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# The limits to urban revolution: the transformation of Ankara, Turkey, under the Justice and Development Party

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary urbanization is characterized by the incorporation of historically isolated places into vast urbanized networks that are planetary in scope. We underscore the political processes and actors that instantiate urban transformation. Drawing on Lefebvre's writings on *urban revolutions* – in plural – we show that he considered comprehensive urban transformation the result of multiple place-based revolutions that are typically driven by a state. We then present Turkey as an example in which the Justice and Development Party embraced an agenda of absolute national development whose primary mechanism was a nationwide urban revolution. We focus on Ankara, which served as a laboratory for urban policy experimentation from 1994 onwards, and we present original research to show how its urban governance mechanisms informed urban planning legislation at the national scale after 2002 when the Justice and Development Party embarked on a program of national renewal. This regime was based on the distribution of short-term gains but its long-term costs became apparent after 2010 and it faced increasingly fierce contestation. This case not only exposes the limits of urban revolution in Turkey, but it also shows that urban revolutions are negotiated political processes and inherently contingent, uneven and incomplete.

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## Introduction

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) have pursued an agenda of absolute national development aimed at imposing dramatic changes on Turkish society. Urbanization was meant to drive economic growth and also incubate a modern Islamic citizenry that would both represent and actualize national renewal. As the Turkish government channeled public and private capital into infrastructure and housing, the urban fabric evolved accordingly – cities expanded, new neighborhoods were built, luxury high-rises and shopping malls proliferated. The AKP's claim to legitimacy rested at least in part on its supposed ability to undertake large-scale infrastructure projects and transform cities.

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Turkey's urban transformation is consistent with global trends. Indeed, monumental infrastructure development initiatives are on the agenda worldwide (Dodson, 2017; Kanai & Schindler, 2019; Ougaard, 2018), and a global growth coalition comprising a host of public and private-sector actors situated at various scales embrace large-scale spatial projects (Schindler & Kanai, 2022). These spatial projects include the expansion of real estate markets as well as transnationally oriented infrastructure networks meant to catalyze export-oriented industrialization and economic growth (Murray, 2017; Schindler et al., 2022; Shatkin, 2016; 2017). Most scholars have approached these trends in one of two ways. The first approach attends to urbanization processes and focuses on the integration of far-flung settlements into functional territories designed to be "plugged in" to global production and trade networks, and the resultant emergence of expansive urban landscapes beyond metropolises in what was historically considered hinterland (Arboleda, 2020; Brenner, 2019; Chua et al., 2018). The second approach grounds analysis in particular cities and documents and conceptualizes their transformation (Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Gillespie, 2020).

These approaches tend to be disconnected – and at times they are even oppositional – and we argue that they are complementary. Thus, our first objective is to reconcile city-centric scholarship with process-oriented approaches to urbanization through an analysis of state-coordinated urban transformation. We do this by showing how the AKP engineered the "unrivalled gargantuan expansion of concrete buildings" in Turkey (Gülhan, 2021, p. 6) by scaling up a regulatory regime that had taken shape in Ankara after 1994.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Ankara served as somewhat of a laboratory for regulatory reform and governance practices that were enshrined in national legislation after 2002, when the AKP came to power and embraced urban transformation at the national scale. Its vision of national renewal aimed to fuse electoral democracy and modernization with conservative values and political Islam (Batuman, 2018; Karaman, 2013; Tuğal, 2009), and the realization of these objectives necessitated comprehensive social, spatial and economic transformation amounting to what Henri Lefebvre termed *urban revolution* (1970/2003).

Lefebvre's conceptualization of urban revolution anticipated the centrality of urban development, real estate and infrastructure – in short city-building – to twenty-first century global capitalism. According to Lefebvre, cities were no longer merely arenas in which industrial societies produce a social surplus, but rather, social surplus was produced *through* urbanization. His forward-looking narrative emphasized the monumentality of this epochal shift from industrial to urban society, yet he did not explain how urban society emerges. He did, however, emphasize the decisive role of the state in the politics surrounding the production of space: "[t]he State becomes more and more clearly the agent, even the guiding hand, of this production" of space (2009, p. 226). We operationalize Lefebvre's notion of the State Mode of Production (SMP) by showing how the state sought to foster an urban revolution in Turkey by coordinating a diverse group of actors.

The AKP orchestrated urban redevelopment schemes that incorporated hitherto marginalized people and places, as well as powerful public and private actors – both foreign and domestic – situated at multiple scales. By establishing itself at the center of this array of actors, the AKP was able to control the distribution of a significant amount of urban rent that was generated through the identification of "underutilized" land, the assembly

of land parcels with a range of legal statuses and the construction of large-scale development projects. This allowed the AKP to cultivate patronage networks which, in turn, cemented its electoral success (Bedirhanoğlu, 2015; Doğan, 2016). The deepening and widening the capital accumulation process was accompanied by an official discourse of social cohesion and inclusion (cf. Türel & Altun, 2013, p. 4). While the redistribution of wealth constituted a major focal point in the formulation and implementation of public policies throughout the history of the Republic, including during the roll-out neoliberal policies of the AKP (cf. Bayırbağ, 2013, p. 1125; cf. Türel & Altun, 2013, p. 4; Akçay, 2018), deep divisions in Turkish society remained. The AKP sought to suture these divisions by managing the urban rent-generating machine outlined above, but these efforts were subject to constant negotiation among diverse stakeholders (Schindler et al., 2020, pp. 10–12). Thus, the AKP coordinated Ankara's transformation through the establishment of a regime that was entrepreneurial-authoritarian in character but not entirely top-down, as it was forced to establish and maintain a coalition that included diverse interest groups including city residents.

The short- and medium-term gains generated by urban transformation in the first decade of AKP rule ultimately generated long-term costs (Tuğal, 2016), and the inability of the AKP to manage these contradictions and maintain patronage networks led to the breakdown of the consensus surrounding urban transformation (Kuyucu, 2022). Beginning around 2010 the aggressive remaking of urban space – combined with reform of mechanisms that served to redistribute the surplus generated by these initiatives – precipitated contestation. This included massive street protests, non-compliance with public authorities' initiatives, and legal challenges to specific projects as previously compliant interest groups attempted to obtain a greater share of the rent generated by urban development. The global media focused on events in and around İstanbul's Gezi Park, but similar protests erupted in cities across Turkey including Ankara. Although Erdoğan has continued to stake his and the AKP's legitimacy – at least in part – on the ability to initiate and manage “crazy”<sup>2</sup> urban infrastructure projects, the limits to urban revolution have become increasingly apparent. As a result, Turkey's urban-oriented regime is increasingly secured by legal manipulations, intimidation and force. Ultimately the case of Ankara's transformation, and the AKP's attempt to transform Turkey's cities in general, demonstrate that urban revolutions are political projects that are inherently contingent, uneven and incomplete. Despite its post hoc appearance of inevitability, Turkey's urban revolution was contingent on political negotiation and remained incomplete. Extrapolating from the case of Turkey, we argue that instead of an all-encompassing urban revolution that is planetary in scope, contemporary urbanization is characterized by an uneven articulation of place-based urban revolutions whose intensity, geographical reach and durability vary.

