

# Disasters as an ideological strategy for governing neoliberal urban transformation in Turkey: insights from Izmir/Kadifekale

**Cenk Saraçoğlu** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Başkent University, Turkey, and **Neslihan Demirtaş-Milz** Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Izmir University of Economics, Turkey

*Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Turkish cities have undergone large-scale change through a process referred to as urban transformation, involving, notably, the demolition of inner-city low-income settlements. The official authorities and business circles have resorted to various forms of discourse to justify these projects, which have led to the deportation of a significant number of people to peripheral areas. The discourse of 'natural disasters', for example, suggests that urban transformation is necessary to protect people from some pending event. Probably the most effective application of this discourse has occurred in Izmir, where the risk posed by 'landslides' has played a critical role in the settlement demolitions conducted in the huge inner-city neighbourhood of Kadifekale. By examining the case of Kadifekale, this paper provides some insights into how 'natural disasters' serve as a discourse with which to legitimise the neoliberal logic entrenched in the urban transformation process in Turkey.*

**Keywords:** disasters, inequality, migration, neoliberalism, urban transformation

## Introduction

*We would like our cities to become civilized cities. We want to save our cities from unlicensed buildings, from gecekondu.<sup>1</sup> When we enter a city we would like to say and we want you to say 'I am a person belonging to a modern city'. We want this. With our MHA (Mass Housing Administration) Projects we want our lower-income citizens to become homeowners. I was also born and grew up in a building where there were only two rooms, no bathroom. As a person coming from such a background, I would like my people, my citizens not to experience the same hardship. . . . We have taken this path as aggrieved people, and hopefully will provide a cure for the grievances.<sup>2</sup>*

The quotation above is from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech on 30 April 2006 at a ceremony to mark the opening of 1,160 homes and a primary school in Çerkezköy/Tekirdağ. These homes and schools were constructed within the framework of the mass-housing projects undertaken by the state's Mass Housing Administration (MHA). The large-scale urban transformation initiatives of the current

government, led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in office since 2002, do not involve only the construction of high-rise apartment blocks in the outer areas of cities for the poor sections of society. In addition, they involve the reconfiguration of inner-city zones through the clearance of 'low-income settlements' (former *gecekondu* settlements)<sup>3</sup> as well as the privatisation of land belonging to former state enterprises. In fact, there is an internal relation between the rise of new apartments in the outer areas of cities and the destruction of low-income settlements in central districts,<sup>4</sup> since, according to the AKP's urban policy, the people evicted from the latter are to be given the opportunity to buy or rent an apartment in the former.

This process of clearing old neighbourhoods, displacing lower-income groups from inner-city neighbourhoods to MHA-built peripheral districts, and thereby making the vacated inner-city lands available for new purposes, has been referred to as an 'urban transformation project' (UTPs) in both official and academic discourse in Turkey. This new outlook of governing urban land was first introduced in the early twenty-first century, gained increasing momentum in later years, and has led to significant changes in the structure of big cities.

Unlike the optimistic official discourse, some academics and urban experts have recently levelled criticism at the way in which transformation projects in Turkey in general have been conducted. The infrastructural problems of the housing units built by the MHA in peripheral areas of the cities, doubts about their strength and sustainability, their incompatibility with the living conditions of displaced migrants, and their 'un-aesthetic' presence in city space constitute the key focal points. Another common criticism pertains to the embracement of UTPs in Turkey by an 'urban coalition' composed of private-sector landowners and municipal and state officials, which found in these 'vacated urban lands' an opportunity to increase rents and real-estate development (Türkün, 2011, p. 61).

Many long-term residents of these inner-city, low-income settlements have reacted to UTPs in different ways and for different reasons. The grievances of these people vary in relation to the potential socioeconomic problems that they could face on their implementation. Some have revealed an unwillingness to move to outer areas of the city because of their advantageous inner-city location. Some, particularly tenants with relatively low rents, are totally against the projects owing to concern about not being able to find and afford new apartments or houses in other districts. In certain cases, such widespread anxieties have turned into popular discontent, which laid the foundation for collective and organised action, and forced the official authorities to revise the terms of the projects.

Given these challenges, the national government and the local authorities have resorted to various practices and discourses to win the consent of otherwise discontented sections of the urban population (Türker-Devecigil, 2005, p. 221). Erdoğan's speech can be seen as a succinct combination of the numerous discourses used to justify ongoing UTPs in Turkey. The official authorities have widely employed the notions of 'creating a modern city',<sup>5</sup> 'providing relief for the poor', and the 'promise

of homeownership', embedded in statements by the government, to respond to criticism and opposition.

In some UTPs, all of these justifications go hand-in-hand with alarmist warnings about the possibility of 'disasters' such as an earthquake or landslide, which are said to pose an imminent danger to the people living in the jerry-built buildings located in these neighbourhoods. This enables the official authorities to depict UTPs not only as an *alternative* policy that could benefit the city population as a whole, but also as a *necessary and unquestionable* precaution for securing the lives of people in these neighbourhoods. In such places as Istanbul and Kocaeli, which suffered the destructive effects of a huge earthquake in 1999, this approach has been particularly common in justifying some UTPs (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008, p. 17). After another major earthquake in Van, an eastern Anatolian city, in October 2011, the appeal to the discourse of 'natural disasters'<sup>6</sup> became more obvious than ever. Soon after this earthquake, Erdoğan declared that, to prevent increased casualties owing to 'unlicensed buildings' in any future events,<sup>7</sup> all cities, particularly Istanbul, will be cleansed of inner-city shantytowns:

*No longer [will there be] unlicensed constructs and shanty houses; we will transfer complete authority to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning if need be. We will expropriate these kinds of buildings without asking those [contractors] who aren't changing or demolishing them and will tear them down ourselves. Regardless of the cost . . . We won't consider whether people will vote for us or not. It is much more unfortunate to live with this same picture than to lose power.*

In the context of contention about UTPs, the discourse of 'natural disasters' seems to be playing an important part in the government's attempt to legitimise its urban policies, to hasten its projects, and to minimise opposition. Probably the most effective application of the discourse has been in Izmir<sup>8</sup> where the 'danger of a landslide' has played a vital role in the demolition of squatter settlements in Kadifekale—a huge inner-city neighbourhood populated by Kurdish people. The urban renewal process started in Kadifekale before the Van earthquake, but an analysis of this case could yield important insights into how 'natural disasters' are used to justify ongoing urban transformation in Turkey. As will be shown in detail below, the employment of the discourse to justify such projects serves to legitimise an authoritarian neoliberal urban policy and to conceal the social inequalities embedded in the urban transformation process.

In the case of Kadifekale/Izmir, a pending 'landslide' was at the centre of all official explanations of the project's purpose, terms, and modalities. The risks posed became the constructive discourse to justify renewal. The main objective of this paper is to examine the ways in which 'landslide' in Kadifekale/Izmir was turned into a 'narrative' to ward off some social contradictions and problems stemming from the project. To do so, the research draws on a field study conducted in Izmir between October 2009 and September 2010.

