

TURKISH URBAN PROFESSIONALS AND THE POLITICS OF HOUSING, 1960-1980 (1)

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As Castells (1977) has argued, a major dynamic of urban politics is the specific forms of social struggle generated in the city around urban services that are consumed collectively. In Turkey, similar to other Third World countries experiencing rapid urbanization after the Second World War, the most crucial question regarding such services was the chronic problem of housing and squatters. This article will analyze the politics of the housing question between 1960 and 1980. As will be shown below, the politicization of the housing problem took place through the practices of two major social actors: squatters who directly experienced the shortage of housing, and urban professionals trying to first define, and then solve this urban problem.

Both the question of housing and the issue of squatters have been subject to analyses from various perspectives. My intention here is to put emphasis on the politicization of the housing question especially through the influence of Turkish architects and urban planners on the discourses and policies regarding housing. The article charts the interconnection of three themes. The first is the analysis of the political economy of housing in the period under discussion. This is crucial for the tightening moments of the housing market represent not only instances of social conflict but also open up possibilities for inventing new concepts and policies regarding the problem. That is, such moments act as occasions for the discursive means utilized by urban professionals to be effective on daily politics. The second theme is the changing conceptions of, and the proposed solutions for the housing problem by the urban professionals, various generations of whom would produce different approaches. Various events (such as congresses and conferences organized by the Ministries, universities, unions and Chambers) were occasions for the production of discourses on the housing question, and I will trace the discursive transformations through these events giving particular consideration to the representation of housing and squatter settlements.

1. This paper is a revised version of a chapter of my dissertation entitled "Spaces of Counter-Hegemony: Turkish Architects and Planners as Political Agents in the 1970s", which was submitted to the State University of New York-Binghamton. I would like to thank Tom McDonough, Anthony D. King and Ali Cengizkan for their comments on its earlier versions.

2. For a chronological account of the Turkish literature on squatters, see Şenyapılı (2004). For a study cataloguing squatter studies in Turkey, see Sarı, 2002.

3. The period analyzed within this study is defined by the dates of two military coups (May 27th, 1960 and September 12th, 1980), each introducing a new social and political agenda illustrated by the constitutions they introduced. However, the major dynamic shaping this era –postwar rapid urbanization– had already gained pace during the 1950s as an outcome of the integration of the country's economy into the world market. The modernization of agriculture during the 1950s (within the context of the Marshall Plan) created surplus labor flowing into the cities. Within a decade (between 1950 and 1960) 1.5 million immigrants arrived into urban areas (600,000 into the four largest cities) and the urban population rose from 19 to 26 percent of the nation's total (Karpat, 1976, 59-63). By the second half of the 1950s, the agricultural export model, dictated to the country by American experts proved to be unsuccessful, and some protectionist measures were taken in order to support domestic production. This was the beginning of the implementation of a new model of import-substituting industrialization, which would mark the later two decades under discussion.

4. In fact, this view represents an intellectual tendency denigrating squatters which would emerge in the 1980s, in a climate marked by the 1980 military intervention.

5. These cases included the problem of relocating emigrants arriving in Anatolia after the population exchange with Greece, and the housing shortage that came about during the construction of Ankara as the new capital of the Republic. For these two cases see Cengizkan (2004), and Yavuz (1952) respectively.

6. The establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement in 1958 was also an outcome of this Congress.

7. All translations from Turkish belong to the author.

The third is the transformation of squatters, as both a category of political discourse and as a political actor. Throughout the period, as an outcome of the social transformations they went through, the squatters gradually changed from a negative symptom (first of shortage of shelter, then of insufficient industrialization) into a political agent possessing potentials for breeding a socialist way of life at the margins of capitalist social formation (2).

STATE, CLASSES, AND HOUSING AS SHELTER

A general overview of housing in the period 1960-1980 shows the constant failure of the state in implementing a general policy (3). Yet, various studies have analyzed the politics of the lack of direct involvement of the state in urbanization processes. Accordingly, rather than seeing the political system as overwhelmed by urbanization and incapable of influencing rapid urban growth, the subtle impact of the state on urban development should be considered (Keleş and Danielson, 1985). In the absence of an effective public intervention, a speculative "non-planned" urban growth welds together diverse class and group interests (Öncü, 1988, 38). That is, both the urban middle-classes and the urban poor gain from speculative growth at the expense of the destruction of urban fabric. While this view implies a possible alliance among urban classes, it overlooks the fact that the use of housing as a means of appropriating urban land (hence the value it gains in time) is a method of accumulation for the middle-classes (as well as land owners), while it is a survival strategy for the squatters (4). As will be discussed below, under the conditions of limited resources as well as limited state involvement in housing production, the domination of the market by private investments assume a different meaning. While the partial attempts toward mass housing end up beyond the reach of the urban poor, the methods utilized for housing production –middle-class apartments versus squatter houses– become class strategies as housing becomes a terrain of social struggle.

As mentioned above, both the state of the housing question and the squatters in Turkey have been major fields of research since the 1960s. Hence, this article provides an overview of the development of the problem of, and the discourse on housing and squatters, as a constituent of urban politics, rather than providing a thorough analysis of these issues. Aside from exceptional cases (5), the housing question in Turkey has emerged as an outcome of the post-War rapid urbanization, and was always conceived in relation to the squatters. Accordingly, the appearance of squatter settlements around the cities was a signifier of the shortage of shelter. Hence, the problem was defined as providing adequate housing for the newcomers; this would be the first step towards their integration into urban life, and hence, their modernization.

The Housing Committee report of the First Reconstruction Congress organized by the Ministry of Public Works in 1955, which was influential in shaping later developments regarding urbanization policies, illustrates the general approach to the housing question (6):

as a result of the housing shortage, issues such as the rents raising up to 20% of monthly incomes, the shortage of construction materials, the possession of the land by speculators,... force the handling of this problem seriously... The housing problem is a social one which can only be solved with an understanding of housing as a public service and through state intervention (quoted in Tekeli, 1996: 106) (7).

8. These institutions include the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement (Second Reconstruction Congress, 1962; People's Housing Standards Seminar, 1965), workers' unions (First and Second Turkish Workers' Construction Cooperatives Conferences organized by Türk-İş in 1961 and 1964; the Housing Seminar by TEKSİF in 1964), and universities (First and Second Housing Panels organized by ITU Building Research Institute in 1963 and 1965).

This view defines the basis of the general approach throughout the later two decades. Accordingly, the phenomenon of squatting is a result of the housing shortage which is incited constantly by, on the one hand, the continuous migratory flows, and land speculation on the other. The problem would be solved, provided state intervention managed to produce adequate amounts of affordable housing. As the major portion of housing investments was consumed by the cost of land, prices for land were also to be controlled. In tune with this view, the 1961 constitution defined it as a task of the state to meet the need of "low-income groups" for shelter (1961 Constitution, Article 49).