In the following section, we revisit Henri Lefebvre's narration of the transition from industrial to urban society, with a focus on the mechanisms of change and key actors who drive the process. In the third section, we introduce Turkey's urban revolution under the direction of the AKP, and we present original research from Ankara. Our focus is on the policy makers and key stakeholders who participated in the negotiations and politics surrounding urban transformation. We conclude by summarizing our findings and discussing the potential for Turkey's urban revolution to be reversed.

## The instantiation of urban revolutions: reconciling city-centric and urbanization-oriented scholarship

Space is no longer only an indifferent medium, the sum of places where surplus value is created, realized, and distributed. It becomes the product of social labor, the very general object of production, and consequently of the formation of surplus value. (Lefebvre, 1970/2003, pp. 154–155)

Henri Lefebvre (1970/2003, p. 43 & 4) announced that “[t]he period of urban revolutions has begun,” and he predicted its culmination in “complete urbanization.” His conceptualization of *urban revolution* not only anticipated the ubiquity of urban space and lifestyles, but also signaled a fundamental shift in the way social surplus is generated and distributed. He posited that in contrast to industrial society in which cities are manifestations of “‘superstructure’ on the surface of the economic structure,” space in an urban society is “the product of social labor, the very general object of production, and consequently of the formation of surplus value” (Lefebvre, 1970/2003, pp. 15 & 154). Writing in the tumultuous late-1960s, Lefebvre anticipated the prolonged economic crisis that would beset the North Atlantic’s post-war Keynesian regime in the 1970s (see Piore & Sabel, 1984). “Capital appears to be out of steam,” he noted (Lefebvre, 1970/2003, p. 155), and he anticipated one fix for the long-term falling rate of profit would be “the conquest of space – in trivial terms, in real estate speculation, capital projects (inside and outside the city), the buying and selling of space.”

Lefebvre’s assessment that human civilization had entered a period of complete urbanization may have been premature, but his conceptualization of urban revolution nevertheless “opened up a new way of thinking ‘the urban’” (Schmid et al., 2012, p. 2). Leary-Owhin and McCarthy (2020, pp. 2–3) note that there has been a “worldwide torrent” of Lefebvrian scholarship in recent years that remains a “disparate body of literature,” reflecting the broad scope of Lefebvre’s writing. They divide Lefebvrian scholarship into four “waves,” and we situate this article in the fourth wave, which, according to Leary-Owhin and McCarthy (2020) is a rather eclectic group that is rooted in empirical research and seeks to advance theory. We mobilize Lefebvre’s notion of urban revolution in order to analyze Turkey’s dramatic urban transformation, and to rephrase Schmid et al. (2012), we hope this opens up a new way of thinking “urban revolution.”

Lefebvre’s far-reaching formulation of urban revolution does not chart a single trajectory of urban transformation, and instead, he noted that “[s]ome of these transformations are sudden; others are gradual, planned, determined. But which ones? This is a legitimate question” (1970/2003, p. 5). He posed these questions at the beginning of *The Urban Revolution*, yet throughout the text he said relatively little about the actual mechanisms that serve to transform industrial society into urban society. While he asserted that “[t]he urban revolution is a planetary phenomenon,” he also noted that we are in “a period of urban revolutions” – in plural – highlighting the fact that the shift from industrial to urban society will unfold unevenly in a series of place-based events rather than in a single planetary big bang (Lefebvre, 1970/2003, pp. 113 & 43). And according to Lefebvre (1970/2003, p. 163), during urban revolutions the highly politicized nature of space is revealed and its transformation is coordinated by a state apparatus. In a “bureaucratic society of controlled consumption” cities serve as sites of “forming, realizing, and distributing in novel ways the surplus of an entire society”

(Lefebvre, 1970/2003, pp. 163 & 156). “[T]he State becomes more and more clearly the agent, even the guiding hand, of this production” of space, according to Lefebvre (2009, p. 228), yet he also recognized that the state apparatus cannot achieve spatial objectives independently. It must engage a host of non-state interest groups, with whom its relationship “sometimes involves a collusion, sometimes a collision” (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 227).

The state-led coordination of these diverse groups, and the reconciliation of their competing interests in pursuit of what Brenner (2004) refers to as “state spatial objectives,” is what Lefebvre terms the “State Mode of Production” (SMP) (2009, p. 226). While Lefebvre recognized that the shift from industrial to urban society is a political project fostered through the SMP, he also conceptualized the production of space as a social process that cannot be realized by fiat from a state or any other institution (1991). Instead, “relations between objects and people... need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41), and everyday practices can undermine the SMP by appropriating the city of straight lines and right angles (Lefebvre, 1970/2003; Stanek et al., 2014). Therefore, states cannot hope to foster the transition from industrial to urban society with either bureaucratic policy frameworks or coercion alone, so various modes of governmental rationalities and technologies must be leveraged to secure consent and mobilize a coalition of actors (e.g. finance capital, the construction sector, and city residents). Thus, in this instance urban governance entails the territorialization of the *processes of urbanization* by establishing a coalition around a hegemonic vision, and then managing and balancing various political, economic, socio-cultural and technological processes occurring at different spatial scales.

The establishment of a compelling hegemonic vision is the cornerstone of attempts to foster an urban revolution. Hegemony is incomplete by its very nature (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), so place-based urban revolutions cannot cohere into a totalizing urban society that subsumes urban sociality in its entirety (for a discussion on “totality” in neo-Lefebvrian scholarship see Goonewardena, 2018). So even if a series of urban revolutions are thoroughgoing enough to constitute a shift from industrial to urban society at the national scale, the shift remains contingent, uneven and incomplete. Indeed, the financialization of real estate enables state-led urban revolutions but it also makes them vulnerable to the whims of distant traders, United States interest rates and algorithms that assign property values. Thus, the duration of a growth episode driven by the transformation of the built environment varies, but one thing that is clear is that they are not indefinite and the conditions and relations upon which they depend must be constantly renewed and reproduced through negotiation. The SMP affords the state apparatus the role of coordinator, or orchestrator, whose task is to mediate these negotiations, while also establishing the regulatory regime that ensures the built environment is an arena of capital accumulation.

