

**Linking Conflict and Collaboration;
Bottom-up Urban Regeneration within Top-down Structure of Urban Policy
in Istanbul and Tehran**

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For People- the Sea,

To Struggle- the Ship,

In Memory of *Fardin*- the Beacon

Preface

My research on two neighbourhoods in cities of Tehran and Istanbul begins with accidents of my own biography: I was born in Iran and lived almost all my life there and worked as a regeneration facilitator in *Farahzad* neighbourhood (the researched case in Tehran) for almost two years. The regeneration facilitation offices were initiatives run by a specific department within Tehran Municipality which accordingly was supposed to bridge between the residents of decayed areas of Tehran and other stakeholders i.e. national and local government as well as private partners in order to ignite regeneration process in those areas.¹

In my work in *Farahzad* I had faced with the principle question of working for regeneration in a specific environment when the un-organized people of poor neighbourhoods who were the foremost groups impacted by the urban plans, had to deal with a system of urban policy where there seemed to be no major plans in favor of the residents. A system which apparently did not have any strategic plans to address the increasing problems of deterioration in poor neighbourhoods but still could not ignore the grave impacts of the problems of those areas on 'the rest' of the city where the people with higher income and affluent people lived. For instance, the poor neighbourhoods around the big bazaar of Tehran are less than half a kilometre away from Tehran city hall and geographically quite close to the policy makers of the city. The same neighbourhoods with narrow alleys and open gutters where the drug addicts dose in broad daylight and children are left without enough food or education.

In a nutshell, the core question of the research was formed through my professional work in *Farahzad* on how to deal with the urban degeneration within a structure which is not laid for listening to the voices of the residents and welcoming their participation in building their own lives in the neighborhoods. A system which also could not take measures to change the condition in these neighborhoods for the better i.e. practiced successful urban regeneration policies.

Afterwards, life took me to Istanbul where I spent ten months between 2011 and 2012 doing readings on urban development and urban transformation plans in the city. The research on Istanbul in this dissertation is primarily based on my 10 month stay in the city and the two trips which I made later to the city in June 2014 to find the case study neighbourhood and in October-November 2014 to finally implement the field work.

In my first trip to Istanbul in June 2014, I tried to find a case study – a *gecekondu*² neighbourhood – in which the people had succeeded to achieve 'something' by means of participation or civic engagement. In other words, I was seeking for a neighbourhood probably under the threat of

¹ Details of conduct of the research are brought in Appendix A.

² Pronounced as *ge-dje-kondoo*, a term used for informal neighborhoods in Turkey literally meaning 'landed overnight'

eviction in which the people had gained a success namely stopped the eviction or even took the course of events toward a scenario differently from what was dictated by top-down urban management. Beside the outcomes, I was willing to learn about the path; why and how the people decided that they should resist, how they had organized themselves, how things worked in the probable organization and if there were any accomplishments of their mobilization?

The reasons that I was seeking for a 'successful' process was that the 'negative' cases in Istanbul in which the people were beaten by the power of the structure of urban policy, were evicted and dispersed to soulless apartments in peripheries of Istanbul, were many. In other words, following the neo-liberalization of urban policies in Turkey and intensification of these policies after AKP¹ coming to power in 2002, the 'negative' cases in which the municipality of Istanbul had evicted the people, bulldozed their settlements and had displaced the original inhabitants were not few. In some cases, the municipality had succeeded to drag the people to bargain tables. Or in *Sulukule*, an 800 year old Roma neighbourhood, the municipality of *Fatih* district of Istanbul had demolished the historical neighbourhood in front of the eyes of the media as well as tens of activists and the residents. The negative cases are extensively researched, written about and discussed previously.

In my first trip to conduct the primary investigation and through talks with some friends, I came across a neighbourhood in *Sarıyer* district of Istanbul which the people had organized themselves in a neighbourhood cooperative. I was told that although there was not anything like 'neighbourhood cooperative' in the Turkish cooperative law, the residents had established one and had sued the municipality and succeeded to dismiss the urban transformation plan for the neighbourhood by the order of a court in Ankara. I learned that this mobilization had been established through the help of activists of an NGO and a group of academicians and urban scholars who tried to make changes in their environment by conducting such activities.

The name of the discussed neighbourhood was *Derbent* or as Istanbul municipality officially calls it – *Camlitepe Mehlesi*². After hearing the brief story about the neighbourhood, I began to search information about the neighbourhood in online publications and media. The ultimate reason to convince me that *Derbent* was the case study I was seeking for, was a three year socio-economic research in the neighbourhood (Yalcintan et al., 2014) conducted by the same academicians who were helping to organize the residents. Having the experience of work in similar situation in Tehran as the other case study of my research, I was aware on how valuable those information could be and how helping those data were to have a preview on the neighbourhood before stepping into the field work and conducting the research. It seemed the question emerging in Farahzad could find an

¹ The Turkish equivalent of Justice and Development Party, currently ruling the country

² Locating on the slopes of hills, the name of many of these neighborhoods in Turkey includes the word 'tepe' meaning 'hill' in Turkish (Esen, 2008).

answer in *Derbent*. Therefore, I made my mind and selected *Derbent* as the case study of research in Istanbul.

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In *Farahzad*, Tehran, my deep gratitude goes to different people who have been a great source of energy and inspiration. Over there, Mr. Sangchuli and Ms. Sarfarazi were always supporting the works of mine and my colleagues' in the neighbourhood. All the members of Women's Cooperative whom my colleagues and I spent long days to think out solutions for betterment of their lives and their families' are an important part of my work. The research about *Farahzad* could not be completed without the help of my dear friend and colleague, Maryam Vahedi who patiently was ready to discuss different issues of research-related work with me, helped with the second part of the interviews and has always been at reach to provide more information, data and outlook.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	x
Glossary	xi
Turkish Alphabet and the English approximation	xiv
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Relevance of the research	1
1.2 Question of the research.....	1
1.3 Methodology of the research.....	2
1.3.1 Foreword to methodology	2
1.3.2 Relevance of the cases- why Tehran and Istanbul?.....	2
1.3.3 The case in Tehran- <i>Farahzad</i> neighbourhood	3
1.3.4 The case in Istanbul-<i>Derbent</i> Neighbourhood.....	4
1.3.5 Conducting the research	5
1.4 Scope of the research	6
1.5 Limitation of the research.....	6
1.6 Outlines of the research.....	6
1.7 Concise summary of the research.....	8
2. Theoretical Framework.....	10

2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 The discourse of urban informality	10
2.2.1 Widening the debate over informality	13
Informality from 'a sector' to a 'way' and a 'mode' of life	14
'Informality from above' vs. 'informality from bottom'	15
2.2.2 Urban informality in Istanbul	15
Illegality within the governance system	16
2.2.3 Urban informality in Tehran	18
Urban informality in Tehran after the Revolution 1979	18
'Reign of <i>mustaz'afeen</i>', the egalitarian paradigm of Revolution and housing policies	19
Facts and figures about current housing market in Iran.....	21
Housing and informal settlements in the Iranian urban laws.....	22
2.2.4 Why urban informality is problematic?.....	23
2.2.5 Summary of the discourse of urban informality.....	24
2.3 The discourse of urban regeneration.....	24
2.3.1 Urban regeneration, past and now	25
Cautious urban regeneration- a Berliner experience of regeneration	27
Gentrification.....	27
2.3.2 Urban regeneration in developing countries- slum upgrading	28
2.3.3 Urban regeneration policies in Istanbul.....	29
<i>Gecekondus</i> as the main target of urban transformation plans.....	30
2.3.4 Urban regeneration policies in Tehran.....	31
Setting the problem of housing and degeneration in Tehran	32
2.3.5 Summary of discourse of urban regeneration.....	33
2.4 The discourse of participation	33
2.4.1 Ladder of citizen participation	35
2.4.2 Civil society organizations and the state	36
2.4.3 'Un-civil society; the quiet encroachment of the ordinary'	40
2.4.4 Civil society organizations and the state in Turkey.....	41
<i>Gezi</i> and the aftermath	44
2.4.5 Civil society organizations and the state in Iran.....	45

Constitutional Revolution, Oil Nationalization Movement, 1953 Coup.....	45
Revolution 1979	46
Post-reformist era (2005-now)	48
Green Movement	49
2.4.6 Summary of the discourse of participation	50
2.5 The discourse of rights.....	50
2.5.1 Human rights-based approach.....	52
The <i>right to the city</i> movement.....	53
Conflict as a possible product of human rights-based approach	55
2.5.2 Collaborative approach	56
2.5.3 Summary of discourse of rights	57
3. Istanbul	58
3.1 Introduction	58
3.2 Squatter housing (<i>gecekondus</i>)s in Istanbul	59
3.2.1 Different developments in <i>gecekondus</i>.....	62
3.2.2 Land tenure in <i>gecekondus</i>.....	63
3.2.3 Land seizure, the only feasible solution to housing problem.....	64
3.3 Neo-liberal urban policies in Istanbul	64
3.3.1 1980s+ 1990s.....	64
New policies; privatization and land speculation	65
The second wave of land seizure	65
3.4 From 2002 to date (AKP time) - the period of 'blessed demolitions'	66
3.4.1 Urban policies of AKP	66
3.4.2 Urban transformation plans and the Turkish Mass Housing Company (<i>TOKİ</i>).....	67
3.4.3 Changing the legal setting in favour of urban transformation projects	69
Law 5366	70
Law 5393	70

3.4.4 Changes in perception toward the <i>gecekondu</i> people- stigmatization issue.....	70
3.4.5 Megaprojects in Istanbul-The bigger, the better!.....	71
3.4.6 Gated communities	73
3.5 Derbent neighbourhood; brief history, facts and figures.....	74
3.5.1 Socioeconomic specifications of <i>Derbent</i>	81
3.5.2 Strong sense of community in Derbent - 'like Tigris River'	83
3.5.3 Land tenure; illegal but legitimate	84
3.5.4 Organization and mobilization	87
Neighbourhood Association	88
Neighbourhood Cooperative	91
Specifications of <i>Derbent</i> neighbourhood Cooperative	96
Legal fight against the urban transformation plans.....	97
Organizing a platform of action along with other gecekondus of Sarıyer	100
3.5.5 The final objective, gaining the land tenure.....	101
3.5.6 Resistance against urban transformation plans.....	102
The transformation plan for Derbent	103
Signing the recognizance	105
3.5.7 The future; how the people see it.....	106
4. Tehran	111
4.1 Introduction	111
4.2 Tehran before Revolution 1979	112
4.2.1 Tehran in the old days	113
4.2.2 Modern planning of Tehran	113
4.2.3 Land reform in 1962; displacement of the rural population.....	114
4.3 Living in the periphery- 'hashiye neshini'	115
4.3.1 Provision 100 of the Municipality Law and house demolitions	116
4.4 Tehran after the Revolution 1979.....	117
4.4.1 Housing in Iran	118

Housing administration	119
Housing laws.....	119
House ownership.....	120
Housing policies.....	121
Housing programs.....	121
Housing provision.....	123
<i>Mehr</i> Housing Scheme (<i>Tarh-e Maskan-e Mehr</i>)	123
4.5 Revolution 1979 and the promise of provision of housing for the poor	125
	
4.5.1 House squatting in the aftermath of the Revolution 1979	126
Squatting	126
Eviction of squatted houses	127
4.5.2 Neighborhood councils.....	128
4.6 Informal settlements in the aftermath of Revolution 1979	129
4.6.1 Informal settlements vs. inner city decayed areas	130
4.6.2 Social and physical specifications of informal settlements and decayed areas	131
4.6.3 Land tenure in informal settlements and decayed areas	132
4.6.4 Magnitude of ‘the problem’ of informal settlements in post 1979 Revolution era.....	133
4.7 Neo-liberal turn in 1990s	134
4.8 Brief history of urban regeneration in Tehran	136
4.8.1 Urban regeneration before the Revolution 1979	136
4.8.2 Urban regeneration after the Revolution 1979	137
<i>Navvab</i> expressway (1991-1994)	137
<i>Khub-Bakht</i> project (2007-2009)	139
Establishment of facilitation offices (2009-2011)	140
4.9 Farahzad Neighbourhood.....	142
4.9.1 Physical alternation of <i>Farahzad</i>	143
4.9.2 Socioeconomic survey in <i>Farahzad</i>	147
4.9.3 Socioeconomic status of <i>Farahzad</i>.....	150

Amenities and facilities in <i>Farahzad</i>	155
Housing and buildings	156
4.9.4. Actor analysis in the <i>Farahzad</i>.....	160
People.....	160
Municipality	160
Neighbourhood Council	160
Steering Committee of Imam's Order.....	161
4.9.5 The Facilitation office of Development of <i>Farahzad</i> Neighbourhood (Jan 2010- Jun 2011).....	161
Measures of Office of Facilitation	164
Group meetings with the people	164
Giving voice to the voiceless- establishing a cooperative	165
Women's Cooperative of <i>Farahzad</i>	166
4.9.6 Establishment of the Office of Renewal in <i>Farahzad</i> (Feb 2014-now)	166
.....	166
4.10 Final remarks about <i>Farahzad</i>.....	170
5. Linking conflict and collaboration.....	171
5.1 Introduction	171
5.2 The primary setting of the problem of the research.....	172
Part I-Case discussion.....	174
5.3 Expanding the question of research; actor analyses in Iran and Turkey	174
5.3.1 Urban regeneration actor analysis- Iran, Tehran	175
Pro-poor rhetoric of 'mustaz'afeen'	176
Iranian NGOs, civil society organizations and urban decay	177
'Quiet encroachment' vs. collective action of 'the ordinary'.....	178
5.3.2 Urban regeneration actor analysis- Turkey, Istanbul.....	182
Urban transformation plans; evictions and demolitions	183
Winners and losers of urban transformation plans in Istanbul	183
Case of <i>Sulukule</i>.....	184

NGOS and civil society organizations	186
Earthquake in Istanbul, 1999.....	186
Gezi Park protests, 2013	188
5.3.3 Iran vs. Turkey; similarities and dissimilarities	189
Legal-institutional framework and main housing policies in Iran and Turkey	189
Institutional framework	189
The legislature	189
The judiciary.....	190
The executive.....	190
Main legal provisions.....	191
5.4 Top-down modernization	191
5.4.1 Unplanned industrialization	192
5.4.2 Economy	193
5.4.3 Political environment and space for activities of civil society.....	195
5.5 <i>Farahzad</i> vs. <i>Derbent</i>; similarities and dissimilarities.....	197
5.5.1 General picture.....	197
5.5.2 Physical specifications.....	198
5.5.3 Economic situation.....	199
5.5.4 The status of tenure, informality and degeneration	199
5.5.5 Social texture and communal solidarity.....	200
5.6. <i>Derbent</i> and the threat of eviction- the course of developments since 2012	203
5.6.1. <i>Derbent</i> Neighbourhood Cooperative	205
Part II-Theoretical discussion	206
5.7 Spaciality of contestation; <i>Derbent</i> as a contested area.....	206
5.7.1 Property right, the cornerstone of the spacial contestation in <i>Derbent</i>	207
5.7.2 Establishing an informal settlement- a bottom up initiative to materialize the right to shelter.....	208