## The terms of the Kadifekale UTP

Kadifekale is located on a 186-metre-high hill and at the very centre of Izmir with a bird's-eye view of almost the entire city. At the very top of this hill is a Roman castle; the name 'Kadifekale' is related to this castle. 'Kadifekale' is also the official name of one of the six quarters of the Kadifekale neighbourhood. With a population of approximately 30,000 at present, Kadifekale is almost within walking distance of Konak, the very centre of the city. The first *gecekondu* houses were built in this area as early as the 1950s and then scattered rapidly across other vacant state territories of Izmir.

Kadifekale has been one of the primary destinations of Kurdish migrants from eastern Anatolia over the past 20 years. Before the influx of the Kurds, migrants from different cities of Turkey, as well as Muslim migrants from Crete, had inhabited this district (Sevgi, 1988). As of the mid-1990s, the Kurds comprised an overwhelming majority in this area (especially in the Imariye and Kadifekale quarters), because Kurdish migrants had fled in great numbers from southeast Anatolia owing to the armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the security forces (Mutluer, 2000). A majority of Kurdish migrants in this district either hold jobs in the informal sector or are unemployed. The condition of those who settled here owing to internal displacement—or forced migration<sup>9</sup>—is particularly troublesome, since they possess neither economic nor human capital with which to find a formal job or to set up a business in Izmir. The most prevalent informal means of subsistence are selling mussels in central streets and other parts of the city and fruits and vegetables in the discount bazaars or on market stalls (Karayığit, 2005; Yörür, Karataş, and Çırak, 2008, p. 4). This profile also applies to the conditions of internally-displaced migrants in other metropolises of Turkey, such as Istanbul (Yükseker, 2008).

There are three key reasons why Kurdish migrants opted to settle in Kadifekale:

- First, housing costs are relatively low, primarily because most houses are in poor condition and are located in a dangerous landslide zone. The potential for landslides in this area has posed a threat to local people for decades.
- Second, the overwhelming majority of Kurds in the region provides new Kurdish migrants with the benefits of patronage relations and solidarity networks.
- Third, the proximity of Kadifekale to the very centre of the city—roughly a 15-minute bus ride to Konak—reduces transportation costs, and facilitates engagement in informal jobs in the city centre (Karayığit, 2005).

Despite official recognition of Kadifekale as a landslide zone, its population has continued to increase. State officials and municipalities have developed a kind of 'ad hoc lenience policy' towards the proliferation of new houses in the neighbourhood (Buğra, 1998). With the agreement of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality<sup>10</sup>—led by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition party—Konak Municipality, and the MHA, the region was incorporated into the framework of the 'Konak Urban Renewal Project' in 2005. The plan, in simple terms, involved the demolition of 1,968 houses in Kadifekale and the deportation of migrants in this area

to the newly built high-rise apartments in Uzundere. Uzundere is a suburb that is distant to the city centre and quite isolated from the economic and social opportunities on offer in the city (Yörür, Karataş, and Çırak, 2008, p. 7). Given the scope of this project, it impacts on the lives of almost 15,000 citizens.

The deal was that the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality would buy the apartments built in Uzundere and then sell them to those people whose dwellings were in the landslide zone and earmarked for demolition. The property owners in Kadifekale would receive a sum of money from the municipality as compensation for the expropriation and demolition of their houses—an amount depending on the ‘value’ of the building. This value was determined by a group of specialists composed of architects and engineers who examined the houses to be demolished. The designated amount typically was a lot lower than the price of apartments built in Uzundere. Consequently, if the property owner agreed to buy an apartment in Uzundere, he/she would have to pay the remaining sum to the municipality in instalments to be deposited monthly over a number of years. If the property owner did not agree to buy an apartment in Uzundere, he/she would be paid the designated amount in cash.

This already complex protocol is further complicated by residents’ differing status in terms of property ownership. Before the onset of demolition, 96 per cent of the buildings in Kadifekale were unlicensed—that is, the users or the owners did not have a legal title deed. Most of them had a *tapu tahsis* document guaranteeing a future de jure property right—to the property that the migrants ‘own’ or ‘occupy’.

The Kadifekale region was integrated into the framework of the general amnesty passed during the 1980s in Turkey. However, the formalisation could be only partially realised because the administrative court rejected the amnesty on the grounds that the region is a landslide zone, invalidating the *tapu tahsis* documents given to the migrants. Only the very few migrants who were quick to apply to the Land Office at that time managed to get formal title deeds in the time between these two decisions. The cancellation of the amnesty did not affect this minority, but those who have only *tapu tahsis* documents now cannot claim a right to formal title deeds. Nevertheless, people with *tapu tahsis* documents were still paid what is officially referred to as *enkaz bedeli* (compensation for the demolished building), which usually means the designated value of the unit to be demolished rather than the full market value of the real estate. Tenants, meanwhile, comprising 46 per cent of the population of Kadifekale, are ineligible for any form of compensation or legal right. The majority of the migrants who settled in Kadifekale throughout the 1990s fall into this category. As of January 2012, 1,700 of the 1,968 buildings have been demolished and the ‘cleansed’ areas have been reorganised as recreational zones.

## **Landslide and the ‘success’ of the Kadifekale project**

Compared to some other UTPs undertaken in Istanbul, such as in Başbüyük (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010) and Kuruçeşme (Eğilmez, 2009) in Izmir, where state and municipal officials had to deal with the collective resistance of the neighbourhood population

as well as opposition by some civil society organisations, Kadifekale's transformation went relatively smoothly. A challenge to the project was at best disorganised and intermittent and civil society organisations, academics, activists, and researchers did not pay as much attention to the Kadifekale UTP as they did to some others in Istanbul.

The fieldwork and the in-depth interviews<sup>11</sup> conducted just before the start of the demolition process revealed that the absence of an organised resistance was not because Kadifekale people became convinced of the merits of the project. Although the municipality's attempts to gain the consent of people worked well among those satisfied with the compensation paid for the expropriation, there was explicit discontent and a lack of consent among the majority of Kadifekale people. In interviews with those actually living in Kadifekale, most expressed an objection to the project and voiced their frustrations. Notwithstanding some commonly raised points, particular complaints and demands emerged, which varied according to the relationship with the building to be demolished. Notably, the issues that tenants raised during the interviews were different to those that legal property owners used to justify their opposition. The discourse that a shopkeeper deploys to express discontent was very different, as expected, to that employed by a woman living in a house without a title deed.

The most common source of anxiety that transcends these multiple property relationships and affects almost everyone to be deported is the dispersal of Kurdish migrants from Kadifekale to various places in Izmir, which would inevitably mark the end of ethnicity-based informal networks, solidarity relations, and common culture. The concentration of Kurdish migrants meant something more to these people than the quest for inexpensive ways of surviving. Kadifekale was also a place that provided forced migrants in particular with different forms of solidarity and shelter, which could empower them vis-à-vis the extremely harsh emotional and material conditions faced after migration. For these migrants, therefore, the project obviously meant a second bout of internal displacement and hence the loss of a sense of security. For those who arrived in Izmir before the 1980s, the project also meant the sudden disappearance of longstanding social ties and the loss of a sense of togetherness. For those running a shop or a small-scale business, the deportation would mean not only a pure economic loss but also the end of working life altogether, as well as an abrupt evaporation of rapport and trust developed in the Kadifekale community. The erasing of the 'spirit of community' in Kadifekale thus has been a major source of distress for everyone, regardless of property status.