We mobilize Lefebvre’s notion of the SMP by focusing on urban governance, which is consistent with a growing body of urban studies literature that highlights the role of the state. Shatkin (2016, 2017; see Goldman, 2011; Rogers, 2017; Gibson et al., 2022) shows how states are participants in lucrative real estate markets as well as regulators. In his more recent formulation (2022, p. 2), it is the national government that drives urbanization:

[I]n nations where opportunities for capital accumulation are highly concentrated in large conurbations, politics has increasingly been defined by national state efforts to build political regimes around expanding such opportunities, and by the contestations that arise around the infrastructure and urban development agendas that result.

Urban space in many cities in the Global South remains illegible to finance capital, and states at multiple scales seek to implement regulatory regimes that financialize real estate and expand “real estate frontiers” (Aalbers, 2016; Gillespie, 2020; Halbert & Attuyer, 2016).

Much of this research on the role of states is city-centric, and stands in stark contrast to scholarship focused on urbanization processes and emergent urban forms (e.g. extended urbanization). The most notable contribution is Brenner and Schmid’s (2015, p. 152) formulation of *planetary urbanization*, whose premise is that “rather than witnessing the worldwide proliferation of a singular urban form, ‘the’ city, we are instead confronted with new processes of urbanization that are bringing forth diverse socio-economic conditions, territorial formations and socio-metabolic transformations across the planet.”

Brenner and Schmid’s “epistemology of the urban” provoked robust debate and critics charged that its all-encompassing nature obscures particularisms (see Oswin, 2018). Less controversial is their claim that the contemporary urban reality “has become more differentiated, polymorphic, variegated and multiscalar than in previous cycles of capitalist urbanization” (Brenner & Schmid, 2015, p. 152). Here the debate is over whether this complex emergent urban reality is best analyzed through city-centric analyses or a focus on urbanization processes. Numerous scholars have insisted that the city – a more or less bounded territorial entity – remains a useful category of analysis (Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Schindler, 2017; Scott & Storper, 2015; Walker, 2015). Meanwhile others argue that “methodological cityism” obscures the meta-processes that transgress arbitrarily drawn city boundaries (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2015; Brenner, 2019; Wachsmuth, 2014), and a growing body of scholarship convincingly attends to the processes shaping emergent urban space beyond the bounded territories historically considered cities (Arboleda, 2020; Castriota & Tonucci, 2018; Kanai and Schindler, 2019; Keil, 2018). We find merit in both approaches and we interpret them as complementary. We seek to contribute to a small but growing body of scholarship that reconciles city-centric scholarship with process-oriented approaches to urbanization, in order to show how urban revolutions transpire and foster urban society.

In a recent contribution that reconciles these approaches, Robinson et al. (2022, p. 3) use mega-projects as entry points to approach “interconnected but also often dispersed and fragmented urban outcomes,” and they use the notion of *transcalar territories* to capture the specificity of place, but also attend to the distant actors situated at various scales that influence the production of space. Similarly, Cirolia and Harber (2021, p. 3) employ the notion of *urban statecraft* to capture the “overlapping, on-going, contested and multi-scalar processes” of state formation in African cities, that draw an array of public actors into “complex webs of intergovernmental relations, transnational flows and local practices.” Finally, as noted above, Shatkin (2022) identifies *national governments* as key agents that mediate relations between global capital and local interest groups, and he asserts that urbanization is a spatial manifestation that reflects the contested political economy of the nation-state. Following these contributions that employ



analytical frameworks that attend to urbanization processes while simultaneously embracing a degree of methodological cityism, we show how each is particularly relevant to a period of Ankara's transformation.

In the following section, we interpret Turkey's national development strategy under the AKP as an attempt to foster a shift from industrial to urban society. We ground our analysis in Ankara which served as a laboratory for institutional experimentation, and some of the regulatory reforms pioneered there influenced the AKP's attempts to transform cities across Turkey. In 2018 and 2019, we interviewed 12 key political, bureaucratic and professional figures who were directly involved in the formulation and implementation of the urban planning and development policy since the late-1980s that drove Ankara's transformation (see Appendix). Most interviewees work or worked in the public sector and all occupied strategic locations within institutions that put them at the center of the politics of urban transformation. Some were elected while others were appointed, and they were situated at various scales (e.g. neighborhood, municipal and ministerial). Some were beholden to a political party, others to a bureaucracy and a smaller group to the electorate. All interviewees were purposefully selected due to the role they played as mediators and participants in the negotiations and struggles that shaped the production of urban space in Ankara. Most interviews lasted between one and two hours, and questions mainly consisted of two parts. First, interviewees were asked about urban policy and politics in Ankara during the post-1980 period, and the subsequent evolution of Ankara's urban development model after 2002. The second part sought to ground these dynamics in the districts of Mamak and Yenimahalle which demonstrate the limits to urban revolution in Ankara for reasons we discuss below.

### **Ankara's urban revolution**

While there were policy shifts and formal political contestations throughout much of the twentieth century, the notions of comprehensive modernization and (capitalist) development established the parameters of political debate and discourse since the inception of the Republic of Turkey (Tekeli, 2001). This nation-building project had to rise to the challenge of maintaining "social cohesion and inclusion" (cf. Türel & Altun, 2013, p. 4) as a response to the bottom-up demands for redistribution and pressure for secularization, stemming from the contradictions of those two parameters. The post-1980 period witnessed the birth of new forms of politics as many informal urban settlements inhabited by poor rural-to-urban migrants that were the strongholds of the left until 1980 (i.e. *gecekondu*) became fertile ground for Islamic politics to firmly root itself in cities (Tekeli, 2012).