5.7.3 Organization- a means of realizing the right to shelter.....	210
5.7.4 Against the plans of dispossession within the formal structure	211
5.7.5 Communal property right- the response of the residents to the conflict over the land.....	211
5.8 A deeper reading of the contestation over land; the ‘right’ to shelter and proper housing	212
5.8.1 The legal obligations of the states of Turkey and Iran with regard to right to housing	212
5.8.2 Legitimacy as a ground for legality	213
Part III	215
5.9 Conclusions	215
5.9.1 collaborative in path, conflictual in nature	216
The conflictual aspect.....	217
The collaborative aspect.....	218
Linking conflict and collaboration	219
5.9.2 Future perspective	221
5.9.3 Recommendations for further research.....	221
Bibliography	223
Appendix A	232

List of Figures

Figure 1- Map of <i>gecekondus</i> of Istanbul.....	61
Figure 2 - <i>Derbent</i>	77
Figure 3- Overlooking <i>Derbent</i>	77
Figure 4- typical one story <i>gecekondu</i> building in <i>Derbent</i>	79
Figure 5- Multi story buildings in <i>Derbent</i>	79
Figure 6- It is not easy to walk up the un-engineered roads or climb the many staircases in <i>Derbent</i> ... 80	
Figure 7- A panoramic view of <i>Derbent</i>	82
Figure 8- <i>Derbent</i> (left) and MESA gated community (right side of the picture).....	82
Figure 9- <i>Derbent</i> , the street as an extension of the inner space- a wedding ceremony held on the street	82
Figure 10- Cooperative of <i>Derbent</i>	92
Figure 11- <i>Muhtar</i> talks at a meeting with activists at the Cooperative of <i>Derbent</i>	93
Figure 12- A sign on the wall of Cooperative of <i>Derbent</i> reads: ' <i>Derbent</i> is ours, it will remain ours!' ... 95	
Figure 13- A slogan on the wall in <i>Derbent</i> reads: 'There is no pass for demolition!'	95
Figure 14- An electoral poster in <i>Derbent</i> reads partly: 'The house is ours, the neighbourhood is ours, delegate our lands to us...We have made our choice- our party, our choice is our neighborhood!'..... 95	
Figure 15- Top: Current situation of <i>Derbent</i> (top); Bottom: Details of urban transformation plan for <i>Derbent</i> exhibited in 2013 real estate exhibition in France.....	105
Figure 16- Protests against assignment of <i>Derbent</i> as a 'Risked Area' in 2013	105
Figure 17- Tehran decayed areas (the purple colour patches)- assigned by the Renovation Organization	134
Figure 18- Terms of reference of facilitation offices of regeneration in Tehran.....	142
Figure 19- <i>Farahzad</i> and the assigned borderlines of work of Facilitation Office (yellow dashed line)	144
Figure 20- View to the old part of <i>Farahzad</i>	145
Figure 21- Main street of <i>Farahzad</i>	145
Figure 22- Samples of <i>Farahzad</i> access roads and alleys	146
Figure 23- Second hand clothes stall in <i>Farahzad</i>	151
Figure 24- A group meeting of facilitators and the people of <i>Farahzad</i> in the neighborhood library	168
Figure 25- One of the meetings of Women's Cooperative of <i>Farahzad</i>	168
Figure 26- A schematic diagram of the regeneration process in Tehran after the Revolution 1979 170	
Figure 27- Primary setting of the problem of the research- from urban informality to comprehensive and participatory socioeconomic and physical regeneration	173
Figure 28- Primary setting of the problem of the research- a one way dictation of decisions by the top- down structure of urban policy onto the people living in degenerated areas	174
Figure 29- Urban Regeneration Actor Analysis in Tehran, Iran	181
Figure 30- Urban Regeneration Actor Analysis in Istanbul, Turkey	205
Figure 31- Collective action, a possible venue to impact the top-down structure of urban management from bottom.....	220

List of Tables

Table 1-Structure of the dissertation	7
Table 2-Turkish political reforms 2001–2004.....	43
Table 3- House ownership in <i>Derbent</i>	81
Table 4- Income rate of the households (TL)	81
Table 5-Timeline of developments in <i>Derbent</i>	110
Table 6- Data on Tehran and the decayed areas of Tehran	131
Table 7- General data about <i>Farahzad</i>	147
Table 8- The reasons for moving to <i>Farahzad</i>	148
Table 9- Duration of residence in <i>Farahzad</i>	149
Table 10- Unwillingness of staying on in <i>Farahzad</i>	149
Table 11- Views of people on peculiarities of <i>Farahzad</i>	149
Table 12- Employment status in <i>Farahzad</i>	151
Table 13- Work skill of labor force in <i>Farahzad</i>	152
Table 14- Income rate in <i>Farahzad</i>	152
Table 15- Loan situation in <i>Farahzad</i>	152
Table 16- Sense of collaboration and cooperation within <i>Farahzad</i>	153
Table 17- The activities that the people do not cooperate about in <i>Farahzad</i>	153
Table 18- Trust towards the neighbors in <i>Farahzad</i>	153
Table 19- Communal solidarity in <i>Farahzad</i>	153
Table 20- Trust towards authorities among the population in <i>Farahzad</i>	154
Table 21- Excerpts of views of people on their feelings of (mis)trust towards the Municipality	155
Table 22- Transportation means in <i>Farahzad</i>	155
Table 23-Shopping locations in <i>Farahzad</i>	155
Table 24- The most important problems in <i>Farahzad</i> according to the population	156
Table 25- The general information on the overall condition of the buildings in <i>Farahzad</i>	156
Table 26- The views of the people over regeneration of <i>Farahzad</i>	157
Table 27- Excerpts from people's views on the issue of Tenure	157
Table 28- An excerpt from a resident's views on the sense of community in <i>Farahzad</i>	158
Table 29- Excerpts from people's views on the economic capabilities of the residents.....	159
Table 30- The views of the people on the possibility of cooperation in regeneration in <i>Farahzad</i>	160
Table 31- Comparison between Iran and Turkey	197
Table 32- Comparison between <i>Derbent</i> and <i>Farahzad</i> - facts and figures, physical specifications	202
Table 33- Comparison between <i>Derbent</i> and <i>Farahzad</i> - social specifications	203

Glossary

Term, Name	Definition
AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> , the Turkish equivalent for 'Justice and Development Party'- in power since 2002
Derbent	The researched neighborhood in Istanbul, Turkey
Farahzad	The researched neighborhood in Tehran, Iran
Gecekondu	Pronounced as ' <i>ge-je-kondoo</i> ', a Turkish term literally meaning 'built overnight', the typical informal settlement in Turkey
Gezi Park	A park in the central part of Istanbul, the birthplace of protests of June 2013
Kentsel Dönüşüm	Urban transformation- as it is used in current Turkish urban planning structure meaning physical transformation and displacement of original residents of urban areas
askeri ücret	700 Turkish Lira, the least formal wage in Turkey
CCIA Cooperative	<i>Atatürk Oto Sanakarları Konut Kooperatifi</i> , Ataturk Auto Industry Housing Cooperative
CHP	<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> , Turkish Republican People's Party
DISK	<i>Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konferadasyonu</i> , Turkish Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions established in 1967
Hisseli tapu	Shared title for land in Turkey
IMECE	Volunteer work and financial contribution of all members of a community as affiliates of a solidarity group for doing common works and jobs, e.g. constructing road or sewage system, a religious or community centre and so on (Vikipedi, 2014)
İstanbul Buyuk şehir Belediyesi (IBB)	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

MESA Housing	A gated community adjacent to <i>Derbent</i> , the researched case in Istanbul
Muhtar	Head of the <i>Muhtarlik</i> , elected in election by direct votes of the people
Muhtarlik	The lowest level of division in local government in Turkey. The <i>muhtar</i> (headman) as the head of the <i>Muhtarlik</i> is elected by the people in local government election
Tapu Tehsis Belgesi	A type of temporary tenure in Turkey that recognizes the occupant's right to use the space, entitling the document holder to legal ownership after a 'cadastral plan' and a subsequent 'improvement plan' (in Turkish, <i>imar islah planı</i>)
TOKI	<i>Toplu Konut İdaresi</i> , Turkish Mass Housing Company
yapsatçı	Literally meaning 'builder-seller' referring to Turkish developers
baft-e farsoode	Decayed area, of the terms used officially in Iran both by scholars, professionals and officials
baft-e mas'aledar	Problematic area, of the terms used officially in Iran both by scholars, professionals and officials
Dowlat-e Sazandegi	Literally meaning 'Construction Government', Iranian government in power between 1989-1997 following quasi-neo liberal economic policies
Hashiye neshini, zagheneshini, halabi abad, kaparneshini, Eslam abad, zoor abad, Tah-eKatt, Kharejazmahdoode, Gowdneshin, Kharej az mahdoode, jonoob-e shahr	Different terms used in Persian language all referring to informal settlements and the neighborhoods with low income groups of population
Jahad-e Sazandegi	Literally meaning 'Crusade of Construction', established after the Revolution 1979, this ministry implements different projects of infrastructure and amenities for rural as well as low income groups areas

Mehr Housing Scheme (Tarak-e Maskan-e Mehr)

An ambitious and controversial mass housing program for low income groups launched in 2007

Mustaz'afeen

A Quranic term meaning 'the oppressed', a term used extensively after Iranian Revolution 1979 referring to egalitarian trajectory of Revolution and the system established afterwards

Turkish Alphabet and the English approximation

(Source: Wikipedia with minor changes by MMansoorian)

Turkish alphabet		English approximation	Turkish alphabet		English approximation
A	a	As <i>a</i> in <i>father</i>	M	m	As <i>m</i> in <i>man</i>
B	b	As <i>b</i> in <i>boy</i>	N	n	As <i>n</i> in <i>nice</i>
C	c	As <i>j</i> in <i>joy</i>	O	o	As <i>o</i> in <i>more</i>
Ç	ç	As <i>ch</i> in <i>chair</i>	Ö	ö	As <i>e</i> in <i>set</i> , but with lips rounded
D	d	As <i>d</i> in <i>dog</i>	P	p	As <i>p</i> in <i>pin</i>
E	e	As <i>e</i> in <i>red</i>	R	r	As <i>r</i> in <i>ring</i>
F	f	As <i>f</i> in <i>far</i>	S	s	As <i>s</i> in <i>song</i>
G	g	As <i>g</i> in <i>got</i>	Ş	ş	As <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i>
Ğ	ğ	No equivalent in English pronunciation	T	t	As <i>t</i> in <i>tick</i>
H	h	As <i>h</i> in <i>hot</i>	U	u	As <i>oo</i> in <i>zoo</i>
I	i	As <i>e</i> in <i>open</i>	Ü	ü	As <i>e</i> in <i>new</i>
İ	i	As <i>ee</i> in <i>feet</i>	V	v	As <i>v</i> in <i>vat</i>
J	j	As <i>s</i> in <i>measure</i>	Y	y	As <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i>
K	k	As <i>k</i> in <i>kit</i>	Z	z	As <i>z</i> in <i>zigzag</i>
L	l	As <i>l</i> in <i>love</i>			

1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance of the research

The problem of urban decayed areas is of the defining features of a sizable number of cities in developing countries. While currently the participatory urban regeneration policy (which takes both the socio economic complications as well as the physical decay into consideration) seems to be a consensus among many scholars, the question is how these policies can be realized within the specific pretexts of developing countries. The pretexts in which there is hardly a proper place for 'participation' of the people within the structure of urban policy. The pretexts where the people who are impacted by these policies, hardly have a 'say' in defining them and generally are 'decided over' by the structure. The pretexts where there is a deep split between the top-down structure of urban management and the realities on the ground in general, and the problem of urban informality and urban decay in particular. In such pretexts, normally, the output policies fail to deal with the problem in a constructive way.

The attempts to resolve the problem of urban decay vary from eviction and displacement of the people and establishing yet another decayed area in another part of the city to the betterment of the lives of the residents and regeneration of these areas. In a nutshell, some of the policies move the problem geographically and some others work toward solving the dilemma. Some strategies include the presence of the people in different episodes of the process and some are decided over by the top-down urban management with no role for the people. This research explores the interaction between structures producing the latter group of policies and the people who are impacted by these policies.

The very top-down structure of urban management which produces the urban poverty as well as urban informality, contributes to its existence and its expansion through its policies. Yet even within these pretexts, the only defining parameter to construct the outcomes is not merely the 'top'. In some cases as it will be extensively discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this dissertation, the resistance and struggle of the people hinders the implementation of top-down policies and changes the course of the events to bear more just and equitable outcomes. This research investigates the interfaces of the top-down structure of urban management and the bottom up initiatives originated from the residents of urban decayed areas. The same initiatives which -as it will be discussed- will produce a constructive and just solution to the problem of urban informality and urban decay.

1.2 Question of the research

The Question of the Research is articulated as such:

How the participatory and comprehensive urban regeneration policies can be realized within the context of countries which the rigid top-down structure of urban management;

- a. Fails to practice its legal obligations¹ in provision of proper housing for the citizens,
- b. Fails to take proper and constructive measures to tackle the problem of urban informality and urban decay,
- c. Is not laid out for hearing the voice of the people, nor it practically observes the interests of these groups into the urban policies.

1.3 Methodology of the research²

To answer the question of the research which is aiming at finding ways on how the participatory and comprehensive urban regeneration policies can be realized within the context of countries with a rigid top-down structure of urban management, this research is conducted using the case study research methodology. Using ‘multiple sources of evidence’ (Schell, 1992, p.2), this research investigates a ‘contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (Schell, 1992, p.2). Finally, the question of the research which was raised as a dilemma at work in the case study in Tehran was answered in the research about the other case in Istanbul.

1.3.1 Foreword to methodology³

In both of the case studies and prior to this research, extensive surveys on the socio economic situation and physical condition of both of the researched neighbourhoods in Tehran and Istanbul have been conducted by other scholars which profoundly eased this research⁴. Providing voluminous amount of information and data, these surveys have been considerably helping the research specifically in case of *Derbent* even before I literally stepped into the neighbourhood.