This common concern about losing established ties in Kadifekale is coupled with a sense of unfairness and injustice, which revealed itself in thoughts on the compensation for expropriation. Many migrants complained in the interviews about the significant differences in the amounts paid for buildings in similar condition, interpreting this as a sign of corruption. They claimed, too, that the designation of compensation relied not on an objective standard, but on the subjective judgements of officials.

These various and widespread complaints indicate that the absence of a collective resistance in the neighbourhood and the relative ease with which the official authorities have been able to conduct the project were not due to local people giving their

full consent to the whole process. Rather, the fieldwork for this study revealed that a number of significant factors, such as property-related fragmentation and the prevalence of informal relations between the community and the official authorities, presented obstacles to the development of a collective consciousness and the organisation of a movement based on the aforementioned common criticisms. These factors are not unique to Kadifekale; they have functioned in similar ways in some other UTPs in Istanbul (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). What was more fundamental in the Kadifekale case, however, was the matter of a ‘landslide’, allowing the official authorities to conduct the project rather smoothly.

At first glance, a landslide might appear to be a ‘natural’ phenomenon that should be taken for granted and not treated as ‘subject matter’ in social analysis. However, as Nandini Gunewardena (2008, p. 4) puts it: ‘disasters bring to light the often hidden interplay of pre-existing social and economic marginalities that aggravate the vulnerabilities of those most adversely affected by such calamities’. Likewise, in Kadifekale, the nature of the urban renewal strategy that the political authorities have developed as a solution to a potential landslide highlights some structural problems with and contradictions in UTPs. Furthermore, ‘landslide’ also acquired a ‘social’ character to the extent that the official authorities used it as a ‘discourse’ to justify and explain these unsettling matters. Kadifekale’s status as ‘land exposed to disaster’ influenced the public approach, the assessments of urban experts, the legal procedures, the process to follow, and the implementers’ discourse to justify the project. The instrumentalisation of landslide in this way provided the authorities with a free space for action in which they could shape the project in the desired fashion, despite the problems it created for certain sections of the population.

This does not mean, though, that we do not recognise the dangers posed by a landslide in Kadifekale. Nor do we deny the necessity of renewal in the district. In fact, the imminent threat of a landslide, which is denied by some people living in Kadifekale, is acknowledged by locally elected heads (*muhtars*), hometown associations, independent specialists, and even those activists who are critical of UTPs. What we want to draw attention to is the ways in which a ‘landslide’ was turned into a kind of ideological rhetoric, hindering the efforts of activists, civil society organisations, and urban experts to debate and question the social problems that emerged with the introduction of the renewal process.

Most of the interviewees, including the presidents of hometown associations, stated that whenever they wanted to object to any practice of the municipality regarding the Kadifekale issue they were told that ‘there is a landslide in this area; this is the way it has to be’. In fact, the same thing happened in the interviews with the municipal officers. In response to the question about the grievances of the people facing displacement, the head of the Committee of Expropriation said that:

*If we do not carry these people out of here they will continue to live with the threat of landslide for another 30 years. But one day we may open our eyes and see a landslide happening for real, collapsing 20 houses and killing 40 people. What we are doing is just preventing this from happening. . . . We need to talk about this dimension of the issue.*

*If we talk about other dimensions [that is, criticisms of the project] this would always be problematic. If I do the same thing in Bornova [a regular middle-class district], if I tell the people there that we have to expropriate your house because we have to construct a highway that passes through where your house is located, then that is trouble. It is trouble because it is his property, something inherited from his ancestors, from his father. But here in Kadifekale there is a reality. The reality of landslide. . . . Instead of experiencing this threat everyday it is better to get rid of it and make people live in more secure places.<sup>12</sup>*

During the fieldwork, we observed that local print media, as well as some major civil society organisations, shared the tendency of the official authorities to represent Kadifekale's transformation as a unique case requiring special treatment because of the imminent threat of a landslide. This even led some city planners to express a reservation about labelling it an 'urban transformation project' per se. As mentioned above, some civil society organisations, such as the Chambers of City Planners, generally are very critical about the way in which urban transformation/renewal projects have been conducted over the past decade. However, they seem to remain very distant towards the transformation project in Kadifekale in their discourse and information. The Second President of the Izmir Chamber of City Planners (*Izmir Şehir Plancıları Odası*), Nehir Yüksel, stated that the Kadifekale case should be considered differently from other projects in Istanbul, as the underlying intention was not to open up the area to rent-seeking projects run by certain interest groups, but rather to vivify the zone in such a way as to protect the people from the danger of landslides and to increase the amount of green space in the city.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, this discourse, which defines landslide as an imminent problem and foresees emergent solutions, does not square with the lenient attitude of state officials, who have failed to provide the means with which to deal with this problem over the past four decades. In fact, the threat of a landslide in Kadifekale is not merely a 'natural' disaster. As some geologists have shown, the ill-defined urbanisation policies applied over the past 40 years and the insistent indifference of officials to the gradually worsening geological conditions in the neighbourhood have culminated in the fatal problems faced by Kadifekale residents. The technical studies conducted in the area show that if prompt and proper precautions had been introduced, the landslide problem would not have escalated to such a serious level. Tarcan and Koca (2001, p. 289), geologists working in Kadifekale, summarise their findings as follows:

*In this area, a number of mass movements occurred in the past and the region is still an active landslide field at present . . . Rain and water leaking either directly from the mains or septic holes infiltrate into the ground and act as one of the factors in causing landslides. It is clearly shown that the irregular urbanisation in and around Kadifekale is one of the factors contributing to the landslides in the area. To prevent the occurrence of landslides in the study area, an effective surface and underground drainage should be established. Rain and wastewater should be removed from the area by separate systems. Slopes should be reduced, water-loving trees should be planted, and construction of high-rise buildings should be avoided.*

The interviews with neighbourhood residents revealed that engineers had visited Kadifekale from time to time and that they had inspected leakage into the ground from some water depots located in the district, which is considered to be one of the main landslide-related catalysts. According to these residents, although the water depots were identified as a major problem, the official authorities have long been reluctant to take the initiative and repair them.

We do not necessarily believe that the official authorities *purposefully* employ the rhetoric of landslide to ward off any critique of the project. Rather, we contend that the landslide issue has occupied such a central place and become so entrenched in the legal policies and procedures followed during the clearance process that it has turned out to be a kind of a hegemonic point of reference for the Kadifekale UTP. In other words, 'landslide' has become an established discourse that has provided the official authorities with a legitimate framework for speaking and acting. Consequently, 'landslide' no longer needs purposeful or intentional utilisation by state officials, since it is already an essential part of the whole structure and process of transformation in Kadifekale.<sup>14</sup>

## Neoliberalism and forced migration

The urban transformation problems that have affected the lives of people in this neighbourhood mostly centre on two major dynamics that have deeply influenced metropolises in Turkey since the early 1990s:

- neoliberal economic transformation;<sup>15</sup> and
- forced migration, impacting on the Kurdish population in southeast Anatolia.

