

Dealing with Informal Settlements: Change in Government Acts and Laws in Turkey

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Abstract: *While it has been discussed whether informal settlements are problems or housing solutions, government attitudes and reactions also have changed dramatically over the time. In 1950's, whereas squatter settlements and settlers were seen as labour source for developing industry, vote power for politicians and correspondingly housing solution in Turkey, after 2000, this approach has changed as a result of neoliberal politics, land scarcity and centralization. Neoliberal approach mainly affecting Turkey during late 1980's and 1990's, has taken urban land as commodity and investment tool while making it an attempting source for major urban projects. Meanwhile, urban land which was getting less and less, became more valuable then ever. In same period, foreign capital and investments in construction sector has gained more power and construction industry ended up as leading sector. All that pressures on construction sector and urban land drew government's attention and caused major changes on laws and planning powers. In 2000's, government meeting with housing shortage and economic crisis declared "housing mobilization" and has made a set of regulation changes including housing policies. As a result of the changes, central government organs gained privileged powers on planning of special areas including squatters but most importantly urban land became an economic asset of property- led development. The land has become a negotiation tool between public and private sectors while it has been transformed to get more profit. Once for all, the former "misery" areas which are tolerated by government firstly, turned to economic assets for settlers, then became transformation areas and market-based commodities of government. As the perception of gecekondu changes, policies, reactions and laws were recreated by government over time.*

Key Words: Gecekondu, transformation, laws, neoliberalization, centralization, deregulation, regulative changes, Turkey.

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1. Introduction

In 2003, the head of Mass Housing Authority- Erdoğan Bayraktar declared that Prime Minister had told him; *'we need projects including at least 100.000 units, just go and surround the 81 cities and provinces with shipyards'*. This statement was actually a direct indicator of government attitude towards urban development and explained the current planning actions which are generally market- oriented. Indeed, the explanation was not just concerned with regular mass housing, it was about any kind of residential usages including informal settlements which are seen as source of urban transformation.

In that study, informal housing highly common issue in many developing countries is discussed in terms of laws, policies and changing attitude of government. In that sense, the aim of research is to define and explain the approach of Turkish planning system towards informal settlements within the scope of legislative procedures, regulations and institutional approaches. Also the claim of study is that government's attitude towards informal housing has changed from upgrading to transforming over the years due to market dynamics. Also it is claimed that the sites are directly managed by central government organs by isolating local authorities to accelerate whole planning procedure. The research subject is chosen to find out whether the change in government intervention methods have shifted the process for public good or the whole revisions are held to maximize market based.

Within the context, the study will be discussed in terms of theory and changing juridical interventions. The state policy will be explained by legal procedures transforming by time. Some examples from former urban projects will be used so as to highlight the government's shifting approach towards informal settlements.

2. Main Theme

It is definite that squatter phenomenon has been in transformation for decades all over the world. Once they were seen as problem or diseased areas of urban land by society or media, then by the involvement of foundations such as The UN or World Bank and professionals like John Turner, former common approach has changed. So, informal settlements were not considered anymore as physical disorders but the symbol of socio- economic inequalities. This turning point also affected the general thought and such areas suddenly were treated as upgrading needed parts of cities meeting housing shortage. Then in the latest period which almost started at 1980's, urban transformation became and popular option to recreate informal settlements by physically and socially. The policy shifts were mainly encouraged by world wide economic reforms emerging through neoliberal politics which arranging public-private relations over again. Ultimately, as the perception changes, the intervention methods were refreshed so does legislative actions.

Turkey among the others also showed policy shifts during the decades because of economic conditions, social attitudes, political reasons or legal arrangements. State plan strategies, development plans, laws and other regulations also show that transition. The country followed similar steps to others however after 2000, government reactions towards gecekondu were sharply reorganized and these places became market regulation assets. The areas generally

locating in the central parts of cities became very popular urban parts providing the highest profit and sold to major construction companies for prestigious housing production by central government organs. In that process, government and public planning authorities turned to market regulators, controllers and enablers who look for profit. As a result, government itself turned to a profit making company and it has revised related laws from its new point of view.