The research in Tehran was conducted by a group of experts working in the neighbourhood between Jan. 2010 and Jun. 2011. In the case of Istanbul, a three year unpublished survey was conducted financed by the Turkish government and was implemented by a group of highly qualified experts and academicians. Thus, in both cases I was not compelled to begin the research from scratch and my own research was a continuation of those surveys.

1.3.2 Relevance of the cases- why Tehran and Istanbul?

¹With regard to the domestic laws as well as the international agreements and conventions which these countries are of the signatories

²The entire process and details of conducting the research is brought in Appendix A.

³ Except for the materials which are directly cited from references, here in this dissertation all the documents e.g. interviews, news, views and articles in dailies, websites, blogs, etc. in languages of Persian and Turkish are translated into English by me.

⁴ These two surveys are frequently mentioned as the principal sources of data specifically in chapters about Istanbul and Tehran (chapters 3 and 4). In the survey about the case in Tehran, I was a member of the survey team.

The studies about participatory urban regeneration have been mainly focused on western experiences and originated in these environments. Since the people of developing countries have a weaker say in the decision making apparatus, the literature about their efforts to make their own futures are not reflected sufficiently in academic researches. Although the systems in the developing countries are mostly rigid and non-transparent, the actual experience on the ground reveals that the people are not sitting still, playing no role in their lives. Beneath the silent surface of the river, a forceful movement of currents is pushing forward. Reading and investigating a few of these currents is the core of this research.

In Tehran and after Revolution 1979 the people camped in some main squares of the city demanding their own share of the Revolution. Some other groups of them rushed to occupy and squat in the abandoned houses and hotels which the owners had left behind and escaped. The will of the people making the Revolution 1979 was reflected in the Constitution of the country ratified just a few months after the official establishment of the new regime. Despite that and after 38 years of the system in rule, the phenomenon of urban informality and urban decay are still highlighted parts of urban areas of the country.

In Turkey, the neo-liberal policies introduced in 1980s have been intensified after 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (hereafter, AKP¹) came to power. Since then, Istanbul has been one of the major targets of the neo-liberal changes and urban transformations and has been assigned as an international service and financial hub in which neither decayed areas nor their habitants could be tolerated. Still, amid the heavy pressure of a powerful government with iron fist evicting the people and bulldozing their houses to make space for the wealthy new-comers, the people are trying to protest, delay or even stop the destruction of their neighbourhoods. In these neighbourhoods, people are organizing and even finding their allies in similar situations in other neighbourhoods. They are establishing associations and platforms and in some cases have gone to the national or EU court to object and sue the government and finally stop the evictions. Although still the people are not listened to by the government in major scale, they are trying to find solutions using the voids in the existing laws. In other words, the residents of informal settlements of Istanbul have a long and meandering way to proceed and they are faced by an urban management which is not willing to heed them. This research is intended to not only reflect on the experiences of the people of Tehran and Istanbul in order to enrich the scholarly literature, but also intends to share the lessons of the research with professionals and urban scholars who seek a profound change in the lives of the people.

1.3.3 The case in Tehran- Farahzad neighbourhood

¹ The Turkish equivalent of 'Justice and Development Party' (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) is quite famous in the scholarly literature about Turkey. In other words, even in non-Turkish texts, this Party is referred to as AKP.

Located in an affluent district of northern Tehran, *Farahzad* is a decayed urban patch right in the middle of wealth. The entire texture of *Farahzad* is both informal and decayed. Informal in a sense that almost all the housing units in the neighbourhood have the problem of tenure; either they lack any formal deed for the land or they have not obtained legal permissions for construction on the land.

Originally a village for leisure time of the people of Tehran, *Farahzad* was integrated into the city as Tehran sprawled and expanded its formal borderline. Like many other informal/decayed neighbourhoods of Tehran, it faces the problem of deterioration as well as socio economic complications. Although a couple of programs and plans have been introduced by Tehran Municipality to address the problems of the neighbourhood, they majorly have failed to ignite any tangible positive outcomes so far.

1.3.4 The case in Istanbul-Derbent Neighbourhood

Derbent neighbourhood is a part of a large district of Istanbul called *Sariyer* in the European side up of the city in the vicinity of Black Sea. The neighbourhood is a typical *gecekondu*¹ and was established in 1950s. It covers about 40 ha and includes 10 thousand people. Like other *gecekondus* of Istanbul it mainly includes different groups of working class.

The people of the neighbourhood faced the threat of evictions when in 2013 the Turkish ministry of housing assigned the neighbourhood as an 'Earthquake Risked Area'² and declared a renewal plan for the neighbourhood. Although, an international seismic report had declared the entire *Sariyer* as a safe area with regard to the earthquake hazard, this assignment practically meant eviction and future plans of bulldozing the houses.

In spring 2014, a housing cooperative in the neighbourhood with the help of activists could successfully sue the government and halt the renewal plans. Although the fate of the neighbourhood is still under threat of eviction, this major success has been an encouraging outcome for the people of the neighbourhood.

The last but not least factor to select the two cities of Tehran and Istanbul and the two neighborhoods of *Farahzad* and *Derbent* as the cases study of the research has been my personal experience of work and life in these two cities. As explained more deliberately in the preface, I worked in Tehran and lived for some ten months in Istanbul. Indeed, the core idea and question of the current research was formed as my daily challenge of working in *Farahzad*. Afterwards, living in Istanbul and studying the urban developments in the city and gaining knowledge about the

¹Pronounced as 'ge-je-kondoo', literally meaning 'built overnight', the typical informal settlement in Turkey

² 'Riskli Alanı' in Turkish

response of the residents of the informal neighborhoods to those developments led to the answer of the question of the research.

1.3.5 Conducting the research

The question of the research is a 'How' question. It aims at exploring the possible ways of realization of participatory and comprehensive urban regeneration policies within structures which are not laid out for this type of policies. In other words, the research searches the possible paths in which the participatory regeneration policies can be practiced within the entities which lack the basics of a democratic structure.

To find the answer to the 'How' question, the case study research is conducted. The main tool of implementing the case study research was interviews. I decided that in each of the cases the interviews should reveal;

- a. the structure of decision making and decision taking in the city,
- b. the relationship between the city managers and urban planners at one hand and the people in the neighbourhoods at the other hand,
- c. the role of the people –if any- in the entire policy of urban regeneration,
- d. The experiences of participation that each body had witnessed or had gone through.

In doing so, three groups were interviewed;

- a. The managers, the local government officials, urban planners and academics;
- b. The activists, community leaders and active members of associations and organizations,
- c. The people living in the neighbourhoods.

With the above-mentioned groups three types of interviews were conducted; structured, semi-structured and observation- respectively. In other words, the more formal was the interviewee, the more structured and formal was the interview. With the latter group (the people living in the neighbourhoods), observation, chats, small or random talks were the main tool. Still, even with this group, specific questions on age, income, number of the family members, being a tenant or house-owner, the tenure status, the time he/she has arrived in the neighbourhood were asked.

In Istanbul and in 2014, I conducted 15 interviews with 12 people¹. With regard to the activities in the neighbourhood I acted as a non-participant observant. In case of Tehran, the information and data were updated in Jul. 2015 including 9 more interviews.

¹ Three of the interviewees had vast information on several topics; therefore, I interviewed each of them twice. For instance, in one case I asked the interviewee about the organizing and mobilizing activities and in the 2nd interview I asked him/her about his/her own life experience in the neighbourhood.

1.4 Scope of the research

This research aims at exploring the path that the residents of the urban decayed areas proceed to defy their exclusion from the structure of urban policy. In other words, in reading the response of these people to the top-down urban plans, this research attempts to elicit lessons from the interactions between the 'top' and the 'bottom' in order to find solutions to the similar situations namely the problem of urban informality and urban decay within the pretexts of rigid top-down structures of urban policy and urban regeneration.

1.5 Limitation of the research

The organization and mobilization of the people of the researched case in Istanbul is incompletely explored as the constructive assistance of the NGO helping the residents is not discussed and written about. This NGO which comprises urban activists and academics and other groups of civil society has been helping the residents all through their struggle from the beginning to where it is standing now. Despite this fact, covering the activities of this NGO and the interactions of it with the residents of the researched case as well as other informal neighbourhoods of Istanbul is too voluminous to fit into this very research.

1.6 Outlines of the research

This research consists of five chapters. It begins with Chapter 1- the Introduction and follows to Chapter 2- The Theoretical Framework. Since the research includes the overlap of four realms of 'Urban Informality', 'Urban Regeneration', 'Participation' and 'Rights', this chapter firstly clarifies the meaning of the term 'Urban Informality' and results that the phenomenon is a 'problem' not an 'opportunity of entrepreneurship'. Afterwards, the chapter goes forward to do a short review of 'Urban Regeneration' policies as the principal solution to the problem of urban informality. The 'Regeneration' in this part is discussed to distinct it from market-oriented and physical renewal as well as gentrification and the so-called solutions which geographically move the problem instead of solving it. The same attempt is conducted for the term 'Participation'. Through overview of different experiences of participation in the world plus scrutiny of the literature on the subject, at the outset of the literature review, the study crystallizes the definition of the term. The sub-chapter about Participation is relying heavily on the definition that Sherry Arnstein gave about the term. After illuminating over these three pillars of the research, Chapter 2 finalizes with the discourse of 'Rights' which is necessary to discuss since the problem of urban informality specifically with regard to the case in Istanbul is profoundly related to the issue of 'Rights'.

In chapters 3 and 4, the two case studies of Tehran and Istanbul are written about in deliberate details. The two neighbourhoods selected as the case studies in these two cities are both of informal/decayed areas of these metropolitans. The one in Tehran is officially recognized as 'degenerated neighbourhood' by the local government and the second one in Istanbul is an informal

settlement- a typical *gecekondu*. Although having their share of differences, these two cases share one common feature- both face a rigid top-down system of urban management. This top-down structure is acting in most part indifferent to the problem of urban decay in the case of Tehran, and in the case of Istanbul performs as an adversary. The important point to consider is that the dissertation pays special attention to the urban planning side of the literature and tries to distance itself from economic or political readings of the problem area.

Chapter 5 includes both the Discussion and the Conclusion. Divided into three parts, in the first part (I) the problem of research is elaborated on by putting the two cases of the study in comparison with each other. Then in part II, the cases are discussed with regard to the reviewed discourses. Part III (conclusion) is actually the continuation of the previous parts and is relied specifically over the reading of the experience of the case in Istanbul and the lessons which can be learned from it for the similar environments in the Middle East or countries with a rigid top down structure of urban management and urban regeneration policy.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Introduction	Theoretical Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discourse of Urban Informality 2. Discourse of Urban Regeneration 3. Discourse of Participation 4. Discourse of Rights 	Case Study I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Istanbul 2. <i>Derbent</i> 	Case Study II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tehran 2. <i>Farahzad</i> 	Discussion & Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Part I 2. Part II 3. Conclusion (Part III)
Table 1-Structure of the dissertation				
Source: Design of Mahfarid Mansoorian (Hereafter, MMansoorian)				

1.7 Concise summary of the research

The primary idea of the research emerged in the Iranian case, *Farahzad*. This decayed neighbourhood in north western corner of Region 2 of Tehran Municipality faced problems of informality and physical decay as well as socioeconomic degradation. In 2009¹, following a decision made by one specific department in Tehran Municipality², the project of Facilitation of Regeneration initiated in *Farahzad*. From the outset, it was clear that lack of participation of the residents in the initial urban plan and the entire process of decision making and decision taking was of the major source problems. Although, there was a will within Tehran Municipality to follow a more participatory encounter to the problem of urban decay and informality, the entire structure of Tehran Municipality in particular and urban management in general was not devised to room the participation of the residents.

The question emerging from the case in Tehran was that how within the top-down structure of the urban management the voice of the people could be heard. In general, how the interests of the people could be integrated into the urban policies when the structure of urban policy lacks the basics of a democratic relationship between the management who makes the policies at one side and the people who are impacted by those policies at the other side? Furthermore, when there is a consensus among many academicians and professionals over the necessity of participation of the people as the core stone of urban policies, how that objective could be materialized within the systems which are principally alien to the concept of participation? Still in Iran, the top-down structure of urban management is one side of the reality.

To construct a comprehensive and thorough picture of urban informality and degradation in Iran, also the element of pro-poor paradigm of the system should be taken into consideration as a significant playing factor. Indeed, this paradigm is basically another side of the relationship between the 'top' and the 'bottom' in Iran. The Revolution 1979 and its claims of egalitarianism are partly reflected in the constitution of the country and urban laws. These claims are also strongly engraved in the mind-set and expectations of the urban poor. In such a condition, although the urban management does not follow a general participatory policy with regard to urban issues in general and the problem of urban informality and decay in particular, it does not and cannot follow the policies of eradication of the informal neighborhoods. The above mentioned opposing factors i.e. top down structure of urban management and the dominant pro-poor paradigm have contributed to the current situation of urban informal and decayed areas. In such a situation the condition of the informal neighborhood does not alter- neither positively nor negatively. Consequently, as there seems to be no feasible solution to the problems of urban decay, in the course of the time the dilemma is deepened, widened and worsened.

¹ The Facilitation Office of *Farahzad* was opened in 2010.

² Tehran Urban Regeneration Organization

In Turkey, the neo-liberal urban policies have been in action since 1980s and have been intensified since 2002 and gain of the power by AKP¹. Despite Iran, in Turkey reorganizing the laws and restructuring the Turkish Mass Housing Company (TOKI), made it possible for the urban managers to put the top down policies of bulldozing the informal neighborhoods in action and substitute them with high end facilities e.g. luxury housing, five star hotels and shopping malls.

Since 2012, *Derbent* the case study in Istanbul faced the same threat as many of the other *gecekondu* neighborhoods in the city- being bulldozed and flattened and substituted by luxury facilities. What made *Derbent* unique was that for the first time the resistance against the threat of urban transformation plans was successfully organized through the corridors of the courts which could halt the plans for eradication of the neighbourhood. Indeed, the question of the research which emerged in the case study in Tehran was answered in Istanbul as the people in *Derbent* neighbourhood who had organized themselves in a neighbourhood cooperative used the legal and formal path to put forward their legitimate yet 'illegal'² claim of appropriating the land ownership.

By studying the similarities and dissimilarities of the urban issues of Iran and Turkey as two neighboring countries in general, and the urban informal neighborhoods in two metropolitan areas of them in particular, this dissertation has been aiming at exploring the paths which could contribute to the work of professionals as well as policy makers and practitioners who deal with the problems and dilemmas of urban informality and urban decay.