Kadifekale's urban renewal became a process in which the problems associated with these two dynamics came to the fore. Although the officially declared reason for the UTP was landslide potential, the conduct of the project has been shaped by the logic and the terms of neoliberal urban governance in the country. In addition, since Kadifekale is a neighbourhood where internally-displaced migrants from southeast Anatolia were concentrated, the problems generated by urban renewal also bore the imprint of the phenomenon of forced migration. In this respect, rather than merely a solution to the landslide issue, Kadifekale's transformation was also a process in which the contradictions of neoliberalism and the effects of forced migration in the urban space rose to the surface. Nevertheless, in the discourse of the official authorities and the media, the 'fact' of a landslide is harnessed in such a way as to depict these problems as unavoidable consequences of 'disaster assistance'. That is, the problems linked to neoliberalism and forced migration brought to light by urban transformation are unavoidable consequences of the state's effort to save people from a landslide. At this point, the 'fact' of 'landslide' acquires a 'rhetorical or discursive power' (Schuller, 2008, p. 20)<sup>16</sup> that helps to conceal, distort, or 'naturalise' the 'social' problems associated with neoliberalism and forced migration. Within this discourse,

not only the demolition of houses in Kadifekale, but also the whole process and form of transformation, is presented purely as a response to or an action against a ‘natural disaster’. As Candan and Kolluoğlu (2009, p. 19) have pointed out concerning some other UTPs in Istanbul, thanks to this discourse of ‘natural disasters’, ‘urban transformation projects emerge as the only possible solution/remedy for these “naturalised” urban problems; hence, they are justified and normalised’. As this approach dominated discussions of Kadifekale’s urban renewal, the problems related to neoliberalism and forced migration could not be identified and problematised adequately.

The neoliberal character of the recent UTPs in Turkey manifests itself most clearly in plans to open up the lands cleared in the inner-city neighbourhoods to the profit-generating activities of capitalist enterprises and to transform them into ‘commercial and/or high-end residential districts’ (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010, p. 1482). Yet, unlike the cases of Ayazma, Başbüyük, and Tarlabası, *inter alia*, the Kadifekale project, officially, does not involve a plan to transform the cleared ‘slums’ into a formal urban district where the profit-seeking ambitions of national and international capital forces can be realised. Rather, as mentioned earlier, the plan was to transform the zone into ‘green land’, free of any kind of construction investment. According to urban planners in Izmir, it is almost impossible legally and technically to undertake large construction projects in this landslide zone. Nevertheless, the neoliberal logic behind the project still discloses itself in:

- the expected contribution of this project to the enhancement of the ‘image’ of Izmir; and
- the absence or insufficient nature of any social protection for local people, especially tenants, who were dramatically affected by this transformation.

It is in relation to this second point that one can also observe how people with past experience of forced migration were effected rather differently by the Kadifekale UTP. Through an analysis of these two interrelated points the study will demonstrate that Kadifekale’s renewal was not just an urgent technical intervention in an area exposed to a natural disaster, but also a process within which social problems connected to neoliberalism and forced migration unfolded.

### **Enhancing Izmir’s image by demolishing Kadifekale**

Although the officially declared reason for Kadifekale’s transformation was to protect its population from the threat of a landslide, the official authorities, business circles, and local media outlets celebrated the demolition of buildings for another reason: to enhance the image of Izmir.<sup>17</sup> According to this way of thinking, transforming a seemingly ‘blighted slum’ into a modern recreational zone would have a positive impact on the way the whole of Izmir is seen from ‘outside’. It is obvious that, in the minds of many people living in Izmir, Kadifekale is more than an area exposed to a natural disaster. It also conjures of images of dirty streets, marginal lives, a crime

hub, Kurdish nationalism, and unattractive architecture that is a 'stain' at the very centre of the city. The public also perceives the ongoing clearance, therefore, as a favourable policy to eradicate such troubles, 'allow the city to breath', and improve the image of Izmir as a whole.<sup>18</sup> A glance at the way in which the local media evaluates the project indicates the pervasiveness of these notions of 'blemish of place' or 'territorial stigmatisation' (Wacquant, 2007, p. 68). In fact, this way of seeing the issue manifested itself in the narratives of municipality officials as well. A lawyer representing some dwellers who object to the compensation offered for expropriation stated that:

*I personally went to the municipality and talked to the officials responsible for this urban transformation project. He directly stated this to us. He has a map in front of him and spots Kadifekale and says, 'here is a stain'. I told him how dare you identify as a stain a place where people have been living for 40 years, where people came as a result of forced migration. From his elite perspective his logic is to see this place as a stain.*<sup>19</sup>

Such concern about the image of Izmir and the embracement of the Kadifekale project as a means of improving it cannot be viewed independently from the predominance of neoliberal urban governance. In the period of 'urbanisation of capital', the employment, growth, and wealth opportunities offered by cities are no longer dependent on the planned industrial investments of states, but on the arrival of national or international capital, placing the cities in a highly fierce competition to attract private investment. The result of this shift is that, in the contemporary neoliberal period, cities are expected to compete with each other at the global and the national level to convince capital owners that they are the most favourable sites for 'doing business' (Harvey, 1989, p. 9). Among the ways of attracting capital is to 'promote' the city through the construction of an idiosyncratic identity and an attractive image, a strategy referred to as 'imagineering cities' (Archer, 1997). The reinvention of a city's identity and image typically requires the promotion of particular localities and symbols within it. In most cases, these symbolic places and constructs exist or are built in downtown areas (Paul, 2004). This also explains the increasing intolerance of inner-city squatters that emerges, indicating poverty and 'underdevelopment'. As such, the clearance of 'slums' from inner-city zones is seen as necessary in forging this new urban imaginary and in achieving success in the 'inter-city competition' to attract capital and tourists.

Hence, squatter clearance in Kadifekale is particularly critical for Izmir, as this city has lagged far behind other big cities in Turkey. Compared to Izmir, Istanbul, with its 'high rent-generating potential' and attractive facilities for investment, has been the primary destination for a preponderant proportion of national and international capital (Türkün, 2011, p. 62). In fact, the process of reconstructing the city of Istanbul as a 'global megapol' started in the 1990s and intensified in the 2000s with the ascent to power of the AKP (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2009, p. 13; Öktem, 2011, p. 28;). Izmir, however, seems to have been quite unprepared for this rapid transformation in the neoliberal period, owing to insufficient coordination between capital groups,

central government, and local administration. Since the turn of the century, international economic investment in the city has been significantly less than that in Istanbul, leading to stagnation of economic growth (Sönmez, 2009, pp. 171–180)—an historical aberration for a port city that, for a long period, was one of the most vibrant centres of trade and commerce in the Mediterranean basin (Frankagis-Syrett, 1992, p. 2). This is why business circles, local authorities/media agencies, and ‘opinion leaders’ have long called for the development of emergent strategies to enhance the image of the city, increase the value of urban land, and render Izmir more preferable for flows of national and international capital (Yılmaz-Saygın, 2006, p. 2).

