Urban crisis: 'Limits to governance of alienation'

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Abstract
This article aims to develop a comparative framework of analysis to study urban crises, arguing that there is a need to establish the analytical links between 'everyday life and systemic trends and struggles', and thus to tie together the insights produced by 'particularistic accounts'. It examines urban crises as political phenomena and brings the Marxist notion of 'alienation' to the centre of attention. We argue that 'alienation' – as a universal mechanism facilitating capital accumulation process via dispossession, and as negative mental/emotional implications of dispossession, is useful to establish those analytical links. We identify two domains, urban economic structure and urban political system, where alienation is contained. Public authorities deploy various containment strategies in these domains to govern alienation, and urban crises occur when these strategies fail. The post-2008 wave of urban upheavals could be explained by the failure of roll-out neoliberal strategies, which constitute the basis of our comparative framework.

Keywords
alienation, comparative research, containment strategies, governance, urban crisis

摘要
本文旨在发展一种研究城市危机的比较分析框架，认为有必要在"日常生活与系统性趋势和斗争"之间建立分析纽带，从而将"特殊主义叙述"所产生的各种洞察联结在一起。文章审视了作为政治现象的城市危机，并聚焦马克思主义的"异化"概念。我们指出，作为一种通过掠夺来促进资本积累过程的普遍机制以及掠夺对思维/情感造成的消极影响，"异化"有助于建立这些分析纽带。我们识别了容纳异化的两个领域：城市经济结构与城市政治系统。政府当局在这两个领域部署各种容纳策略来治理异化；当这些策略失败时，城市危机就发生了。2008年之后的城市动乱潮可用新自由主义策略推行过程中的失败来解释，而这些新自由主义策略构成了我们比较分析框架的基础。

关键词
异化、比较研究、遏制策略、治理、城市危机

Introduction

Since the global economic crisis of 2008, we have been witnessing a concurrent wave of revolutions, occupy movements and violent mass uprisings across the world. They erupted in major urban centres and the demands raised by the protesters have mostly been urban in nature, about issues that disrupt the ordinary citizens' daily life and/or harm their material/moral well-being (an urban park in Turkey, bus/metro ticket price in Brazil, housing debt in Spain, etc.). This article concentrates on the role and place of different governance practices of capitalist states in preparing the grounds for these protests/movements, and as the mechanism behind the variation of forms of contestation. Recent studies on these protests have revolved around a renewed interest in the notion of urban crisis. We also do so by problematising 'urban crisis as a political phenomenon'. Responding to Peck's (2015) call for *comparative theorisation*, we are interested in addressing a central question of this special issue: 'How can we develop comparative research methodologies to help understand urban crisis-governance and its contestation in future research?'.

Given the diversity of forms of protests, particularistic accounts alone would not help us much in explaining why these protests/upheavals erupted simultaneously. According to Davies (2013), a Marxist approach gives us a clear answer: All these developments have to do with the fact that 'capitalism [is] a fundamentally crisis-prone socio-economic system'. This observation suggests that this recent wave of urban protests/upheavals could well be indicative of a structural disturbance in global capitalism. The challenge here, however, 'is to grasp the relationship between everyday life and systemic trends and struggles' (Davies, 2013: 498; also see Kipfer, 2002), and thus what ties together the insights offered by particularistic and/or case-study based accounts on urban crisis (Holgersen, 2015: 693–694). We argue that the Marxist concept of alienation – as a universal mechanism facilitating capital accumulation process and as a concrete result of this process characterised by negative mental/emotional implications for individuals and societies, could help us in establishing the analytical links between 'everyday life and systemic trends and struggles', and in tying together the insights produced by particularistic accounts around a comparative framework of analysis.

In fact, governments across the globe have been facing a severe dilemma: to keep their seats while maintaining the legitimacy of the capitalist state or to find new venues for accumulation, adding those sections of their societies to the ranks of victims of unfettered exploitation/dispossession, thereby worsening the alienation problem. The neoliberal policies adopted by the capitalist states across the world have increasingly promoted the second option, which hit a serious barrier in the global economic crisis of 2008. As Harvey notes, '[t]he issue is not that capital cannot survive its contradictions but that the cost of it so doing becomes unacceptable to the mass of the population' (2014: 264). Here the question to further address is 'under what conditions and how the contradictions of capital are translated into urban crises?'