Following a prolonged period of economic stagnation the military took power in a coup in 1980, and Turkey neoliberal reforms were introduced in the years that followed (Yalman, 2009). Total national modernization remained the stated objective but the methods changed dramatically and in addition to standard macroeconomic regulatory reforms urban governance became entrepreneurial (Şengül, 2001/2009). Investment in real estate was encouraged as a means of unlocking land value, yet this governance regime took its toll on the urban poor and exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions. In this context, the Welfare Party – an Islamic political party – fielded mayoral candidates



for İstanbul and Ankara (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Melih Gökçek) who incorporated a redistributive component into the agenda of urban transformation. Importantly, their message was that they would embrace urban transformation but manage it better than the incumbent government, and in such a way that its dividends would benefit the urban poor. Their electoral success in 1994 in Turkey's two largest municipal elections represented a major turning point, and in addition to raising the profile of cities in national politics (Bayırbağ, 2013), it served to formalize and cement the inclusion of political Islam in Turkish electoral politics.

The logic of urbanization cultivated in Ankara and İstanbul laid the foundation for a nationwide strategy to be implemented by the AKP from 2002 onwards. In that regard, the political roots of Turkey's (national) urban revolution were place-based, and Ankara provides a fruitful case to investigate this problematic for three reasons:

- (1) As the capital and Turkey's second largest metropolitan city, Ankara has long constituted a center of attention of national policy-makers, and national urbanization policies (and legislation) were formulated and implemented with Ankara in mind;
- (2) Gökçek's predecessor Murat Karayalçın was one of the first mayors in Turkey to initiate and experiment with a state-led model to implement an urbanization agenda under neoliberalism. Prior to 1980, he launched what was, at the time, a mass-housing project in Ankara, named Batıkent, which was the first of its kind in Turkey;
- (3) Gökçek was one of the two political stars of the Welfare Party (the AKP's predecessor), and had always been an implicit competitor of Erdoğan for the leadership of this political-Islamist movement. While their rivalry was played down in public, by many accounts it remained a theme throughout Gökçek's tenure which lasted until 2017. This explains why Gökçek sought to cultivate relations with, and influence among, AKP cadres entrenched in urban governments across the country. In the remainder of this section, we divide the years since 1994 into three periods.

### ***Urban statecraft: the seeds of urban revolution in Ankara, 1994–2002***

The coup in 1980 triggered a series of neoliberal reforms in Turkey, which included a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in cities (Harvey, 1989; Şengül, 2001/2009). Urban transformation was an objective of Ankara's political class since the inception of the Republic (Batuman, 2013; Şengül, 2001/2009), but especially so during the tenure of social democrat Murat Karayalçın (1989–1994). His approach to urban development was project-based and included novel, and consensus-based, models of urban rent generation and distribution orchestrated by the municipality (Interviewe I-1). The WP's success in municipal elections in 1994 marked a turning point for Turkish politics, but in Ankara, urban development policies of the new WP mayor Melih Gökçek represented continuity in some important respects. Most importantly, Gökçek recognized the potential for urban transformation to serve as the basis of a broad-based political project, but he rejected the circumscribed project-based approach favored by his predecessor. Instead, he (1) advanced an even more ambitious agenda of urban transformation, (2) built a coalition of diverse interest groups and (3) experimented with urban planning policy.

During this period the WP was popular in Turkey's two largest cities, and its leadership realized that it would have to broaden its appeal if it hoped to propel itself to national electoral success. It pursued a hegemonic vision of social transformation (Tuğal, 2009) that incorporated neighborhoods known as bastions of hardline Islam as well as economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with secular leanings (Bayırbağ, 2013). While the WP and later (its successor) the AKP were committed to political Islam, its leaders sought to appeal to ordinary citizens beyond the narrow boundaries of religious affiliation (Doğan, 2007). In Ankara, Gökçek engineered the establishment of a coalition with diverse stakeholders and manufactured consent for urban transformation by generating and distributing urban rent.

Gökçek's institutional innovation in these early years was to deregulate and informalize the process of land acquisition and planning processes. Municipal authorities remained the driver of large-scale projects and these reforms provided them with flexibility, which led to an expansion of the scale and number of projects.<sup>3</sup> The municipal government sought to retain control of the surplus generated by these projects, which it distributed to a range of stakeholders in order to engender broad-based support. As one former senior municipal planner explained:

The motivation behind the urban transformation is money entering into the pockets of politicians, investors and citizens ... These three main actors are always in a negotiation for a win-win game ... They always go for enlarging the pie and receive more profits as a result of this ... Operating as a kind of mafia, these closed talks and hidden negotiations for enlarging the pie provides the main ground for urban transformation. Municipality increases building densities, politicians take their share illegally, investors win more money and the residents own new flats ... The AKP has led this rent-based mechanism that was first initiated by Gökçek. (I-2)

Thus, Gökçek responded to existing demands for (re)development, but he did so more comprehensively than the previous government, and in such a way that allowed many families to become legal owners of their homes – or “assets” – at a scale not seen before (cf. Topal et al., 2019). Not only was the formalization of property titles popular, particularly in peripheral areas, but it also generated revenue streams for the municipal government (Interviewees I-3 and I-5; also see Batuman, 2013; Poyraz et al., 2014). This revenue was channeled into new projects and to allied interest groups.

An informal system of urban development was already thriving in Ankara's informal settlements via an arrangement known as *yap-sat* (literally “build-and-sell”) (Dündar, 2002; Kızıldağ-Özdemirli, 2014).<sup>4</sup> In this system, builders hastily built and sold poor-quality structures on land that they did not own. It was a response to demand for housing that dated back to the 1950s that the government's housing programs and the formal private sector were unable to meet (cf. Şengül, 2001/2009).<sup>5</sup> During Karayalçın's tenure this system was tolerated in certain peripheral areas, but it was independent from the state-led efforts to foster urban transformation in more affluent and centrally located areas of the city. Rather than attempting to formalize *yap-sat*, one of Gökçek's innovations was to insert its logic into the municipal repertoire of urban transformation. As one former planner explained, this expanded Gökçek's patronage network and generated rent:

[A]s you see this model is based on sharing urban rents illegally. This is a model for producing and distributing rent which at the end provide [the government] crucial political support from key social groups. (I-2)

This demonstrates that Gökçek was a true political entrepreneur and urban transformation was the vehicle through which he was able to appropriate surplus and distribute patronage. The municipal government established markets, but it was also a deal-maker and price-setter in the sense that it determined who received what from any given project. Running such a complex scheme necessitated a pragmatic centralization of decision-making powers (Şahin, 2019), both formal and informal (see Kayasü & Yetişkul, 2014; Kuyucu, 2018; Penpecioglu, 2016; cf. Balaban, 2012; Demirtaş-Milz, 2013). Thus, rather than a system of rational top-down planning, Gökçek constructed a flexible, selective, non-universal decision-making system that facilitated fast policy-making. In one example of how this worked in practice, a local professional association challenged the legality of a particular real estate project. As another former planner explains, the municipality was not obliged to demonstrate the legality of the project, rather, it could simply modify the plans on an ad hoc basis and continue with the project.