The reorganisation of Izmir has been expressed in some popular notions of ‘neoliberal newspeak’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001; Doel and Hubbard, 2002), such as ‘world city’, ‘global city’, and ‘brand city’, all of which point to the level that Izmir has to be at according to this discourse. The following words of the Chair of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce (ITO), Ekrem Demirtaş, are a good illustration of this future vision of the city (quoted in Yılmaz-Saygın, 2006, p. 2):

*As a result of a new image and brand, the city becomes an attractive centre that draws people from all over the world, investors, employees/labour force, and most importantly capital. The city that has achieved this should be considered as a world city. The main goal of our board is to make Izmir into a brand city and particularly draw both national and foreign investors in tourism, commerce, fairs, congress, industrial developments in Izmir; to make Izmir an investment hub.*

Kadifekale’s renewal occurred at a time when the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality had already started to undertake several other projects to construct an identity based on the promotion of its historical heritage. The ‘restoration, renovation and rehabilitation of several buildings such as khans (traditional enclosed building for merchants) and historical fountains in and around Kemeraltı’ (Yılmaz-Saygın, 2006, p. 5) are only a few examples of investments to revitalise the historical character of Izmir (Ataöv and Eraydın, 2011, p. 111). Kadifekale’s transformation could be seen as a process that is not only complementary but also vital to this full-fledged campaign to construct a ‘marketable’ identity and image for the city. Its renewal is particularly crucial because it is located on a hill with a clear bird’s-eye view of the entire city and the gulf of Izmir. As interviews with the project implementers demonstrated, Kadifekale’s transformation is expected to ‘purify’ a valuable and precious land through the removal of an ‘ugly’ condition and the dispossession of the local community.

In this respect, the objective of ‘enhancing the image of Izmir’ goes hand-in-hand with the dispossession and expropriation of land used by the urban poor. Even though the land cleared in Kadifekale is unlikely to host new buildings, the new ‘appearance’ of Kadifekale as an inner-city area seems to have greater meaning for the expected growth and development of Izmir. That the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality announced plans in March 2009 to transform the landslide zone into a ‘Historical Park of Aegean Civilizations’ is yet another indication of this point. The project, an

example of ‘place marketing’ (Fretter, 1993, p. 165), reveals its neoliberal character not by directly selling the vacated area in order to attract companies, but rather in being a fundamental part of the general neoliberal vision of urban planning in Izmir.

### **Absence of social protection for the ‘property-less’**

The neoliberal UTP context in Kadifekale is also evident in the policies of the official authorities towards the people whose residences have been demolished. In fact, as with other UTPs across Turkey, the state and the municipality introduced a plan to resettle those evicted from Kadifekale. As stated, the people who have a legal claim to buildings in Kadifekale have been offered the opportunity to buy new high-rise apartments in Uzundere, situated on the outskirts of the city. Transferring dwellers from the inner-city shantytowns to the MHA-initiated apartment blocks is a pattern observed in UTPs in Ankara and Istanbul. In this respect, the renewal of Kadifekale is just another example of a standard neoliberal urban governance model being applied to an inner-city shantytown. For municipal officials, the MHA apartments in Uzundere will not only save Kadifekale residents from the imminent danger posed by a landslide, but also they will improve their living conditions, as the location offers myriad social opportunities. In one of the meetings organised to introduce the Uzundere apartments to the people of Kadifekale, the Mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Aziz Kocaoğlu, stated that facilities in Uzundere will include a marketplace, a multi-purpose hall, sports fields, computer and library establishments, and a telecommunications centre.<sup>20</sup> In addition, there were plans to construct a ‘sterilised mussel-production plant’, seemingly to ensure the continuation of the principal economic activity of Kadifekale people. The plant had symbolic importance as municipality officials drew attention to it to highlight their attentiveness and sensitivity to the needs and demands of the people.<sup>21</sup>

The purpose here is not to judge the extent to which the Uzundere apartments could provide comfortable accommodation for the people of Kadifekale. In fact, the interviews pointed up opposing views on the conditions in Uzundere: some were content with the quality of the apartments; some were unsatisfied. The typical sentiment of all people interviewed, though, regardless of whether they have positive or negative views on the Uzundere apartments, was that, under normal conditions, they would never leave Kadifekale for Uzundere. Most of them were extremely anxious about finding new means of subsistence after a move.

Thus an evaluation of the life of Kadifekale people before and after demolition cannot be based merely on a comparison between the quality of the neighbourhood and apartments in Kadifekale and Uzundere. A shift from Kadifekale to Uzundere signifies more of a change in space, context, and community than a change in the quality of the physical landscape. As in any other place where labourers and poor and socially excluded populations are concentrated, location and community relations within a neighbourhood are more important than the quality of the physical landscape, as they provide an essential means of survival and resistance and a sense of security.

The spatial proximity of Kadifekale to the centre of the city facilitates the involvement of migrants in the informal economic activities that take place there. Subsistence based on such informal economic activities as mussel selling, peddling, and hawking are possible because Kadifekale people can walk to Konak in 15 minutes. Their transfer to Uzundere, nine kilometres from Konak, would mean a loss of the advantage offered by location, and ultimately would make it very difficult for them to sustain their informal economic activities. Hence, a sterilised mussel-production plant in Uzundere would serve little function and hold little meaning for those people for whom spatial proximity to Konak constitutes a fundamental means of subsistence.

Kadifekale is also a 'place' where Kurdish migrants develop a distinct life setting, establishing social networks, solidarity relations, and a shared culture. Regardless of the quality of the MHA apartments in Uzundere, a move will mean the abandonment of this favourable social context and 'dispossession' of all of these means of subsistence. Apropos the distinction of Wacquant (2007, p. 69) between 'place' (full, fixed, stable arenas) and 'space' (feared, secured, fled), one can say that, even in the context of neoliberalism, Kadifekale became a 'place' (with cultural, economic, and social meaning) for Kurdish migrants to the extent that it was a 'space' (devoid of social meaning) for outsiders, state officials, and the media. While for many migrants (especially tenants) Kadifekale's transformation means dispossession from a 'place', for the proponents of the project it simply means governing a 'space'.

Kadifekale is a 'community' composed of people speaking the same native language, recounting similar stories of migration, and sharing a common political position. For a group of people facing increasing unemployment and inequality, which have intensified in the neoliberal period, this sense of community and togetherness, revolving around a common Kurdish identity, boosts their capacity to resist and to challenge. Despite the socioeconomic fragmentation within the community, such feelings of shared identity and informal solidarity still have a lot of value, particularly to the economically most disadvantaged groups.

It would not be possible to create another community in Uzundere with the same functions for three reasons:

- First, not all people in Kadifekale are exposed to expropriation; a large number of Kurdish migrants will remain in those areas that lie outside the zone exposed to a landslide. The project also means, therefore, a division between those who move to Uzundere and those stay in Kadifekale.
- Second, not all people accepted the Uzundere offer; some preferred instead to receive compensation in cash and look for houses in other parts of Izmir, further fragmenting the Kadifekale population.
- Third, the concentration of Kurdish migrants in an inner-city area means something different to their concentration in an outer district. The sense of community and togetherness in Kadifekale symbolises the ability and the capacity of Kurdish migrants to have a place 'within the city', whereas a move to Uzundere represents a kind of displacement and spatial exclusion.