We argue that urban crises are political phenomena. They are, and they do erupt at, moments of political conflict. Thus, they are political constructs, and are labelled as 'urban crises' (by the authorities or by the society) when public authorities in a given country lose their grip over the social order,

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and over the geographies constituting/sustaining this order; or when public authorities foresee that a threat to their legitimacy is on the way. Urban crises have their roots in contradictions of capitalism (and processes of capital accumulation) as explained by Harvey (2014). Of course, urban crises are mostly triggered by economic crises, which now mainly hit urban areas/societies. Yet, the economic crises translate into urban crises once deepening class tensions and/or social discontent turn into mobilisations to threaten established political balances and/or regimes. In that regard, our focus is on the political aspects and consequences of crises of capitalism. We aim to further operationalise Harvey's insights on alienation, by discussing how this universal result of the contradictions he outlines translate into urban crises as political phenomena, and why they take different forms in different contexts. To better understand urban crises, we propose to concentrate on the failure of 'containment strategies' that used to keep under check the potential discontent stemming from the effects of alienation generated by capitalism. In other words, we argue that urban crises erupt when 'governance of alienation' in a given context fails.

We further argue that we could operationalise alienation for comparative purposes by bringing the notion of dispossession to the centre of analysis. Especially when we are to explain the geographical logic of variation in the forms of urban crises, 'dispossession as the essence of alienation' could be quite helpful. In particular, it could help us understand how the costs of capital accumulation are fixed onto certain geographies and classes/social groups, by asking questions about (a) how the processes of neoliberal urbanisation facilitate this cost transfer, while linking different parts of capitalism's geography (urban versus non-urban; West/North versus East/South), (b) and thus what forms of

alienation are produced, through spatial dynamics of capital accumulation. In that regard, we could also begin to investigate the geographically established causal links between different instances of urban crises across the world.

Governance of alienation: Containment strategies

In this section, to further develop our argument that 'urban crises erupt when "governance of alienation" in a given context fails' we will first discuss alienation as a mechanism that prepare the grounds for political discontent. Then, we will identify two domains where the negative consequences of alienation could be contained: '(urban) economic structure' and '(urban) political system'. Then, departing from this *analytical* distinction, we will offer a categorisation of containment strategies deployed by public authorities, as instruments of governance of alienation.

Alienation

To reiterate, broadly speaking, alienation could be defined as a universal mechanism facilitating capital accumulation process and as a concrete result of this process characterised by negative mental/emotional implications for individuals and societies. To further develop our discussion, we will first borrow the following definition(s) formulated by Harvey (2014: 267, emphases added):

> *As a legal term* it means to transfer a property right to the ownership of another … *As a social relation* it refers to how affections, loyalties and trust can be alienated (transferred, stolen away) from one person, institution or political cause to another … [It refers to] (loss) of trust (in persons or institutions such as the law, the banks, the political system) … *As a*

> *passive psychological term* alienation means to become isolated and estranged from some valued connectivity … experienced and internalized as a feeling of sorrow and grief at some undefinable loss that cannot be recuperated. *As an active psychological state* it means to be angry and hostile at being or feeling oppressed, deprived or dispossessed and to act out that anger and hostility, lashing out sometime *without any clear definitive reason or rational target*, against the world in general.

The first definition is of utmost importance in that it is about the logic of the capital accumulation process, while the rest refers to the implications of this process for the individual and the society. We will come back to the rest, especially the last two, in the concluding section. Below, we further elaborate on the implications of the first definition.

Through a careful exegesis of Marx's various works, Ollman (1971) brings the capitalist production process to the centre of analysis in his account of alienation. In this process, the relationship between capital and the worker is established via the transfer of ownership of the latter's labour power to capital. This capitalist process commodifies labour and human needs and ultimately human becomes alienated to her/his productive activity and start to feel himself/herself as the 'extensions of commodities' (Marcuse, 1964). This alienation process runs as a vicious circle to the degree of enslaving the worker, and thus leads to the total integration of the working class into the capitalist system (Marcuse, 1964; Ollman, 1971). Dispossession of labour power is the core of this process and it is an enforced one rather than a free legal exchange between two equal parties.

Pointing the finger at accumulation by dispossession, Harvey's generic definition expands the implications of the analysis above. Capitalist production is not the sole/major venue of capital accumulation any longer. Along with further commodification of labour power, there are now new venues/forms of dispossession in the neoliberal/global context of capitalism, which are mostly *operationalised through neoliberal urban policies* such as commodification of (urban) land (leading to expulsion of urban/rural populations from their habitat), privatisation/commodification of public assets (including natural resources and land, public services and institutions), conversion of property rights, the national debt and the use of the credit system (financialisation as a means of long-term dispossession of labour and land), suppression of indigenous forms of production, and monetisation of exchange, etc. (cf. Harvey, 2005).