As discussed comprehensively, two concepts- neoliberalization and deregulation/centralization- could be seen to lie behind all those the policy shifts. While neoliberalization mostly involved to the process as a cause, deregulation and centralization laterly came as effects in Turkey case. However, whether they are cause or effect, it is seen that both are interconnected to some extent and they have heavily affected planning procedures and processes.

Neoliberal politics deeply affected government actions especially after 1980- 90's. Before 1980's, state control on market was so strong and private sector was not a part of the scene. Instead, public authority was the direct provider and controller of almost every process in urban life including planning services. Under that conditions, state's approach was upgrading the sites by promoting any kind of infrastructure and facilitating. However, neoliberal acts and free market economy has brought private sector to the scene as a contractor and developer in 1980's. The poor economic power of state after late 1970's (due to oil crisis, global economic depression political contradictions etc.) had forced government to get help from private developers on providing services. As a result of it, in late 1980's and 1990's major private companies has risen in market and made some major impacts on state policies. Private developers wellcome by state and seeking for profit suddenly took the leading role of land development. Hence, government having realized the economic and technical power of private sector has started to transform regulations and laws to get more investment. Current policy on informal housing has been focalizing on transforming the sites by mega projects and relocating their inhabitants to outer part of city.

Deregulation policy of government and centralization lately has also emerged in Turkey right after neoliberal policies. At the beginning of planned era, Turkey was centralized country based on state power. That's why central government authorities were managing urban politics and economy. However, in the late 1970's with the effect of political contradictions and local- municipal administrators seeking for more power and capacity, localization movements and transference of authority from central to local had happened. As a result, in 1980's local planning administrations has gained some new roles like plan preparing, approving and implementation to some extent. However, central government having transferred some of its rights in 1980's, entered to a new process of regaining the former powers. Because fragmented institutional structure was so challenging to manage planning procedures, government started to prefer more centralized solutions and minimized the authorization of local. With this, central institutions were assigned with different wide range of planning rights. In that period, while central power has been gaining its power again, it started to deregulate procedures and liberalized processes to make planning more open to

market. All in all, deregulation and centrality policies are improved by connected to each other and both them were conceptualized to make urban development more market-oriented.

To sum up, the cause of study can be said to define the changing attitude of government policies and its influence on juridical framework. In that sense, study reveals that latest improvements on housing policies, large scale projects and squatter areas are connected to each other and government has been trying to convert the strategies from keeping informal areas to transform for more profitable investments. Moreover, deregulation policy of government and lately emerged centralization attempts are supportive concepts to feed neoliberal economy.

2.1 First Period: The Emergence of Gecekondu in 1940's and 1950's

Early 1940's – right after II. World War- were the first time when squatter settlements started to be visible in major cities in Turkey (Çakır, 2011). The time was also the start of industrialization for country and work opportunities were clustering in big cities rather than rurals of country (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011). As a result, thousand of people coming to cities without financial support created their own housing type which is basically built in one night. Although the new type of housing was labelled as 'disease, disgusting, irregular' by media and society, gecekondu settlers at that time were mostly defined as being innocent society seeking for a basic need- sheltering. The media and idealist intelligentsia perceived the emergence of gecekondu as a stripe to the odern urbanized society. In 1935 Yunus Nadi, a journalist and a well-known figure of Republican intelligentsia wrote about first gecekondu in Ankara as follows:

“It came to my mind while I was talking about Ankara, there we saw in confusion one day that on the mountain facing the old city, a city part from scrappy houses from bottom to top emerged without any warning, where this mountain next to the other city was a hilltop ready to be a forest. How to find a way to correct this mistake?” (Tekeli, 1980, 91)

Besides, intellectuals, journalists and media discussed that squatters apperad mostly because of lack of government authority on planning and housing shortage instead of migrants. So, the public planning authorities and housing institutions were accused of not providing land for low income and not managing a comprehensie housing policy. The professionals and journalists claims that municipalites and ministry caused growth of squatter areas by doing nothing. Until 1970's, that approach of media had continued.

