In Defence of the Space:
Local Opposition to the Globalist Projects in Istanbul

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Local opposition against the Invasion

- Professional chambers: Since the mid 1980s
- NGOs: Between 1990-2000
- Political groups: Since the mid 1990s
- Civil initiatives: Since the 2000s
- Neighbourhood organisations: Since the 2000s
Neighbourhood Organisations

From the interviews:

“we oppose this plan because our existence is completely ignored. Otherwise, the plan should be prepared. It is a need... We only oppose the ignorance of our existence... It is not only housing right that is being taken from us, it is our living rights...”

“Nobody asked us whether we want anything or why we oppose these plans!”

“We cannot live in mass housing sites where they want to relocate us. How can I do with 400 YTL income (200 euros) in those houses? How can they expect me to live in those areas without increasing my income? I do not need to pay for extra money for the caretaker, apartment contribution and etc when I am living in this neighbourhood. And I will not have neighbours like this in those sites, who help each other when necessary. That’s how we live: We share our poverty! What shall I share with those people in those mass houses? And what if I cannot pay the installments!”
Neighbourhood Organisations

• Local NGOs with strong local relations

• Motivations:
  – To stop the gentrification process and stay in their neighbourhood
  – To sell their house to a higher price

• Problems:
  – Representativeness
  – Reactionary rather than progressive (some may be evolving to progressive)
  – NYMBISM (until a certain stage of discourse construction)
  – Clash of arguments between different neighbourhood organisations
  – Competition to become a leader
  – Impacts of the leftist groups
  – Time and money problems

• Union of Istanbul Neighbourhood Organisations - IMDP
Civil initiatives along with neighbourhood organisations

Civil initiatives tend to work with the neighbourhood organisations and there has been some remarkable co-works.

Solidarity Studio:

- Around 200 volunteers worked together with street representatives elected by the neighbourhood association at Gulensu and analysed their neighbourhood via questionnaires, interviews and street meetings as well as developing ideas in a 1 week workshop at a university. Meetings are going on.

- Chamber of Architects, Chamber of City Planners, some labour unions and some NGOs also supported.
Civil initiatives along with neighbourhood organisations

• Sulukule Platform:
  • It has been the most successful initiative in terms of developing public awareness.
  • Together with the Solidarity Studio, they just produced an alternative plan (STOP) for Sulukule, in which Roma people may stay in their neighbourhoods by doing what they have been doing traditionally.
  • Negotiations with the municipality continue.
Concluding Remarks

- **Radical pluralism**: groups combining, uncombining and recombining…

- **Plural & Diffused Resistances**: Differentiated political spaces starting from the street and neighbourhood scale extending to city, nation and even international scale.

  - Without rights to the neighbourhood, can we talk about the rights to the city?

- **Neighbourhood as a political construct**: Re-defination on the basis of its capacity to self-organise and make decisions?
Concluding Remarks

- Creative & Progressive Resistance:
  - Concrete alternative proposals

- Extending the public space of planning, which is quite important for democratisation of planning and getting the rights to the city.

- Who should set the agenda?
  - Should the community get organised to resist a set agenda or set the agenda by themselves? How?
  - Self organisation rather than participation…
Concluding Remarks

• Neighbourhood organisations create their own discourse and publicise their own word with the power of their organisations...

  • Raising self confidence and the sense of freedom...

  • As they are more publicly involved and get into the discussion for the whole city, and as they put their own agenda rather than a given one, they start avoiding NYMBISM.

  • This in time may generate the consciousness to defend rights to the city as a whole, however, those urgent rights (such as sheltering) should first be obtained via political organisation and solidarity.
The right to the city

- There is an opportunity to oppose together with the concept of the right to the city [Lefebvre & Harvey]:
  - Urbanisation as a working slogan and a political ideal focusing on the production, use and control of space ...
  - To construct a global and strong social movement...
  - To ensure the democratisation of the right to the city and regain/protect our public spaces...
  - To take over the urban space and reproduce it...