What happens when the alienation process described by Ollman and Marcuse is expanded as Harvey explains? To elaborate our answer to this question, we shall borrow the following quote from Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* about the enslavement of labour: 'The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home' (Marx, 1959: 72). A corollary of this insight is that non-work-related domains of life (family, friendships, cultural activities, hobbies, civic/community activities, etc.), which are experienced in living spaces (homes and public spaces such as streets, neighbourhoods, parks, squares, theatres, etc.), do emerge as venues where the negative effects of alienation originating from the workplace might be relieved and could be contained. The containment strategies enter the picture here.

Domains and strategies of containment

Governance of alienation would require, first, to devise policies/strategies to buffer consequences of 'alienation at the workplace' via introduction of a 'life support

system', which we call *(urban) economic structure*, based on public spending on welfare, social security systems, workplace standards, regulation of finance capital, etc. … Yet, these policies alone would not be helpful to govern alienation. There is a second and even more strategic venue of governance of alienation, *urban political system*, explained below.

Policies geared towards protection of living spaces, where the negative implications of alienation at the workplace could be contained more easily, need to be introduced. These could involve introducing limits to commodification of housing (cheap/public housing, protection of tenants, etc.), (urban) land, publicly owned assets/commons and transportation, for example; as well as policies to protect/revive social capital (broadly understood). Given that the policies designed to contain alienation at the workplace are more jealously protected by the capitalist state, and have been carefully de-politicised over decades, the non-work-related domains of life emerge as the natural venue of expression of discontent stemming from alienation (at work). Thus, they could be more easily politicised; and urban politics, which revolve around urban policies of national governments as well as the policies pursued by local governments, emerge as a critical venue of expression and containment of discontent. Then, urban political systems, consisting of (a) institutional design of/conducting 'politics of representation' and (b) production of '(political) culture and discourse' to promote/contest public authority, serve as a major venue of governance of alienation.

No doubt, neoliberal policies have been deepening alienation at the workplace. And during its roll-back stage, the life support system was unplugged in a hurry, worsening the alienation problem and resulting in protests in different countries. It was to be restored, albeit partially, during the roll-out phase. As we will discuss in the following section, that phase reached its limits too. But below, we will first list and discuss the *roll-out containment strategies* deployed to govern alienation in the domain economic structure, which ultimately turned it into an 'urban economic structure'. We could identify two main strategies:

(A) *'(Re)Distribution of wealth via public policies'* to contain the tensions created by the roll-back damage done to the classical life support system (national/local economic structure, the welfare state), which involves restoring social spending. There are two sub-strategies here. First, to contain deepening proleterianisation and precarisation of working classes, *selectively inclusive state policies, such as roll-out welfare policies* were introduced (Davies, 2011, 2012, 2014; Peck, 2012; Peck and Tickell, 2002). Given the shortage of available public resources, this selectivity was necessary. In cases such as Turkey, where the neoliberal urbanisation process has increasingly widened the income gaps, this selectivity worked to keep the society politically divided, too (Bayırbağ, 2013; Bayırbağ and Penpecioğlu, 2014). Second, *alternative sources to fund public policies* had to be generated to make up for the commodification of the commons, public resources and services. Those involved the sale of public assets/institutions that are not directly involved in service provision, parallel budgeting and charity-based service provision, etc. (Buğra and Candaş, 2011; also see Buğra, 1998).

(B) '*Ensuring sustainability of neoliberal urbanisation*' to contain the tensions created by expansion of dispossession process, targeting (urban) land/housing in particular. We could identify two sub-strategies here, too. First, to contain mass resistance to commodification and dispossession of urban land and public spaces, *informalisation of private property and selective distribution of urban rents* (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010; Peck

et al., 2013; Penpecioğlu, 2013; Şengül, 2013; Swyngedouw et al., 2002) have been deployed as effective strategies (see section 'Limits to containment strategies: Roots of urban crises' for detailed discussion). Second sub-strategy was *to encourage/invite global financial capital to invest into urbanisation* (see Smith, 2002). Given its destructive consequences, as proven after the 2008 crisis, this policy orientation might not sound to be a reasonable containment strategy on the part of the public authorities. But it was, until 2008. In the West/North, it has helped to bring the middle classes under political control via long-term indebtedness to the banks. The stick called economic stability has promoted the political status quo (of course till the housing bubble burst). That scheme also worked in the East/South, too. What is more, global financial capital originating from the West/North found new venues of accumulation in the East/South, also thanks to the neoliberal urbanisation policies implemented in the latter countries. This was to the benefit of the public authorities on both sides. In the Western/Northern countries, domestic limits to accumulation were overcome to a certain degree, thereby relieving the pressure on different domains of alienation there. In the Eastern/Southern countries, the public authorities have been provided with capital needed to initiate a (virtual) growth strategy without having to tap into the public purse (cf. Karaman, 2012).