Look at [that luxurious] ... gated community project in ... [by] a very big construction company ... The chambers [of City Planners and Architects] opened court cases. They won the cases but the municipality does not bother with the court cases. They make plan modifications and the project starts [again] and the chambers go to court and the court abolishes the plan ... but in the same week municipality puts a new plan into action with just some minor changes. So the construction never stops. In a way we can say that they manipulate the legal urban planning procedures. (I-4)

The legal framework initially introduced by the first neoliberal government of Turkey (that of Turgut Özal's – 1983–1991), including the laws #3030 (Law on Metropolitan Municipality) and #3194 (Law on Urban Planning), had already given the metropolitan mayors some opportunity to develop and implement their own urban development policies, so as to facilitate the “urbanization of capital” (Şengül, 2001/2009). Gökçek took advantage of this context to experiment with urban development policy, and these efforts were expanded after 2002 when the AKP came to power in Turkey.

### ***Transcalar territories: the urban revolution institutionalized, 2002–2010***

The 2002 election was a watershed moment in Turkish politics. The AKP formed a government led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and laws and regulations regarding urban transformation were subsequently implemented at the national level. The intention was to ensure that the “construction never stops” in cities across Turkey and orchestrate of an urban revolution. New urban spaces were harbingers of national renewal because they promised to incubate a new and affluent conservative society (Schindler et al., 2020, pp. 10–12), while also acknowledging aspirations of the secular middle class and its demands for special treatment from public authorities (see Datta, 2014). The national government passed a series of laws that were informed by urban policy experimentation by Erdoğan in İstanbul (for 4 years as the city's mayor) and Gökçek in Ankara. These laws included but not limited to #5216 (Metropolitan Municipalities, 2004), #5393 (Municipalities, 2005), #5366 (Renewal of Dilapidated Real Estate of Historical and Cultural Value) and #5104 (North Ankara Urban Transformation Law, 2004), as well as various changes to #3194 (Urban Planning, 1984) and #6385 (Mass Housing, 1984 – also known as TOKİ law). The resultant legal framework was purposefully vague and redundant, so if a project was in violation of one law, it was likely in accordance with

another law. Thus, this extensive legal framework was paradoxically designed to empower metropolitan municipalities and to circumvent legal obstacles (cf. Kuyucu, 2014).

İstanbul became a magnet for global capital in this period, and it was indeed a showcase of Turkey's national urban revolution (see Enlil, 2011; Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011). Meanwhile, Ankara became a laboratory of policy experimentation and Gökçek's connections with the national policy circles facilitated policy mobility. Media from the period is littered with references to "Melih Gökçek Law," which did not refer to a single law, but was used by politicians and mayors from both the opposition and the AKP, as well as by media pundits from various political persuasions, to denote Gökçek's influence as an urban policy guru at the national scale. For example, it was used to refer to the Metropolitan Municipality Law (#5216);<sup>6</sup> the article on urban transformation of the Municipal Law (#5393); the North Ankara Law; the amendment law on the article #257 of the Penal Code (protecting Gökçek and other mayors from the charges of misconduct in office). Another former planner highlighted Gökçek's influence on Turkey's urban legislation:

One can easily see that Ankara Metropolitan Municipality enforced the profit-oriented urban transformation logic on the country. It is aggressive and speculative; exceeds legal boundaries and triggers profit-oriented construction. Thus, it needs a legal basis for all this speculative development of urban space. Look at the North Ankara Urban Transformation Law. This is a first project-based law in Turkey enacted by Gökçek for legalizing profit-oriented [urban] transformation projects. This logic of urban transformation has first appeared in Ankara [by Gökçek] and then became widespread in the whole country. (I-5)

The regeneration of informal settlements in north Ankara between 2004 and 2007 served as the testbed for project-specific regulations (see Şahin, 2006, 2017). One senior planner, who worked closely with Gökçek for over two decades, explained that this served as a precedent that was replicated nationally:

Did you know that Gökçek wrote the text of [the North Ankara Urban Transformation] law? He also led the formulation of other urban transformation laws including Law No 5366 and Municipality Law Article 73. He sets out the logic of the law, writes down the draft and lobbies [for the law], and creates pressure for the enactment of such laws at Turkish National Assembly. (I-6)

The emergent legal regime invested mayors with power and encouraged them to act entrepreneurially. This involved establishing formal collaboration among key stakeholders such as private capital, religious and community based organizations, and other public authorities. Importantly, the primary driver of this agenda was the AKP, rather than the state itself (see Doğan, 2016). The AKP was weary of political opponents deeply embedded within the Turkish state, so the empowerment of friendly mayors and party cadres to manage urbanization – and thereby control the social surplus – was one way that the AKP sought to consolidate power. As one ministerial-level planner explained, this created tension:

We have laws and legislations regulating urban transformation ... Article 73 of the Municipality Law and Law No. 5366. [They] give authority to municipalities in urban transformation since 2005. Metropolitan municipalities use it and prefer to make urban transformation projects on their own ... Sometimes they fail, sometimes they succeed

depending on their negotiations with the investors and the residents ... At the Ministry of Environment and Urbanism, previously we worked on an urban regeneration law as a regulatory framework; but the leading mayors at that time, Gökçek and Topbaş [of İstanbul] did not want it. They always preferred to carry out transformation under their own authority and via their own negotiations and resources. (I-7)

The AKP's attempt to transform cities was partly a response to demand, hence, an urban-oriented political platform initially won over sceptics. Importantly, it extended far beyond the boundaries of polite society, and incorporated informal settlements. As noted, the template was the transformation of a vast area of informal and unplanned settlements at the periphery of Ankara, and its north in particular (see Poyraz et al., 2014). For many of Ankara's poor, urban redevelopment schemes represented their first chance to become legally recognized homeowners, and speculation soon turned homes into assets. Many of those with access to urban land, even if it was informal, became active entrepreneurs (Şengül, 2015). Ordinary citizens – both Islamists and secularists – became economically and emotionally invested in Turkey's urban revolution, and this served as the basis of the AKP's hegemony (Bayırbağ, 2013; Çavuşoğlu & Strutz, 2014; Datta, 2014; Duman, 2015; Penpecioglu, 2013; Schindler et al., 2020; Türkün, 2011). Indeed, during this period many large-scale housing schemes were constructed (see Figure 1), and residents whose old houses were razed to make way for development were compensated with a flat while additional units were sold on the market. This resulted in a windfall for the municipal government and private firms, and each project funded the next, so



**Figure 1.** New urban spaces of an expanding coalition.



once again, the incentive for all stakeholders was to ensure, as the planner stated above, that “the construction never stops.”

