrian right to the city demand, which is not about inclusion in a structurally unequal and exploitative system, but about democratizing cities and their decision-making processes.”

MAYER 2009
R2C as a unifying agent

• “One step towards unifying these struggles is to adopt the right to the city as both working slogan and political ideal,

• precisely because it focuses on the question of who commands the necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use.

• The democratization of that right, and the construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative

• if the dispossessed are to take back the control which they have for so long been denied

• and if they are to institute new modes of urbanization

HARVEY 2008
“Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all”

Harvey 2008
APPROPRIATION OF SPACE BY AN ACTIVIST!
Teşekkür Ederim

Cihan Uzunçarşılı Baysal