¹ The Turkish equivalent of Justice and Development Party (in Turkish: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*)

² 'Illegal' as the formal ownership of the land which the neighbourhood is built over does not belong to the residents of *Derbent* but to the city of Istanbul and CCIA Cooperative.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

From all the extensive literature produced and the sizable number of researches conducted about urban poverty, urban informality, urban regeneration and participation and the notion of right, this chapter attempts to follow a path through to illustrate how these issues interconnect and interrelate.

This chapter begins with the literature which defines the urban informality as a bold phenomenon in the urban areas of global south as well as in the research areas. Then, it pictures the phenomenon in the cities of Tehran and Istanbul as the two case studies of this research. Further on and after depicting the current situation in the two cities regarding the urban informality, it reveals the urgency of taking action to address the problems of informality and all the phenomena related to it i.e. poverty, socioeconomic problems, physical deterioration and so on. Later, the chapter briefly goes through experiences of urban regeneration in the world as a solution to the complex and complicated problems originating from informality and urban decay. By explaining the excerpts of the experiences of urban regeneration from physical oriented measures and slum cleansing evolving to integral and comprehensive urban regeneration policies, the chapter continues to reach to the participatory urban regeneration necessitating the presence of residences of degenerated areas in the entire process of urban regeneration. At this point, the theory of public participation of Sherry Arnstein is elaborated to define which type of participation this research is considering. The notion of participation brings up the relationship between the state and the civil society. The next parts of the chapter are dedicated to this issue and later on it reviews the relationship between the states of Turkey and Iran and their citizens. Finally, the chapter ends discussing about right-based and collaborative-based approaches to make the basis for the discussion and conclusion chapters to reveal and explain where the researched neighborhoods in Istanbul and Tehran are standing and how the struggle of the case in Istanbul can be framed and comprehended.

2.2 The discourse of urban informality

A long way has been walked since 1960s and the time before when the leading understanding about the informals was considering them as 'margins' (Perlman, 2005, p.124) of the society who acted as 'cancerous sores on the beautiful body of the cities'(Perlman, 1980, p. 212). Janice Perlman was probably the first scholar who gave a different view on the issue countering the idea that the 'squatter communities were populated by those who were doomed by their laziness and poverty' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004, p. 18). Studying the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, she showed that the squatters 'were socially well-organized, culturally optimistic, and economically hard working'. Through her research and work among the residents of *favelas* of Rio, she depicted the residents as those 'aspired to better life' who had 'patriotic values'. According to her, the persistence of the 'myth of marginality' was primarily to class bias (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004, p. 120).

The discussion about urban informality (without using the term) can be traced back to there searches about movement of labor from the rural areas to the cities in 1950s and 1960s. But the term 'informal sector' initially was used by Keith Hart and ILO both in early 1970s. Discussing about the type of the work which is not registered and does not follow formal contracts, Hart made a clear distinction between formal and informal sectors (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004). He wrote about Accra workers in Ghana who were not 'unemployed' but were definitely working casually and for erratic and generally low turns (Hart, 1973). He explained that the 'formal' jobs and employment comprised of economic activities within law and regulations when 'informal' employment 'lay beyond the scope of regulations'. What specifically Hart was mentioning as urban informality was majorly the economic activities in which the urban poor succumb in waged jobs without formal contracts (Hart, 1973). In the same manner, ILO was another organization which made a distinction between formal and informal jobs (Sabot, 1973). According to both Hart and ILO, the term 'informality' was defined as small self-employment businesses which either were the main source of income or as a complementary wage earning in the formal sector. This kind of activity neither acquiesced in the laws and regulations nor they paid taxes and at the same time were not supported by the laws and regulations. ILO also defined the informality as an attempt to provide subsistence (International Labor Office, 1972) .These jobs which encompass a sizable number of trades e.g. shoe shining, vending, porting, street jobs and alike, currently comprise a stark part of the economy of developing countries.

For some time the debate over the informality subsided but again after the economic crises in the new millennium, the debates over the phenomenon reemerged giving a new life to the scholarly researches about it. Of the outstanding works was Mike Davis's infamous work- 'planet of slums'. In an article with the same title (Davis, 2003) he begins with striking pictures of slums in Lagos, Jakarta and Lima and notifies that for the first time in history of humankind the urban population in the developing countries has exceeded the rural population. The same striking are the figures that he suggests:

In 1950, there were 86 cities in the world with a population over one million; today there are 400, and by 2015, there will be at least 550. Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950 and are currently growing by a million babies and migrants each week. The present urban population (3.2 billion) is larger than the total population of the world in 1960. The global country side, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population (3.2 billion) and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050 (Davis, 2007, p. 1).

Of this boom in urban population -he states, ninety-five per cent will occur in the urban areas of developing countries, 'whose population will double to nearly 4 billion over the next generation' (Davis, 2003, p.12).

For the question on how the slums are formed and continue to exist in developing countries, Davis mentions reasons such as 'neglecting the most important land-use issues, super-urbanization and informal settlement, including sprawl, environmental degradation, and urban hazards'(Davis, 2003, p.9). While mentioning the rural to urban migration as one of the other reasons of formation of slums, he complains about 'the legacy of a global political conjuncture -the worldwide debt crisis of the late 1970s and the subsequent IMF-led restructuring of Third World economies in the 1980s' (Roy, 2012, p.8).

In sharp contrast to Davis's work and views who borrows Charles Dickens' heart-rending works to picture the contemporary slums, there is De Soto who looks at the informality as a positive phenomenon.

When Davis' picture of the slums and urban informality is dark and throbbing, there is De Soto at the opposite side who 'celebrates' the urban informality and calls the informals as 'heroic entrepreneurs' and equals the informality with entrepreneurship. Based on the work of him and his colleagues who 'closed their books and opened their eyes' -as they put it- walking through the streets of 'developing countries and former communist nations' (De Soto, 2003, p. 48), he notifies that there is a tremendous amount of wealth piled up in developing countries which can take them to a 'successful capitalism'(Bromley, 2004, p. 272).

De Soto's works as well as his views on urban informality are 'messages of hope' suggesting ways for all the poor nations of the world from global south to the former socialist countries to 'soar into the wealth' (Bromley, 2004, p. 278).In his praise for informal sector as an 'invisible revolution', he considers the informals as grassroots uprising against the bureaucracy of the state planning.

De Soto categorizes the activities and properties into three major groups; legal, extra-legal and illegal which when translated into plain English mean formal, informal and criminal. To enlighten us on what he means by this classification, De Soto explains that although squatting is illegal (because it is established on a land without proper tenure) it can be justified because it is used by

some people to live on it. Or if a vendor is acting illegally (because he is working without the required permissions), it is defensible because he is working to make a living. In his words, these activities have 'legal end' but 'illegal means'. He argues that since the cause for this 'illegality' and the source of all these dualities is the unjust laws and unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, the solution for solving the problems of illegality and informality is 'thorough legalization and tilting the real property' (Bromley, 2004, p. 276).

For the idea of turning every individual living in informality to a small capitalist as De Soto wishes, it seems Alvater (Alvater, 2005, p. 17) is rightful to mention that not everybody can turn into one. Alvater calls De Soto's views 'simplistic and even dangerous':

Men are not by birth entrepreneurs. Moreover, it is socially impossible for everyone to become a capitalist since some must remain workers to be hired by capitalists. Whether credit is useful for the new entrepreneurs depends on the interest rate and the overall debt service to be paid. Last but not least, in modern societies most property is already distributed so that one has to deal with competing property rights. The case presented by De Soto as a positive example is the colonization of the 'wild West' in North America during the nineteenth century and the simple distribution of property rights which transformed illegal squatters into honorable landowners. But De Soto forgets the violence involved and the eradication of great parts of the indigenous population.

The basic critique to what De Soto recommends is that the core stone of his argument is primarily based on a thick line of distinction he draws between formality and informality when in reality as many scholars argue is not simple and plain (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004; Etzold et al., 2009; Roy, 2012, 2005). Quite oppositely, these two notions of informality and formality are 'interwoven into each other when neither is the domain of the rich or the poor' (Bromley, 2004, p. 275).

Maybe even more problematic base of De Soto's doctrine is that he does not recognize any role for the divide of the rich and poor in global context and puts the blame not on systems but on some 'stubborn vested interest groups who do not let the mass people to pull themselves up'. That is why he repeatedly recommends that individualism, private property and entrepreneurship are the means to reach this noble cause (Bromley, 2004).

2.2.1 Widening the debate over informality

Currently, the scholarly debates over informality have gained yet another perspective which opposes the clear cut dichotomy between formality and informality. They use the term urban informality to indicate an organizing logics in contrast with the dichotomy of 'formal sector'/'informal sector' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004, p. 10). Also, they widen the term arguing that 'informality is not a separate sector but rather a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004, p. 9). In doing so, they mean that

informality and formality do not have a precise line in between and in different situations and in different contexts they have a blurred, permeable and even flexible relationship, when each penetrates into the other and is integrated into the other.

Besides, Roy and AlSayyad insist on the reality that currently in the world the informality is not just the domain of the poor. In other words, although most of the time poverty and informality go hand in hand, they discuss that in developing countries, not only for the poor but also for the middle class and even the rich the informality is important (AlSayyad and Roy, 2004). They discuss that many times informality acts as a ‘complex continuum of legality and illegality’ beginning with formation of squatter settlements through invasion of land and setting up the self-help housing. But the domain of informality does not end up there. They argue that inside the formal and legal ownership of land there are informal subdivisions (high-end informality) which violate the land-use regulations.

That is not just Roy and AlSayyad who believe in the complexity of the relationship between informality and formality; there are other scholars who contribute to the idea. For instance, Yiftakhel and Yakobi add the parameter of ‘ethnocracy’ (Yiftachel and Yakobi, 2004, p. 209) to the other producing factor of informality i.e. capital accumulation. Moreover, there are Benjamin Etzold (Etzold et al., 2009) who by their research on mechanisms of rice distribution in Dhaka emphasize on the complexity of the relationship between informality and formality.

Informality from ‘a sector’ to a ‘way’ and a ‘mode’ of life

Putting the simplicity of the informality as a sector aside, there are discourses which consider the informality as a more comprehensive paradigm. Among them it is AlSayyad who considers it as ‘a way of life’ (AlSayyad, 2004, p.7). Indeed, the same way Wirth defined urbanism as a way of life, AlSayyad considers the ‘informality as a way life’ and relates all three perspectives of Wirth’s definition of the city to the phenomenon of urban informality:

One of Wirth’s seminal contributions was to emphasize that urbanism as a way of life may be approached from three interrelated perspectives: the physical structure, comprising a population base; a system of social organization, involving a characteristic social structure and related patterns of social relationships; and a set of attitudes and ideas of individuals or groups engaged in or operating under forms of collective behavior and/or social control...all three of these aspects remain relevant in seeking to understand the meaning and practice of urban “informality.”

What does it mean when AlSayyad calls the urban informality as a ‘new way of life’? He relates the phenomenon of urban informality just within the context of globalization and liberalization.

According to him, the structural adjustment which was supposed to be the market utopia, instead ‘has left entire

regions of the world at the mercy of the most vicious of fears and hatreds, reinforcing rather than challenging authoritarian, fascist, and fundamentalist regimes'. He adds that the same way that the discourse on urban is anchored to the discourse of modernity, the discourse of urban informality should be anchored to the structure of liberalization (AlSayyad, 2004, p. 27). As a result, he describes:

Despite the Internet and the spread of information technology, patterns of urban behavior and exchange at the beginning of the twenty-first century in many ways resemble those common during the Middle Ages. Such a mode of urbanism is made of segregated enclaves, and is dominated by militarization, religious ideologies, and the maintenance of political structures that govern through patronage, division, and economic oppression.

The other scholar pursuing the informality as a complex paradigm is A. Roy. She calls informality as a 'mode' (Roy, 2005, p. 147) of urbanization in contrast with the past perceptions which related the informality to poor squatter settlements. Roy uses the term 'informality from above'. When the terms such as urban informality, urban poverty, urban marginals and urban disenfranchised are used interchangeably (AlSayyad, 2004), Roy explains that informality is a phenomenon more than the presumed act of urban poor or migrants who migrate to the city for sake of finding better jobs and life and live in the fringe of the cities usually in dire and unfavorable condition (Roy, 2009).

'Informality from above' vs. 'informality from bottom'

Urban informality is a constituent of what Roy calls the 'idiom of urbanization' (Roy, 2009, p. 76) meaning something which is peculiar and particular to the Indian political economy and yet can be detected in many other contexts and geographies. Roy argues that in these geographies informality is a key feature of this idiom when planning proceeds through systems of 'deregulation, unmapping, and exceptionalism' (Roy, 2009, p. 86). She explains that these systems to be 'neither anomalous nor irrational'; rather they embody a distinctive form of rationality that underwrites a frontier of metropolitan expansion. She concludes that in such conditions, 'planning cannot 'solve' this crisis for planning is implicated in the very production of this crisis' (Roy, 2009, p. 86).

2.2.2 Urban informality in Istanbul

Urban informality in Istanbul partly represents itself in informal neighbourhoods (known as *gecekondus*) which have been in the city since –at least- 1950s. From then on, informal settlements have been a crucial and bold part of urban areas of the city. They are houses or settlements literally defined as 'informal', sometimes even 'illegal'. The informality or illegality of these settlements is because; a) they are constructed on state land or the private land of someone beside the house owner, b) they are constructed without observing laws, regulations, codes and permissions.

Generally speaking, Istanbul went through major population changes because of the rapid urbanization and the rural-to-urban migration (Erman, 1997) in different periods of her history. As the result, sizable number of the population was pushed to Istanbul as one of the major sources of employment and promises of better life. These people who came to Istanbul to seek for jobs ended up in informal settlements erected in the fringes of the city and quite close to the work places.

Gecekondu means 'settled over a night' and they literally are settlements built up during one night time mostly over the public land. Since the urbanization in Turkey had not planned for the shelter of the migrant labor force, erection of the *gecekondus* was practically a win-win solution both for the officials and the migrants; the migrants could found a shelter and the officials could shrug off the housing costs of urbanization (Esen, 2009).

The reaction of the state toward the migrants and *gecekondu* neighbourhoods has been fluctuating since the beginning. At some periods, *gecekondus* were officially accepted as a solution to the housing problem of the new migrants (Esen, 2009) and the authorities agreed to provide infrastructure and amenities, municipal services and public parts for them (Keyder, 2009). As the result of all the developments as such, gradually the permits were obtained and shacks were turned into brick and mortar apartments (Keyder, 2009) when from time to time they were bulldozed to make the way for affluent gated communities. Furthermore, at the time of elections, the promises of provision of amenities and infrastructure as well as issuance of tenure have been tools for politicians to gain votes.