As for the roll-out containment strategies deployed to govern alienation in the domain urban political system, we could identify, again, two main strategies:

(C) *'Redesigning politics of representation'* to contain the increasing tensions created by alienation of masses from the policy-making process informed by a neoliberal agenda. First sub-strategy, *promoting local democracy,* *participation and entrepreneurialism* aimed to contain the discontent created by policies facilitating the expansion of dispossession to the non-work-related domains of life (Amin and Thrift, 1995; Harvey, 1989; MacLeod, 2001; MacLeod and Jones, 2007; Purcell, 2006). This sub-strategy had to be backed by a second one, *social capital engineering* (Kurtoğlu, 2004; Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Putnam, 1993). There are two aims here: to incorporate communal ties (family, kinship, religious and ethnicity-based networks) into the urban economic structure so as to contain the alienation created at the workplace; and to turn informal social networks (especially religious and ethnicity-based) into relatively safe channels of political representation. This strategy also propagates identity politics, which, in turn, serves to keep the masses (working classes) politically divided (Bayırbağ, 2013).

(D) *'Promoting hyper-urbanism'*[1] to contain discontent that could stem from dispossession of the public via commodification/privatisation of public spaces/commons and concentration of public and private capital into major cities/urban centres to the detriment of relatively underdeveloped neighbourhoods/cities/regions. First sub-strategy deployed, in that regard, is *to promote consumerism in cities by city branding, place marketing, etc.* Here, individualism is to be sanctified to the effect of hollowing out the meaning of public. This cultural intervention serves to keep citizens disinterested in collective ideals and politics (Goldman, 2011; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Roy, 2011; Urry, 1995; McCann and Ward, 2012), thereby weakening the ideological bases likely to generate organised discontent. Second sub-strategy too, serves to rescale the politics of neoliberalism. *Promoting a globalist policy discourse on national development which champions global cities* (cf. Brenner, 2004; Keyder, 2000; Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 1999 – world system approach) serves to justify concentration of

private and public investments into major cities, while creating an expectation on the part of broader public that the economic growth in those cities will create a spill-over effect in the long term.

Given the universal nature of the main problem these strategies are addressing, alienation via dispossession, the strategies listed above have been deployed extensively (albeit in different combinations) across the geography of capitalism during the neoliberal era. Yet, they reached their limits.

Limits to containment strategies: Roots of urban crises

Neoliberalism resembles the Ouroboros, the snake eating itself. The content of the roll-out containment strategies outlined above indicates that neoliberalism's response to the problems it creates is to further deepen and widen itself (Aalbers, 2013: 1085; also see Peck, 2012: 651). Yet, the post-2008 wave of urban uprisings suggests that, unlike the Ouroboros, it is not eternal. Roll-out containment strategies seem to have reached their limits. It looks as if the urban uprisings will not subside anytime soon.

In fact, as the roll-out containment strategies were being deployed, the social and geographical scope of dispossession/ accumulation continued to expand, too. What places and who were the new targets? The answer was: The very centres of wealth, metropolitan cities and those sections of society/classes with possessions, inhabiting those urban centres of wealth. This amounted to directly targeting 'private property' (land property), as well as local commons (cf. Aalbers, 2013: 1084); and proleterianisation of the white collar middle classes (Boratav, 2013). These interventions have had a direct impact on the daily lives of the population: Loss of jobs, flexibilisation and precarisation of work, increased

periods of unemployment and social insecurity (coupled with the increasing decay of solidarity networks, thereby paralysing social capital engineering efforts), commodification of commons (public spaces, agricultural areas, forests, water resources … etc.). The need to further deepen the dispossession process would amount to paralyse, or give up on, a set of containment strategies listed above, namely 'selectively inclusive state policies, such as roll-out welfare policies' by giving up on an already vague emphasis on inclusiveness; 'promoting a globalist policy discourse on national development championing global cities', by increasingly restricting the benefits of this policy to a narrower set of social groups/classes even in those global cities; and 'promoting local democracy, participation and entrepreneurialism', because of the need to embrace an increasingly authoritarian policy outlook to be able to implement such harsh measures devastating peoples' lives. This could be likened to the Ouroboros' move to eat its own tail to regenerate itself.