In this period, while gecekondu settlers were defined as the innocent and marginal, they also contributed to the development of economy. Even industrial organizations and employers looking for cheaper work force supported squatting because they took squatter society as labour force. Those were the years when employers were advancing money to migrants and connecting them to the city (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011).

2.2 Second Period: Population Increase and Early Legislative Attempts 1950's – 1970's

After 1950's, it is possible say that squatter phenomenon entered to a new phase. The population increase both in cities and gecekondu settlements had risen dramatically because of ongoing rural exodus so does squatter areas (Enlil, 2011). The country was also in a challenging period due to political conflicts and military coup and in 1960's Military State came to the fore.

When looking to the 1950's and early 1960', it is possible say that the squatter problem had not been totally understood by politicians and planning authorities. Squatter families who were wellcome by the economic system as producers, become the consumers of local industry and economic input in 1960's. Once settlers gained economic power and strengthened their link to city life, they started to be visible in the system not as outsiders but insiders. Having recognized the power of gecekondu, politicians behaved more tolerant towards them and informal settlements were not regulated or eliminated due to vote concern. As a result, after considered the vote power of these areas, government neglected the existence of gecekondu while implementing plans and avoided preparing a comprehensive programme. Whereas the tolerance and compromises in the period can be seen as unmentioned or covert social policy, some political attempts by politicians to legalize squatters may be seen as direct interventions (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011). All in all, whatever the circumstances it is possible to say that squatters were considered as physical disorders.

In 1956, The Minister of Reconstruction mentioned in a conference that squatters should be considered comprehensively by taking social- spatial and economic factors. It was also declared that state banks will build multistorey apartments to prevent squatting. This approach also symbolizes the seeking of legal solutions for gecekondu. Moreover, attempts to legalize squatters were still going on by politicians in 1950's (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011). On the eve of the 1957 election, Democrat Party started to deliver title deeds of gecekondu via local channels. This kind of political support became a turning point and represents direct help unlike former indirect one. Eventually, the number of gecekondu has risen over the following years due to political tolerance and lack of authority.

In early 1960's, while first academic studies about squatters started to be applied. Besides, another important feature of the period was legislative arrangements seen for the first time. In 1958, not only the Ministry of Resettlement and Reconstruction but also The Squatter Commission were established to handle with squatter phenomenon. This early legal approach could be accepted as indicator of modernist attitude of government as well as it shows that squatters were accepted as problematic urban parts which blocks urban ideas to be generated.

On the other side, *Five Year Development Plans and Gecekondu Law* are the first legislative attempts in that period however they were noteworthy and even made the situation worse. 1. and 2. Development plans were prepared between 1963- 1972 and adopted an indirect approach to urban issues while covering gecekondu problems up to some extent (Çakır, 2011). The plan was offering three types of method to cope with gecekondu which were rehabilitating, eliminating, preventing, discharging. Besides, the plan was stating that squatters can not be demolished if people are not located any other place. Another upper scale

planning resolution became Metropolitan Planning Offices established under the Ministry of Resettlement and Reconstruction. Although the offices were settled in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir one after another to manage urban development, they did not directly affect squatter areas. However, time and changing trends brought the need of preparing second development plan. Afterwards, 2. Five Year Development Plan was prepared which faced with urban problems more than first one and it completed the aims of Metropolitan Planning Offices. So it added different aspects for urbanization. Nevertheless, 2. Development plan did not go further and shared the same aim about gecekondu areas with first development plan (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011).