The first half of the 1960s witnessed a series of events organized by various institutions to produce solutions to the housing problem (8). The preliminary studies for the First Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP) were also an important medium for debates regarding the housing question. It is not surprising to see that the main concern in these debates was to find a way to overcome the shortage with the least amount of national resources which were supposed to be allocated for industrialization. The logical solution to producing the largest amount of housing units with limited resources was the implementation of housing standards to optimize housing construction. The idea of "social housing standards" was forwarded for the first time in the Second Reconstruction Congress organized by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement in 1962. The planners in the State Planning Organization (SPO) discussed the optimum level of resources to be allocated for housing construction that would balance their determination for economic development and their concern for social justice. Although the first FYDP reflected a clear stance directing national investments toward "productive" areas, it instructed the implementation of housing standards, complying with what was mandatory for public investments (and loans) and only recommended for private ones.

Nevertheless, throughout the period 1960-1980, more than 70% of housing investments were provided by the private sector (Keleş, 2004, 475). As a result of this, it was not possible either to control housing production and implement size standards or even to implement an effective housing policy. In fact, two primary methods of production, which had both spontaneously emerged in the 1950s, dominated the period under discussion. The first of these involved small-scale contractors that controlled the formal housing sector. In the absence of an advanced sector with large-scale capital and high construction technology, such contractors performed low-capital intensive activities with non-unionized, low wage labor (Öncü, 1988, 50). These small-scale firms took advantage of high rates of inflation, continual demand for housing and cheap labor to gain high profits in the short run. They acquired land (which composed the major portion of the required capital) in exchange for a couple of flats in the apartment building to be constructed (Öncü, 1988, 52-3).

While the small contractors served the formal sector of the urban middle-classes, squatting emerged as the informal housing method of the urban poor. Interestingly enough, these two spontaneous processes were legitimized by the state in the mid-1960s in attempts to regulate them (Tekeli, 1993, 6-7). The 1965 "Flat Ownership Act" for the first time organized the ownership of apartments in a single building, facilitating housing production by small contractors. The 1966 "Gecekondu Act", on the other hand, referred to the squatter settlements for the first time and

9. While the number of squatter houses in 1955 was estimated as 50,000, this number reached 1,150,000 in 1980. The squatter population rose from 250,000 to 5,750,000 between 1955 and 1980, which corresponded to 4.7% and 26.1% of the urban population across nation. By the 1960s, the number of squatters reached half of the urban population in the five largest cities (Keleş, 2004: 561-3).

10. The limit value for the floor area was intensely debated during the Seminar. It would be increased 10% in November (69.3m²), and finally raised to 100m² in 1966 under the pressure from the unions. The failure to implement an efficient level for the social housing standards, needless to say, resulted in the limited attempts to support mass housing to gain a middle-class character.

proposed certain measures recognizing their existence yet trying to avoid new ones to be built. Although the Act was significant in recognizing the existence of these settlements, it was unsuccessful in preventing the expansion of squatter settlements (9). Although these two channels of housing production dominated the period, as we will see below, both of them would end up in crisis by mid-1970s.

A third method, which was not very influential throughout the period 1960-1980, was the attempt to provide mass housing. Since it was decided not to invest public funds in housing production, an option supported by urban professionals was the crediting of construction cooperatives through social security organizations. However, these attempts could not address low-income groups except for high-skilled, unionized, blue-collar workers, since access to such credits and loans required formal employment conditions (Keleş, 1967; Keleş, 1982).

Nevertheless, in the first half of the 1960s, the optimistic technocrats of the SPO and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement were dedicated to optimizing the distribution of resources as well as the process of housing production. As previously mentioned, a major instrument believed to efficiently control the “waste” of resources for luxurious housing was “people’s housing standards”. Interestingly enough, the strongest objection to the implementation of these standards came from workers’ unions.

The housing standards were established and published by the government in March 1964. Accordingly, the maximum floor area of a housing unit eligible for public loans was determined as 63m². In this context, the “Housing Seminar” organized by the Turkish Textile Industry Workers’ Union in September 1964 became a stage for hot debates regarding the implementation of the standards (TEKSİF, 1964). Defending the standards, the SPO representatives underlined the need for increasing housing production without increasing the amount of the resources allocated. This would only be possible by discouraging luxurious construction and implementing mass housing methods (Can, 1964) (10).

Another issue raised in the Seminar was prefabrication and industrialization of construction. Representatives from two companies producing prefabricated building materials supported the benefits of prefabrication and standardization in construction (Gürel, 1964; İnanç, 1964). In fact, introduction of high technology into the building industry was supported by the Chamber of Architects during the 1960s, since the Chamber believed the solution to the housing problem would be achieved through “a social housing campaign in tune with the development plan and the social housing standards” (Chamber of Architects, 1964).

Mimarlık was publishing articles discussing pros and cons of prefabrication (Hasol, 1965), and even allotted whole issues to the topic (*Mimarlık*, 1965/12; *Mimarlık*, 1967/2). Yet, especially economic planners were against prefabrication since the building industry was a crucial employment field for unskilled labor flowing into the cities.

The last issue worth discussing in relation to the “Housing Seminar” is a discussion that followed Charles Hart’s presentation on “The preliminary results of studies on İstanbul squatters” (Hart, 1964). Hart was an American anthropologist, who came to Turkey as the chair of the Department of Social Anthropology in İstanbul University. His study (1969), conducted in 1962 and 1963, had a considerable influence on later

studies, as well as government policies (Tekeli, 1996, 123). While researchers in the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement were trained during Hart's research (the studies conducted later by these researchers would provide empirical data regarding squatters in Turkish cities), his basic proposals were followed by the authorities. According to Hart, squatter settlements represented a peculiar method of low-cost housing production. If the squatters were legalized and given title deeds, not only would they cease to be a problem but also improve their environmental conditions themselves in time (Hart, 1964; Hart, 1969). However, Hart's ideas stirred debates in the Seminar. The Turkish technocrats fiercely argued against the distribution of title deeds, indicating the emergence of squatter landlords owning entire squatter neighborhoods. While Hart found the resistance of the technocrats surprising given the "strong desire towards home ownership" he had observed among the squatters, his opponents pointed out the danger of squatting becoming a new means of land speculation (TEKSİF, 1964).

THEORIZING THE SQUATTERS

As mentioned above, the 1966 Gecekondu Act, with its recognition of squatters as a social phenomenon and giving up their representation as illegal seizure of land, was in tune with Hart's views. The Act not only acknowledged the existence of squatters in the cities, but also set the stage for studies examining the social and cultural transformations the squatters experienced. The general framework of studies afterwards would be marked by a modernization approach, expecting the squatters to transform into modern proletarians. A crucial study providing a theoretical framework for such studies would be Mübeccel Kıray's work.