In order for the AKP’s hegemony to be secured, however, urban transformation had to satisfy an increasingly long list of demands from members of an ever-growing coalition (Kuyucu, 2018; cf. Kuyucu & Daniş, 2015; Türkün, 2011). For nearly a decade the AKP was able to use the distribution of surplus generated in the course of urban transformation to meet these expectations. However, the owner of a large urban planning consultancy explained that demands began to outpace the surplus generated by urban transformation:

People think that they will get huge rents and benefits from urban transformation. For a long time, after the transformation of their squatter, they think that they will have at least 3 flats. Government authorities, media, investors together they dominated this type of thinking and expectations in the society. A lot of money is used for such purposes. However, at the end, today all of us see that this is not the case. Urban transformation did not save us and I think that all of these thinking and expectations are great betrayals against our cities. (I-3)

This period witnessed great changes in Turkish cities. While İstanbul was the center of attention – particularly for foreign investors – the model that took shape in Ankara played a key part in preparing the legal basis of this revolution. This helped the AKP to cement its power at the national scale, yet the short-term gains (i.e. the rent generated and distributed) eventually gave way to long-term costs. Ultimately it became clear that not all ordinary people would benefit and that there would be losers as well as winners. Urban transformation lost its shine as a result, but a more fundamental problem was that it catalyzed urban sprawl and it became difficult to generate rent as development extended further into the urban periphery. The limits of the AKP’s ability to orchestrate an urban revolution became apparent around 2010, and the resistance to urban development – which we explore in the next section – threatened the AKP’s hegemony *tout court*.

### ***National governance: the limits to Turkey’s urban revolution, 2010–present***

The AKP’s vision of national renewal through urbanization initially enjoyed broad-based support, yet expectations were poorly managed and there was disappointment when urban transformation did not lead to affluence for many people. Even more dangerous for this regime was the growing feeling that urban transformation posed a threat to lifestyles and livelihoods (See Çavuşoğlu & Strutz, 2014). In the span of half a decade, there was a shift, and many communities went from lobbying their local officials to initiate an urban redevelopment scheme that would enhance the value of land and provide them with assets, to resisting urban redevelopment schemes altogether. As a leading member of the Chamber of City Planners explained:

People started to feel that no matter where you live and who you are you could be subjected to urban transformation projects at any time and it can change your whole life suddenly. They reinforced this feeling of insecurity by such laws and projects. (I-8)

The world was gripped by the backlash to Turkey’s urban revolution that erupted in İstanbul’s Gezi Park and Taksim Square, which spread to almost all cities in the country including Ankara. These protests were indeed a vivid reminder that Turkey’s model of urban development faced a challenge, and in the remainder of this section we focus

on the limits it encountered in informal settlements on the outskirts of Ankara in municipal districts known as Yenimahalle and Mamak. These areas should have been prime targets for redevelopment given their informal status and demographics (i.e. many residents were relatively poor, conservative and AKP supporters) (See Poyraz, 2011; Şahin & Gözcü, 2017). Most planned urban development projects in these areas, however, were either postponed or stalled. To understand why their transformation was never achieved, it is necessary to briefly recount their history.

As the residents living in Yenimahalle and Mamak over 30–40 years emphasize, these areas were originally squatter settlements on publicly owned land and many occupants lacked titled deeds or shared property with extended family members (Interviewees I-2, I-10, I-12). Developers typically offered to raze single-story structures and construct five to seven story apartment buildings, which required a complex series of negotiations given the ambiguity surrounding property ownership. Nevertheless, many such agreements were struck because residents were able to acquire multiple units in the new buildings (Interviewees I-2, I-12). Residents explained that this allowed a single family to distribute property among children, and the developer made a profit by selling the extra units (Interviewees, I-2, I-12). It is important to note that in addition to trying to acquire assets, residents were also concerned with the use-value of housing. The pressure they exerted on the municipality and politicians was for small-scale redevelopment, legal recognition of their ownership of property and for the expansion of formal infrastructure systems (Interviewees I-2, I-10, I-12). In contrast, developers were motivated by the possibility of maximizing the exchange-value of real estate and were not concerned with the long-term livability of neighborhoods (Interviewee I-2; see also Kızıldağ-Özdemirli, 2014).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the interests of residents and developers often aligned and these areas were thoroughly transformed through *yap-sat*, which was largely tolerated by authorities given their inability to provide alternative housing (Interviewees I-2, I-12; see also Kaba, 1995; Poyraz et al., 2014). This complex ecosystem of negotiation, exchange and construction proceeded despite the state rather than because of it, and Gökçek's entrepreneurial approach favored large-scale projects that had the potential to generate larger returns for developers and the state. However, the redevelopment efforts lacked direction. Thus, on one hand urban development remained rather ad hoc, yet in contrast to *yap-sat* in which residents and developers dealt directly with one another, municipal authorities sought to coordinate projects at the expense of residents' participation. One long-term resident who also sits on the Ankara Greater Municipality City Council explained:

The story was, you know, there were a plan, the power holders and the people who pursue their interests. There was interplay between these three elements of urban politics ... I believe that there has always been a balance between these three elements but what the AKP did, I think, completely distorted the balance. For instance, until the AKP, there has always been an upper scale plan. Every change in plan or every project entails an adjustment to this upper scale plan. But after the AKP, they completely abolished that upper scale planning and went home with modifications ... there is not a long-term vision. There is just an incremental approach that makes plan modifications only when necessary. (I-4)

This flexibility facilitated urban transformation in some areas, but its inherent uncertainty provoked resistance among a population that historically sought to avoid direct



negotiation with public authorities (e.g. the Mass Housing Agency, TOKİ). Developers stoked this suspicion by alleging that the involvement of regulatory institutions (e.g. the Municipality or TOKİ) increased the cost of construction and this meant that they were unable to offer residents the same amount of space in the newly constructed units (what is omitted from this narrative is that the quality of construction would be higher). Indeed, as one senior planner at the Ministry of Environment and Urbanism familiar with the area explained, the negotiation between residents and developers is typically the first step in urban regeneration and it proved difficult for authorities to intervene and mediate:

For parcel-based urban regeneration, as the Ministry, we appeal to the Law No. 6306. But we cannot do it on our own [as the ministry]. Firstly investors and residents start negotiation at the local level. Investors talk with the people living in old apartment buildings; agree with them on building densities and the number of flats. Then they approach the Ministry to put into effect Law no. 6306 for the destruction of the building under the risk of disaster and to replace it with a new luxury housing ... In certain districts of metropolitan cities like Alsancak in İzmir, Kadıköy in İstanbul, Çankaya in Ankara where the land values are high you can see this parcel-based urban transformation. We stimulate this through the enactment of the Law no 6306. But still, it depends on a constant negotiation between investors and the residents. (I-7)

Since *yap-sat* had served to augment housing stock, residents were sceptical of the municipality's sudden interest in urban transformation (Interviewees I-10, I-12) and the state's involvement became an impediment to urban transformation rather than an impetus. As a top-level decision-maker from Ankara Greater Municipality explains, this was encouraged by a host of private-sector stakeholders:

Citizens will only accept urban transformation when only contractor is involved in the project. If they see Municipality or TOKİ, they reject the project. Lawyers, real estate agents are also provoking such disagreements, telling the citizens that if they accept the Ministry's or TOKİ's [offer], they would receive less money from transformation. (I-9)

Renewed attempts were made to transform some informal settlements at the height of Turkey's urban revolution in 2005. The Şentepe Urban Transformation Project was launched by the Yenimahalle District Municipality and it covered 425 ha. and contained a population of approximately 160,000 (Kızıldağ-Özdemirli, 2014, pp. 39–40). The name suggested it would be directly coordinated by the AKP-led Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, but that was merely a branding exercise. Instead, according to Kızıldağ-Özdemirli (2014, p. 41),

in legal terms it is essentially a “development plan” and adopts the same principles as the redevelopment by improvement and redevelopment plan model: spontaneous redevelopment through a market process based on a plan prepared by the local authority within the so-called “build-and-sell” [*yap-sat*] mechanisms.

In other words, the regulatory framework embraced by municipal officials was so flexible in this period that it could incorporate this ecosystem of eclectic project-specific negotiations, but this raised the question: what is the purpose of involving authorities? The result was a patchwork of incremental and non-standardized construction initiatives, so “both squatter settlements and transformed apartment blocks often coexist on the same street of on the same block” (Kızıldağ-Özdemirli, 2014, p. 42).

According to one urban planner who worked at the Ankara Greater Municipality during this period, the intention of policy makers was to encourage the transformation of this area at zero cost to the district municipality (Interviewe I-5). In some areas, there was demand for urban transformation initiatives and high enough land value to make projects viable, yet the municipality proved incapable of moving past the complex negotiations that are a prerequisite for starting a project. In one such neighborhood, Demetevler, legal complications bogged down a project for over a decade (Interviewees I-2, I-10; I-11):

Demetevler is a complicated neighborhood to transform when you look at property relations. We don't touch there ... Because there is something weird out there ... What they say: They have rights! 200,000 rights holders are mentioned. Normally it was 40–50 thousands twenty years ago, today this figure has been up to 200,000. And there are people demanding 1 million monthly amount of rent for his 50 to 100 square meters shop. Huge rent and it is amazing! The rent is very high, there are too many people and it is not such a large area. It is a crux of [complex] property relation and very hard to transform there. (I-11)

A proposed transformation project in Mamak suffered a similar fate (Interviews I-9; I-12; also see Somali, 2013; Poyraz, 2011), and these cases demonstrate how comprehensive urban transformation coordinated by the state ran out of steam. All of these areas reverted back to a quasi-formal market-based development model in which residents negotiate with developers directly with little or no regulatory oversight. The result is a landscape whose transformation has been suspended, where houses from the 1950s co-exist with newly built apartments, and elsewhere houses have been demolished but redevelopment projects have been abandoned (Figure 2).

The future of these areas is uncertain. While the AKP remains committed to Turkey's urban revolution, it has shifted its attention away from urban redevelopment to large-scale infrastructure projects. Turkey has been perched precipitously on the edge of an economic crisis since 2017, and urban redevelopment schemes no longer pay for themselves let alone the next project. This situation was summed up by one senior planner from the Mamak Municipality (and long-term resident) who described how one project was abandoned due to protracted negotiations:

It was a holistic type of transformation and it was necessary to undertake huge expropriations for that project. Ankara Greater Municipality did not succeed. It was too costly and people living in the project site did not want Metropolitan Municipality's project ... These people said that we do not want TOKİ and Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Because they are thinking that they will receive less money if TOKİ or Ankara Metropolitan Municipality implements the project ... At last what happened?: Urban transformation has disappeared! (I-12)

## Conclusion

We have demonstrated that the AKP has sought to foster a national urban revolution in Turkey. This process began in earnest after the 1994 election victories of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Melih Gökçek in İstanbul and Ankara, respectively. Gökçek established a coalition among diverse stakeholders and pioneered reforms that resulted in dramatic urban transformation, particularly in the city's informal areas in the north. This model



**Figure 2.** Urban revolution suspended.

and particular laws and regulations were subsequently passed at the national level after the AKP formed a government in 2002, indicating how city-building was central to the AKP's vision of national renewal. This allowed the AKP to respond to demand from below and rehabilitate sections of Turkish supporters that had historically been marginalized, while the distribution of rent allowed the AKP to win over sceptics. However, the model was limited by its internal contradictions. Most importantly, the AKP sought to shore up support as quickly as possible, and as a result it pursued short-term gains without much consideration of long-term costs. The focus of urban transformation increasingly shifted to peri-urban areas while demands from residents increased, and the costs eventually surpassed the sum of benefits distributed. The inability to respond to demands led to resistance, as did the state's attempt to generate rent through increasingly large-scale projects. Faced with these economic and political costs, the state was ultimately unable to coordinate urban transformation in many places.

This case demonstrates the political nature of Turkey's urban revolution. It was the primary way in which the AKP sought to use its power within the state to enroll and control diverse interest groups. The durability of this coalition was challenged from the start by residents who were skeptical of the state's eagerness to incorporate ongoing urban development processes. By about 2010, many residents came to see urban transformation as a threat rather than an opportunity. Rather than distributing a surplus, the AKP was forced to focus on the distribution of costs, and there was a backlash that exposed the contingent nature of Turkey's urban revolution. Just as Turkey's urban revolution began with municipal elections, it may also have ended with them.