However, the most important, organized and systematic direct legal arrangement towards gecekondu had been the *Gecekondu Law (Number 775)* approved 1966 (Çakır, 2011). Whereas the law became the first concerning squatter areas, it also defined the term of gecekondu and created some solutions. According to law, squatters were type of housing which are unlicensed, illegally built, deedless and constructed on unauthorized land (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011; Çakır, 2011). Gecekondu law was offering four basic methods to regulate these areas including reform, eliminating, improving and preventing. In that context, new urban areas called Gecekondu Preventing Zones were planned to build modern housing on state -owned land. Moreover, the sites were allocated to be sold or rent to gecekondu settlers for better living. Both preventing zones and other public housing projects were strongly used to cope with squatters in the era. Another bringing of law became the establishing the Gecekondu Fund which was supposed to be used to renovate settlements physically and to provide public services. All in all, the attempts were said to be progressive. In 1960's, the media evaluated the new legislation as a positive step and mentioned the opportunities that were given by law. On the other hand, Gecekondu Law has always been a controversial one because of its effects on urbanization. Main criticism behind was the legalization of gecekondu settlements by providing title deeds. In addition, law was highly excoriated because it focuses only physical rehabilitation of housing instead of social and economical environment. Also it has been criticized because it does not take gecekondu problem in terms of urbanization, housing or development plans. Further more, squatter preventing areas were criticized because of looking like military buildings. Although newly constructed multistorey buildings created a stock, housing environment was seen as insufficient and unqualified.

As a result, this period mostly passed with first legal solutions and their implementation process. Besides, squatter phenomenon started to be thought as a urban issue and searched by scholars. Especially during 1960's, anthropologists had studied on squatter society with related to migration and tried to define the basic characteristics of people. By this way, newly realized social change and its motivation became research subjects (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011; Akkayan, 1979).

2.3 Third Period: Allowing Squatters / Amnesty Laws 1970's -1985

After 1950's and during 1960's, rural exodus has kept on all over country especially on major cities. Previously approved gecekondu law which ended up with legalization of gecekondu also encouraged people to build squatters. In the mid-1970s 45% of İstanbul's population lived

in gecekondu and gecekondu had a share of 39.55% of housing stock in İstanbul while it was 65% for Ankara. The gecekondu population has also risen gradually nationwide. In 1960 while some 13.5% of the urban population was living in gecekondu, this reaches 23.3% in 1970 and 28% in 1974. It is estimated that almost one tenth of the total population is living in gecekondu at that time (Tuna, 1977, p.3).

In 1970's, gecekondu started to be a subject for land speculation due to inflation rates and gecekondu law encouraging people to build. So the squatter lands became more valuable as an investment tool because most of early constructed squatters locate in the center of city. At the end, becoming an profitable investment tool gecekondu started to be converted to multistorey buildings and they made more money for their owners (Karaman, 2013). Since therefore, an illegal housing market was created and the market is under control, or patronage of local "entrepreneurs", or groups of influence in some areas and political groups in some other places (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011, p.22). During the period, gecekondu kept on getting powerful and donated with urban services and political attitude of gecekondu population has changed over the years. While early comers were voting for right party until 1970's, they began to look for new solutions of left party. Both the change of political direction and economic crisis observed in 1970's created a political segregation between different groups. At the same time, researches examining urban problems and urbanization continued to focus on squatters. However, empirical studies and field surveys still hold absolute dominance as in previous decades (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011, p.25).

Apart from those issues, new legal instruments were put into action during the period. The most crucial government intervention in the period were *amnesty laws* which were approved one after another and development plans. The 3. *Five Year Development Plan* was giving applicable information about squatters while it was stating the housing shortage and pointing that the shortage was covered with squatters (Çakır, 2011). The reformist nature of 3. Development Plan presented a new type of solution called '*nucleus house*'. According to the application, the Ministry of Resettlement and Reconstruction was assigned to deliver basic construction materials which could be used to construct a nucleus house. So The Ministry became responsible of using prefabricated houses in social housing (Tuna, 1977, p.4). The method was highly used to improve and eliminate squatters. Also 4. *Five Year Development* became another instrument supporting the rehabilitation of squatters with infrastructure and public services. The plan assigned local governments and public institutions with upgrading works on country wide and included most of illegal buildings deployed on public land (Çakır, 2011). However, 5. *Five Year Development Plan* did not cover squatters with detailed principles and it discussed Amnesty Law 2981 which was approved a year later.