Meanwhile, the ability of squatter settlements in effectively reducing the cost of urbanization as well as industrialization also brought "self-help housing" into the agenda. This was in fact a strategy advised by the UN to Third World countries experiencing similar problems caused by rapid urbanization (UN, 1964). The origins of "self-help housing" as a policy lay in the participation of a number of individuals, who later became influential in the academic literature, in community work in squatter settlements either via the Peace Corps or as architects and anthropologists (Ward, 1982, 3). Such studies were effective in diminishing biases and "myths" regarding Third World squatters and developing a view of squatter settlement as a solution to the lack of inexpensive housing for the urban poor (Abrams, 1965; Mangin, 1967; Turner, 1968; Payne, 1977). Accordingly, the direct involvement of the users in the production process through local organizations and the deployment of local material and technology would work as means for social integration (Turner, 1976). As self-help housing emerged as an alternative in the face of the failure to produce low-cost housing projects in the Third World countries, its consideration by Turkish urban professionals in the second half of the 1960s came to the foreground under the same premises (11). However, the central theme in the international debates was presenting squatter settlements as a housing method "that works", and showing that these environments were not "slums of despair" but "slums of hope". In contrast, the central issue for Turkish experts, as illustrated with the debates in the 1964 Housing Seminar, was the title deeds, which represented the question of how to legitimize the squatters' existence. Accordingly, the distribution of deeds meant only the legitimization of the

11. Various reports (such as Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement, 1965) produced for the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement in these years discussed strategies of self-help housing.

12. It is necessary to remember that socialism in the 1960s was mostly conceived as a level of development free from defects of market economy.

13. This deviation had foreign reference points as well. Throughout this debate in the Seminar (as well as in his speech at the General Assembly of the Chamber of Architects on February 12, 1969) Demirtaş Ceyhun claimed that “Marxist sociologists identified] our century as the age of urbanization, using urbanization synonymously with socialism”. This statement referred to contemporaneous debates on urban politics in France.

end product, while the need was the legitimization of the *process* of building of squatter settlements. This argument would gain a vital character by the end of the 1960s, as a result of the use of squatter deeds in the election campaigns in 1968 and 1969.

The second half of the 1960s witnessed a high level of political mobilization across country. Also encouraged by the political events in the Third World, a considerable level of optimism emerged among architects and planners with regards to the potentials of underdeveloped societies toward social transformation—hence the political potentials of squatters—in these years. While Turner’s ideas began to find an echo among Turkish urban professionals, underdevelopment was viewed as producing “unsettled” social structures creating a possibility of “a greater leap toward development, as the settled societies contained many reactionary institutions avoiding revolutions” (Aktüre, Tankut, Adam, and Evyapan, 1969) (12). Moreover, urbanization, under conditions of underdevelopment, was also seen as a social dynamic independent from industrialization (Ceyhun, 1968). The “Architecture Seminar” organized by the Chamber of Architects in 1969 witnessed discussions centered on these ideas. Against scholars arguing that the squatters would gain class consciousness only after turning into modern proletarians, young architects insisted that the squatters were “depositories of hope for revolutionary change” (Chamber of Architects, 1969). The idea that the emergence of urbanization detached from industrialization was “the only hope for the underdeveloped countries”, points to an important deviation in terms of both urbanization discourse in Turkey and the conceptualization of the relation between politics and the city (13).

Another important issue here is the agency pursuing such theoretical deviation. We observe that a generation of architects and urban planners begin to become influential especially around the Chamber of Architects in the second half of the 1960s. While architects of this generation were organizing to overtake the Chamber, the scientific commissions of the Chamber focusing on particular issues regarding the built environment were becoming means for collaboration among architects and planners. Moreover, the Chamber was providing a political space for young technocrats in state institutions who were gradually being alienated from their institutions under the Justice Party government. The vital point characterizing these professionals is that they were truly a product of the 1960 military intervention. This generation, which I will label as the generation of ‘60, experienced the fall of the Democrat Party government as university students whose continuous protests were influential during the last months before the military takeover. While they shared a strong belief in statist development with their older colleagues, they differentiated in their technocratic modernism with less regard to bureaucratic procedures. The generation of ‘60 would be influential in producing representations as well as policy proposals for the housing problem.

FROM “DEPOSITORIES OF HOPE” TO “MARGINAL SECTOR”

The Justice Party government skillfully exploited the tactic of promising title deeds to the squatters in their election campaigns for both the 1968 local and the 1969 general elections. All publications by urban professionals as well as the commission reports of the Chamber of Architects in these years forcefully objected this policy arguing that it was

14. On August 10, 1970, the value of the US\$ was raised from 9 TL to 15 TL under pressure from the IMF (Boratav, 1998, 103).

15. The growing social unrest resulted in the Armed Forces to force the government to resign on March 12, 1971. What followed was the establishment of a 'technocrats' government' under the influence of the Army. The government was composed of deputies that resigned from their respective parties and experts from without the National Assembly. The "technocrats' government," which was claimed to put an end to the social and economic crises, quickly proved that its major function was the oppression of the growing social movements. The 12 March period ended with the elections held in late 1973.

16. The Minister Ali Topuz formed a permanent board of consultants in the Ministry. The Board included Cevat Geray as the undersecretary to the Minister, together with Ruşen Keleş, İlhan Tekeli, Tuğrul Akçura, Ergun Unaran, Şevki Vanlı and Haldun Özen. The Board would immediately be dissolved, accused of acting as a "political commissariat" as soon as the Nationalist Front government was formed.

"an attempt to make the squatters allies of private land ownership". Moreover, the devaluation of the Turkish currency in 1970 (14) and the high level of inflation caused ownership of squatter houses –as with home-ownership for the middle classes– to appear as a means of investment in the face of inflation. The rapid increase in real estate prices resulted in the discovery of the function of housing (including the squatter settlements) as a means of social security against inflation as well as an instrument of speculation. Parallel to these discoveries, the analysis of the urban structure was gradually developing in Marxian terms, the framework of class conflict replacing the key concept of public benefit. A seminal text that synthesized these transformations in the literature on squatters was a paper by Tekeli, presented to the "Gecekondu Seminar" organized by the Chamber of Cartography Engineers on February 12-13, 1970.

Arguing that "squatter settlements [were] the reflection of the class structure of the society in space", Tekeli (1970) saw the solution in raising the income level of squatters and providing them with social security. In addition, title deeds should not be distributed, and the "dynamic and flexible" building process of these settlements should be legalized rather than being forced to fit into the existing codes and regulations. While these ideas summarize the ultimate level of the representation of squatters by the urban professionals before the 1971 intervention (15), Tekeli also combined this representation with two more issues. The paper defined the conflicting benefit groups in order to develop a class analysis of squatting, and ended with a discussion of the role of urban planner as an advocacy planner taking the side of disadvantaged social groups. The proposals forwarded in this paper would be the basis for the policies to be proposed by the Board of Consultants in the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement under the short-lived RPP-NSP coalition in 1974 (16). During its short existence throughout the seven-month coalition government, the Board prepared a bill proposing institutional reforms that would work towards controlling and organizing the urbanization process. Aside from the bill that would not have the chance to pass, the Board also made attempts to organize the process of housing production, legalizing and encouraging the process of squatting. The Board was dispersed before it could achieve any concrete results (Unaran, 1975; Tekeli, 1975; Geray, 1975).