When such potential consequences of a move to Uzundere were brought to the attention of municipal officers in the interviews they admitted that they were possible. However, they argued that the Uzundere apartments are the most ideal and realistic solution to the landslide problem. Nevertheless, some alternative projects that could allow this community to stay in a more secure inner-city zone were never discussed. In an interview with Tuncay Karaçorlu, the former president of the Chamber of City Planners in Izmir,<sup>22</sup> we learned of some alternative and innovative projects that could be put on the agenda, such as renovating or reconstructing the *gecekondu* houses (with community help) to make them compatible with the nearby area of historical heritage. As a result, Kadifekale residents would not have to leave the city centre and move to the outskirts.

In fact, the displacement of migrants to the outer district bears the hallmarks of the neoliberalisation of the urban economy. The neoliberal transformation of Turkish cities can be characterised as a transition from the ‘urbanisation of labour’ to the ‘urbanisation of capital’ (Şengül, 2003, pp. 153–168). The former refers to the stage in the history of urbanisation during which the spatial and social structures of the cities are forged along the lines of the objective conditions of the nationalist development model. The growth of the national economy and domestic capital accumulation is reliant on the sustainability of self-expanding industrial production undertaken by both the state itself and by state-subsidised national capitalists. After the 1980s, however, there was a sharp rupture with such a strategy of growth and development. Like many other countries of the world, the transition to neoliberalism in Turkey—and to the urbanisation of capital—was characterised by the rule of market and property relations in the use of urban land and in the treatment of the urban poor (Keyder, 2005, p. 130).

In the 1990s, the commercialisation of urban land gained new momentum with an increasing desire on the part of the major capital owners to use the inner-city urban land for such profit-generating economic investments as banks and business offices, hotels, luxury housing, and shopping malls (Şengül, 2003, p. 164), a trend also witnessed in other advanced or late capitalist societies (Blomley, 2004, p. 31). During this period, urban land was no longer seen as an instrument to accommodate the growing labouring classes and to turn them into consumers in the big cities. Rather, it was a new area of economic investment open to both national and international capital.

As capital accumulation is no longer largely based on the expansion of labour-intensive production, the concentration of the labouring classes in these inner-city areas, essential for capital accumulation throughout the 1960s and 1970s, has started to pose a major obstacle to the quest to use the urban land for the generation of profit and rent. The smooth transition to the ‘urbanisation of capital’ also has been reliant on the deportation of these people from the inner-city ‘slums’ to the outer areas of cities. In this respect, the UTPs that started in the early twenty-first century have been the last step towards the consolidation of the urbanisation of capital in the neoliberal period.

This structural change in the capital accumulation regime and thus the status of urban land in Turkey has also had a bearing on the status of the inner-city shantytowns and the people living in them. As urban land is dominated by capital and market relations, it was impossible for them to build or purchase unlicensed buildings in big cities. As a result, most of the Kurdish migrants of the 1990s—many of whom were internally-displaced persons—had to become tenants of low-rent dwellings in the ‘slums’ of these cities, of which Kadifekale is but one example. One of the factors that kept the rents relatively low and hence enabled the migrants to reside in Kadifekale was the ‘landslide’ threat itself, since Kadifekale’s status as ‘land exposed to disaster’ and rumours about demolition degraded the value of houses, lowering rents, and making them affordable for migrants experiencing economic difficulties. Kadifekale’s status as a ‘landslide area’ also made it legally impossible for private entrepreneurs to buy the land for investment purposes, leaving *gecekondu* houses intact for years. Ironically, as of 2007, the very factor that enabled the Kurdish migrants to find affordable accommodation in Kadifekale (landslide) became the ‘legitimate’ reason for the expropriation of the land and thereby their displacement from the district.

In the context of neoliberalism, Kurdish migrants residing in Kadifekale in the 1990s and beyond no longer represented a labouring body engaged in formal production processes essential for the development of capitalism in Turkey. Most of them have been perceived as ‘rootless destitute city dwellers’, falling outside of production processes and making no contribution to profit generation in the city (Zucconi, 1999, p. 10). Only nine per cent of employable individuals in Kadifekale held a formal job as a factory worker or as a civil servant in 2005. The rest of the population was either unemployed or had an informal job without any social security (Karayığit, 2005, p. 11). Compared to the migrants who settled in Kadifekale throughout the 1990s, those who arrived before then had a better chance of formal employment, or had their *gecekondu*s legalised, and in most cases could achieve upward social mobility. Having overcome the trappings of poverty, many moved to other districts of Izmir, renting or selling their houses in Kadifekale to those Kurds who had fled war in east and southeast Anatolia. The new Kurdish migrants in Kadifekale confronted either unemployment or informal and irregular jobs. Under the conditions associated with the urbanisation of capital—that is, the neoliberalisation of urban space—the inner-city areas were no longer open to ‘workers’ or to the ‘reserve army of labour’. This should be seen as one of the factors behind the reluctance of the official authorities to examine the possibility of accommodating these migrants in other inner-city areas.

The urban renewal of Kadifekale that took place in this context affected the population of the neighbourhood in different ways, depending on their status vis-à-vis the demolished buildings. The property owners who agreed immediately to the deal offered by the municipality owned and lived in another apartment outside of Kadifekale. Consequently, they were practically unaffected by the action. Many people with *tapu tahsis* documents complained about unfair valuations of their houses or shops and went to court in a bid to increase the amount of compensation to be paid by the

municipality. This process of designating compensation for the buildings was also subject to the effects of ‘informal’ relations between project implementers and property holders. Such informal relations in Kadifekale have been a means of survival for many migrants for many years. When combined with the informal strategies of the project implementers, they have resulted in various forms and degrees of suffering for the entire community and perceptions of injustice in the conduct of the project. Those who have been able to situate themselves well at the intersection of the formal and the informal realms are the ones who have benefited most from the project. Those who have been unable to define a place for themselves in the simultaneously formal and informal context of the project have been the ones who have been most disadvantaged.

In this respect, tenants, comprising 46 per cent of Kadifekale’s population (Yörür, Karataş, and Çırak, 2008, p. 4), were hit hardest: they have been totally excluded from the UTP as they are not ‘rightful owners’ and thus have no recognised legal right to the houses in which they reside. Typically this group is composed of internally-displaced Kurdish migrants who came to Izmir at a rather later stage—that is, throughout the 1990s and 2000s. On their arrival they concentrated mostly in the slums located on land exposed to landslides, as rents were lower than in any other district of Izmir, ranging between TRY 150 and 300 (USD 100–300). With no rights, say, or power in relation to any stage of urban transformation in Kadifekale, they have been alienated from the process of expropriation, the legal procedures governing clearance, the apartments built in Uzundere, and the negotiations between the municipality and property owners. The expropriation law and related laws on urban transformation/renewal totally exclude tenants and so they are pushed outside of the ‘formal’ sphere. Although they selected this spot to settle because of the presence of the Kurdish community and the informal network in existence, their marginal position in the formal realm (owing to arriving later) also situated them outside of the framework of informal clientelistic power relations. One tenant interviewed summarised the common grievances of internally-displaced Kurdish migrants:<sup>23</sup>

*We do not want to leave here. We are used to here. I am a tenant. If they forced me out from here I cannot rent another place. The rent of a house has now increased to 450, 500, 600 Turkey Lira. I am now paying 230 Turkey Lira. If they try to demolish my house, if they force me out, I am planning to go back to my hometown. . . . It is better to go back and get into our own cave. . . . Our villages have already been burned. We all came here because of that. If we are able to live there, we will do that.*

Property ownership is so central to how the project is conducted that the actors involved, including the property owners in Kadifekale, act as if there is no such group as (internally-displaced) tenants. Being a tenant and lacking any legal claim to either a building or land also deprive internally-displaced persons from any informal means with which to deal with urban renewal problems.