Nevertheless, amnesty laws marked the era. Although there has been a few of amnesty laws approved, two of them – approved in 1983 and 1984- were become the most discussed due to their heavy damage on urban development. Amnesty Law 1983 is one of the most well-known because it legalized the existing gecekondu which had been constructed till 1983 and forbade new squatters (Çakır, 2011). However, *Amnesty Law in Number 2981 (approved 1984)* marked an era and *Affidavit Office* was opened under the law. With the establishment of the

offices some public services were privatized whereas title deeds (not an actual deed but substitute) were distributed to gecekondu owners (Akbulut and Başlık, 2011; Karaman, 2013). The law also classified squatters and other illegal buildings in two categories; buildings which will be kept by rehabilitating and buildings not benefitting from taht law. Most argued result of the law has been the legalization of both squatters and industrial buildings/other illegal constructions built before 1984. When looked comprehensively, amnesty laws are seen to affect urban development negatively and made an increase number of squatters (Enlil, 2011). Once an amnesty law was obtained, many settlers began to convert their modest shelter to a multi-storey building. As a result, amnesties both provide property rights for the people and created a new potential income source. Gecekondu areas become commercialized and market dominated squatter lords began to emerge.

2.4 Fourth Period: After 1980's -2000

By 1980's, the world took yet another twist which is defined by neoliberalism and globalization just after the petrol crisis causing global economic depression in 1970's. As a result of the crisis, many countries including Turkey faced with new type of system which makes financial power of governments weaker. In Turkey, the neoliberalization process has begun nearly 1980's and the national policies were to make major cities a focus point with investments. The governments pushed neoliberal policies and cities became the subject of internalization. Economic transformation accelerated the transformation of urban space and enhanced the city image (Dinçer, 2011). Many policies were conducted to brand city in international markets for tourism, business center etc. All these attempts encouraged for high profile housing and office development, luxury motels, transportation modes. These changes also affected service production, infrastructure provision and housing policies as well. Ultimately, private sector investments and financial / technical power of developers has become more important for urban development whereas government turned to be enabler than direct provider.

While the policies had been creating a new frame for urbanization dynamics, some other system supporting concepts like deregulation, privatization and global markets emerged. Turkey also entered to this process and became a part of the project of integrating with global market (Enlil, 2011). One of the distinctive influence of the neoliberal economy creating more freedom for private sector became the conversion of import substituting industrial model to market economy. On the other side, after 1980's and during 1990's population increase has continued and urban land became scarce so housing shortage started and housing production decreased almost % 50. However, growing population become more socio- spatially segregated than ever with neoliberal economy and polarization between different income groups increased in major cities (Eraydın, 2006). Globalization, neoliberalism and transformation of society has changed housing demand. Upper class and upper middle class housing located on shorelines of seashores and the general pattern began to change. The cities showed new formations, fragmenting. The government created new financial incentives for cities to invest in large-scale infrastructure projects.

In this period, both central- local government relationship model and policies changed as well as housing policies. In 1980's, massive deregulation of legal and institutional structure of city planning has taken place as an spatial effect neoliberalization. Formerly taken responsibilities and planning powers of local government were sent back by law in 1986. With the new legislation, two- tiered metropolitan government model was adopted and planning authority was transferred from central organs to local ones. Planning powers were decentralized to district municipalities and municipalities took the role of shaping built environment including urban renewal. It is seen that after 1980's former legal instruments which legalized gecekondu areas and made them a kind of marketable commodity were avoided (Turkey National Report and Action Plan, 1996). However, the major and most important attempt affecting housing policies was the establishment of *MHF (TOKİ)* and state funding provided for mass housing projects through Mass Housing Fund and TOKİ.

