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## Cooperative Response to Urban Transformation: Lessons from Istanbul

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## **Cooperative Responses to Urban Transformation: Lessons from İstanbul and Berlin**

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### **Abstract**

Turkey's economy increasingly benefits from privileged trade, low wage levels and the steady influx of foreign direct investment. Capital accumulation produced by this rapid economic development has increased the land prices and triggered the reallocation of industry and trade. Most of the larger Turkish cities experience similar changes which have been characterized as "urban transformation".

In the megacity of İstanbul, government and financial investors realize ambitious infrastructure and commercial projects while in the so called centers of urban transformation neighborhoods are becoming increasingly threatened by dispossession. This has led to criticism about the role of central government in urban development and about the lack of citizen involvement in decision-making culminating in the Gezi Park demonstrations of June 2013.

After German unification, The city of Berlin has been reallocated its former status as Germany's capital city. In the 1990ies the city had collected a heavy debt burden and was threatened by bankruptcy. City government had responded by cuts in public spending and a land policy which aimed at selling out public and community real estate to highest bidding private investors. Since then, the city has experienced an unprecedented period of growth and reconstruction. With the ongoing impacts of the financial crisis in Europe and the formidable performance of the German economy, investment in Berlin's real estate and infrastructure has gained a reputation as safe heaven for profit seeking investors. In the meantime, land and real estate prices together with the cost of living have dramatically increased, while income levels have not. This has repeatedly triggered dissatisfaction about low transparency of Berlin's land policy and the low involvement of civil society in the planning of privatization and urban transformation projects. Recently the case of the Tempelhof Airfield Construction Project, which was brought to a complete stop by a referendum against government plans has provided a formidable example of citizens expressing their distrust in the abilities of their city government.

In this paper we claim that in the process of urban transformation finding a compromise between commercial and community interest affords the redefinition of citizen and property rights accompanied by the emergence of a politically strong and tightly organized civil society. After a quick survey over contemporary theories of urban transformation and civil society development, we will analyze and explain current processes by which citizens organize their claims about customary, economic and political rights related to participation in planning. By means of case studies and interviews with leaders of neighborhood associations we analyze some of the instruments and potential of these types of civil society organizations for the inclusion of traditional and customary forms of neighborhoods into the urban decision making process.

We find that new types of movements and neighborhood organizations aim at defending their members against forced eviction. Moreover, they organize voice thereby linking residents and local politicians. In this process, our paper highlights the importance of securing both, economic property rights and customary residential rights of citizens for successful and sustainable conflict resolution. Our paper ends with recommendations for the development and further formalization of urban resistance movements' organized efforts to participate in the process of urban transformation. Likewise we give recommendations for the better integration of these organizations in future processes of politics and planning.

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## 1. Introduction

Increasing population especially in urban areas has been a fundamental problem worldwide. In 1950s, approximately 730 million people lived in cities (29%). Today, there exist 3.6 billion urban residents. Estimations indicate that by the year 2050 some 6,2 billion people will live in cities. Moreover, urban population is expected to double in developing countries (UNFPA, 2011). Unprecedented levels of urbanization also have an effect on the number and size of the world's largest cities. While there were only seven megacities in 1950s with at least 5 million inhabitants, today, there are 21 megacities all over the world.

As the number of the global urban population increases, national governments, metropolitan authorities and local municipalities are confronted with a major task of improving the quality of existing housing stock and providing land and house for different social strata. In other words, with a growing amount of heterogeneity among residents managing cities will become more complex (Bredenoord and Lindert, 2010). At the same time in many regions of the world it cannot be expected that political organization and administrative capacities will grow as fast as the number of urban residents (Laquian 2011). Consequently, an inadequate participation accompanied with the lack of transparency and accountability may emerge as typical shortcomings of city governance because sustainable development of cities usually requires participation by all sectors of society in urban politics and decision making (UN-DESA, 2011; Tekeli, 1998; Harvey, 2008; Gülöksüz, 2002).

The understanding of the formation of civil society in contemporary processes of urban growth seems to be a key ingredient of theorizing global urbanization.. Old and new residents seeking to maintain and improve their living in the context of urban growth frequently oppose and block public and private urban projects, which raises costs and lengthens time frames for the all sectors involved (Ducci, 2000). New types of urban movements and collective action groups characterize conflict settlement. The fight for citizens' rights to land and housing is challenging the dynamics of transformation (Bartu and Kırılı, 2007; Çavuşoğlu, 2008). This study analyzes the role of civil society in urban transformation in the city of Istanbul. Our goal is to better understand the organization of processes by which citizens seek to influence planning and decision making. In particular we seek to understand the emergence of new types of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the aspects of urban transformation these organizations are best able to support and the changes these organizations experience in the process of raising voice and claiming rights to the city.

Our paper is organized as follows: In the next section we provide a short overview over the literature on urban transformation specifying hypotheses about the role of CSOs in urban change processes. . We then exemplify typical organizational developments and typical change processes with cases in which residents collectively confront projects of urban transformation in the city of Istanbul. In characterizing the aims of new types of CSO we distinguish between activities in which citizens claim public space like parks, roads or other infrastructures and cases in which claims about private or individualized space like housing are made. We find that depending on what is at stake different degrees of organization and rights formalization characterize the resulting movements and CSOs. While referendums and movements secure participation rights in planning and organize in loose horizontal structures representing a flexible but credible threat to developers of public space, the aim of protecting against eviction and the modernization of housing is organized in movements which quickly become formalized. Both ways of preference articulation use pre existing democratic modes of formalization to acquire legitimacy and political allies. The paper ends with a discussing of the role civil society organizations in redefining residents' ownership and participation rights to city.