Due to a combination of populist politics, amnesty laws and incomplete or complete provision of amenities and infrastructure for some of these settlements by the state during the time, the illegality of many of these neighbourhoods can be questioned (Demirtas-Milz, 2013). In reality, the unclear status of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods can work in favor of the residents because the ambiguous situation of these neighbourhoods makes a proper bed for bargaining between the residents of these neighbourhoods and the authorities.

Illegality within the governance system

Similar to what Roy suggests about the informality within above, Demirtas-Milz shows in her research about *Kadifekale* neighbourhood in Izmir (Demirtas-Milz, 2013) that beside the phenomenon of informality in the form of informal neighbourhood (which will be discussed elaborately in the chapter 3), there is another kind of informality which is imposed by the state especially during the periods of populist concern i.e. at the time of elections. During these times, the candidates try to attract the votes of the residents in favor of themselves by promises of legalizing their 'illegal' or 'informal' settlements i.e. issuing deed for some, postponement or ignoring the demolition orders for others or providing amenities for the settlements without legal status or even through practicing informal means of bribery. One may conclude here that when the act of land

invasion might be considered as an informal proceeding by the migrants to find a shelter for them, the tolerance of the authorities toward these invasions has been another side of the informality which is practiced by the state and not by the people.

The striking point that Demirtas-Milz (Demirtas-Milz, 2013) reveals is that till the 1980s, these policies and practices could work to the favor of the residents and 'ease their survival in the city', but within the neo-liberal turn in the country after 1980s and specifically after the gain of power by AKP, the circumstances have gone toward a negative direction if the interests of the residents are considered. As Demirtas reveals in her research, the neo-liberal policies embedded in urban transformation plans (*Kentsel Dönüşüm*) specifically are targeting the life of the poorest of the residents who merely can survive with the help of the network they have formed through the years in their neighbourhoods. In summary, the informal practices of the state which was in favor of residents of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods before 1980s, has changed to policies and projects which act against the dwellers of these neighbourhoods.

Also similar to the concept of Roy about the type of informality which is employed by the state (Roy, 2012, 2005), Demirtas discusses about the informality that the Turkish state has been manipulating to deal with the *gecekondu* residents. In this case, not only the Turkish state has been using the informality of the residents of *gecekondus* to ease dealing with them, but also it is engaged in informal practices to pave the way for quick implementation of urban transformation plans.

Of the informal measures of the state is, for example, when they want to evaluate the value of the properties of informal residents- they suggest different irregular evaluations. The different evaluation not only discriminates some residents against others but also it manipulates the 'divide and rule!' trick to fragment the possible solidarity and collective action of them (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010).

There are different elements which contribute to the manipulation of the government from informality. For instance, ambiguity of the law and regulations is one of the elements contributing to the economic loss of the people when encountered with urban transformation plans proposed by the municipality or the state. Lack of knowledge of the residents over these laws, adds to the loss. Besides, when the people do not act collectively they are left alone and unarmed before the law as well as the state and lose a considerable amount of money because simply the lack of collective action easily bears decrease of bargaining power. In this case, the outcome of the bargaining and the entire process of evaluating the property of the residents is left to the links they have with different elements inside the system and clientelistic ties.

As the reasons for economic informality in Istanbul, Çarkoğlu and Eder who have studied the reasons of formation of informality argue that 'the degree of economic vulnerability is one of the

most important in capturing why and how individuals adopt informal practices' and that 'as degree of economic vulnerability increases so does degree of informality' (Çarkoğlu and Eder, 2006, p. 1).

2.2.3 Urban informality in Tehran

Like many countries of global south, the informality at the side of the people in Iran began in 1960s when waves of migrants rushed to Tehran to seek job and better opportunities of life. Providing the labor forces for newly established assembling industries while there were no policies, plans or system of support by the state to help them finding a shelter, the migrants filled the gap for housing by their own hands and their small incomes. By congregation of the simple shacks and tin or carton covered huts, the shanty towns and informal settlements were established. At the beginning, the government closed its eyes on their 'illegal' action of land grabbing and constructing shelters without gaining the formal permissions.

Urban informality in Tehran after the Revolution 1979

One of the first impacts of the Revolution over the lives of thousands of people living in shanty towns was their chance to 'creep' into the city and its spatial fabric (A. Bayat, 1994; Asef Bayat, 1994; Bayat, 2010a). The migrants began establishing their settlements firstly by erecting a mosque to stop demolition of the settlement (Piran, 2015). The same they had done before the Revolution when they put national flag and a photo of Shah over their shanties to stop the bulldozers (Saazmaan-e Cherik-haaye fadaiy-e khalq-e Iran, 1979).

Many of those towns formerly considered as 'outside of the boundaries of the city' - *khaarej az mahdude-* before the Revolution, were integrated into the city by law defining new limits for the city. These laws enlarged the city from 250,000 square kilometers in 1979 to 500'000 square kilometers and later to 760,000 in 2014. Also, in the turbulent days of 1979, many of the residents of these towns found an opportunity to occupy and takeover new pieces of lands inside the city and even in the north of Tehran namely the upper class area. A number of these lands were public lands and some belonged to individuals. As a result, after the Revolution two major incidents occurred in the lives of disenfranchised; some were integrated into the city and became 'legal' and some formed new patches of informal life inside the city (Bayat, 2010a).

The people living in these towns were not just the Iranian poor coming from cities to capital city for opportunities of work and better life; there were also other people who fled the war to save their lives. After the war with Iraq (1980-1988), about 2.5 millions emigrants from war stricken areas of the country joined the people living in degenerated areas (Bayat, 2010a) and took shelter there. Also, the civil war in Afghanistan pushed hundreds of thousands of Afghan immigrants to these neighbourhoods and increased their population drastically. The number of the Afghan refugees mostly living illegally in Iran is said to mount to three million (Shafaf News, 2012) although the exact number is unknown due to lack of formal registration of them. According to an

UNHCR report, in 2011, the registered and 'legal' refugees were about 840 thousands (UNHCR, 2014). The informal status of many of these refugees fit into the overall informality and degenerated areas of the capital city where they could find a shelter in.

'Reign of *mustaz'afeen*', the egalitarian paradigm of Revolution and housing policies

The government coming to power after the Revolution 1979 claimed to follow an egalitarian trajectory and called for the rule of country by the disenfranchised- so called '*mustaz'afeen*'. The reflection of this reality with regard to housing for the poor was firstly in Constitution of the country ratified a few months after the triumph of the Revolution in which the responsibility of provision of housing for the citizens was put over the state. Along with that, in April 1980, the establishment of 'Foundation of Housing' was ordered by the then supreme leader of the country. Two years later, in 1982, the 'Law for Urban Land' was ratified in which the private ownership of urban land was limited by 1000 square meters (Athari, 2005). According to the same law, the then Revolutionary Council¹ took the responsibility of distribution of land among the applicants.

The government not only distributed cheap urban lands among those in need of shelter, but also eased provision of housing by selling low price building materials to those who were building one for their own. Again, at the same time, the Revolutionary Council ordered for 20% decrease of rent prices all over the country (Athari, 2005).

The surprising reality is that although the country was inflicted by the war at that time, the housing parameters showed a positive development. For instance, the housing production increased by 4.7% exceeding the population boom in those years (3.7% annually in 1980s). Also, the percentage of sub-standard housing (slums, shanty towns, etc) decreased from the existing 2.5% to 0.93% of the entire volume of housing units (Yazdani and Athari, 2008).

During the same time, the housing cooperatives boosted all over the country. The cooperatives could decrease the acuteness of housing problem to some extent, but since the precondition of being a member of these cooperatives was having a formal job in a relatively big workplace², the poorest applicants of housing in informal sector, were omitted from the supports allocated to these cooperatives by the government. Besides, the formal expansion of the cities was one of the side results of these policies. As a matter of fact, just close to these expanded urban borderlines, many informal settlements were established.

¹ An interim council running the country right after Feb 1980 and before official inauguration of the national government

² According to the Iranian law; 'big workplace' is the workplace with more than 10 employees.

In the aftermath of Iran-Iraq war (from 1988 on) the ‘Construction Government’ (1990-1998) unleashed the housing market, began wide spreading privatization, outsourced the municipalities and ordered for adopting the policies of ‘self-sufficiency’ of the cities. It meant that the major cities of the country and their municipalities were cut off the national budget and had to provide necessary means to produce incomes for the cities. One of these policies taken those days was ‘density selling’ (Yazdani and Athari, 2008). Of the consequences of the policies of that period was fast increase of land and house price. To counter this increase, the Iranian Ministry of Urbanism and Housing took measures to construct houses for rent. But these top-down measures did not succeed and the expansion of informal settlements went further on (Athari, 2005).

In the third development plan (2005-2011), the confusion and irregularity in law making and housing planning was maintained. This time, despite the explicit order of previous laws, the Ministry of Urbanism and Housing was allowed to sell the urban land at a competitive price. As a result, the price of urban land was increased even further by 70%. This increase in the price of urban land along with the reality that the government had achieved merely 20% of its targets for implementing mass housing projects can depict the criticality of the housing condition in 1990s (Yazdani, 2004a).

Although the housing sector has been subsidized by the government since 1970s, it has not achieved its major objective -provision of shelter for those in need of one. In the first decade in the aftermath of 1979 Iranian Revolution with its egalitarian mottos, provision of housing for low income groups was followed as a major policy of the government. During this period the policies also were supporting the housing construction for the purpose of use. As the result, the people were encouraged to build a house for themselves. To implement this policy sizable amount of state lands were sold to the people in need of housing at very low prices. These policies also included provision of low price housing materials. During this period the government did not directly involve in construction.

Different reasons can be counted for the failure of subsidizing the housing sector. Actually, these reasons are the same as the reasons for the failure of social welfare system of the country; different executive elements plus diverse programs and plans for the support of the people and categorizing the people not based on their income but based on general and ambiguous terms e.g. ‘low income groups’ or ‘population groups in need’. As the result for instance and as a survey on 30 cases of low price allocated lands for land development plans in 1998 reveals (The Ministry of Urbanism, quoted by (Yazdani, 2004b)), solely 10% of the surveyed cases were owned by the low income groups.

The Iranian government followed the neo-liberal policies in urban governance after the Iran-Iraq war and as a result the economic adjustment and shrinkage of the state were of the policies it pursued. Accordingly, the municipalities were cut off from the national budget and were left to

produce their own income. To achieve that, the municipalities were officially allowed to sell density. It means that if for a specific land use, the urban plans allowed for an utmost five story building, the municipality could permit a higher building or even a skyscraper in exchange for money for the extra floors. In other words, the municipalities were officially allowed to violate the laws.

The interesting point is that although these policies were supposed to provide income for the municipalities, a study (Yazdani, 2004a) proves that the share of the municipalities in the income produced by selling density in 1992 has been merely 32% and it has decreased to 8.6% in 2002. In other words, selling the density has been mostly in favor of the real estate investors rather than the municipalities. As the same study suggests, this sizable amount of money which is channeled to the pockets of real estate investors has granted them a considerable economic and political power which practically does not allow the municipalities to revise their policy of selling density. Therefore, this policy is not only against the basic principles of democracy to give the higher income groups even a louder voice in decision making structure, but also it adds to the problem of housing since these investments mostly have been taken place in high end housing in the affluent north of Tehran and not in social housing or any type of housing for the medium or low income groups.

Facts and figures about current housing market in Iran¹

Yazdani illustrates the current situation of the housing market of the country as such (Yazdani, 2014):

'In the past, 60 out every 100 new families which stepped into the housing market (to rent or purchase a house) could afford purchasing one and the rest 40 families had to rent a place. But now the number of those who have to rent a place has increased to 65%. We warned the government of an upcoming housing crisis, because when the market is let free to determine the prices and there is no social security policies practiced to support the people, the people get hurt...The general outcome of this situation is that currently the number of those who own a house is decreasing. For instance in 2006, the ownership rate has been 71.5% in the country and now it has decreased to 66.6%. We have to consider that this decrease rate specifically has been higher among the low income groups.'

Explaining about the Housing Affordability² and defining the 5-10 years of waiting time for purchasing a housing unit as 'unfavorable' and more than 10 or 12 years as 'critical', he illustrates the picture about Iran indicating:

¹This segment (2.2.3.2.1) and the following one (2.2.3.2.2) draw heavily on an interview with Fardin Yazadni, the supervisor of National Comprehensive Housing Survey, on 'housing poverty index' (Yazdani, 2014).

² Average housing price divided by the annual household income

'When in the world the waiting time for purchasing a housing unit is 5 years, in 2006, in Iran the time has been 8 years. In 2013, it increased to 12 years. For the lowest deciles of income groups, this number is 32 years of waiting. The given numbers are rough calculations because they are based on the assumption that a person saves all her/his income to purchase a house. In reality, the people can save utmost one third of their income for purchasing a housing unit. For the lowest income groups, this fact increases the years that one should save the money to 96 years. This literally means that these families never can afford purchasing a housing unit if they are not supported by the government...if we add other factors such as crisis in our banking system and considerable budget deficit, we can find out how critical is the situation'.

In continuation, he defines the parameter of 'Housing Poverty' based on the rent affordability of a 60 square meter housing unit with basic standards of amenities and construction materials. The rent price of such a unit is the determining factor in explaining the Housing Poverty. According to him, all those who cannot afford renting such a housing unit are suffering from housing poverty. By including this factor, he depicts the current situation as such:

When we compare the rent of such a housing unit in 2006 and 2013, we see a 400% increase in rent price. And when we compare this number with average household income we can see that in 2006 about 24% of the people could not afford a basic housing unit when in 2013, it has increased to 33%. In other words, in 2013, at least 33% of the entire population has been suffering from housing poverty and have to move to informal settlements...When this number is compared with the number of vacant housing units in the country (1,200,000 units) one can get the whole picture.

In a nutshell, up to now, despite the clear and explicit text of law, the Iranian government has failed to; a) provide proper housing for the population in need, b) renovate the decayed urban areas. Recently and in reality, in both cases the situation has become more critical when compared to the first years of establishment of Islamic government. Briefly said, these failures and the subsequent current critical situation of housing, contribute to the deepening of the dilemma of informality in general and expansion and extension of the informal settlements in particular.