In fact, the tendency to reduce social relations to commodity or property relations is not unique to the neoliberal stage of capitalism; it is also an essential feature

of capitalism itself. One of the historically specific features of capitalism that distinguishes it from other modes of production is the pervasiveness of 'commodity fetishism' across various aspects of social life (Marx, 1976, p. 165). Nevertheless, the extent to which reified 'commodity relations' rule the social world varies according to the degree to which free-market relations dominate economic and social life. In this sense, one can argue that the transition from developmental and Keynesian models of economic development to neoliberalism also marks an intensification in and a further consolidation of the rule of property relations and commodity fetishism in social life. The Keynesian economic models in advanced capitalist countries and national developmentalism in late capitalist societies necessitated an 'interventionist social state structure' and put emphasis on 'local liveability and the life opportunities of local residents', curbing, to a certain degree, the predominance of market relations (Blomley, 2004, p. 30). It was in this period that citizens were granted certain social-security benefits and rights, the extent of which varied from one country to another. The transition to neoliberalism signified the gradual eradication of these benefits and unfettered rule of free-market economics. As Gill (1995, p. 405) observes: 'the neoliberal shift in government policies has tended to subject the majority of the population to the power of market forces whilst preserving social protection for the strong'.

Consequently, such an obvious indifference to (or even non-recognition of) the conditions of 'property-less' tenants in Kadifekale represents the spirit of neoliberalism, where the rule of market and commodity has reached the outer limits. Even though the municipality presents the facilities on offer in Uzundere as one example of a social democratic mode of urban governance, the lack of recognition of the thousands of tenants who have no say in the project seems to reflect the predominance of a neoliberal logic that is embedded in its implementation.

While prioritising the objective of maximising urban rent and land values, the neoliberal vision of urban governance discards and inhibits any formal plans or mechanisms to solve the housing problems of the labouring population (Buğra and Adar, 2008, pp. 98–99). Against this background, the absence of any state protection and of comprehensive planning of housing became an unquestionable norm, making the labouring class in general and the poor in particular more vulnerable to marginalisation (Türkün, 2011, p. 64). Hence, this 'neoliberal orthodoxy' and the consequent unfettered domination of the market (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) have almost ruled out any possibility of placing the problems of 'property-less' tenants and internally-displaced migrants on the state and public agenda.

The conditions of 'tenants' are also wrapped up in their history of forced migration. Their specific problems thus offer a good vantage point from which to examine how the issues connected to forced migration have crystallised during the UTP in Kadifekale. In fact, without understanding the history of internal displacement in Turkey and its impacts on Izmir, one cannot comprehend adequately the current structure of property relations and of social stratification in Kadifekale. The following remarks of a dweller in Kadifekale are indicative of the significance of internal displacement in understanding the social effects of the transformation:

Interviewee: *What will I do [if they force me out]? I will throw myself to the sea. Where will I go? I cannot buy even a toilet or a bathroom with the money I have.*

Questioner: *Have you ever thought about going back to your hometown?*

Interviewee: *Well . . . our villages . . . they have burned them all. Our farms and gardens have all gone . . . How many years have passed since 1994? . . . 15 years. In 15 years nothing could be left there. What exists there?*<sup>24</sup>

As stated, lacking the necessary financial resources with which to secure ownership of a house, the internally-displaced migrants of the 1990s emerged as the new tenants in Kadifekale. In contrast, the people with legal property ownership and strong networks emerged as the actors that could use legal or informal channels to raise their demands—an option not available to most internally-displaced migrants. The regulations consider them to be outside of the formal context of the project; the underlying dynamics that brought them to Izmir (unwillingly and without preparation) were neglected. When the internally-displaced migrants became ‘tenants’, deprived of all rights, state officials managed successfully to deflect the matter of forced migration. With the exclusion of tenants from the UTP in Kadifekale, it has taken the form of a ‘money’ project among property owners, the municipality, and the MHA. It is only when one delves beneath the surface and analyses the inner dynamics of the process that its intricate relations with neoliberalism and forced migration start to emerge.

## Conclusion

The rhetoric of ‘landslide’ has served to present Kadifekale’s UTP as merely a technical intervention in an area exposed to a natural disaster, yet it conceals the project’s underlying neoliberal logic and its distinct effects on the internally-displaced Kurdish migrants. As a result, an inherently social and political issue has been transformed into a financial dispute between individual property owners and the municipality. Both neoliberalism and internal displacement are issues that go beyond the level of individual interests, affecting a larger community. By masking the neoliberal logic ingrained in the project, and rendering the matter of internal displacement invisible, the rhetoric of ‘landslide’ poses a major obstacle to problematising the processes of neoliberalism and the social effects mediated by forced migration.

The problems of neoliberal urban governance and the effects of forced migration in Turkey have unfolded during the UTP in Kadifekale. The importance of this case lies in the ways in which the discourse of ‘urgency’ and that of ‘natural disasters’ has served to conceal these structural problems and to depict the project as an unquestionable technical intervention to address the imminent dangers posed by a landslide. The notion of ‘natural disasters’ plays a significant ideological role in this respect, ‘naturalising’ the number of problems that are social in origin, such as inequality and urban poverty. Given the AKP government’s attempt in May 2012 to justify its

forthcoming plans to wipe out the inner-city shantytowns of the big cities as an earthquake-related precaution, the discourses used to legitimise Kadifekale's renewal and the procedures followed to complete the project seemingly could offer some insights into the new direction of urban transformation in the country in general. In this respect, Kadifekale can be seen as a small-scale illustration of a larger strategy of urban governance in Turkey.

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## Correspondence

Dr Cenk Saraçoğlu, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Baskent University, Bağlica Kampusu Eskisehir, Yolu 20. km, Bağlica 06530, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: [cenksaracoglu@gmail.com](mailto:cenksaracoglu@gmail.com)

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Gecekondu* literary means 'built overnight'. It refers to houses or settlements constructed on state and/or privately-owned land without planning and/or construction permission, through the efforts of rural-to-urban migrants and their country fellows in urban peripheries. Owing to populist policies, amnesty laws that aim to formalise the status of these settlements, or informal state practices at various levels to supply services to these settlements over the past four decades, it is no longer possible to define these settlements using the formal context of urban politics and the classical concept of *gecekondu*.
- <sup>2</sup> See <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdogan-kacak-yapilardan-gecekondulardan-sehirlerimizizi-kurtaralim-/3775> (translation: authors).
- <sup>3</sup> *Gecekondu* is no longer a valid concept with which to identify all irregular neighbourhoods in the central and peripheral regions of cities. Although some neighbourhoods preserve their physical outlook as *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, their legal status has changed to a large extent in the course of the formalisation of these settlements. Consequently, 'low-income settlements' is used here to refer to such places. The term better covers the variety of differences in property ownership patterns, socioeconomic positions, the physical condition of houses, and the general physical structure of these neighbourhoods.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Low-income settlements' typically have proliferated on the outskirts of the big cities of Turkey, particularly since the late 1980s. However, there are some old squatter districts that date back to the 1940s and the 1950s, including Altındag in Ankara, Kadifekale in Izmir, and Zeytinburnu in Istanbul, situated in the very centre of these cities. Urban transformation projects since the AKP's accession to power have targeted such old districts predominantly.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Modern city' in the discourse of Erdoğan and local politicians mainly relates to the physical and infrastructural qualities of the cities; it is devoid of social concern and meaning.