This expansion process proved to be much more explosive as they added a better organised and politically more conscious middle class to the ranks of the victims of dispossession (cf. Bayat, 2007); while also attacking the very principle of private property, which constitutes one of the foundations of the discourse of freedom and democracy in capitalist societies. Given that this principle has played a key role in establishing the political ties between the bourgeois democracy and the middle classes especially, attacking 'private property' would result in 'alienating' the middle classes from the bourgeois politics. The 'alienation' problem portrayed here is now turning into an existential crisis (cf. Bayat, 2000) for a substantial section of urban societies (cf. Yiftachel, 2009, in McFarlane, 2012; cf. Peck, 2012: 650–651). This existential crisis is inevitable as promotion of individualism

(see 'Promoting hyper-urbanism', (D) above) serves to deepen the alienation as a passive psychological state, harming the valued social connectivities (despite the social capital engineering efforts). In this context, the belief in the virtues of bourgeois democracy and the promises of wealth by capitalism (and free market economy) remain as the only source of hope, especially for the middle classes. Once the principle of private property, the ideological basis of this hope, is attacked, and once the bourgeois democracy reaches its limits of delivering this hope, that passive psychological state could quickly translate into the active, agressive, psychological state Harvey (2014) refers to.

Apparently, continuation of an expanded dispossession process, especially when you are to take on private property and labour of a politically conscious and better organised section of society, could become only possible by also disturbing the urban political system, i.e. (a) giving up on the promoting (local) democracy discourse; (b) building up an increasingly authoritarian police state (cf. Şengül, 2013); (c) bringing an end to the principle of 'rule of law' via selective employment of a more flexible/nebulous legal framework to legitimise unjust practices of neoliberal urbanisation (Bayırbağ and Penpecioğlu, 2014; Kuyucu, 2013a, 2013b; for a detailed case study see Yılmaz, 2011).

Degree of flexibility of the political regime in a given country will determine the form an urban crisis takes. The portfolio of containment strategies available to the policy-makers in different countries and their capacity to make up for the failure of certain strategies by operationalising yet others underlie this flexibility; and differences between the forms of urban crises emerging in the West/North and in the East/South could be explained by these factors. As we will discuss in detail later, the Western/Northern countries have a richer portfolio of political containment strategies that might render potential discontent more manageable. For example, by diverting public's attention to local governments via austerity urbanism, the problem might be reduced to a purely local democracy problem (cf. Peck, 2012: 650–651). In that regard, Purcell's (2006) caution that 'the right to the city' discourse could fall into the 'local trap' becomes meaningful in that it could miss the roots of the crisis of urban governance in the dominant accumulation regime. And national policy-makers could also avoid the political costs of urban crisis, while enjoying the opportunity to put the blame on the ineptitude and incompetence of 'over-responsibilised' city elites (cf. Peck et al., 2013: 1097).

Besides, as the home base of global capital, the Western/Northern countries still enjoy the relative advantage of exporting their own troublemakers to the East/South (as discussed under the strategy 'to encourage/invite global financial capital to invest into urbanisation' (see (B) above), which, to reiterate, could eventually solve domestic limits to accumulation, thereby relieving the pressure on different domains of alienation there. Yet, the long-term prospects of success of this strategy (on the part of the Western/Eastern countries) are quite dim now. This has to do with the fact that containment strategies of the Eastern/Southern countries reached their limits.

In fact, unlike past country-/continent-specific urban revolts, the geographical reach of those revolts has been stunning (from Brasil to Egypt to Hong Kong). This time urban protests cut across the North/South divide. In fact, what makes this recent round more widespread and even more striking is that the South came to the fore and the major urban centres of the South took the lead.[2] Especially in these cases, the protests have been more violent and regime-threatening, and urban crises, as we shall discuss later in detail, have mainly been crises of urban political system.

In the Eastern/Southern countries, urban economic structure has relied more on the strategy '*ensuring sustainability of neoliberal urbanisation*' than '*(re)distribution of wealth via public policies*'. Given the chronic problems of the public purse in those countries, that was inevitable. Yet, this has been a pretty risky bet as the neoliberal urbanisation policies in those countries have increased the pace of urbanisation there, turning the Eastern/Southern metropolitan cities into hotbeds of stark contrasts/inequalities. This has, to borrow Ollman's terminology, worsened alienation of masses in terms of 'Man's [sic] relation to his fellow men [sic]' (1971: chapter 21) and 'Man's [sic] relation to his species' (1971: chapter 22), especially the latter culminating in the inhumane conditions of urban poor in such cities. To repeat Harvey's point, '[t]he issue is not that capital cannot survive its contradictions but that the cost of it so doing becomes unacceptable to the mass of the population' (2014: 264). This is precisely the case with the Eastern/Southern cases. There, the former strategy, which would work more effectively once complemented by the latter, has served to deepen the problems to be addressed by the latter. Besides, speeding up the neoliberal urbanisation process consumes scarce public resources at a faster pace, and in bigger amounts, to the effect of destroying the capacity to initiate wealth (re)distribution programs, which could otherwise serve as a buffer mechanism, ensuring the sustainability of that former strategy.