Nevertheless, between the "Gecekondu Seminar", in which Tekeli's paper was presented, and the 1974 RPP government lays a three-year period under the 12 March regime. It is interesting that this period would witness the emergence of a different representation of squatters. It can be argued that urban professionals, who were alienated from state-oriented projects as a result of the military intervention, began to picture the squatters as a permanent structural element caused by the class structure. The literature on squatters gradually distanced itself from the modernization approach and the culturalist problematic of integration, and began to analyze squatters from the point of view of population movements and employment composition. This approach rendered squatters as a structural problem caused by dependency rather than a temporary disorder, and explained it through the concept of "marginal sector" imported from the Latin American literature (Tekeli, 1977). While it is possible to relate such a negative structural reading of squatters with the gloomy conditions under the military regime, it also represents the first stage of grasping the city as the context in which the formal and the

17. For a review of this literature, see Şenyapılı, 1978.

18. An Act taxing small contractors and land owners in the urban areas created suitable market conditions for the larger firms in 1970 (Gürsel, 1975, 5-10).

informal sectors produced a functional combination. The last step towards this conclusion would be the assertion that the marginal sector was not a negative but a positive and functional element of the urban economic system (Şenyapılı, 1978; Şenyapılı, 1981).

In any case, the “marginal sector” analysis is significant in two senses. First of all, the acceptance of the permanence of squatters (and their settlements) defined a strictly fragmented urban structure resting on a duality between physical spaces (official housing areas versus *gecekondu*), social groups (urban middle classes versus squatters), and even economies (formal versus informal sectors). This representation would soon assume a political form (with the 1973 elections) defining the urban fragmentation in terms of class conflict. The second issue is the appropriation of the “marginal sector” as a conceptual tool. While the term represented a lack of social organization in the Latin American literature until 1960s (Perlman, 1976), its appropriation by Turkish urban professionals redefined its meaning as an informal economic sector that is a structural outcome of rural to urban migration unable to be absorbed by industry (Tümertekin, 1971; Tekeli, Erder and Turak, 1972; Tekeli, 1974; Tekeli and Erder, 1978). This approach, in fact, brought together the contemporary international debates on the economics of development analyzing the relations between agriculture and industry (17) and the sociological explanation of the squatters’ reluctance toward politics with the concept of “relative depravity” (Nelson, 1970; Kiray, 1970).

THE HOUSING CONGRESS: ARGUING WITH ORTHODOX MARXISM

While the 12 March period produced a negative conception of the squatters and their settlements (suppressing *gecekondu* as a solution to the housing problem), it gave way to the emergence of two clear stances regarding the housing question. Both of these approaches were in a sense responses to the intensifying foreign investments in urban services in the Turkish cities. Beginning with the 1969 elections, both native and foreign investors directed their attention to the fields of urban infrastructure and tourism (18). The 12 March government maintained close contact with the World Bank, which declared Istanbul (together with Amman and Beirut) as a candidate for development funds. In the following years changes were made in the Building Code, a credit agreement was signed with the World Bank, and even regulations were made to employ foreign technical staff in the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement. While major projects regarding urban infrastructure in Istanbul were distributed to foreign firms, major Turkish industrialists came together to establish a “Mass Housing Holding”. The Holding, which was followed by similar newly established firms, applied to the Land Office and circulated newspaper ads to purchase land around major cities. These developments had an impact on the perception of the housing question by the urban professionals. First of all, the Land Office, which was established to fight land speculation and supply cheap land for public housing investments proved to become a tool of speculation itself, as it was forced to sell its assets. In addition, industrialists were also benefiting from the loans that were designed to encourage housing production. This mechanism, however, worked for intensifying land speculation since keeping the land and postponing construction only increased the value of land; speculation was proving more profitable than investment in housing production.

19. It is important, here, to remember that the generation of 1960 encountered Marxism later in their intellectual formation in comparison to the younger generations whose intellectual formations were embedded in orthodox Marxism. As a result, the Marxism of the generation of 1960 had always been less scholastic and more practice-oriented. It is curious to consider to what extent this heterodoxy was an outcome of their inadequate knowledge of Marxism (as they would be accused by their younger colleagues), and to what extent the result of a conscious deviation.

20. The Housing Policy Commission of the Chamber of Architects Ankara Section composed of Yılmaz İnkaya, Teoman Öztürk, Güven Birkan and Arif Şentek. A summary of the report was published in *Mimarlık* (1972/8: 6-7) as well as daily newspapers *Ekonomi Politika* (July 12, 1972) and *Yenigün* (September 9, 1972).

21. The text was translated into Turkish for the first time in 1970 under the direction of Hasan Çakır, and would be republished by two other publishers; by Odak in 1974 and Sol in 1977.

22. What made this reorganization possible was not only the end of the military regime and the election results, but especially the general amnesty honoring the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic. The amnesty originally did not include political prisoners, yet it was broadened by a Supreme Court decision, and resulted in the recovery of the revolutionary groups.

23. Among these five Chambers, the Chamber of Electrical Engineers did not later participate in the organization of the Congress.

Under these conditions, it was irrelevant to allocate state funds to credit private investors and opposing production by the state.

Within this framework, two approaches, roughly corresponding to two generations of urban professionals, came to the foreground. While some architects and planners of the generation of '60 forwarded proposals to control land speculation that emerged in the form of housing investments, the younger generation of 1968 completing their intellectual formation in Marxism, arrived at Orthodox Marxist theses on housing (**19**). The first group argued that the state had to participate in housing production through a national housing policy. Accordingly, private investors should not be given the ownership of land that they develop and should be forced to produce rental houses, while the state had to reformulate housing standards, and develop appropriate technologies in mass housing (İnkaya, 1971; Chamber of Architects, 1972 (**20**); İnkaya, 1974). According to the younger generation, on the other hand, it was not possible to solve the housing question under capitalism; even if it was assumed hypothetically that everyone was provided with housing, the living conditions of the working classes would not improve since the wages would drop at the same rate. Moreover, home ownership would reduce the mobility of the worker, reducing her bargaining capacity. This view was clearly a recitation of Engels's position in *The Housing Question* dated 1872 (**21**).

Interestingly enough, the largest event on housing, organized jointly by four Chambers would witness the raising of both of these views in 1974. Yet, before introducing the discussions in the Congress, it is crucial to mention two important developments that took place in 1974 and affected the discussions regarding the housing question. The first is the RPP municipalities' involvement in mass housing, which contributed to its becoming a topic for discussion. The second is that the same year was also marked by the reorganization of revolutionary groups (**22**). These two developments would also have impacts on the debates in the Housing Congress.