Housing and informal settlements in the Iranian urban laws

Beside the Constitution of the country which explicitly puts the responsibility of provision of housing for the population in need on the state (with a specific emphasize on low income groups), there are other articles in laws which address the problems of informal settlements in the country. Although these laws have not been passed by the parliament as the highest regulatory body and have been ratified by other parts of the administration, they are clear and explicit and are due entry into force.

For instance, different articles of municipality law indicate that ‘taking necessary measures to construct low cost housing for the destitute’ as well as ‘regeneration and essential renovation of the neighbourhoods and enhancing a balanced and harmonious development of the cities’ is of the responsibilities of the municipalities. To practice this responsibility, the law gives legal rights to the municipalities to ‘plan and practice other necessary measures’ for the purpose of renovation of decayed urban areas. According to the same laws, the municipality is allowed to establish necessary institutions to buy degenerated housing units in deteriorated areas and renovate them or sell them to market (Yazdani, 2014).

Establishing an administration within the government structure to address the issue of housing dates back to the time before Revolution 1979 when in 1975 the “the Organization of Social Security” was founded. One of the measures of this organization for instance, was establishing a mass housing project for the low income groups in south of Tehran (called *Vavan*) in the same year. But since the complicated problem of poverty and mass migration from villages and remote towns to Tehran was not addressed properly, in parallel to establishment of *Vavan*, *Shadi Shahr* (now; *Eslam Shahr*) the first informal settlement established after the Revolution with the population of 50,000, was formed (Yazdani, 2014).

2.2.4 Why urban informality is problematic?

The ambiguous and unsustainable condition of life is of the primary agonies of living in informality. Although many scholars oppose the interchangeable use of ‘informality’ and ‘poverty’, nobody denies that in many cases these two phenomena are totally overlapping each other. In other words, the people living in informality suffer from the situation of informality per se and similarly, the poverty which strikes the lives of them. In a nutshell, although the problems coming with and along urban informality are diverse and the features of the phenomenon vary from city to city, or place to place, it puts a sizable burden of diverse types of pressures over the shoulders of residents of these areas.

The unfavorable condition of life of millions in the developed and developing countries has been the core of many discussions among scholars as well as professionals. Although currently the informality and informal neighbourhoods do not merely room the low income groups and is extending to middle class in cities like Cairo or Mumbai, it seems that it is a common sense that nobody welcomes living in informality and such a dire condition if she/he has another option to select. That is why the phenomenon should be addressed and dealt with.

The informality as a socio economic and political phenomenon places itself in informal neighbourhoods. Without any exception, it can be claimed that a sizable number of these neighbourhoods suffer from deterioration and decay. Thus, the informality and informal urban

areas practically equal with physical deterioration, lack of necessary amenities and infrastructure, poor services as well as all sorts of socio economic complications. The problems within these areas are too big to be ignored and that is why the idea of 'renewal' and 'regeneration' emerges resulting to sizable piles of literature over the issue.

Despite the 'opportunities' of 'entrepreneurships' that some scholars like De Soto believe that the informality may produce, here in this research the informality is considered as a problematic phenomenon. The status of being informal bears different types of violence within itself, e.g. violence of poverty and unemployment, bureaucratic repression as well as stigmatization and discrimination. All these types of violence for their parts yield other problematic symptoms i.e. living in a dire condition of physical deterioration, un-sustainable and improper housing and social dilemmas e.g. child labor, drugs, prostitution, illegal activities, etc.

2.2.5 Summary of the discourse of urban informality

The definition of the term 'urban informality' has been changing through the years. The negative perception over the urban informals has been converted as well toward a positive picture about these people. This research takes the positive side of the definition about the informal people like what scholars like Perlman pictured- hard working and well-organized. Yet, despite this assenting illustration, the research does not consider the informality as an encouraging phenomenon like what De Soto believed in equaling it with entrepreneurship. In other words, this research looks upon informality as a 'problem' which should be addressed and dealt with.

This sub-chapter also discussed broadly about different debates over informality and took into consideration what scholars like AlSayyad, Roy and Demirtas-Milz consider as informality from the top. Still, although taking this different side of the discussion into consideration, what this research is following is concretely the more popular notion of informality discussing mostly the low income groups of people living and working in informality. The research specifically focuses on the issue of informality in physical space i.e. informal settlements and informal neighborhoods.

2.3 The discourse of urban regeneration

The first example of renewing the cities was probably Paris of 1853 in which Haussmann established a new way of urbanization. Harvey (Harvey, 2012) depicts the era by explaining that by rebuilding Paris he planned for absorbing huge quantities of labor as well as capital which by the help of the authoritarian suppression of Napoleon could establish the required social stabilization. The plans of Haussmann for Paris were ambitious and unprecedented in scale. He 'annexed the suburbs, and redesigned whole neighbourhoods rather than just bits and pieces of the urban fabric' (Harvey, 2012, p. 21). The Paris that he planned and re-made roomed a new urban life. It was the 'city of light' with beautiful promenades, wide boulevards and cafes alongside them illuminated

with glittering lamps and ‘nice’ environment for the bourgeois people to walk through and spend the leisure time.

The renewal of the city and turning it to a different identity in the USA occurred many years later in 1940s, but the Haussmannian spirit was quite in work when Robert Moses began to cut the New York Metropolitan region exactly the way that Haussmann did in mid 18th century. Again, to absorb the surplus capital, Moses constructed highways and established infrastructural transformations through suburbanization. What Moses did to New York was repeated all over the USA in major cities. This reorganizing the city also made grave changes in the life style of citizens. Harvey explains it as such (Harvey, 2012):

...a radical transformation in lifestyles [that] produced a whole new way of life in which new products- from suburban tract housing to refrigerators and air conditioners, as well as two cars in the driveway and an enormous increase in the consumption of oil-all played their part in the absorption of the surplus.

2.3.1 Urban regeneration, past and now

Although the socioeconomic condition and the history of development in developed countries as well as developing countries have major differences, in almost all of them three generations of urban regeneration policies can be recognized (Carmon, 1999):

The first generation, the era of the bulldozer and physical determinism and emphasis on the built environment and regeneration equaled physical renewal,

The second generation, the period of neighbourhood rehabilitation and a comprehensive approach emphasizing social problems;

And finally the third generation, the age of revitalization, and comprehensive socioeconomic strategies for the profound regeneration of the degenerated areas.

One of the earliest policy documents using the term ‘regeneration’ was a report prepared for Merseyside County Council in 1975. It also explained on how some urban areas begin to decay:

At times of decline or even low growth, market forces slacken and the least attractive areas (in terms of appearance, accessibility and other attributes) become under-populated and derelict. In such a situation of population decline there might come a point when market forces would commence the *regeneration* (authors’ italics) of areas of dereliction.

Experience in some of the older industrial American cities suggests that even assuming this would happen, the process would be extremely lengthy and carry in its wake a multitude of environmental, economic and social problems which would be unacceptable (Merseyside County Council quoted by (Chris Couch et al., 2011)).

The idea of urban regeneration came up when after the recession of 1970s, social, economic and environmental problems necessitated a more fundamental re-conceptualization of the problem. The researches and studies revealed that the spatial problems had to do with something more than locality and the special specification of the plighted area. And since the problems had its deep roots in wider national and international economy and unfair relationships based on them, it required a ‘new form of policy intervention in inner urban areas’ (Chris Couch et al., 2011, p. 3). And this ‘new form of policy’ means something beyond the traditional slum clearance, physical approaches and redevelopment.

The point to consider is that in several documents, the decayed areas of the cities were recognized as the areas in need of special attention, separate strategy and specific policies. For instance, subsequent UK Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 together with a series of other related policy changes gave local authorities the powers and resources necessary for this new approach: *‘urban regeneration’* (Chris Couch et al., 2011, p. 3).

Geographically discussing, currently in the countries of UK, France and Germany and despite the differences on urban regeneration policies, there are common bases which all three countries share: First of all, the policies agree on the fact that as the result of the regeneration plans no social groups should be excluded or marginalized from the mainstream of national, regional and city life. In Europe in general, the EU has recommended that in implementing and devising the urban policies of the member countries ‘special attention’ should be ‘paid to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole’ (EU, 2007, p. 1).

To the question of “What is the urban regeneration?” many different answers are given by scholars, professionals and policy makers, but there is a considerable consistency among these answers. Not so long ago, urban regeneration equaled entirely physical renewal and development of an urban area. It not only was the description of the term in North American and European cities, but also resonated with urban policies in almost all parts of the world as well (Chris Couch et al., 2011).

The urban regeneration policies generally are defined as policies which ‘bring back investment, employment and consumption and enhance the quality of life within an urban area’ (Couch, quoted by (Chris Couch et al., 2011, p. 3)), or ‘to enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas, and between different groups’ (DOE quoted by (Chris Couch et al., 2011) p. 3), to ‘concerted social, economic and physical action to help people in neighbourhoods experiencing multiple deprivation reverse decline and create sustainable communities (Brown, quoted by (Chris Couch et al., 2011) p. 4). Furthermore, the ideas indicating

that 'urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area' (Jon Ladd, quoted by (Chris Couch et al., 2011) p. 4).

Cautious urban regeneration¹- a Berliner experience of regeneration

As part of a construction exhibition in Berlin in 1984, a group of German urban planners developed a 'cautious' urban renewal and set 12 principles for it. Implemented in Kreuzberg neighbourhood of Berlin, the team selected a new way of regeneration instead of the previous method of physical and harsh type of renewal. This method has been praised since then and has been a lesson for many urban regeneration plans all over the world. The principles of the cautious urban regeneration emphasized on the involvement of the residents into the planning and defined the final plans as 'an agreement' between the inhabitants and the planners. It also insisted on the preservation of the original character of the neighbourhood. The principles of cautious urban regeneration also stressed on the gradual and step by step path of changes so that they caused the least number of demolitions (Karssenberg, 2007). Generally said, the cautious urban regeneration of Berlin Kreuzberg is of the experiences putting the human being and its needs as the major focal point of the urban policies in general and urban regeneration policies in particular.

Gentrification

Quite opposite to the comprehensive and integral urban policies such as cautious urban regeneration, the gentrification which some parts of big cities of the world experience is of the policies without any consideration of the interests of the original people. Now, the phenomenon is quite familiar in many of the cities of developed and developing countries and it is in no way confined to the western cities.

For the first time in recent history of the major cities, gentrification began by the measures of market and laissez-faire later evolving to the direct interventions of the state into the process. Hackworth and Smith argue that by the involvement of the state in gentrification process, the state not only does not take initiatives and measures to support the low income, but also benefits from gentrification by extracting more tax revenues out of redevelopment activities (Hackworth and Smith, 2001).

Beside Hackworth and Smith, several other scholars have studied the intervention of the state into the process of gentrification. For instance, in a research on two neighbourhoods of Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin and Harlem in New York, Bernt (Bernt, 2012) argues that in both cases the neighbourhood change was an outcome of changes in public policy. He explains that although the market was a pushing force for the changes, the bed for the involvement of the market was made by the help of

¹Behutsamen Stadterneuerung

the authorities. For instance, 'in the case of Harlem, the rise of African-American political power, a deregulation of credit markets, the emergence of a CDC¹model of urban renewal and entrepreneurial city politics helped channelizing the capital to Harlem'. And in the case of Prenzlauer Berg, 'the restitution of capitalist property supported by a broad array of subsidies (re-)established an investment opportunity where there was none before'.

Some scholars call gentrification a 'new urban colonialism' (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005, p. 1) referring to the privileging whites and their class-based identities which prefer specific parts of the city to live in. The other reason for calling the phenomenon as some type of 'colonialism' is its universalizing of certain forms of (de)regulation. These processes are all following market disciplines e.g. privatization of the housing markets.

As previously stated, the phenomenon not only is prevailing in wealthy western countries but also has been extended to other parts of the world with similar set of public administration. Also, like their identical middle class gentrifies, the one in the developing countries are of the elites, of the 'whiter' parts of the population who are supported by a domestic and local service plans, networks and possibilities exclusive to them.

2.3.2 Urban regeneration in developing countries- slum upgrading

There are numerous brochures, handbooks and guide books published by UN, World Bank and many international 'development agencies' about practices, steps and details of the strategy of 'slum upgrading' and measures of 'poverty reduction'. Slum upgrading and poverty reduction measures are supposed to be attempts to make a better environment for the slum dwellers. According to them, the 'upgrading' measures include provision of 'better services' to slums, 'financial aid' to the dwellers, sanitation helps for the dwellers which making improvements in the structure of local government as well as promoting 'participatory' measures at the side of the state (Imparato and Ruster, 2003).

These attempts which aim at betterment of the current situation of the slums to a more humane situation, do not target the cause of the problem and the structural complications. As their title reveals, their objective is 'upgrading' the current situation to a better condition. In that regard, it is worth to ask when the resources are claimed to be channeled to make improvement in the life condition of thousands of slum dwellers, how they are going to deal with the roots of the problem? In other words, how the unjust system which structurally produces the poverty and complicates it is going to be dealt with. When the root causes are not addressed, they continue producing the poverty and the resulting slums. Therefore, the right question to inquire about is primarily asking why slums establish and exist in the first place, and more generally, why poverty engenders, rather than how to beautify the poverty or 'upgrade' the slums.

¹Community Development Corporation

The current problem with many of the ‘renewal/regeneration’ plans is that instead of betterment of the situation for the citizens, they practically target the lower income groups in favor of affluent causing displacement and re-location. There is a general rule for these developments all over the world; the more un-democratic the system, the harsher the displacement. As Harvey reports, in China hundreds of thousands of people are being displaced to make way for the urban renewal plans in old Beijing (Harvey, 2007). In the US, municipalities are pushing the low income and even moderate income property owners out of their places to free the land for construction of high end housing and commercial developments. In Istanbul, a UN report doing a research on urban transformation plans suggests that huge number of people will be displaced due to these plans (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). In a nutshell, urban regeneration plans like other ingredients of urban policy re-emerges the question of ‘Commodification of everything’ (Harvey, 2007, p. 79) and if the urban policy should focus on the ‘exchange value’ of the housing and the city or should insist on the ‘use value’ of them. The market-oriented type of regeneration plans does not provide a sound and sustainable life for the ordinary citizens but make way for intensifying class gap and segregating and marginalizing a majority in the bottom in favor of a minority at the top. Urban transformation policies in Istanbul are of the clear evidences of such urban policies.

2.3.3 Urban regeneration policies in Istanbul

When many of the developed countries have walked a long path from physical oriented measures i.e. slum cleansing and bulldozing to a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which can lead to a sound and profound resolution of urban problems, in Istanbul the loudest sound being heard is the roaring noise and squeaks of the bulldozers of municipality of Istanbul leveling squatters’ houses and old cinemas as well as historic cafes.