A closer look at those cases suggests the presence of a rather universal scheme of dispossession, which has been run on a pretty thin urban political system, with similar dispossession tactics across continents. In the case of China, for example, Fu (2002) indicates how the state uses land lease as a mechanism to dispossess public land and allow it for the development of construction and finance sectors to make Shanghai a global city. Like Shanghai, in Taipei neoliberal

urbanism facilitates and attracts investments through large-scale urban projects. As Jou et al. (2011) highlight, land acquisition via the privatisation of public land has played a key role in dispossession and four large-scale urban projects in Taipei were formed and implemented in that regard. In this East Asian way of neoliberal urbanism, there has been a consensus among central state, local state and private capital over establishing private property on public land (Jou et al., 2011). In Mumbai there has been an enormous urban regeneration operation displacing millions of slum dwellers. In Bangalore land speculation and dispossession of the people living in city's rural periphery has become the market-driven priority to make it a world city (Goldman, 2011; Roy, 2009).

Neoliberal urbanism and its variegated practices of dispossession not only came to dominate urban policy in Asian countries; but they have also constituted the main motive behind the reproduction of urban space in Latin American countries. These neoliberal policies of dispossession correlate with changes in increased unemployment and informality, poverty and inequality, crime, victimisation and urban insecurity (Portez and Roberts, 2005). In certain Latin American cities, urban gentrification has become a state-led strategy for social dispossession of land (for the case of Chile see: Lopez-Morales, 2010). In others, these changes have exacerbated urban socio-spatial segregation and brought in intractable problems for capitalism, those about citizenship, human rights and democracy (for the case of Brazil see: Caldeira, 2001).

Turkey has been the leading example from the Middle East. In the Turkish story of neoliberalisation, accumulation has heavily relied on urbanisation of capital, dramatically altering the socio-spatial fabric of the cities, while increasingly rendering class and socio-spatial inequalities in the cities permanent (Şengül, 2009 [2001], 2012). In this

process, the built and non-built environment, public resources and land, historically and culturally valuable sites, squatter areas have all come to be subordinated to the logic of urban rent (Şengül, 2013). As Balaban (2012) points out, the state has played a leading role in the growth of the construction sector in Turkish cities and facilitated the dispossession process via various legislations reorganising planning powers, transferring property rights and empowering central government institutions as the leading actor (also see Penpecioğlu, 2013). This process has been associated with further centralisation of decision-making powers at all levels of public institutions (Şengül, 2012). In the context of such an authoritarian policy regime, urban regeneration projects enact 'forced marketisation' (Aalbers, 2013; Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010) that intensifies the displacement and dispossession of the urban poor (see, for example, Danışan, 2012; and Poyraz, 2011), while subordinating a broader segment of the society, mainly the middle class, to the financialisation of the housing market and rendering their labour captive to finance capital (Akçay, 2015; Karaman, 2012).

In the Eastern/Southern examples, we witness implementation of *a reverse and loud encroachment policy* (cf. Bayat, 2000) pursued by the state, speeding up the dispossession process while deepening existing inequalities, and yet creating new ones (Kuyucu, 2013a: 609–612, 618, 624; McFarlane, 2012; Roy, 2011; also see Kuyucu, 2013b). In such countries, as noted, prospects for containing the emergent crises via state reforms are rather dim as the politics of representation are not constructed on the basis of the idea of formal citizenship but rather on the basis of clientelism (cf. Bayat and Biekart, 2009: 819–820, 824; also see Kuyucu, 2013a: 12), and the containment capacity of clientelism reaches its limits when the public authorities have no more

rent to distribute in the face of a global economic crisis, which paralyses neoliberal urbanisation policies there. Hence, it should come as no surprise that urban crises in the East/West tend to take more violent forms.

Forms of urban crises: A comparative framework

As argued, urban crises come in different forms, depending on the types of strategies failed in different contexts. In fact, to explore how/when/which containment strategies are operationalised, in what combinations, and how/when/why they succeed or fail in a given context is an empirical task (so, the examples given Table 1 below are tentative, to provoke further thinking on our framework). Our task here, however, is an analytical one. By offering a categorisation of urban crises on the basis of containment strategies, we aim to construct an analytical framework that could help us formulate further research questions for comparison.

In section 'Governance of alienation: Containment strategies', we have identified two domains where the negative consequences of alienation could be contained: '(urban) economic structure' and '(urban) political system'. We think that we could develop our comparative framework on that basis, too, with three major categories at hand: (a) Failure in/of urban economic structure; (b) failure in/of urban political system; (c) total failure (when the former categories overlap) (Table 1). That categorisation could be further developed on the basis of major containment categories, such as category one only, category two only or both etc.

Of course, we do not argue that subcategories separately listed under urban economic structure and urban political system are not interrelated. Our point is that these two domains have different functions in containing alienation via dispossession. While

Table 1. Different forms of urban crisis (and some recent instances of urban uprisings suggesting the presence of an urban crisis).