In May 1974, five Chambers (of Cartography Engineers, Electrical Engineers, Civil Engineers, Architects, and Urban Planners) declared their views on housing, and announced their preparations for a Housing Congress (Chamber of Architects, et al., 1974) (**23**). The Chambers emphasized the increasing level of house rents as well as the rate of rental houses, and defined this as an indication of the polarization of urban property. In tune with the above-mentioned Chamber of Architects report (1972), the Chambers called for state involvement in improving construction technology and mass housing production along with measures to control land speculation. After a few months' preparations, the Congress was held in December 16-20, 1974, in Ankara. The opening statement declared the objective of the Congress as "exposing the increasing level of exploitation in the fields of housing and infrastructure", and "identifying the role of the struggle against such exploitation in relation to the people's struggle for liberation and democracy" (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975, 5-6). The five-day event, in which more than 30 papers and responses to them were presented in nine panels, witnessed the two distinct approaches to the housing question. A number of papers supported the above-mentioned first approach involving production of mass housing by the state and demanded an end to the utilization of housing as a means of "foreign

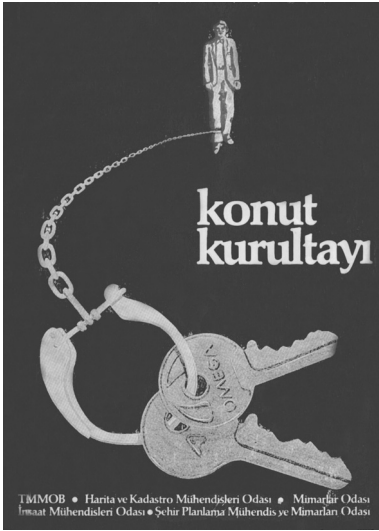


Figure 1. The cover of *Konut Kurultayı* [The Housing Congress] (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975).

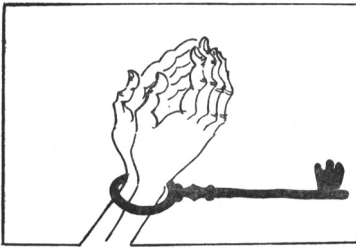


Figure 2. A caricature by Tuncay Günday (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975).

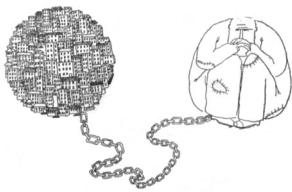


Figure 3. A caricature by Abdullah Orhan (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975).

dependency and internal exploitation" (Ataman, 1974; Ergüden and Göktuğ, 1974; İnkaya, 1974; Okan, 1974; Karaesmen, 1974; Unaran, 1974). On the other hand, discussions following the presentations as well as the last two papers (Çakır, 1974; Resul, 1974) raised the orthodox Marxist view arguing the impossibility of a solution under capitalism. The final resolution of the Congress, interestingly enough, displayed a combination of both stances. According to the resolution, "native and foreign monopoly capitals were removing small scale producers in the construction sector", and it was not possible to solve the housing question under capitalism. Yet, the "technical workforce" could support the struggle toward the "creation of a new order" and propose policies that would provide a basis for the course of action in the future (socialist) order (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975, 139-143).

Nevertheless, an important aspect of the Congress was the publication that came out of it (24). While it contained the discussions on the presentations conveying the argumentative climate in the Congress, the limited number of papers published reflected a different image of the event. The book included the three papers of the first panel which can be regarded as a scientific introduction to the discussion, the two radical papers of the final panel that were in a harsh debate with each other regarding Engels's *The Housing Question* (Çakır, 1974; Resul, 1974), and lastly the final resolution. That is, the publication made an impression as if orthodox Marxist views dominated the Congress. A significant aspect of the publication supporting this representation was the visual material included in it. The Congress was accompanied by a competition in visual presentation of "Housing Exploitation". The products in various media were presented during the Congress, awards were given in the end, and the artifacts were later exhibited in various cities. In addition, some of these artifacts were selected to be included in the publication of the proceedings (Figures 1-3). Almost all of these images represented home ownership as imprisoning the people, in tune with the orthodox Marxist theses.

APPROPRIATING MUNICIPAL EXPERIMENTS: *GECEKONDU* AS SOLUTION

Although the Congress represented the suppression of *gecekondu* as a solution to the housing question, the municipal projects toward mass housing would set the stage for its revival. The local elections in December 1973 resulted in the squatters' support for the RPP and its winning the municipalities in 33 cities. Hence, the year 1974 witnessed the first attempts of the RPP municipalities in mass housing projects. The major examples of large-scale housing projects were the "new settlements" in İzmit and "Batıkent" in Ankara, both of which were started in 1974 and planned as alternatives to squatter areas. Such vast projects would take years to complete even the needed expropriations and planning stages (25). Their significance for our discussion is that they, first, were prioritized projects of the leftist municipalities, and second, these projects would gain an ideological content beyond mass housing projects in the hands of the architects and planners of the generation of '60.

The earliest version of Batıkent was Mayor Dalokay's "Akkondu" project, referring to the RPP's *Ak Günlere* (to the bright days) (26). The project was forwarded early in 1974, and it was formulated in a report by the

24. The Congress papers and the responses were provided for the participants in a collection (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1974). The publication came out the following year (Chamber of Cartography Engineers, et al., 1975).

25. Along with the interventions of the central government, a Supreme Court decision changing the law on expropriation (establishing the expropriation value as the current market price rather than the taxed value) in 1977 also created financial obstacles for the municipalities.

26. The project was renamed after the government change, to avoid partisan connotations. The construction of the first houses in Batikent would not start before 1980s. As a discussion of the realized version of the project is beyond the scope of this study (for an evaluation of the built environment in Batikent, see Cengizkan, 2005), I will only discuss the impact of the project regarding the approaches to the housing question. The major success of the project was its organizational model efficiently coordinating housing cooperatives. This model would be followed by later projects. For a detailed discussion of the Akkondü project during 1970s, see Ateş, 1979. For more recent evaluations on the planning process see Eryıldız, 2002 and Keskinok, 2006. While Eryıldız provides a rather subjective story of the project from an administrative point of view, Keskinok, who was a member of the planning team, offers a critical assessment of the three different plans produced for Batikent.

27. A total of 25 professors, 10 of which were members of the Faculty of Architecture, were expelled in 1975 from METU with the decision of the Board of Trustees. While İrem Acaroğlu, Yılmaz İnkaya and Seniye Özkol of the Faculty of Architecture were previously expelled in 1972, the 10 professors expelled in 1975 were Mehmet Adam, Teoman Aktüre, Tuğrul Akçura, Aydan Bulca, Bilgi Denel, Davran Eşkinat, Raşit Gökçeli, Orhan Özgüner, İlhan Tekeli and Esat Turak.

28. These consultants were Esat Turak, İlhan Tekeli, İrem Acaroğlu, Önder Şenyapılı, Adil Özkol, Yağın Küçük, Ahmet Yücekök and Erhan Acar in Ankara; Aydan Bulca, Selahattin Yıldırım, İcen Börtüçene, Ergun Unaran and İlhan Tekeli in İzmit; Turgut Cansever, Necat Erder, Bülent Aren in İstanbul; Şevki Vanlı and Timuçin Yekta in Mersin; and Metin Kavakalanlılar in Antalya.