## 2. Civil Society and Urban Transformation

Urban transformation has become a dominating paradigm of urban planning describing the shift from modernist industrial cities to post-industrial global cities (Gülersoy and Gürler, 2011). Concordantly, planning and governance of urbanization processes have been reconfigured, and the concept of urban transformation became diversified in theory and practice, both in planning and institutional literature. Furthermore, this situation is reflected in Hall and Pfeiffer's (1992) work where the 20th century is defined as the century of urbanization, and the 21st Century as the century of urban transformation. As a consequence, managing urban transformation which is influenced by ongoing social and economic dynamics has become one of the most important challenges of the 21st Century (Sassen, 1991,1995; Smith, 2002; Yırtıcı, 2005; Eraydın, 2006) .

So first and foremost, it is necessary to clarify the concepts and drivers of urban transformation to reveal the role of civil society organizations in urban transformation processes:

The concept of 'Urban transformation' was first used for the characterization of renovation activities in European cities which were destroyed after World War II. Decentralization of industrial plants has been another driver of change threatening the congruence and integration of urban spaces. Typical interventions including revitalization, regeneration and re-functioning. all have been described as elements of urban transformation. During the 1990ies -the notion of urban transformation gained a new meaning in the context of neoliberalism. For example authors like Rousseau (2008) have described processes of urban transformation as the "spatial translation of neoliberal theory". In this discussion the idea of refunctioning of land has gained some prominence. For example Çalışkan et al, (2012) states that in recent years, production of space generally occurs through urban transformation depending on the decreasing amount of vacant urban land and need for re-functioning. In this context Ataöv and Osmay (2007:57) make the most comprehensive definition: "*urban transformation is the process of physical, social and economic transformation of urban land*".

Definitions of transformation highlight different aspects depending on who is involved. While a group of planners treat transformation as a framework for better explaining and classifying different tool of planning, social scientists and some planners rather aim at identifying the driving forces behind urban change processes in the context of societal transformation. Both perspectives are relevant and contribute to the understanding of the physical and societal reproduction of the city: New types of social classes emerge and the ways in which cities are built change (Yang, 2010).

Gülersoy and Gürler (2011) represent the former group, stating that urban transformation includes three major categories of interventions: (1) Heritage conservation-based Urban Transformation occurs in historical areas with cultural significance in which the protection of heritage is a fundamental concern focusing on restoration, restitution, renovation and reuse of space as methods in the process. (2) Regeneration based Urban Transformation occurs in existing urban areas having economic and functional potential like for example derelict industrial areas and docklands and focuses on urban regeneration as well as reconstruction, redevelopment, restructuring and land-use change as methods in the process. (3) Re-Development-based Urban Transformation mostly occurs in squatter areas, devastated and/or deteriorated urban spaces for urban upgrading and socio-economic restructuring, focusing on an urban renaissance as well as renewal, revitalization, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse as interventions.

Consequently, planners define transformation as a general framework concept by which the different purposes of spatial interventions are structured. Their concept of transformation allows to classify what the subjects of change are.

Another perspective transformation relates to urban sociology and the economics of urban development. Authors aim at revealing the drivers of urban transformation finding answers to the question of “why transformation occurs?” The recent debate in this literature has been inspired by David Harvey’s work “*The Urbanization of Capital*” (1985). Urban agglomeration is explained by increased labor division and the resulting gains from specialization and concentration. Transformation happens via factors influencing how capital is accumulated and governed in urban areas. In his later work Harvey (2013) for example analyzes the financial crisis of capitalism throughout an urban perspective, moreover, he puts forth the significant role of urbanization processes (housing, infrastructure, etc.) on capital accumulation since cities have arisen through geographical and social concentrations of a surplus product. He argues that the urban process entails “*the creation of a material physical infrastructure for production, circulation exchange and consumption*” (Harvey, 1985). In which the built environment is a reproduction of the the accumulation and organization of capital. The urban environment was built, and is continuously destroyed and rebuilt, for the sake of creating a more efficient arena for capital circulation (Harvey, 2008, 2013). This “Las Vegasian”-process of “creative destruction” is accelerating and is clearly visible in many cities all over the world.

Literature on urban transformation from the last 20 years reveals that in many countries the notion and concepts of urban transformation have become elements of state policy.. Most city governments consider urban transformation as a framework in forming policy formulation and implementation. Therefore countries may define a specific urban transformation policy depending on their own constitutional structure, property rights, financial system and housing needs. Moreover, policies may be influenced by interdependencies between national and international relations and respective global doctrines in policy formulation. For instance in times of global crisis urban transformation has often been interpreted as being part of Keynesian economic policies during 1960s, whereas currently it is often described of being an element of market oriented neo-liberal policy principles. (Keyder, 2005)

**Table 1.** Dimensions of Urban Transformation

Objective	Policy Tools	Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Decreasing crime rates</li> <li>•Affordable houses, livable places</li> <li>•Re-development after war or pre-disaster</li> <li>•Local development by commercial uses</li> <li>•Macro-economic growth depending on real estate financial markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Financial</li> <li>•Housing</li> <li>•Employment</li> <li>•Macro-economic</li> <li>•Development</li> <li>•Local governance</li> <li>•Urban and planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Regeneration</li> <li>•Redevelopment</li> <li>•Renewal</li> <li>•Rehabilitation</li> <li>•Revitalization</li> <li>•Resettlement</li> </ul>

Source: Produced by Authors from National Development Plan of Turkey, 2013

Figure 1. Summarizes different functional dimensions of transformation mentioned in the literature. First one is the **main objective** of the urban transformation. This ultimate objective is sometimes solving the housing problem, sometimes, reducing earthquake risk. This objective mainly eases the legitimacy of the urban transformation policy. Second is the **bundle**

**of policies** that makes urban transformation applicable and sustainable. Policies like health policy, social security policy, security and environmental policy makes the process not only a spatial transformation but transformation of social life. The third one is about how urban transformation **designed** as a **process**. Whether it is an urban land development facility, a method to provide affordable housing or an approach to revitalize public land. Urban transformation policies describe divergent methods or tools like urban renewal which refers to rehabilitation of impoverished urban neighborhoods by large-scale renovation or reconstruction of housing and public works., resettlement in empty urban areas and brown fields, regeneration in city centers.