The establishment date of TOKİ points out an important era for Turkey's economic and political situation. The period which is right after military coup overlaps with transition to liberal economy and globalisation. So while the state was losing its financial power and opening to world economy, private sector was also rising. Under these circumstances, Mass Housing Authority was found to shape the general state housing policy and also to prevent construction activities from being specific to private sector. Therefore, with newly constructed mass housing concept government took steps to prevent housing shortage and squatting (Dedeğaç, 2010) to help squatter transformation as well as rehabilitation of historical housing stock.

While housing policies were developing under mass housing law, in 1990's, second phase of neoliberalism has just started and national/international investments were supported by investment incentive laws (Dinçer, 2011). Tourism Law and Privatization Law became the major samples for of this. However, most importantly planning and decision making powers were transferred to central government organs to speed up plans and projects which points deregulation.

2.5 Last Period: After 2000's The Construction Boom

In 2000, Turkey met the millenium with a big housing shortage and economic crisis. While neoliberal politics and market oriented economy continues in Turkey, the country also entered to the last period of neoliberalism. In this period, the pace of deregulation stepped up especially after 2005. Government was no more a direct organizer of public space. In favour of large commercial interest, redevelopment projects began to dominate the city.

The great earthquake in 1999 became a turning point and hit the country by causing some changes in housing policies. Tenure legalization strategy in squatter areas was largely abandoned and the earthquake resilience became top priority (Karaman, 2013). The newly elected political party- AKP – has declared a series of new legislations and policies to provide more housing and urban transformation concept adopting a 'property led redevelopment' was one of them (Karaman, 2013; Kuyucu, 2013). After the declaration of housing mobilization, AKP has increased the planning power of central organs and assigned new authorities for them to simplify planning process to gain more investment and for

economic development. The main actor of urban transformation model become TOKİ whose authorities has been enlarged especially after 2002. The institution became major real estate actor and primary supplier of market- rate housing.

In 2004, TOKİ gained the power of implementing squatter transformation projects. After that in 2006, the institution has been assigned to conduct *revenue sharing model* widely especially on transformation areas. With this model, TOKİ has released state-owned lands to be constructed with market housing by private sector and has taken money from that sale.

Another major actor in urban transformation have been local governments. Between 2004-2007, a series of laws redefining the juridical status of metropolitan and district municipalities granted some rights to execute urban transformation projects in collobration with TOKİ (Karaman, 2013). One of these tools was *Urban Renewal Law No 5366* approved in 2005. While the law authorizes local governments to implement renewal projects and designate urban transformation zones, it also mentiones ‘project’ instead or ‘planning’ (Gür and Türk, 2013). However, it is criticized because it focuses on demolition and the choice of projects were held by Cabinet (Dinçer, 2011).

In the same year 2005, Municipality Law No 5393 which is a complementary tool o renewal act put in to action and it significantly strengthened the financial and administrative powers of local government in a country that has historically been exceptionally centralized (Dinçer, 2011; Gür and Türk, 2013). Most importantly, the new municipality law granted district municipalities the authority to designate decaying zones within their boundaries as ‘*transformation zones*’ and implement renewal projects in partnership with the TOKİ and the metropolitan municipality. However, the law has been evaluated as a fail to some extend and criticized due to its unclear criteria and restrictions. Some criticism points include limited participation of actors/society and transformation area size which is restricted with at least 5 ha. Also the law is strongly debated because it does not clearly define the features and criteria of being a transformation zone.

The last and most comprehensive law including urban transformation became *Urban Transformation Law No 6306* approved in 2012. Although the law seems to transform disaster prone areas at the first glance, it becomes a major regulation to transform almost any piece of land. So the law extends the operational power of ministry and leads it to demolish any place to transform including squatters. Ministry of Environment and City Planning is assigned to manage this process and implement the law. However, if the ministry prefers, it has a chance to practice law with the collobration of TOKİ. Even, the ministry can transfer its planning rights to TOKİ in those transformation areas. However, the law nodoubtly became the most problematic legal regulation of all recent years because it violates property rights by destroying tenure without defining any specific reason. Further critique is also related with the superiority of urban transformation law over other planning laws/ regulations whicch makes transformation main concern. The superiortiy of transformation law not only damages to hierarchical order or laws but also makes them insignificant including urban conservation laws or other regulations directed to conservation.