Previously and right after the 1999 earthquake causing vast damages and human loss in Istanbul and neighboring cities, the existing policies and planning institutions were forced to change their trajectory towards neo-liberalism (Sengül, 2011). After gain of power in 2002, the AKP government inherited the neo-liberal policies from the previous governments and gave it a new thrust and momentum and practiced it full forcedly. As the result, the bulldozer type of urban regeneration policy or as the ruling AKP calls it, '*Kentsel Dönüşüm*' has been active ever since.

The AKP government is trying to turn Istanbul to a ‘world city’ because according to them, the city has a strong potential to become a major service and financial hub for the Middle East and even global economy. To turn the city to an attractive destination for global investors, different mega projects e.g. the third bridge over Bosphorus, the third airport in the coastal area of Black Sea and a ‘new Istanbul’ at the European side of the city, tens of shopping malls as well as luxury condos and tens of gated communities, brand shops and fancy restaurant and hotels have been or are planned

to be constructed (Gündoglu and Gough, 2013). The efforts of Turkey for accession to EU beginning in 2001 and assigning of Istanbul as the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2010, reveals the attempts of AKP to restructuring the economy and urban policies as an essential part of integrating the country into EU and global economy (Gündoglu and Gough, 2013).

***Gecekondus* as the main target of urban transformation plans**

The plain reason for conducting the urban transformation plans via bulldozing the squatter neighbourhoods, is that these lands are valuable and for the property-led urban transformation plans, they are the lands which should be dedicated to luxury commercial centers and fancy housing, shopping malls and places attractive to domestic and international elite. Simply said, these lands are too valuable to be occupied by the lower income groups. Therefore, eviction of the initial residents of these areas is a pivotal part of these plans.

The plans for restructuring the city and establishing a new order have different actors; the global investors are organized by the national government when the eviction and bulldozing of the squatter neighbourhoods is conducted by the local municipality. The final phase which is constructing the new luxury constructions to room in the affluent new-comers as well as the mass housing projects which room the evicted people is implemented by the Mass Housing Company, the infamous *TOKI*.

The urban transformation plans of AKP were planned to be implemented mostly in the *gecekondu* areas in the inner city and were supposed to beautify the city as a typical neo-liberal policy. The practical translation of these objectives was eviction of the residents of the *gecekondu* neighbourhood, displacing and re-locating them and finally slum cleansing.

As stated before, the main target of all these transformation plans have been and still are the low middle class or low income groups who are living in squatter settlements (*gecedkondu*)- the same areas which originally were on the peripheries of the city and now are integrated into the inner city as the result of sprawl of the city.

The evacuated people typically are pushed to the further and more distant peripheries of the city into the mass housing projects constructed by *TOKI*. In practice, these so-called 'affordable housing' projects put another major dilemma before the residents. The remote location of these mass housing projects far from the work places inside the city swallows a lot of time, energy as well as money from the residents to shuttle between the new home and the city. To add to complexity of the story, it should be considered that these extra 'expenditures' are concurrent with the pay back of the mortgages to *TOKI* which are usually more than what the family can afford.

When the displaced people are facing new pressures and hardships in their life, at the other side of the developments, the transformation projects and vast constructions all over the city as well as implementing the multibillion mega projects put a huge amount of interest into the bank account of a few. A recent research project called 'Projects of Dispossession' (Adanali, 2015) conducted by groups and individuals from artists, the media, journalist communities as well as citizens, activists and politicians, reveals that the same individuals who own and organize the urban transformation plans in Istanbul, are the same people who run the Turkish media, own the mines in Anatolian regions of Turkey and those who control the banks as well as the financial institutions of the country.

2.3.4 Urban regeneration policies in Tehran

According to the estimates, there are about 3268 hectares of deteriorated areas in urban regions in which 1,152,000 people live in 261,000 residential units (Pakseresht and Fazeli, 2011). Defining the criteria of Housing Poverty based on the rent affordability of a 60 square meter housing unit with basic standards of amenities and construction materials, the researches reveal that when for instance in 2006, about 24% of the entire population were suffering from housing poverty, in 2012 it increased to 33% (Yazdani, 2014).

Although different data and information are given by the officials about the magnitude of degradation of urban areas, along with the deepening of the problem of housing, it is rational to assume that the problem of urban decay has been intensified over the year. Moreover, regarding the economic poverty as one of the major sources of the problem, a steep decline in economic welfare of the people between 2005 and 2013 has contributed to the size of the dilemma. Specifically, in the second four years of this period, the intensification of economic sanctions by western countries against Iran added to the breadth and depth of the deterioration. Now, the quandary seems quite uncontrollable. These neighbourhoods with their crumbling houses and their poor inhabitants as well as their filthy gutters and unconscious drug addicts dozing in the broad daylight and worming on the street corners, are just a few hundred meters away from Tehran city hall. That is why the dilemma cannot be ignored anymore and the officials cannot keep a blind eye on it.

The degenerated neighbourhoods of Tehran not only face major problems inside, they export their problems to the other urban areas as well. Besides being a safe haven of all sorts of illegal activities, these areas send their kids to the streets of the city to beg and to work; to sell flowers and chewing gums on the crossroads or wipe the windshields of the cars in the traffic jams. These scenes are far from favorable and need to be rectified.

Beside the dire condition of many of the housing units in deteriorate areas of Tehran which are not standard and put the inhabitants in grim condition of living, the threat of the earthquake which

Tehran like many other Iranian cities is prone to, reveals the seriousness of the dilemma and the urgent need for sound and wise urban regeneration policies. According to the scientific estimations, the death toll of any earthquake in Tehran with an average magnitude would be tens of thousands (JICA, 2004).

Excluding a few cases of destruction of the shanty towns right after the 1979 Revolution and the short period of slum cleansing in 1990s, the dominant policy of urban regeneration in Iran has been ignoring the problem. In the cases of destruction of the shanty towns, those who were forced to abandon their homes moved to other areas alike and re-established their poor shelters in new locations (Bayat, 2010a). Although the discussions, news and views over the problem of degenerated areas never have been off the media and academia or official congregations, addressing the dilemma in a profound way has not been as a major policy.

Setting the problem of housing and degeneration in Tehran

The Iranian urban policy in general has not fit into the term success especially when the outcomes of the policies regarding the urban regeneration of deteriorated areas of the cities are considered. In recent years and following the major socioeconomic decline as the consequence of amalgamation of mismanagement and economic sanctions imposed by the West over the nuclear row, following the social direction in urban regeneration policies was practically halted and recently has turned back to the physical alternation. What currently can be considered as the major policy of the government toward problematic neighbourhoods of Iranian urban areas, is a mixture of 'not touching the beehive' and tolerance as well as taking some minor measures to involve the inhabitants into the process of regeneration.

Despite the profound socioeconomic, political and cultural differences with western countries, the policy of urban regeneration in Iran more or less has followed the same path. At the outset, the dominant policy was ignoring the dilemma- the government did not mention the degenerated areas in any of the official documents, urban plans or texts. Later on, the dominant policy turned to slum cleansing in 1970s and to a lesser extent in 1990s.

Since 2006 and re-establishment of Tehran Urban Regeneration Organization some steps were taken towards developing a participatory urban regeneration and promoting a participatory approach to designing and implementing regeneration projects in Tehran (Pakseresht and Fazeli, 2011)- at least the way that the managers and policy makers in this Organization percept the ideas of 'participation' and 'urban regeneration'. Within the new policy, the 'facilitation offices of urban regeneration' were established in more than 60 degenerated neighbourhoods. These offices were supposed to urge the residents of the neighbourhoods to step up and begin regeneration of their settlements with the help of the private sector and the government. After some years of try and

error and the modifications in the managerial board and policies, still the problem of degeneration threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of decayed areas.

2.3.5 Summary of discourse of urban regeneration

From the three generations of urban regeneration policies i.e. bulldozing, neighborhood rehabilitation and revitalization policies discussed above, the term 'urban regeneration' used in this sub-chapter refers to the third category. In other words, here in this dissertation the term 'urban regeneration' equals to comprehensive socioeconomic strategies of profound regeneration of degenerated areas of the cities. According to these policies, no social groups should be excluded or marginalized from the mainstream of national, regional and city life. These policies enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas, and between different groups of population. These policies comprise comprehensive and integrated vision and action which lead to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of a decayed urban area.

2.4 The discourse of participation

Participation is of the terms extensively written about. Still, it is so comprehensive it challenges any attempts to crystallize it. Since 1960s, the concept of participation has turned to a new orthodoxy and an attractive mantra for scholars, activists and governments. It seems that there are rarely fields of work or proficiency in which the term has not been applied to. For many, it is the final solution to almost all problems that we face in the world today. For some others, it is a horrifying picture giving life to bitter memories of endless talking and discussing and long hours of arguing and quarreling with a shapeless and nameless mass of illiterates. Just googling the term 'participation' reveals its hugeness- 82'100'000 hits on July 17, 2014 increasing to 273 million on May 18, 2015. It is necessary to seek the reasons why the idea of participation was engendered.

Suburbanization of the United States in 1960s engineered by Robert Moses was a revolution in infrastructure and life style as well. The vast and new scale of consumerism e.g. refrigerators, private cars which in turn manipulated the nature and the resources was a basic way to absorb the surplus in the years following WWII. But the suburbanization hollowed the inner cities and produced what now we know as 'urban crisis' of 1960s in the US when the country witnessed many revolts and protests (Harvey, 2012). Traditionalists found the solution in Jane Jacobs' prescription to counter brutality of modernism via establishing local neighbourhood development and historical preservation (Jacobs, 1992).

In its modern sense, participation was introduced into the encyclopedia of social sciences after protests of student movements of 1960s. Later, it contributed to the forming of the ideas of New Left Movement. The New Left Movement which tried to separate itself from the traditional Marxists, focused on issues not discussed before, namely gay rights, gender issues, racism, environment and general topics of alienation and anomie. The statement issued by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in Port Huron in 1962 is one of the significant documents of this movement. Calling themselves as middle class students, they began the Statement by expressing their concerns about

the world and human being and went on suggesting the 'participatory democracy' as an alternative and substitution for the order of the existing world. They demanded 'common participation' and a democratic system in which 'the people participated to share in determining the quality and direction of their lives'. In the Statement, they declared (Hayden and others, 1962, p. 3):

We see little reason why men cannot meet with increasing skill the complexities and responsibilities of their situation, if society is organized not for minority, but for majority, participation in decision-making.

In their 56 page statement, they used the term 'participation' several times ranging from 'participation in decision-making', 'democratic participation', 'participation in social affairs' to 'public participation', 'political participation', 'community decision-making and participation' and even to a more global and general sense of 'joint participation of all nations'. Although they tried to separate themselves from old school of Left and labor unionism, they did not miss to seek for economic justice and called for 'the economy and its major resources be open to democratic participation and subject to social regulations'.

To achieve such a justice and to fulfill their utopia which they elaborated on in details, they thought 'participation' could act as a panacea to all the problems of mankind. They even thought and wrote about 'worker participation in decision-making' and it seemingly was under influence of those students among the discussants of the Statement who were closer to the Marxist ideas. But still, their remedies for the problems discussed in-depth, was too general and from the outlook of a minority of the middle-class white elite.

The students wrote about the mankind as a whole and expressed their concerns about the world of their time, but they did it through the eyelet of their own class stance- the white middle class. Although the concerns and problems they expressed were general and it included the entire human being, it is doubtful to think that the solutions they suggested were useful for all the humankind especially for the marginalized disenfranchised i.e. the low income groups living in the degenerated urban areas which this research is about.

As said, Participation has its vast population of supporters. Still, it does not mean that even in academic texts it does not face opposition. For instance, in an article asking if public participation worth it, beside the advantages of the public participation, the authors enumerate the disadvantages of it as being costly, difficult to congregate the diffused views of the participants, the problem of complacency, lack of authority, selfishness of the participants, the problem of wrong decisions and the dilemma of representation (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). The gist of the entire discussion of their views is the ending sentence of the article- 'talk is not cheap- and may not even be effective' (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004, p. 63).

In their infamous book, Cooke and Kothari mention the participation as a 'new tyranny' and criticize the way the international agencies manipulate the idea of participation to gain the support of the locals for their invested projects and attain credibility for themselves (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). They believe that this kind of participation just is 'compatible with central planning' where there is no place for the voice of the people who are affected by those plans. Further on, they

discuss how the rhetoric of participation is distant from its real sense and how participation (as they believe) is ‘nowhere near the participatory, bottom-up, open process that it is commonly held to be’.

2.4.1 Ladder of citizen participation

Of the outstanding works about participation discussed widely since its publication, is Sherley Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” (Arnstein, 1969a). Since this article is one of the major theoretical bases of this research, this section goes deeply into it and surveys the entire text with a major attention.

Published almost half a century ago and to minimally show what she had in mind, Arnstein illustrated a simplified ladder with eight rungs corresponding each rung to one specific level of participation. She used the simplified illustration to explain what participation meant, how and where it could be fake or untrue and ‘non-participation’ and where and at which rung the participation practically began to become real.

At the beginning, she mentions that when virtually participation is praised by almost everyone, in practice it is reduced to confirmation and polite handclapping followed by ‘splendor ribbon-cutting ceremonies’. But she adds that the issue however, is very much praised by the different groups of ‘have-not’s. Not so far into the article, Arnstein clears that to her, the participation means ‘citizen power’, in which sharing the ‘power’ means ‘how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out’ (Arnstein, 1969b, p. 2). She mentions that power-holders consider themselves as superior side who know better. Enjoying a better education and knowledge which enables them to come up with the best solutions, they ‘educate’ and ‘cure’ the other side- the people. Further on, Arnstein explains that this kind of participation actually fits into the first two rungs of the ladder- ‘Manipulation’ and ‘Therapy’. At this level, the people are ‘engineered’ to approve plans and to confirm the already decided decisions.

The two upper rungs ‘informing’ and ‘consultation’ can be allocated to the people who are heard to some extent and have a level of ‘say’ in the system. Although at these two levels the people might be heard, it does not mean that their voice is heeded and their proposals are actualized. In other words, this level of participation does not change the status quo. Although the upper rung i.e. ‘placation’ is a higher level of participation where the people have a bigger say in the decision making apparatus, still the major power is kept in the hands of the power-holders. Then the sixth rung- ‘partnership’ is the rung in which the people are looked upon as one side of the system of power. That is the level in which the people are ‘negotiated and engage in trade-offs with traditional power-holders’.

Later in the article, she expresses her concern over the implementation issue of the plans. She explains that participation should continue into the stage of implementation when in practice that is the traditional organizations which are envisaged to be the responsible body for the implementation.