In 2019, the AKP lost elections in İstanbul and Ankara for the first time since 1994. While Erdoğan remains the President of Turkey, there is a palpable sense that we have arrived at the end of an era. Covid-19 exposed these cracks, because the central government's response was at odds with rather autonomous municipal governments. Rapid inflation since 2021 has forced the government to rethink the centrality of the construction sector in the national development strategy, and recent statements by officials in Ankara signal an attempt to revert to an export-oriented political economy centered on manufacturing (Pitel, 2022). If the AKP is able to tame inflation, usher in economic stability and orchestrate the reallocation of capital from construction to manufacturing, we may witness a reversal of the process Lefebvre had foreseen. This time, the state may attempt to re-establish a national development regime centered on export-oriented industrialization, over the political-economic ruins of its incomplete urban revolution.

The case of Turkey demonstrates the contingent, uneven, incomplete and even reversible nature of urban revolution. We have sought to demonstrate how place-based city-centric scholarship can be reconciled with scholarship focused on the expansive and planetary nature of urban processes. Urbanization is without a doubt a primary arena of surplus generation and accumulation in twenty-first century capitalism, yet the transition to urban society is a process that requires deliberate action, typically from a state. The case of Turkey demonstrates that surplus must be appropriated and distributed in order to obtain consent for the hegemonic visions that underpin place-based urban revolutions. This consent fractures if the state has to distribute costs rather than a surplus, as happened in Turkey around 2010. These are important lessons as the world braces for an uncertain post-Covid future. Initial indications that states would seek to foster an economic recovery by embracing ambitious Keynesian policies the likes of which have not seen in more than four decades (EBRD, 2020), are being reversed as central banks raise interest rates in response to inflation. If inflation is tamed and stimulus packages introduced that foster urbanization then Turkey may be a canary in the coal mine.

## Notes

1. For Ankara's centrality in the history of Turkey's urbanization policy (see Şengül, 2009; Batuman, 2013; Kezer, 2015; Topal et al., 2019).
2. "Çılgın Projeler" (in Turkish) as Erdoğan labeled them. That was a package of billions of dollars worth of mega-projects (including the third bridge over the Bosphorus, the third airport in İstanbul, etc.) introduced during his party's 2011 national election campaign.
3. Out of the 8 master development plans for Ankara, from 1923 onwards, 3 of them were prepared under the Gökçek administration in a span of 23 years: 1998 (targeting 2025), 2006 (targeting 2023) and 2017 (targeting 2038). Yet, the "2025 plan" did not become official; and the "2038 plan," which was recently canceled, had become official just before he left office (for details see ABB, 2017). So, in fact, it was only the one in the middle (The 2023 Plan) which could be seen as a formal policy document. Yet, that master plan was prepared to retroactively legitimize the smaller scale development plans prepared early on (I-5).
4. Yap-sat "involved a peculiar alliance between urban landowners and small capital owners or contractors with no capital other than their organizing capacity, who acted as middleman between the landowner and potential buyers ... Depending upon the deal, the landowner got a certain share of the flats and the entrepreneur got the rest. Usually, the units were sold during the process and helped to finance the completion of construction" (Enlil, 2011, p. 13).

5. The demands for “redevelopment” (not regeneration) (cf. Kızıldağ-Özdemirli, 2014) via amendments in urban plans – increasing the development rights in the gecekondu neighbourhoods – were informed by their owners’ concern with accommodating their children in the same apartment building, and thus use value was also a critical factor in informing the terms of transaction in urban redevelopment. For instance, for a family with three kids, that would amount to a need to have a 4 story building with 8 units, such that the family and their kids’ families would have one unit for each (a total of 4), while the other half would go to the developer through the sharing agreement (I-5; I-12). It is for this reason that yap-sat and the traditional four or five story apartment buildings became the norm in many squatter areas in Turkey that were redeveloped from the 1970s to the 1990s (also see section 3).
6. See Hurriyet News (2006), İpekeşen (2010), Memurlar (2006), and Çelik (2010). Additionally, the minutes of Session 118 of the Parliament (Period 23, Vol 72, Legislative Year 4) indicate the extent to which debate on #5393 revolved around Melih Gökçek.

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## Appendix. List of interviewees

All interviewees have first-hand knowledge of the politics surrounding urban transformation in Ankara. All have been directly involved with state-led transformation, although some were elected while others were appointed. They are situated at various scales and beholden to various, sometimes multiple, constituencies (e.g. voters, political party or bureaucratic state apparatus). All interviewees were purposefully selected due to the role they played as mediators and participants in the negotiations and struggles that shaped the production of urban space in Ankara.

- I-1 Ex-Mayor of Ankara Greater Municipality.
- I-2 City planner who worked for the Yenimahalle Municipality for more than two decades, and also a Yenimahalle resident.
- I-3 An experienced city planner who worked for the municipal government for approximately 10 years and currently owns an urban planning consultancy that regularly undertakes projects in Ankara and cities across Turkey.
- I-4 City planner who worked as a project manager in Ankara Greater Municipality and the Ankara Special Provincial Administration for almost 20 years, and also resided in Mamak for many years.
- I-5 A renowned city planner in Ankara who began working for the Ankara Greater Municipality in the 1980s, on flagship projects such as the Northern Ankara Urban Transformation project. Has held positions of responsibility in the Chamber of City Planners.
- I-6 Urban planner who held positions of responsibility in Ankara Greater Municipality for approximately 30 years including Head of Urban Development Department.
- I-7 An experienced city planner, currently working at the Ministry of Urbanism and Environment.
- I-8 Active member of the Chamber of City Planners, Ankara Branch, with professional experience in Mamak, Yenimahalle and Çankaya districts.
- I-9 Urban planner who held positions of responsibility in Ankara Greater Municipality for approximately 20 years, including Head of the Urban Transformation and Special Projects Department.
- I-10 Long-term resident of Yenimahalle and member of the Yenimahalle Municipality Urban Council.
- I-11 City planner at the Yenimahalle Municipality for approximately 10 years, whose responsibilities include urban development projects. Also a resident of Yenimahalle.
- I-12 City planner at Mamak Municipality for approximately 30 years, and resident of Mamak.