In the rest of this paper the notion of ‘urban transformation’ is used as a framework concept describing drivers and policies of urban change. In order to understand the impact and direction in which urban transformation steers, the role of the various stakeholders of urban change has to be clarified. This is where civil society as a driver and beneficiary or victim of change processes comes in. In what follows we will shortly describe the role of civil society and certain movements in important strands of the social sciences literature.

The concept of urban movements have emerged after 1960. Based on Lefebvre’s idea of “the right to the city” Lefebvre (1968) Lefebvre summarizes his ideas as citizens’ upcoming *"demand for transformed and renewed access to urban life"*. According to Lefebvre, production of urban space has both social and mental dimensions not just physical; also space is not a container in which activities just occur. With this aspect, urban space is both a commodity to reproduce capital and a subject of collective struggle, which mostly develops as a tension between the planning authority and citizens. Therewith the 1970ies can be characterized by an increasing interest in advocacy planning by arranging neighborhood associations of householders, academic networks and other participatory activities to engage citizens in urban planning. After the 1980ies, the paradigm shift to neoliberalism led to a more market-oriented urbanization in which citizen participation has not been much of a concern (Corcoran,2002) . By the 1990ies, due to the urbanization processes comprising contradictions; while market-led development still reigns, there has been significant interest in communicative or collaborative planning parallel with a shift from representative to deliberative democracy (Monno and Khakee, 2012).

After 2008, David Harvey’s piece Right to the City-which he briefly described the capitalist process and how the city has been the space for investing surplus capital- has led both the literature on urban transformation and struggles on street protests. Harvey suggests that the global crises, which have affected cities across the world now offer an opportunity for the marginalized “classes” of the world to come together and take control of the “surpluses”. He proposes that if the marginalized people across the world were to democratically unite, they could probably demand a human right to the city. The right to the cityconcept of Harvey differs from that of Lefebvre in being *“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. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights”*.

A number and variety of urban movements, such as the Right to the City Alliance in the United States of America, Recht auf Stadt, network of squatters, tenants and artists in Hamburg, and various movements in Asia and Latin America and also in Turkey have incorporated the idea of the right to the city into their identity and struggles. Most struggle groups around the world seeking a united response to gentrification and call a halt to the displacement of low-income people and marginalized communities from their historic and central urban neighborhoods.

The right to the city concept neatly complements recent theory debates in Public and New Public Administration. about appropriate governance structures of increasingly complex metropolitan areas (Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren, 1961, Ostrom 1972, Frey and Eichenberger, 1999,). In revisiting Elinor Ostrom's conceptualization of the "Governing the Commons (Ostrom 1990). Harvey (2012:80) adapts her concept and develops the idea of "The Urban Commons", a situation in which the boundaries between public and collectivized goods and services become blurred and the city as a whole with its structure of citizen rights is to be called "The Urban Commons". For Harvey "Urbanization is about the perpetual production of an urban commons (Harvey, 2013) and its perpetual appropriation and destruction by private interests. The future sustainable governance of this type of agglomerated commons invokes that living in a city coincides with the allocation of citizen rights to design urban space and better appropriate the benefits made possible by the complex interplay between various public and private actors. For this to come true, the bottom up reorganization of civil society is seen as indispensable prerequisite of urban development. The emergence of new types of rights to the city and other movements around the globe is seen to be a first sign of an unavoidable development of citizen's grass roots in the future.

It is precisely this context in which cooperatives are being viewed as important vehicles for developing human, social and financial capital. Cooperatives combine the associative features of civil society organizations with typical features of business firms (Draheim 1956). As such they may provide important links between the institutions of civil society with those of capitalism. In the developed world cooperatives play major roles for the organization of producers' countervailing power vis a vis mighty food processors and retailers. in agriculture and rural service provision, cooperative financial institutions are important elements of the world's financial systems. In urban areas housing cooperatives are important players at the land and real estate markets. As such cooperatives can be found in nearly all countries (Zeuli and Radel, 2005. According to many authors the urban cooperative sector provides a third or middle ground between the public and the private sectors, known as the two traditional ways of organizing consumption and production,. In the housing sector co-operative tenure is regarded as a compromise between owning and renting (Kemeny, 1992; Bengtsson, 1999; Özkan, 2009;); housing cooperatives are frequently the initiators of citizen movements and known to collectively secure economic property rights and right to the city especially with respect to resident participation (Lang and Novy, 2012).

Networks also play an important role in the development of grassroots (neighbourhood) organisations which develop usually horizontally between different organisations. Linkages between organizations becomes more and more important on urban governance. Besides raising public awareness, these networks serve as exchange channels of experiences and increase the power of advocacy and claim-making as well as improving spontaneous and formalized participation opportunities. (Schwegman, 2013)

Consequently, while urban development is still primarily directed by private and public capital investment (Harvey, 2013), the need for a more grass root driven participatory planning and transformation as well as the development of new networks of territorially defined organizations is highlighted in the recent literature (Rosol, 2010).