Director of Social Housing of the Ankara Municipality (Eryıldız, 1974). Accordingly, an area of approximately 2,700 acres including 28,000 lots and accommodating a population of 400,000 in 80,000 housing units would be developed as a “satellite city”. The Municipality would expropriate the land, produce the projects, develop infrastructure, provide technical resources, and later sell the lots to low and middle-income users, as well as public and private investors. The area was planned to house units for rent and for sale, along with commercial and entertainment facilities.

The report met harsh criticisms from individual urban professionals. Altaban and Kocabıyıkoglu (1974) (of the Ankara Master Plan Bureau) argued that the cost of the project as envisaged would end up much higher, which in return would reflect on the prices of housing units and make it impossible for low-income groups to buy. The area was too close to the city to be a satellite city, and it could not accommodate more than 200,000. Finally, parceling and selling of public land was severely opposed as unacceptable. Acaroğlu (1974), similarly, claimed that the municipality could not utilize land speculation “to profit” even for raising funds, and preference of middle-income rather than low-income groups was not acceptable. She also mentioned that the proximity of the area to the city could make it barely a suburb and not a satellite city. Adam (1974), lastly, stated that the housing question was multi-dimensional and the solution was already discovered in the form of *gecekondu*. What was needed was to develop alternatives making use of the building process of the squatter settlements. It was necessary to merge the social sphere of production with the residential areas rather than building satellite cities.

The crucial aspect of these reports is that they represent voluntary contributions to the development of a systematic approach and a sound content for the project, which was hoped to become a sample solution to the housing question in Turkey. Significantly, these contributions came mostly from the urban professionals of the generation of ‘60, who saw in these municipal experiments a possibility of putting their expertise in public service beyond technocratic positions. Such almost spontaneous input, with the expelling of professors from METU (27), would give way to the formation of a Board of Mayoral Experts in the Ankara Municipality (Ateş, 1979). These experts would create a network producing and conveying knowledge and experience among municipalities under the RPP (28). In Ankara, a joint project by TBTAK (Turkish Scientific and Technical Research Organization) and the Ankara Municipality was started to develop a comprehensive model of social organization that would industrialize the existing forms of housing production in the squatter areas. The researchers in charge were Mehmet Adam, İrem Acaroğlu and Erhan Acar. Although the project was put off as a result of the problems in the Ankara Municipality (financial problems as well as internal conflicts in the RPP), a serious work was produced by the Mayoral experts (Acar, Acaroğlu and Adam, 1976; Adam, 1977; Ankara Municipality Mayoral Experts, 1977). Before discussing the model produced by the Mayoral experts, it is crucial to mention that earlier studies by Adam (1973) and Acaroğlu (1973) preceded and provided a framework for these works. Especially Adam’s Ph.D. dissertation (1973), pursued in University of Edinburgh, requires a brief discussion. His main argument was that the emergence of intermediary groups in the squatting process had already resulted in the selling and renting of squatter houses, which, in return, represented the materialization of *alienation* in these

29. Adam identified an ideal subgroup of squatters that could become the subject of social change as those who "had recently came from rural areas ... in need of housing for its use value and eager to build their own dwellings, and definable as a specific group with their families, friends and relatives" (1973: 47). Considering the date of the work (before the 1973 elections and during the military regime), the emphasis on alienation should be understood as an effort to explain squatters' lack of involvement in radical politics.

30. The RPP would not re-nominate its successful mayors of Ankara, Istanbul, and İzmit due to internal conflicts in the party.

environments. *Production* of housing environments had to be understood as a key sphere, since alienation could only emerge in the domain of production. Moreover, the process of squatting was essentially contradictory to private ownership and possessed potentials to create new relations of production (Adam, 1973, 142) (29). Hence, it was necessary to combine the environments of work and rest, and the spheres of housing production with general production. As these ideas can be understood as a Marxist interpretation of Turner's ideas emphasizing key issues of *production* and *alienation*, the participation of urban professionals in municipal housing experiments would develop them significantly.

If we look at the collaborative work produced on Batıkent in 1975-77, a noticeable change is observed in terms of the significance attributed to the squatters. There are constant references to their potentials in social organization, and innovative strategies in developing social and physical environments (Acar, Acaroğlu and Adam, 1976; Adam, 1977; Ankara Municipality Mayoral Experts, 1977). The studies propose stages for the development of both housing environments as well as social organizations. These stages introduce heterogeneous technologies of production (of housing as well as general economic production) and propose the integration of "new settlement areas" to the urban system as a sphere of production.

While these models were being formulated in Ankara, İzmit was also witnessing an important experiment in housing. Although the success of the project in terms of its realization would be low due to the RPP's losing the elections in İzmit (30), the "New Settlements Project" was also important in developing solutions to the housing question going beyond merely searching methods for housing production. The project targeted the production of 30,000 housing units and, similar to Batıkent, was developed under the guidance of Mayoral consultants who were in close contact with their colleagues in various municipalities. Two crucial aspects of the project were its approaches to design process and construction technology. While the architects tried to develop a design process involving user participation, they also tried to utilize the same process for raising consciousness and improving social organization (Çavdar, 1978). In terms of construction technology, the crucial concern was making use of prefabrication for rapid production, yet cautioning about flexibility for user requests and more importantly avoiding the use of foreign dependent technology and materials (Bulca, 1977; Bulca et al. 1979). Although these experiments and studies in housing revived the view of the squatter settlements as a potential solution, they would soon arrive at the conclusion that these areas were terrains of struggle and could very well become sites for creation of a socialist way of life. However, this conclusion would require the intensification of violence in Turkish cities as well as the introduction of two theoretical findings.

GECEKONDU AS ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL SPACE

By the second half of the 1970s, neighborhoods were begun to be built under the guidance of leftist groups, especially around İstanbul. These neighborhoods were significantly different than the earlier examples reproducing a patriarchal social organization among squatters as well as politics of clientelism. These new examples legitimized themselves ideologically and aimed at self-sufficient neighborhood organizations. Built under the guidance of "people's committees", these neighborhoods

became sites for the development of a “squatting program” widely discussed in the publications of the radical groups and aiming at diminishing the exchange value of housing (Aslan, 2004, 104-5). The analysis of the squatting program requires it to be evaluated in two levels: first, the spontaneous development of program components through the urgent needs and previous experiences of the squatters; second, the (limited) involvement of urban professionals toward “planning” the gecekondu settlements.

As soon as a “people’s committee” model became effective in a squatter neighborhood, it became the sole authority guiding the development of the area. The major concerns of the squatters were securing first their settlement process, and then organizing against the future threats of evacuation. Hence, the squatting program introduced measures toward collectivizing the construction and maintenance of new gecekondu units. Prevention of gecekondu speculation was also a major concern. While everyone was allowed to have only one house, the houses of the ones who turned out to have dwellings elsewhere were confiscated by the committees and given to others in need of housing. It was also not allowed to keep the houses empty. These precautions were believed to reinforce the commitment of the population in defending their neighborhood in the case of an evacuation. The land was distributed according to the needs of each household, a communal account was used for expenses, and the houses were built in collaboration of the squatters (Aslan, 2004, 111-117).