- <sup>6</sup> We are aware that the expression ‘natural disasters’ is problematic when it is used to denote those hazards whose consequences are mediated by socio-political structures, relations, and conditions. In this respect, ‘natural disasters’ as an expression could play an ideological role in the concealment of the man-made and social causes and effects of the hazards. To avoid confusion, it is important to point out that wherever the expression ‘natural disasters’ appears in this text, it refers to the discursive strategy of ‘naturalising’ certain human-driven consequences of urban disasters.
- <sup>7</sup> Merely blaming unlicensed buildings for the earthquake-related casualties seems to be incorrect and implausible given that most of the buildings that collapsed in Van were licensed.
- <sup>8</sup> Izmir is Turkey’s third largest city, with a population of approximately four million people. From the seventeenth century until the Republican period (starting in the late 1920s), it was a very important port city and hence played a critical function in Mediterranean trade. In the Republican period, though, it lost competitiveness vis-à-vis Istanbul, and other port cities close to Istanbul, owing to macroeconomic policies on regional development in Turkey. In the competition for global capital, too, Izmir has lagged behind Istanbul since the 1980s. The longstanding political support of a majority of Izmir’s population for the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the main opposition to the ruling AKP, currently further alienates the city from powerful political networks. Notably, following the economic crisis of 2001, the city’s economy experienced deep stagnation, which is why local business circles and Izmir’s media outlets have long urged for the development of new strategies to render the city more attractive to national and international capital flows.
- <sup>9</sup> The terms ‘forced migrants’ and ‘internally-displaced migrants’ are used here interchangeably to refer to the Kurds whom the Turkish state forced to flee their villages and homes in southeast Anatolia for officially declared security reasons during the military conflict between the PKK and the national army. The Hacettepe University Population Studies Institute (2002) estimated that almost one million Kurds were exposed to internal displacement during the 1990s, and that 50 per cent of these displaced migrants moved to cities with an overwhelmingly Turkish population, including Izmir.
- <sup>10</sup> The Mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality—the main official agency in the Kadifekale UTP—is from the CHP (Republican People’s Party), which has been the main opposition party since 2012. It is evident from the example of the Kadifekale UTP that, given the structural and financial constraints imposed by the municipal system, the CHP local government develops urban transformation strategies in parallel with the macro neoliberal urban policies of the AKP.
- <sup>11</sup> Twenty-five in-depth interviews were conducted with two groups of neighbourhood residents directly affected by the application of the plan: those who accepted the terms of the agreement and were in the process of moving out; and those who have been resisting the move through court proceedings. A purposive sampling method was used, which aimed to secure a representative sample of the population, composed of house owners, occupants, men, shop owners, tenants, and women. The sample mostly comprised Kurdish immigrants, although there were four interviews with Turkish immigrants. Twenty in-depth interviews were also held with the presidents of the hometown associations affiliated to immigrants from Mardin, the city planners involved in the Kadifekale case, a lawyer who defended the cases of some immigrants, those officials from the municipality directly engaged in the planning and implementation of the UTP, and the current president of the Izmir office of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with the authors, no.: S1, Izmir, 7 May 2010.
- <sup>13</sup> She added that this is a controversial issue for the city planners themselves and that there are different thoughts on the administrative board of the Chamber of Urban Planners as to whether the Kadifekale case can be defined as a typical process of ‘urban transformation’.
- <sup>14</sup> A similar discourse was used in Istanbul following the Kocaeli earthquake of 1999 to justify the restructuring of urban land. Candan and Kolluoglu (2008, p. 17) note that: ‘one must add the emergence of what we call a discourse of urgency, articulated around several imminent “natural disasters”. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 1999, an intense public debate has taken place regarding the imminent massive earthquake and the extent of the city’s preparedness to deal with

it. In the last five years, an interesting shift has occurred in the public discourse in the articulation of this problem. Measures that need to be taken in relation to the pending earthquake, such as strengthening the housing stock and examining the infrastructure, are discussed in relation to many other “disasters” that are “awaiting” Istanbulites, such as crime, migration, chaos in the transportation system, and overpopulation. In other words, the earthquake is discussed in relation to other “naturalized disasters”, creating a sense of urgency. The only way to handle these imminent “disasters” supposedly is through the massive urban transformation projects in the city’.

<sup>15</sup> Like most political-economy scholars, we employ the concept of neoliberalism as a distinct form of capital accumulation and as a specific stage in the development of global capitalism. Neoliberalism refers to ongoing economic and social processes via which state intervention and protectionism under the Keynesian model of capital accumulation have been replaced by the norms of a free-market economy and internationalisation of capital (Harvey 2005). Given that such a large-scale change in capital accumulation conditioned the respective transformation of ideological and political levels of social formation, it is better to use the concept of neoliberalism in its broad sense to connote not only the liberalisation of the realm of economics but also the impacts on political and social life (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005, p. 2).

<sup>16</sup> Schuller (2008) provides a comprehensive discussion of a similar ideological process in the case of Hurricane Katrina in the United States.

<sup>17</sup> The tendency of powerful economic groups in Izmir to see the threat of a landslide in Kadifekale as an opportunity to develop their neoliberal vision of the city echoes the concept of ‘disaster capitalism’, which Klein (2001, p. 13) defines as ‘orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities’. In the Turkish case, this opportunistic outlook, in the guise of taking precautions against expected and inevitable hazards, is put into practice before the outbreak of a disaster. Most of Klein’s examples, however, refer to processes of neoliberal urban restructuring that could occur post disaster.

<sup>18</sup> As an emblematic example of this discourse see [http://www.izmirdebugun.com/root.vol?title=kadifekalede-buyuk donusum&exec=page&nid=5468](http://www.izmirdebugun.com/root.vol?title=kadifekalede-buyuk-donusum&exec=page&nid=5468).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with the authors no.: S2, Izmir, 2 June 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Information from the official website of the municipality: <http://www.izmir.bel.tr>.

<sup>21</sup> Construction of a mussel-production plant was later removed from the framework of the project. In interviews with the authors, the presidents of the village associations flagged its inappropriateness due to logistical issues and the informal nature of the employment.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with the authors, no.: S5, Izmir, 13 September 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with the authors, no.: M19, Izmir, 18 May 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with the authors, no.: M22, Izmir, 23 September 2010.

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