In the next section we will study cases<sup>3</sup> in which citizens have recently claimed their participation and ownership rights to the urban commons in Berlin and Istanbul.

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<sup>3</sup> The case studies are based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with leaders of CSOs.

### 3. The Struggle to Govern the Urban Commons

With a population of 14 million people, İstanbul is today the fifth largest city of the world.. Due to its geographical position at the Strait of Bosphorus the city belongs as much to Europe as it belongs to Asia. As such İstanbul is not only a significant cultural and geopolitical centre but also firmly integrated within the global economy. The steady influx of foreign direct investment and capital accumulation produced by economic development has pushed up the land prices and triggered the transformation of the city center.

Urban transformation in İstanbul has happened in four stages beginning in 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of modernization of the state. Second period begins with World War II which can be defined as self urbanization. The third period is shaped by neoliberal policies and changing socio-economic environment after 1980s shape. The final and ongoing process started at the end of the 1990s and accelerated with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government which has revolutionized the urban structure both in central area and the periphery (Kurtuluş and Türkün, 2005; Çalışkan et al, 2012). This transformation process can be realized through (1) master plans, (2) capital investments (prestigious business centers, five star hotels, shopping malls, gated communities), (3) mega projects (3<sup>rd</sup> bridge, 3<sup>rd</sup> airport), (4) regeneration/revitalization/transformation projects in residential areas.

On the other hand, İstanbul is one of the most vulnerable cities to seismic events due to its location on the North Anatolian Fault Zone, one of the world's fastest moving and active faults. Moreover, İstanbul's earthquake vulnerability has been magnified by factors like inaccurate land-use planning and construction with poor infrastructure and services in particularly in squatter areas (Erdik et al., 2003). Mainly two objectives serve to legitimize the city government's strategy towards urban transformation: On the one hand, city development shall mirror and underpin İstanbul's role as a modern global metropolis. On the other hand construction and planning shall serve the purpose to reduce risks for the population related to earthquake hazards (Karaman, 2008; Ercan, 1996; Candan ve Kolluoğlu).

This situation has provided manyfold opportunities for realizing ambitious construction projects in İstanbul's inner city districts. At the same time not only the many areas in which people have settled without formal land titles are increasingly becoming threatened by ambitious projects of transformation. The recent Law on Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk also puts a threat to many of İstanbul's legal settlements because their earthquake risk status may easily become subject to interpretation and debate among politicians and private investors. Another aspect supporting urban transformation in İstanbul is the city's policy of partnering with large private investors and the practices of privatization of urban public land. These factors have led to criticism about the role of central government in urban development and about the lack of citizen involvement in decision-making.

Meanwhile criticism of practices of urban transformation has led to the formation of a number of community-based organizations (grassroots). The so called "neighborhood organizations" and "solidarity groups" (initiatives) have become an increasingly important part of politics and civil society in İstanbul.

Objections on planning issues are not new. Activities have been first led by chambers (architects and urban planners) after the mid-1980s. And some NGO's joined the chambers after the 1990s. But since the year 2000 a new era of civils society organization has started. Political groups, neighborhood organizations and civil initiatives have been established or existing ones shifted their interest to planning decisions or projects. Enacted law on Urban Transformation has been the first stimulus for the growing numbers of neighborhood organizations, however the Gezi Protests of Summer 2013 has been a milestone for the



increasing number of initiatives, solidarity groups and forums conducting objections and protests against planning decisions. Figure 2 demonstrates newly emerged CSOs and their spatial distribution in İstanbul which generally coincides with areas subject to urban transformation



**Figure 2.** Newly Emerged Civil Society Organization in İstanbul

Source: Produced by Authors

Our first case from İstanbul is a Neighborhood Cooperative organized to secure economic property rights and customary residential rights of its residential members. Our second case from İstanbul is a solidarity group which has emerged to defend a historical public park in İstanbul against the threat of being transformed into a shopping mall. Both cases are similar in that citizens have managed to organize collective action, raised public awareness for problems caused by low citizen participation in planning. The cases differ in the types of property rights claimed: The Derbent Neighborhood Cooperative aims at securing the rights of residents and protect them from eviction. The Taksim Solidarity Group aims at protecting a public space from being rebuilt into a mall.

### ***Derbent Neighborhood Cooperative: Defending both for Property and Citizens Rights***

Based on an (informal) agreement between capital, state and the labor force which was reflected in populist urban policies, squatter settlements surrounded the periphery of İstanbul. The radical shift in planning urban land with neoliberal urban policies engendered transformation process in these neighborhoods particularly after the 1999 earthquake (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). Increasing awareness about earthquake risks legitimized interventions in squatter neighborhoods particularly closer ones to prestigious business centers or other big

capital investments. Derbent is one of these neighborhoods first formed in 1937 after industrialization around the neighbourhood and until today its population increased to 10.000 inhabitants. Until the 1990s residents of the Derbent neighbourhood provided their own public services and utility infrastructure (roads, water,...) where development was mainly based on 1 storey squatter houses. Ever since most buildings have been transformed into 2 and 3 storey buildings (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Derbent Neighborhood in Sariyer-Istanbul