The involvement of young urban professionals as well as university students in the realization of squatter settlements (which by definition suggest unplanned development) resulted in cases where they were conceived in a planned manner. Although such cases were very limited within the overall experience of squatting in Turkey, they are significant in demonstrating the ties between urban professionals and squatters. Here, a clear differentiation between the generations of urban professionals attracts attention. While the generation of ’60 was reluctant in directly involving in the building of new settlements, younger generations did not hesitate to undertake this mission as a political duty. Here, it must be noted that, it was not uncommon for the university students to live in squatter neighborhoods as they provided inexpensive housing in the 1970s. That is, these areas were not only spaces of political engagement but at times the immediate living environments for the younger generations of urban professionals. In the cases where such cadres put their knowledge of urban planning into work, major consideration was given to health conditions, cost reduction, and the spatial forms of social organization. Spaciousness and orientation with respect to sunlight, use of affordable and accessible materials, adaptability to future infrastructure implementation and growth directions, allocation of public spaces for educational and cultural activities, and prioritizing neighborhood relations in arranging houses and communal spaces were the principles forwarded through such experiences (Aslan, 2004, 117-124).

Both the emergence of such neighborhoods, and the excessive violence they endured were related to the intensifying economic and political crises after 1977 (31). Yet, the economic crisis also had a direct impact on the housing sector. First of all, by mid-1970s, the supply of land in the city center as well as its immediate periphery had been depleted in the major cities, due to the high-rise residential developments as well as the

31. The impact of the international recession after 1974 was postponed via short-term debts, only to be experienced much destructively after 1977 (Boratav, 1998, 114-118). While the economic crisis deepened, right-wing paramilitary groups pursued a civil-war strategy staging massacres and terrorist acts, paving the way for the 1980 coup.

32. In fact, a market for *gecekondu* had already established itself in the late 1960s. Squatter houses were began to be sold and rented, while *gecekondu* developers dividing land into small lots and selling out with joint titles had emerged.

33. It must be noted that this theoretical importation does not indicate that such figures of Western Marxism (and their ideas) were fully grasped by the Turkish intelligentsia. Rather, theoretical findings were partially imported when they seemed to provide explanations to immediate questions.

34. The professors who were expelled in 1975 returned to METU by a court decision in 1978.

35. Still, the architects and planners of the generation of '60 were constantly criticized by their younger colleagues for being "revisionist". For an orthodox Marxist critique of Acar and Adam by the Chamber commission on "Gecekondu Problems", see Aydın et al. (1979).

purchasing of peripheral lots by large companies. This shortage reflected itself on land prices as well as house rents, pushing them upward. Secondly, the costs of construction materials escalated enormously. And finally, the high inflation that used to be beneficial for the contractors reached a level which required increased rates of cash downpayments and installments (Tekeli, 1982; Öncü, 1988). Under these conditions, it became impossible (that is, unprofitable) for the small contractors to serve urban middle-classes. The process of squatting was also experiencing a bottleneck. As the squatter houses were characterized by the occupation of land without paying for it, the lack of land around the cities made it impossible to find place to settle (**32**). While the squatters' collaboration with leftist groups provided them with a new means of legitimacy (and protection) and small contractors could not find lots to build, the large companies preferred land speculation which was more profitable than housing production. That is, all channels of housing production were blocked towards the end of the decade.

While the *gecekondu* became a social space defined by political violence spread throughout the cities, its perception by the urban professionals also transformed. The more the squatters organized against right-wing terror, the more they developed towards self-sufficiency. In addition to this observation, two theoretical findings also would contribute to the thinking of Turkish urban professionals. The first of these was the thesis that the mode of production in underdeveloped countries was not a homogeneous entity but was composed of an articulation of different modes of production (Wolpe, 1980). While this thesis was put into use to analyze the historical development of housing in Turkish society (Adam, 1978; Tekeli, 1978; Acar, 1979), it was also significant in its logical implication of the possibility of socialist forms of social organization even before the disappearance of capitalist relations of production. The second theoretical finding imported from contemporary debates in European Marxism was the role of ideology in the re-production of a social formation (Althusser, 1971). With this idea, housing, which the urban professionals tried to integrate to the urban structure as a sphere of production, gained a new significance with its role in the sphere of reproduction (**33**). Combining these two theoretical theses, it was maintained that the residential areas in the developed countries were merely the locus of physical reproduction of labor-power, while those in the underdeveloped ones also contained the ideological reproduction, hence, were open to possibilities for social transformation (Adam, 1979a; 1979b; Chamber of Architects, 1979). Now, Turner's ideas were harshly criticized for he failed to see "the political, economic and ideological dimensions of housing" (Adam, 1979: 72). A number of master's theses finished at METU in these years (**34**) also pursued a similar approach to the housing question (Paçacı, 1978; Ülkütekin, 1979; Öztürk, 1980; Dostoğlu, 1981) with a heterodox Marxist terminology. The unorthodox Marxism of the generation of '60 proved to be fruitful in producing a discourse coupling with the transformation of the *gecekondu* into an alternative social space (**35**).

Moreover, the urban professionals were also dedicated to analyze the crisis in the housing sector from the perspective of class analysis improved with the new conceptual tools. The crucial point in these analyses was the assertion that it was the middle-classes' tendency to profit from land speculation that resulted in the increasing rate of house rents and the inability of the urban poor to inhabit the existing housing supply (Acar and Adam, 1976; Adam, Tekeli and Altaban, 1978; Tekeli,

1978; Tekeli, 1982). This critique would finally give way to the realization of the inaccuracy of a basic assumption that dominated the studies on housing between 1950s and 1980. In his seminal paper, Tekeli (1982) showed that there, in fact, wasn't a shortage of housing in terms of the number of inhabitable houses even in the early 1970s. The constant production of squatter settlements was an outcome of not the insufficient number of housing units, but of the unavailability of the existing ones for the urban poor.

CONCLUSION

The 1980s would witness strategies of economic recovery making use of mass housing, as well as building amnesties turning the squatters into true land speculators. Although they are beyond the scope of this paper, these strategies should be understood as responses to the radical urban politics emerged in the 1970s. Throughout the paper, I tried to show the transformation of the housing question as a constituent of urban politics. The political economy of housing and the developing social struggle of the squatters are not enough to explain the particular forms of the urban struggle centered on housing that emerged in the period under discussion. An important component of this process was the involvement of urban professionals producing representations of housing and squatters, which in return affected the ongoing struggle. Especially the urban professionals of the generation of '60, with the historical peculiarity of their intellectual formation, provided significant contributions distinguishing them from their older and younger colleagues.