The failure of urban economic structure	The failure of urban political system	Total failure
(A) *'(Re)Distribution of wealth via public policies'* fails **(Brazil, June–July 2013)**	(C) *'Redesigning politics of representation'* fails **(Ferguson 2014, Baltimore 2015)**	(A + B) + (C + D) fail **(Egypt, Tahrir Resistance + and the Coup in 2013)**
(B) *'Ensuring sustainability of neoliberal urbanisation'* fails **(Spain)**	(D) *'Promoting hyper-urbanism'* fails **(India – Struggles/protests against large-scale urban projects)**	
Both (A) and (B) fail **(Greece)** **(USA Occupy Movement)**	Both (C) and (D) fail **(Turkey, Gezi Protests in June–July 2013)**	

the urban economic structure mainly offers compensation for the material losses caused by alienation, the urban political system recuperates the mental/emotional losses (cf. Harvey, 2014: 267). Hence, the crises falling into the latter category could be expected to be more explosive. This is inevitable as the urban political system serves as the last resort for the political regimes to keep the effects of alienation under control.

Following the above line of reasoning we further argue that if urban economic structure fails, we should expect to see increasing pressure on urban political system. There, flexibility of the political regime in a given country gains significance. The capacity of public authorities to tolerate further democratisation to maintain their own legitimacy and/or their capacity to manipulate the political discourses/identities shaping the bases/faultlines of nationhood, i.e. ability *to redesign politics of representation* (C); and ability to formulate *a brand new discourse of development* (as an alternative hyper-urbanism) (D) are critical. Here, an important axis of comparison between the Western/Northern and Eastern/Southern cases is the degree of this flexibility.

If the regime is flexible, we could see an urban crisis thus emerging (in/of urban economic structure) be contained by the public authorities via shifting the emphasis on the domain of containment from urban economic structure to urban political system. Yet, this would be a temporary solution unless future changes are made to the urban economic structure. Otherwise, we could expect urban political system to fail after a while, and witness that urban crisis to take a new, and more violent, form. This is, for example, the major challenge before the SYRIZA in Greece and PODEMOS in Spain, which have temporarily contained the discontent of the masses via democratic change, thanks to the flexibility of the urban political systems in their respective countries. Besides, the case of SYRIZA indicates that political/policy paralysis is an inevitable result once the policy-makers are caught between the neoliberal pressures on urban economic structure and progressive pressures on the urban political system, which increasingly consumes the portfolio of containment strategies available to them.

If the urban economic structure in a given context is already a fragile one, for example

without effective public policies *redistributing wealth* (A), and mainly depends on *neoliberal urbanisation* policies (B), then failure of the latter strategy is likely to spark more destructive events. As the pressure will be mainly on the urban political system. In fact, this latter strategy (B) is more directly vulnerable to a global financial crisis. Given the significance of neoliberal urbanisation as a national development strategy (by attracting global capital) in many Eastern/Southern countries, failure of that strategy upon a global financial crisis will inevitably increase the likelihood of urban crisis in the domain of urban political system. Yet, whether or not this pressure will result in a crisis will depend upon the degree of flexibility of the political regime, as noted.

Of course, urban crises could directly emerge in the domain urban political system, while there is a relatively more effective urban economic structure established on the basis of a successful blend of related containment strategies. Especially if the success of the urban economic structure depends on a rather authoritarian style of policy-making, this increasingly renders containment strategies in urban political system ineffective. That was the case with the Gezi Protests of 2013 in Turkey. The Erdoğan government was able to contain that uprising in political terms, temporarily, as indicated by their success in local elections of 2014 (Bayırbağ and Penpecioğlu, 2014). In fact, his government's promises were mainly about further deepening the strategy '*ensuring sustainability of neoliberal urbanisation*' (B). Yet, given the vulnerability of this strategy to global economic instability, and given the fact that this strategy has also supported the strategy (A) '*redistribution of wealth*', collapse of the urban economic structure in Turkey could well result in *Total Failure*, as in the case of Egypt. Current political tensions in Turkey are alarming, in this regard.

Conclusion

Understanding urban crisis is not an easy task, because: (a) although root causes develop over an extended time-period, they become visible and/or are labelled as crises at points of political upheaval/conflict; (b) crises are moments of confusion, when everything we thought we knew about ourselves, our own societies and/or countries might be proven wrong, while theoretical opportunities to make sense of the events leading to crisis are consumed; (c) crises themselves ignite diverse and dispersed social/economic/political reactions displaying various spatio-temporal patterns; (d) the fact that crises become visible at certain places and at a certain point in time might lead us to focus our attention on that particular place and time/era in history, thereby leading us to miss the bigger picture; (e) measures taken by public authorities to do away with crises are hasty, partial and pragmatic in nature. Thus, researchers might have a hard time in detecting meaningful patterns in their intervention schemes. Hence, the multifaceted, comprehensive and politically contentious nature of urban crises tends to render our attempts to make sense of this phenomenon particularistic and limited in nature.