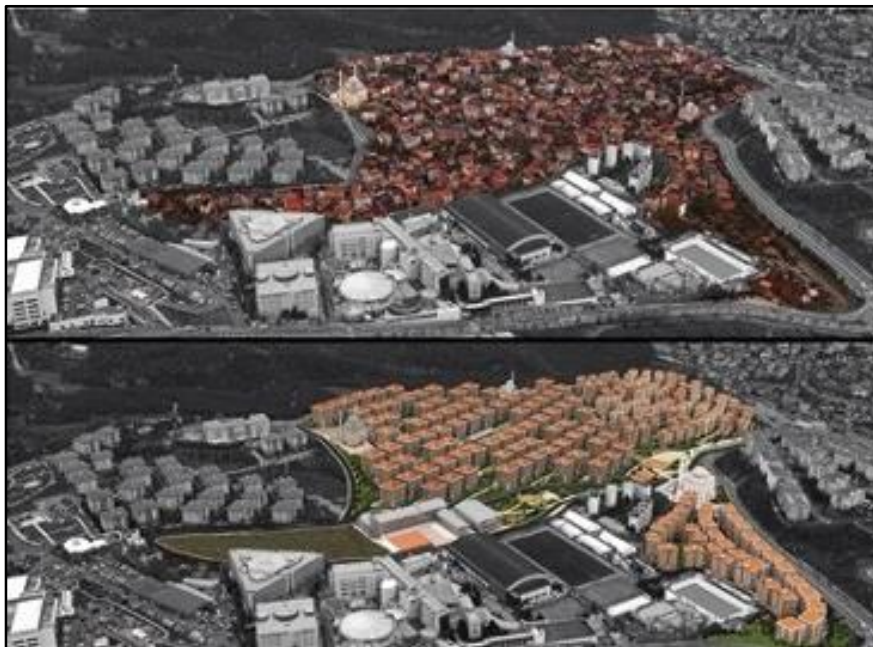
Land use in Derbent expands up to 400 acres with approx. 10.000 houses while land property is diverse. In the beginning of the 1980ies some 220 acre of the land with an existing 500 squatter houses was officially transferred to Atatürk Oto Sanatkarları Housing Cooperative. Since then this old cooperative exists on the basis of clearly demarkated boundaries and land titles and has built 26 luxury buildings for its members. While the old cooperative struggles for more houses on their land, in 2005 a neighborhood organization was founded in Derbent as a service provider for residents of squatter houses. In the years between 2005 and 2011 the neighborhoods of the squatters in Derbent increasingly became threatened by eviction. In this period they get active assistance-advisory of “Solidarity Studio” and BirUmut Organization. While Solidarity Studio, consisting mostly activist academicians from urban planning departments of university, gives technical advices; Bir Umut as an NGO gave consultation on legal legislation, and this is an important source of motivation and consultancy. When they first faced an immanent threat of eviction in 2011, the plan to organize in the form of a cooperative was realized and Derbent neighborhood cooperative has been established in 2012. Executive board of the cooperative consists of citizens who were notable and not active in the neighborhood organization for the purpose of sharing active leaders of the neighborhood. In parallel with this process, 9 neighborhood organizations and 8 coops came into existence in Sariyer district all consisting of squatter settlements threatened by eviction. In addition the “And Sariyer Neighborhood Organizations” and “The Cooperatives Platform” have been established as umbrella organizations.

Operating under the main cooperative principles Derbent Cooperative has an additional objective to have a more powerful voice on defending citizen rights. While their main motivation of solidarity is to defend the neighbourhood and property rights; their major objectives include planning and producing their own physical environment to increase quality of life, avoiding

eviction, defending their commons both for homeowners and tenants -which are neglected in transformation projects and also laws.

Even the cooperative seems to be financed with membership fees, services they provide for the neighborhood (summer classes for kids, literacy education, neighborhood bulletin) are based on solidarity within the neighborhood and activists in both BirUmut and Solidarity studio. Information sharing and decision making is conducted through weekly board meetings, advisory meetings, general assembly and some more meetings which is all open to public. Ensuring broad participation to these meetings is essential to increase awareness about transformation processes and inform citizens, besides social events like picnic organizations for solidarity among citizens.

Although, they have similarities and links with the traditional cooperative movement and operate in accordance with the Cooperative Law, housing cooperatives in Sarıyer have a particular by-law and define themselves as neighborhood cooperatives depending on this difference<sup>4</sup>. Derbent Cooperative and other new ones in Sarıyer have been established without a property and not to build but to defend an existing residential environment.



**Figure 4.** Derbent Transformation Project

The role of the Derbent Cooperative in governance of urban transformation begins just after the planning process that started in August-2012 and it gained importance after 30 hectare of neighbourhood was identified as a risky area according to Law 6306 in January, 2013 (Figure 4). The first displacement attempt for the neighborhood parried by the citizens with a resistance beyond barricades. The executive committee of both neighborhood organization and the cooperative was detained after the revolt in the neighborhood and they were accused by deforcing people to stay in neighborhood. Thereby 2013 has been the year of struggles with a busy agenda. Sarıyer Neighborhood Organizations and Cooperatives Platform organized a

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<sup>4</sup> Housing co-operatives have generally addressed to middle and upper middle income groups to produce owner occupied housing for their members in Turkey. They have been different from the cooperation ideology and their counterparts in Europe and formed its own distinguished structure with state subsidies within a top-down movement. Newly developed coops mainly differs from existing cooperatives that are serving not for the low income groups but high ranked bureaucrats, aiming to use public resources such as credits, land and infrastructure investment by using cooperative the institution.

huge protest march from neighborhood to a central location to demonstrate that they are united and have the will to defend their own environment. The march attracted a great deal of attention and enabled to organize voice thereby linking residents and local politicians. While they become more assertive in their desire to participate in planning and transformation process of their neighborhood, 2014 has been the year of success. The court cases which was against the planning process and identification of risk area ended in favour of cooperative. Considering the future prospects, main success of the former activities of the organizations seems to have transpired at local elections. All candidates except AKP (Justice and Development Party) signed a commitment document promising to include residents of the neighborhoods in planning processes. Elections in March, 2014 has been ended in favour of their candidates and the leader of the cooperative has also been elected as the chief of the neighborhood.