All in all, it is seen that the most crucial approach has become the centralization of planning powers and increasing authorities of central government organs after 2000's. Based on neoliberal policies, the construction sector and new large scale developments has been encouraged by the laws and urban transformation projects in that era (Gür and Türk, 2013). In 2010 more than 175 municipalities signed protocols with TOKİ and private developers to regenerate those areas and make them market tool while between 2001- 2010, 11 large scale renewal projects were started in İstanbul.

3. Findings

When examined carefully, it is seen that legislative arrangements and processes have changed over the years from upgrading to transforming by demolishing. As the perception of gecekondu changed, government reactions or legal procedures has changed on the same direction. Between 1950- 80; urbanization and housing policies have taken the squatter issue as a problem and found solutions as prevention, demolition, discharging, renovation or building social housing on squatter preventing areas. After 1980's; squatter settlements started to be considered as solutions for housing shortage and that approach has continued to almost late 1990's. However, changing economic and political direction in 2000's, has made the urban areas popular investment centers. As a result of this process, number of steps were taken to grant privileged powers to central government and large scale projects to rebuild informal settlements by relocating their inhabitants became rising trend in urban areas.

After a series of regulations and socio- economic improvements, the former "misery" areas which are tolerated by governments first turned to economic assets for settlers, then became transformation areas and market-based commodities of government. While they were economic source for gecekondu residents at early era, now they are the market regulating tool of state and private developers.

4. Conclusion

Gecekondu have been a problematic issue in Turkey for decades although they were tolerated for years because of political concerns. However, it is obvious that changing socio-economic structure of country and policy reforms also affected the way of handling with increasing number of illegal houses. Although different regulations were approved to cope with gecekondu, most of the them were insufficient and failure because they did not prevent cities from squatters. Instead, laws and regulations indirectly supported gecekondu either by legalizing them or by upgrading with public services. As a result, number of informal housing increased over the years.

At the beginning of 1930's, while industrialization process has just begun, it was not thought that the results will be so massive. However, rapid urbanization, migration and population growth had followed the industrialization and then informal settlements came on the scene. Almost until 1960's, while their existence were ignored or they were compensated by government due to vote potential, they only were seemed as physical distortions. They were also supported by leading industry employers because of they are cheaper labor force. Thus, they gained more political power and became a crucial part of economic system day by day.

Besides, socio- economic deficits of gecekondu began to be searched by social scientists as well as urban planners in 1960's. Also amnesty laws and distribution of title deeds made the squatting process even worse and the number of informal settlements and settlers have risen dramatically. When the number of gecekondu settlers exceeded thousands and industrial jobs were full with these marginals, the cities were not in the need of cheaper employee. So, they became 'extra' for cities and demolition process has begun.

Neoliberal economy policies also supported this transformation and changed the city structure upside down. While the country was opening to world economy, grasping more private sector investments became a priority. So, making cities, buildings and built environment more attempting for new investors came first. As a result, changing the cities and gecekondu as their 'ugly faces' become compulsory.

In recent years, government took steps to transform gecekondu areas by enlarging the powers of central government organs. In that context, a series of legal arrangements were brought in to force. However, it is not possible to say that new legal procedures are more successful than the old ones in terms of rebuilding social- economic structure of gecekondu settlers. Infact, new legislation makes large urban lands commodity while making more profit.

When legal instruments are examined, it is seen that urban problems of gecekondu have not been considered comprehensively. Also, it is obvious that an effective urban transformation policy which forms a long term social- economic and physical renovation for these areas has not been conducted. Instead, every single law has been centralized by trivializing local government especially after 2000 and tenure ownership has been violated. By this way, large land pieces are now marketed to be constructed by major construction companies which shows that urban land is managed according to economic concerns so does squatter areas.

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