We are equipped with analytical tools necessary to build a comprehensive/comparative account of urban crises, which remains sensitive to spatio-temporal particularities. This is possible because the phenomenon of urban crisis is deeply rooted in contradictions of 'capital accumulation' (cf. Harvey, 2014), and thus capitalism as the major political-economic code of conduct pervading the globe, weaving human society into a single, yet shaky, fragile and contradictory totality (cf. Brenner, 2013). In that regard, we argued that the Marxist concept of 'alienation' – as a universal mechanism facilitating capital accumulation process via dispossession, and as negative mental/emotional implications of

dispossession finding their unique expressions in the non-work-related domains of life, will be useful in establishing the analytical links between 'everyday life and systemic trends and struggles', and in tying together the insights produced by 'particularistic accounts' around a comparative framework of analysis. Our aim, in that regard, was to take Harvey's insights on alienation one step further, by explaining how this universal result of the contradictions he outlines translate into urban crises as political phenomena, and why they take different forms in different contexts.

To further operationalise this perspective, we identified two domains, urban economic structure and urban political system, where the mental/emotional and material impacts of alienation could be contained. We argued that public authorities do develop different containment strategies in these domains to govern alienation, and that urban crises occur when these containment strategies fail. Those strategies constitute the basis of our comparative framework.

In the above regards, we claimed that the post-2008 global wave of urban protests could be seen as the evidence of a deeper current of urban crises, caused by the failure of 'roll-out neoliberal containment' strategies. Neoliberal urbanisation policies widely implemented across the world could be seen as an important factor that geographically ties together different urban crises across the world. The logic of geographical variation is determined by the unique configuration of urban economic structures and urban political systems, as well as the degree of flexibility of the political regimes in their respective contexts. This line of reasoning could help us explain the differences between the urban crises occurring in the Western/Northern and the Eastern/Southern countries, broadly speaking. While the former crises are rather products of failure of urban economic structure, the latter tend to erupt in the domain of urban political system, where mental/emotional effects of alienation are contained, and thus are more explosive.

That the Eastern/Southern countries took the lead in this new wave of urban protests, unlike the past experience, should come as no surprise in that roll-out neoliberalism has taken its heaviest tolls there, and unlike the Western/Northern countries, they do not possess that much political flexibility needed to govern alienation. What is more, it should be remembered that while the Western/Northern urban crises could be kept under check for a while, that success will be short-lived. This is mostly because political contestation in the East/South has a capacity to paralyse the urban economic structure in the West/North and to increase the pressure on the urban political systems there.

The last two connotations of the term alienation given by Harvey (2014), namely as a 'passive psychological state' and as an 'active psychological state' should be further examined if we are to further elaborate our analysis of urban crises, and especially its 'contestation' side. To quote Harvey, again, as an active psychological state 'it means to be angry and hostile at being or feeling oppressed, deprived or dispossessed and to act out that anger and hostility, lashing out sometime *without any clear definitive reason or rational target*, against the world in general' (2014: 267, emphasis added). The major challenge before any political/social movement to challenge capitalism, then, is to make sure that this 'passive state' will not be captive to this 'active state', where revolutionary energies are easily lost, while giving a perfect excuse to the oppressors to criminalise the opposition. In other words, the opposition should formulate a definitive reason, to end alienation, and a rational target, the containment strategies of the oppressors. The 'right to the city' discourse does only half of the job. The real challenge, then, is to establish the discursive and political links

between the struggles at the workplace and at the non-work related domains of life.

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Notes

1. The term 'hyper-urbanism', as used here, refers to a policy orientation/discourse which aims to transform cities by better articulating/integrating them with global (economic/cultural) networks, while promoting a self-indulgent urban culture adorned with grandeur and extremes (see Hogan and Potter, 2014; McCann et al, 2013; Roy, 2011).

2. Hence, it should come as no surprise that the literature on urban crisis, except for those covering the cases from the USA and the UK (and partly Europe), has not been that rich. What is more, unlike past instances of urban crises of the USA (and Europe), the urban revolts/protests in the South have been threatening their respective political regimes/governments (see the examples of Egypt, Turkey, Spain and Greece). Thus, it is not easy to argue that these revolts/protests totally stand as chances to further rationalise capitalism, or 'crisis as an opportunity', on the part of the policy-makers, at least in the South.

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