### ***Taksim Solidarity: The Case of claiming Public Space***

The realization of the idea of urban transformation and modernization has been accelerated particularly by the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP). City transformation follows the governments political agenda of the year 2011 in which so called “crazy projects” characterize the governments modernization program for the city. With crazy projects a number of recently announced mega projects of the Turkish Government are described. They include the realization of a third Bridge over the Bosphorus a Third Airport, a 50 Km long new channel paralleling the Bosphorus and the Development of Taksim Square, one of Istanbul’s most important public spaces.

The City of Istanbul is divided by the Bosphorus, a Sea Channel linking the Marmara Sea with the Black Sea. This results in an Anatolian part and European part of the City linked by two Bridges. Taksim Square and Gezi Park are open spaces situated at the European side of the City of Istanbul which is a district with restaurants, shops and hotels. Designed in the 1940s, Taksim Square and Gezi Park have been the most important public spaces of contemporary Istanbul including a Republic Monument commemorating the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Due to its long history, Taksim Square became a symbol for nation building and civil society formation and has been associated with many public events such as political rallies, labor demonstrations in May 1<sup>st</sup>, New Year celebrations and national football celebrations. Today it is a place where protest groups traditionally demonstrate governments deliver information and political agendas to the people (Gül et al, 2014).

The Taksim project was first announced by PM Erdoğan during his 2011-election campaign. The plan has been approved by municipality and included the destruction of a green space called the Gezi Park for a shopping mall and reconstruction of Ottoman-era ancient military barracks (Figure 5). Project get reaction from urban planners, architects, NGO’s and community groups and objections were made in relation to the municipality’s management of the proposed project. Particularly the lack of participation and PM’s personal involvement subjected to critics.

Right after the plan’s approval, public opposition against the plan arose and was organized in new civil society organizations. In this process a group named Taksim Platform emerged in which concerned citizens, urban planners, architects, lawyers, academics, NGO leaders, political party representatives, and artists organized. At the beginning their aim was to distribute information about the governments Taksim project to the public. The result was the organization of a petition campaign and the collection of thousands of signatures in support of the Park’s protection. On February 14, 2012, the Chamber of Architects had announced to organize a solidarity group among the organizations already participating in activities in



support of the park's protection. Nearly 60 such organizations attended the first meeting to express their claims on their "commons" and denominated the group as "Taksim Solidarity" by signing a common declaration. Just a few weeks after the first call, the number of organizations having signed the taksim declaration had increased to more than 120 while the structure of the group now being called Taksim Solidarity had tremendously diversified now including labor unions, chambers, neighborhood organizations, ngo's, political parties, other CSO-platforms and citizen initiatives. The group decided to execute the secretarial issues of the solidarity through Chambers of Architects and Urban Planners.



**Figure 5:** Taksim Gezi Park and Proposed Military Barrack

After that has been achieved, Hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected under the initiative of Taksim Solidarity. The group showed its political muscle in mass demonstrations like people's chains, concerts and movie shows. Over a period of 18 month Taksim guardspatrolled the park demonstrating that civil society would control any intervention in the park's integrity. Alongside the activism, Taksim Solidarity also made press statements, objections to public authorities and started legal processes in the court. *"Taksim as a whole is a protected piece of our cultural heritage and the city's most important public space. We demand that an immediate halt is called on the project, before it becomes an imposed fait accompli. We want Taksim to be developed with a more holistic approach, taking into account its social, historical, communal, cultural and environmental value, and using honest, transparent, participatory and democratic methods that conform to universal models and rules"* was declared as their statement about Taksim Square (TS-Press Release, 2013).

As by May, 27, 2013 the Municipality of İstanbul started to remove some trees in Gezi Park, this had launches a movement of protes and resistance Members of the Taksim Solidarity made a call to all organizations participating in the declaration to defend the park. First protesters standing up for the park were immediately subjected to tear gas and violence by the police. . Now a wave of park protesters flowed into the park On May, 31, 2013 this movement had turned into country-wide uprising, particularly as a result of excessive use of teargas and water cannons by the police and PM's aggressive and offensive speeches about the protestors. Now millions of people revolted to keep their democratic rights, give voice to their demands on freedom and respect to personal lives which were all encompassed by the demands to keep Gezi as Park.

Soon after government had been forced to withdraw police from Taksim Square on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, the neighboring Gezi Park turned into a occupied camp with thousands of protesters in tents, organising a library, medical center, food distribution and their own media since mainstream media downplayed the anti-government protests (TS-Press Release, 2013). Public forums involving all the participants were organized to take decisions on how to move

forward with the protests which can be associated with the characteristics of a direct democracy. On the other hand, Resistance drew attention from all over the world and demonstrations have been organized by urban movements in many cities; London, Stockholm, Berlin, ...etc in solidarity with Gezi., “*everywhere is Taksim, resistance everywhere*” has been the slogan for all protests around the world. After June 16<sup>th</sup>, with a last riot attack Gezi Park was emptied but people created new and smaller forums in neighborhood parks to discuss the ways forward.

While the park was occupied by the protesters the court declared its decision about the cases opened up by secretary chambers of Taksim Solidarity. Pedestrianization project for Taksim Square and the development of Gezi Park has been once more indicated by legal authorities that the projects were against the law and the principles of conservation, architecture and urban planning. At the beginning of 2014 the Supreme Court has approved the decision which means that the Turkish government can no longer insist on the project under democratic conditions.