Throughout the period, the question of housing evolved from a problem of shelter into a complex constituent of urban politics through discoveries of various social dimensions of housing. As discussions on the relation between urbanization and industrialization revealed the role of housing in the reproduction of labor-power, the discussions on whether or not to give title deeds to the illegal squatter settlements proved that this type of houses were also commodities for consumption as well as exchange. Moreover, high inflation and the devaluation of the Turkish currency in 1970 gave way to the discovery of housing (including squatter settlements) as a means of protection against inflation as well as a means of speculation under the conditions of high inflation. Parallel to these discoveries and also as an outcome of the social transformations they went through, the perception of squatters also transformed. As shown throughout the paper, the culturalist approach, which dominated the 1960s and saw squatter settlements as environments that would eventually modernize, had ceded its place within the period of 1971-74 to a political economy approach examining the squatters and the services they provided in terms of labor processes and employment categories. Finally, by the mid-1970s, as a mutual outcome of both the political struggle intensifying in the cities and foreign theoretical debates followed closely by the Turkish urban professionals, housing was defined as a means of reproduction of the social formation. Towards the end of the decade, residential areas –as spaces of the (physical and ideological) reproduction of social relations of production- were defined as a terrain of struggle for the left and a social milieu comprising potentials to generate socialist forms of organization.

It has tried to be shown that Turkish urban professionals treated the question of housing as something more than a technical problem

throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. For them, the housing question was a political problem; it was both an issue that should be addressed at the level of politics, and also a subject through which they defined political positions for themselves. Moreover, different generations of urban professionals came up with different ideological standpoints and different strategies regarding the housing question. The crucial point is that, the practice of urban professionals throughout the period under discussion proves that the relation between the sphere of political discourses and that of the discourses of technical expertise is one of constant and mutual interaction. This interaction maintained by urban professionals has generally been disregarded as one of direct translation from the former to the latter sphere. Yet, as I tried to show, along with the policy proposals they put forward, the representations of housing produced by urban professionals also found their way into the public perception of the problem. And this was precisely what transformed the Turkish urban professionals from technocrats into agents of radical urban politics during the period in question.

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TÜRKİYE'DE KENTSEL UZMANLAR VE KONUT POLİTİKASI, 1960-1980

Bir yandan savaş sonrası dönemde hızlanan kentleşme süreci, öte yandan 1960 müdahalesi ve onun ürünü olan yeni anayasanın yol verdiği kitlesel siyasallaşma, Türkiye'de kentsel politikanın ilk kez özgül bir siyasal mücadele alanı olarak ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Dünyanın çeşitli bölgelerinde olduğu gibi, Türkiye'de de kentsel politikanın başlıca konularından biri konut sorunu olmuştur. Bu makale 1960-1980 yılları arasındaki dönemde konut sorununun siyasallaşma sürecini, özellikle bu süreçte mimar ve plancıların oynadığı role vurgu yaparak incelemektedir. Öne sürülen görüş, konut sorununun siyasal bir mücadele konusuna dönüşümünün iki temel aktörün etkinliğiyle şekillendiğidir. Bu toplumsal aktörler, bir yanda konut açığını acil bir toplumsal sorun olarak doğrudan deneyleyen gecekondular nüfusu, diğer yanda ise aynı kentsel sorunu önce tanımlayıp sonra da çözmeye çalışan kentsel uzmanlardır. Söz konusu dönemde konut sorunu, mimar ve plancılar açısından çözülmesi gereken teknik bir problem olmanın ötesine geçmiş, meslek insanları olarak toplumsal konumlarını ve siyasal sorumluluklarını tanımlayan bir araca dönüşmüştür.

60'lı yılların başlarından itibaren, kentleşme sürecini yaşamakta olan kitlelerin barınak ihtiyacını karşılamak, sosyal devlet ilkesi çerçevesinde, gerek devlet bürokrasisinin gerekse mimar ve plancıların konut politikasına yaklaşımlarını belirleyen temel yaklaşım olmuştur. Buna karşılık, 60'lı yılların tanık olduğu bir dizi gelişme konut sorununun basitçe bir barınak sorunu olmanın ötesinde tanımlanması gereğini gündeme getirmiştir. Kentleşme ve sanayileşme arasındaki işlevsellik ilişkisinin araştırılması konutun emek-gücünün yeniden üretimindeki rolünü öne çıkarırken, gecekondular sahiplerine tapu verilir verilmemesi üzerine yürütülen tartışmalar gecekondunun da tıpkı modern konutlar gibi bir kullanım ve değişim nesnesi olduğu tespitini üretmiştir. 1970'te yaşanan devalüasyonla birlikte yüksek enflasyon koşulları, konutun ve yine gecekondunun bir yatırım ve hatta spekülasyon aracı olarak ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Bu gelişmeler, onları izleyen ve yönlendirme gayreti içinde olan mimar ve plancıların elinde konut sorununa dair giderek siyasallaşan bir söylemin araştırma nesnesi haline gelir. Bu söylemin dönüşümü hem konut ve gecekondular sorununa kuramsal yaklaşımları, hem de kentsel uzmanların kentleşme sorunları karşısında kendilerine tanımladıkları (mesleki ve siyasal) rolü etkileyecektir. 12 Mart döneminde daha çok sınırları işgücü ve istihdam ölçütleriyle çizilen bir politik ekonomi yaklaşımıyla incelenen gecekondular 1974 sonrası dönemde hızla politikleşir. Bu süreçte, kent yoksullarının yükselen kentsel taleplerinin siyasal biçimler kazanışı mimar ve plancıların ürettiği kavramsal malzeme aracılığıyla gerçekleşir. 70'lerin ikinci yarısına gelindiğinde konut, emek-gücünün salt fiziksel değil aynı zamanda ideolojik yeniden üretiminin mekânı olarak tanımlanacak, bu vargının iyice politikleşmiş bulunan kentsel gündelik yaşamdaki karşılığı ise gecekondunun, sosyalist bir yaşam biçiminin nüvelerinin inşa edilebileceği alanlar olarak tarif edilmesi olacaktır.

1960-1980 arasında Türkiye'de konut sorununun kentsel uzmanlarca ele alınışı, konunun salt teknik bir problem olarak tanımlanmadığını göstermektedir. Aksine bu dönemde konut sorunu siyasal bir sorun olarak tanımlanmıştır; konutun siyasal bir düzlemde ele alınması gerekliliğine yapılan vurgu, bu sorunla ilişkilenen mimar ve plancıların kendilerini de kaçınılmaz olarak siyasal failler olarak konumlandıklarını sağlamıştır. Burada dikkat çekici olan nokta, söz konusu dönemde konut ve gecekondular sorununa ilişkin üretilen yaklaşımın, siyasal söylem alanından mesleki söylem alanına yapılan bir izdüşümü olmadığıdır. Aksine, kentleşme alanıyla ilişkili meslek mensupları, kendi meslek alanlarında ürettikleri kavramları gündelik siyasetin sözlüğüne ve pratiğine sokmayı başarmışlardır.