The city of Berlin which provides the context for the next two case studies is surely different from the examples of Istanbul. However, similar to Istanbul is the regional status of the city as Germany’s capital, as the second largest city in Europe and as a densely populated area with high political importance. Similar is as well the prosperous development of the city’s economy over the last ten years and its attractiveness for international capital. Comparable to the situation in Istanbul is as well the realization of very ambitious construction and infrastructure as well as housing projects over the last ten years. These factors have dramatically changed the urban landscape of Berlin. Likewise prices at Berlin land and real estate markets and the cost of living both are on the rise. With citizens expressing growing concerns for the sustainability of living in Berlin. The next section will again describe a case in which citizens which do not hold legal titles to the land they are occupying become threatened by eviction and claim use rights for residential purposes and a case in which citizens on a large scale claim rights to shaping large public space.

### ***Convoi: Claiming use - rights to land***

Since the year 2003 Convoi is a group of 14 caravan owners squatting land in the city of Berlin. The city of Berlin does not foresee the permanent use of its land by caravanists. As a result the form of living and housing realized by Convoi group members is considered to be illegal, a status which poses a constant threat to the existence of Convoi members. In the first five years of its existence, Convoi members managed to first squat and then contract for the preliminary use of communal lands with the district of Friedrichshain and the Berlin Land Fund, an institution which was formed in the years of Berlin’s debt crisis. The sole purpose of the Fund is to seek and find non used public and communal land and sell it for profit to the highest bidder. At the peak period of Berlin’s debt crisis, the city government managed to oblige all districts to hand over the authority over the use of free spaces to the Fund.

As early as 2007 it became clear that the fund was about to sell the land used by Convoi. The Fund granted a first offer option to Convoi but in this situation the members of the caravan park desperately looked out for possibilities to finance and buy the land they had so far used but bringing up the necessary capital was problematic.

The leader of the group was looking for help from people with a similar problem background and found the Housing Cooperative of Bremer Höhe e.G. , a cooperative which was formed 9 years before in the year 1999 as a response of a group of neighbors of the so called “Bremer Höhe” complex, whose flats were dedicated to be sold to a foreign investment group. The meanwhile 600 members of Bremer Höhe provided experience and showed interest in the

inclusion of the Convoi group into their organization. In the year 2008 contracts between Convoi and Bremer Höhe e.G. were signed in which the cooperative grants a 15 years user right for the purpose of convoy members. After that the convoy members have an option to rent the land for another 14 years. In return Convoi members conveyed their option to buy the land from the Land Fund to the cooperative and became ordinary members of the Bremer Höhe e.G. For the case that claims about legal issues are raised against one or the other party of the contract, a guarantee to act on behalf of Convoi's interest has been included in the contract. The cooperation between the "Wagenburg" Convoi and the Bremer Höhe cooperative enables the former urban squatters to enjoy long term user right otherwise not existant in the legal framework of Berlin.



**Figure 6:** Convoi Caravan Park In Friedrichshain

### ***Tempelhofer Feld: Claiming public space***

Since the year 2008, the former Tempelhof Airfield in the heart of Berlin has been closed. As of 2009 the city of Berlin is the sole owner of the area and has started the planning of an ambitious project of redevelopment called Tempelhofer Freiheit, which included a number of sizeable housing complexes, museums and other infrastructure projects. After the closing of the Airfield Berlin citizens began to show interest in using the new open space for creative and recreational purposes but the Airfield remained closed for the public. The initiative Squat Tempelhof organized large demonstrations which resulted the granting of open access to the Airfield for the public. Because now citizens were allowed to access the Airfield soon the first alliances and movements claiming rights to participate in the further process of planning emerged. But as the city government showed little interest in the participative involvement of citizens and as the choice of partners to become part of planning became increasingly obscured in September 2011 a new initiative named "100% Tempelhofer Feld" was launched with the sole purpose to stop all construction plans at the Airfield by means of a 2 staged public referendum. In the meantime and for the by then most likely case that the referendum would fail, a new cooperative had been formed. The purpose of this initiative was to rethink the current planning process and to bring all stakeholders, residents, neighbours, developers, investors into a process of participatory planning and to make sure that the rights and needs of the different interest groups are equally represented in the outcomes. The "Entwicklungsgenossenschaft Tempelhofer Feld e.G. was formed to be a different type of



developer which would integrate citizens' rights to the city from the beginning of project planning. On June 2013 the second phase of the referendum took place. An overwhelming 730.000 votes against the plans of the government stopped a planning process which is believed to have costed some 9 Million EUR. In the future it will be the tasks of politicians to transfer the referendum results in a new law for the protection and use of the Tempelhof Airfield.



**Figure 7.** General View of Tempelhof

#### **4. Summary Discussion and Conclusions: the Role of Civil Society Organization in the Process of Transformation**

In this study we have analyzed the roles of civil society in cases of urban transformation processes from Berlin and Istanbul. Our goal was to better understand the organization of processes by which citizens seek to influence planning and decision making. In particular we seek to understand the emergence of new types of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the aspects of urban transformation these organizations are best able to support and the changes these organizations experience in the process of raising voice and claiming 'rights to the city'. The main outcome of our brief literature review on transformation was that urban transformation may be seen as a conceptual frame for various actors and disciplines guiding activities and decision making. In this the understanding as to why transformation occurs is in the same way important as is the understanding of how transformation may serve certain policy goals. It turned out that not only means –ends relations but rather the preferences of the actors for certain processual characters of transformation deserve attention because the success of transformation projects may ultimately become a matter of social acceptance.

In our cases from Berlin and Istanbul we show the instrumental and functional similarities between cases taken from most different contexts and regions of the world. First of all, all cases represent as Harvey puts it "struggles to govern the urban commons". The means they are choosing differ but in all such cases actors to some extent raise attention for their case by unformalized action. For example, Derbent Cooperative and Convoi represent cases in which citizens have chosen a democratic membership organization – a cooperative – in the hope to strengthen their customary rights to land. While the Derbent process is still ongoing and its



result is still open, the Convoi Caravan Settlement has reached its end by becoming integrated into an existing cooperative.

Interestingly the Derbent case includes two cooperatives with conflicting development goals. While Atatürk Oto Sanatkarları Housing Cooperative argues from a secure position of holding land titles, the Derbent Cooperative does not. In the conflict the claims of actors within the legal framework run against those of actors who lack land titles. Derbent Cooperative has yet to secure that it is heard and it consequently aims at organizing public and political support by demonstrating at the streets, while the Atatürk Oto Sanatkarları Housing Cooperative is much more likely to resort to conflict settlement at court in case of property rights.

The cases of Taksim Solidarity and Tempelhof also provide insights into how citizens raise claims but a different type of citizen right is at stake: There, the right to participate in the planning of transformation processes and in the ultimate decision making about how public land is to be used and protected against private interest is the subject of the struggle to govern the urban commons. Taksim Solidarity is an initiative based on signing declaration and horizontally organized with some informal institutions and unenacted by-laws which is admitted within 124 organizations. Twitter and Facebook types of new media was an important source to share information and in doing so it successfully managed to organize people by calling them to defend the park. At the beginning the government had tried to produce a credible threat to demonstrators by reacting violently but the sheer numbers of people willing to sacrifice time and health has defeated this plan and created a large feeling of social acceptance and solidarity among the Turkish people. On the basis of this and in a second phase of the project the issue has been taken to several instances of courts by very professional allies of the movement from public administration and academia. The formal legalisation of the Taksim Solidarity project and therewith the definition of the right of citizens to participate and decide in the city's planning processes happened through the legal system.

The case is similar but different for the Tempelhofer Feld Case: Early revolts organized by the Squat Tempelhof Movement did at first not succeed but finally opened up the area for the public. This has allowed a large amount of actors to make up their mind about what to do with the former airfield. The 100% Tempelhofer Feld initiative used this group as multipliers and at the same time launched a large process of informing the Berliners about the plans of government and its alternatives. Parallely it organized a group of very professional actors which brought the referendum into being. At the same time a group of actors founded a cooperative for the sole purpose of better integrating neighborhoods and developer of all kinds into the planning process for the case that the referendum failed. Ultimately the referendum has served the purpose to formalize citizens claims for shaping their environment.

Instead of putting emphasis on the importance of participation in planning, current experiences and our cases indicates that tightly organized civil society meets the deficits in participatory planning by holding or breaking power to push governments for a better decision for public good. It is also predictable that if urban-space-related resistances continues, cities will become a potential center of conflicts. Far from generalizing the results of these most different scenarios we think that there are several take aways from our study.

First we think that in very different scenarios pretty similar tools are used to claim rights to urban commons. In any case the longterm success will depend on how well stakeholders may be linked to the processes of rights formalization. Rights of citizens are frequently of a customary type when conflicts occur. Where this is the case one can expect that citizens will invest money, time and energy into the organization of revolt, public unrest and demonstration prior to taking their cases to court or other means of formalized conflict settlement. Recently the cost of organizing citizens have been considerably decreased by new media.

Qualifications of the communication devices and social media used in particularly Gezi and other resistances around the world is a precursor for a new way of organizing. Protesters organize quickly, gather in streets and develop strategies to direct the way forward. In the pace of the expected mass urbanizations one can expect that technological progresses will result in the further professionalization of horizontal types of organization of spontaneous emergence and decline.

In other respects, we strongly share Hardt and Negri's (2012) discourse on the globalizing world; while capital can flow through the world; globalization at the same time makes it possible for urban movements to also globalize. Accordingly networks of solidarity across the world and opportunities that the technological revolution and social media serves can be regarded as a chance for publicity, to organize voice and increasing awareness, but falling in the trap of slactivism should be considered (Miessen, 2010).

After a phase of raising voice and gaining social acceptance has been successfully started the question as to how the process of formalization and the appropriation of rights is to be organized. In our four cases it is surprising that cooperative associations have been the organizational choice for formalization processes in very different environments. Cooperatives and neighborhood associations are main actors in Derbent, they make a considerable share of the members of Taksim Solidarity, they provide the organizational solution to stabilize the Convoi group and they emerge as last resort if anything else failed in the Tempelhof conflict. These observations may be coincidental but the presented literature of civil society involvement and the rights to the city literatures give us reason to believe that the relationship between civil society and cooperative groups deserve special attention not only from the side of academics but also from the side of practitioners and consultants of civil society processes. By recalling Ostrom; all sizes of civil society organizations cooperatives, initiatives, solidarity groups or networks, are all seem to be essential components of urban governance issues. The constructive role of all units must be seriously considered.

A third take away may be to rethink the role of institutions in transformation and city development. In particular the role of land rights come into mind. Developers as well as urban planner and other stakeholders interested in guiding processes of transformation may preview the consequences of ill-defined or undefined property rights for the pace of transformation processes. It is our contention that many of the ongoing struggles to govern the urban commons may be tremendously eased by a more creative dealing with the question as to how certain property rights of citizens can be organized and strengthened before larger projects are undertaken. It is in this context that Hernando de Soto's claim to boost development by strengthening the property rights of the poor has a meaning.

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