According to Arnstein, Partnership is a redistribution of power between the citizens and power-holders through 'negotiation'. In this relationship, everything is designed, planned and concluded through 'give-and-take' discussions by both sides. To her experience, this power is shared merely when it is *taken* (stressed by Arnstein) by the citizens because as she mentions, 'those who have power want to hang onto it (and) historically it has to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful'.

2.4.2 Civil society organizations and the state

Wherever in scholarly or professional discussions, there is any hint to poverty and/or participation, the NGOs and civil organizations working in the area are mentioned as well. Mitlin defines the 'civil society' as a society comprising of independent organizations acting between the state and the citizens (Mitlin, 2000):

"Civil society" is used as an all-embracing term for voluntary associations between the state and individual citizens and their families. As such, the definition includes non-government organizations, non-profit associations, and informal organizations addressing public interest issues and self-help groups and associations'.

And;

NGOs are defined as professional, non-profit, non-membership intermediary organizations that are independent of the state and which undertake a range of activities in order to further development objectives.

Also, as a part of 'development literature', the term 'civil society' comes along many familiar 'warmly persuasive' words repeated all over the mainstream such as 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction' (Cornwal and Brock, 2005, p.2). The mainstream literature of development agencies and international donors are full of 'positive hope' illustrating the world with currents of 'self-help initiatives' in which the major changes can happen via small good-hearted measures. They suggest that the problems of millions of poor and dire condition of numerous populations in a sizable number of countries all over the world can be solved through 'empowerment' of the poor. Still, the pictures these bulletins, brochures, books and documents depict always fade when they come in contrast with the real world reflected on the news and in the media in which the reality on the ground informs us of a gravely dissimilar story. Unluckily, the

latter story is not colored by glittering colors of a rainbow, but stained by ugliness of poverty and misery, incomes gap and conflicts:

From the delicate tinkle of the fountain in the atrium at the World Bank's H-Street headquarters and the soft-carpeted corridors of the hotels favored by the development elite on mission, to the sublime confidence that permeates the marketing of solutions by the army of consultants and advisors who occupy these spaces, the trappings of the development industry are part of a world that is ever more removed from the world in which poor people live their everyday lives (Cornwal and Brock, 2005, p. 9).

Along with the dominance of neo-liberalism over the debates on the issues such as development and poverty the ideas promoting NGOs and civil society organizations began to grow in 1970s and specifically after 1980s. Along with that, the neo-liberal discourse which encouraged the so-called 'individual entrepreneurial freedom', institutional privatization as well as absolute rule of free market and free trade, converted the role of the state to an establishment which is solely responsible for creating and protecting such practices (Harvey, 2007). Consequently, land, water, education, health care, social security were submitted to private sector and the role of the states turned to merely providing the necessary markets in those areas (Harvey, 2007).

When the privatization and lessening the role of the governments was introduced as a solution to the global problems, the NGOs were suggested to substitute the role that state was supposed to play- providing the basic needs of the population living within its jurisdiction. In other words, the NGOs stepped into the vacuum in social provision left by the withdrawal of the state from such activities (Harvey, 2007) and tried to fill the void of the presence of the state to practice its duties. With the emergence of the NGOs, the necessary terms and definitions came along with them; the poor were supposed to 'participate' in development projects and the 'local ownership' was recommended. Among this all, NGOs were supposed to play a pivotal role of organizing and dealing with the poor affected by the neo-liberal policies. There was no hint to the cause problem i.e. structural injustice as a fulcrum of capitalistic system and possible upending it to an alternative system which could fulfill justice and sound distribution of resources and opportunities. Manji (Manji, 1998) articulates the discussion as such:

Far from helping to overturn the social relations which reproduced injustice and impoverishment, the main focus of development was to discover and implement solutions which would enable the victims to cope with impoverishment, or find 'sustainable' solutions for living with it. Over the last few decades, development NGOs have played a critical role in that process.

Via the prescription of NGOs as the means of solution to the problem of poverty and injustice by the international agencies e.g. World Bank and IMF, the discussion over ‘rights’ faded and was substituted by debates over ‘development’. In ‘depoliticizing’ of poverty , the dilemma of poverty was depicted not as matter of rights but as a problem facing ‘developing countries’ (Manji, 1998, p. 13). In the de-politicization processes, NGOs played a significant role. Manji states:

Central to this paradigm was to see ‘poverty’, rather than rights and freedom, as the main problem facing ‘developing countries’. The victims of years of injustices, whose livelihoods had been destroyed by years of colonial rule, were now defined as ‘the problem’, and thus the stage was set for the entry of the development NGOs to participate in the process of depoliticizing poverty.

Getting close to 1980s, the NGOs paradigm was extended and shifted to a wider realm of ‘civil society’. One of the reasons contributing to this shift was that many NGOs were financed by foreign sources and were facing a legitimacy problem, so to solve the problem there were attempts to localize the idea and focus more on local institutions. Along with the idea of local institutions, the term ‘social capital’ was introduced to hub on the local relationships. This ‘social capital’ was supposed to facilitate actions such as trust, norms and networks (Putnam, 2000).

As Mitlin (Mitlin, 2000) explains, the notions of civil society and social capital are closely related to the development of capitalism as a system and ‘liberal democratic state’ when ‘neither capitalist development strategies nor liberal democracy necessarily have a positive impact on poverty reduction’. She believes that ‘when considering urban poverty reduction within a global perspective, the nature of the international economic structures and the dependencies that they create and sustain also have to be considered’.

Civil society institutions or other ‘non-profit’ organizations are expected to ‘affect’ the extent to which the poor ‘benefit’ from processes of urban change. It is as if the issue of poor benefitting from urban change is a negotiable topic and if there is any legal or moral foundations which according to them the state can ignore the rights of the poor or any other groups of people when deciding over the urban change. These organizations are supposed to exactly deal with the issue of profit and resources which are extracted and consumed and for whom they are spent when they themselves are non-‘profit’ identities. They are going to tackle the complicated issue of distribution of national wealth and resources as well as the socioeconomic and political opportunities without themselves being caught in between. It is fair if we assume it is an impossible mission to accomplish.

It is also interesting to notice that when the governments are not fulfilling their legal obligations stated in the international declarations which they are a signatory of or the constitution of their countries which they are legally bound to observe and practice, there are some organizations trying to take the responsibilities of the governments instead. It is right to ask when a government or a

system of power with all the resources and money at hand does not succeed to enhance the life of its citizens, how NGOs with their limited power and resources can make any drastic changes. Or if when even they do, how far their good-hearted measures can go and how deep they can influence the condition. Also, this is right to take into consideration that when the governments are legally the duty-bearers, why instead of putting pressures on them to practice their legal duties, the population should request the NGOs to take the responsibilities. In short, what defines the situation and the life of the urban poor is not merely the hard work and good intentions of civil society organizations if they presume that they can 'affect' the situation to a major and profound extent, because simply the structural problem which makes the crisis is there untouched.

Also, when discussing about 'civil society' and 'civil society organizations' there is an ambiguity on who exactly they are, what objectives they follow and which means they seek to fulfill their missions.

Chatterjee argues that there is a notion of governmental performance of the government which 'emphasizes the welfare and protection of populations' which uses 'similar governmental technologies all over the world but largely independent of considerations of active participation by citizens in

the sovereignty of the state'. In this case, that is either the governmental agencies or NGOs or international agencies that deliver certain services and benefits to the groups of population who 'are not proper members of civil society or of the republican body of true citizens'. He then asks 'how can the particular claims of marginal population groups, often grounded in violations of the law, be made consistent with the pursuit of equal citizenship and civic virtue'? Although the neologism of Chatterjee does not match with the realities of many countries of the world to assume the bourgeois civil society as a non-political society, the distinction between the citizens (the assumed non-political civil society) and right-bearers (the assumed political society) seems to be correct. In other words, it seems to be more accurate if we claim that the demands of the elite and the rest of the population are two distinct modes of engagement with politics rather than two strictly separated domains. About the claims of what he calls 'political society' and the dynamics of its relationship with the power structure he argues:

These claims are irreducibly political. They could only be made on a political terrain, where rules may be bent or stretched, and not on the terrain of established law or administrative procedure. The success of these claims depends entirely on the ability of particular population groups to mobilize support to influence the implementation of governmental policy in their favor.

Therefore, what the people of political society do to gain their rights is doing a struggle with the hope of 'bending the regulations' which unconstitutionally denies their basic right to shelter. It

seems that they would have an unshakable triumph if they could fixate their new (gained) status by gaining e.g. the property right of the place that they have been living on for decades - deed in their hands. Because as Chatterjee argues the success is necessarily 'temporary and contextual so that the strategic balance of political forces could change and rules may no longer be bent as before' (Chatterjee, 2006, p. 60).

Discussing the distinction between the demands of the elite in contrast with those of the destitute, the other issue to take into consideration is the means and ways the people select to follow their demands to reach their causes. There are conflictive means and there are peaceful ones. There are those which are contentious in depth and there are those which are collaborative. The latter goes for negotiation and long-term pressures when the previous takes confrontational path or 'threats of political reprisal' (Appadurai, 2001, p. 29). Talking about the alliances of housing activists in India, Appadurai puts this distinction as such (Appadurai, 2001, p. 24):

On the one hand are groups that have opted for armed, militarized solutions to their problems of inclusion, recognition and participation. On the other are those that have opted for a politics of partnership-partnership, that is, between traditionally opposed groups such as states, corporations and workers. The alliance of housing activists ... belongs to the latter group and is part of the emergent process through which the physics of globalization is being creatively redeployed.

The issue of the means for gaining the basic rights of the poor, specifically the right to the shelter, is discussed on in following parts of the dissertation.

2.4.3 'Un-civil society; the quiet encroachment of the ordinary'

For many of the developing countries facing the problems of poverty and injustice and subsequent informality, there is another dilemma which makes the situation even more complicated and that is the rigid top-down authoritarian power structure which not only produces and enhances the poverty and injustice but also obstruct any action by civil society or any groups of population to address or even question the problem. Of the major measures these governments take is banning and hindering the right of association and organization. These states follow a strict rule against any civil activities to question the status quo and are allergic to any sort of association which might lead to countering the prevailing injustice. For the countries as such, like those in Middle East, the idea of civil society might be better substituted by the 'un-civil society' (Bayat, 1997a, p. 53).

The idea of un-civil society discusses about the 'ordinary practices' of 'everyday life' of the informals which through 'silent encroachment' make significant changes in their milieu. As Bayat explains, 'these practices represent natural and logical ways in which the disenfranchised survive

hardships and improve their lives'. Through their 'mundane, ordinary and daily nature' (Bayat, 1997b, p. 4) of demands, they impact on the environment which they try to survive in.

The noteworthy specificity of these silent encroachments is that they are not mobilized and are not organized. They happen in a scattered way and are 'un-institutionalized' but are dominating the urban politics of many developing countries. Bayat explains the un-civil society as such (Bayat, 1997b, p.7):

The 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary, a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives. They are marked by quiet, atomized and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action, an open and fleeting struggle without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization, one which makes significant gains for the actors, eventually placing them as a counterpoint vis-à-vis the state. By initiating gradual 'molecular' changes, the poor in the long run 'progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes.

He adds:

Driven by the force of 'necessity' (economic hardship, war, or natural disaster) they set out individually and without much clamor, often slowly and unnoticeably, as persevering as the movements of turtles in a remote colony.

Bayat explains that despite the conventional civil society, the un-civil society 'avoids collective effort, large-scale operations, commotion and publicity', because what is important to them is just gaining success which most of the time is individually. What they try to achieve is not following a collective political objective, but choosing means to survive the hardships of life. In other words, what these people do is a practical way to fill the gap of necessary amenities, job, food, infrastructure and basics of a decent life which according to the law and constitution of many countries should be provided by the state and is not.

2.4.4 Civil society organizations and the state in Turkey

The civil society organizations and voluntary activities do not emerge from nothing in a society. They have their roots in history of a country and the path the people have walked all through the decades to reach to whatsoever place they are standing on now. Therefore, although this sub-chapter is solely discussing the relevantly short history of civil society initiating after 1990s, in no way it means that the history of struggles of Turkish people and the achievements they have gained or the defeats they have tolerated is merely because of the activities and efforts of civil society within the recent decades.

The 'civil society' activities in its current definition in Turkey initiated in 1980s. Before that and after the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, the mere powerful actor in all spheres of

country's life was solely the state. The top down control over the population specifically increased during the military rule of the country following the coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980. The manner that the government reacted against Islamic groups and Kurdish ethnicity and practicing 'state security' measures is one of the instances of that approach (Bikmen and Meydanoglu, 2006).

The rise of civil society in Turkey after 1980s held the state accountable and lessened its control and authority. The first occasion in which the idea of civil society and civil society organizations was discussed extensively was the Habitat Forum in 1996 in Turkey which encouraged several hundreds of Turkish civil society organizations to establish and initiate working. The focus of work of many of these organizations was sustainable development and social justice.

One of the instances that proved the strength of the civil society was the helps that these groups provided after the earthquake in Marmara and Kaynasli region in which more than 20,000 people lost their lives and many constructions were destroyed. Then, the members of civil society organizations took the action, helped with the rescue operations and taking care of the survived population afterwards. The active participation of the civil society was highlighted when the state showed quite incapable of helping the hazard stricken people and taking care of them.

Furthermore, the other major incident helping the growth of civil society was the process of accession to EU initiating in 1990s. Indeed, with the acceptance of Copenhagen Criteria i.e. the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union, the Turkish government demonstrated the political will to adopt certain reforms. These reforms which were practiced after long years of military rule and iron fist of the government directly impacted the civil society and the general political atmosphere of the country. Specifically, the freedom of association which was denied before that time was of the major changes having direct influence on the establishment of civil society organizations.

By and large, by profound changes in Turkey's legislation and laws following its two decade procedure of accession to EU, a relatively sound bed for social activities in the country is established. Following the applying for the full membership of EU in 1998, the country planned a national program to adoption of the legislation, legal acts, and court decisions of EU. The legal reforms in Turkey 'increased legal protection of social, cultural and political rights of all Turkish citizens irrespective of religious and ethnic origin' (Baç, 2005, p. 21). Furthermore, the reforms revised the role of the military in Turkish politics and addressed the issue of freedom of expression in the country.

One of the major changes was with regard to death penalty which was lifted totally by applying several amendments in 1982 Constitution of the country. Also, by revising the Anti-Terror law, the road for retrial of all of the cases of military courts was opened. All in all, the amendments in the

laws and penal codes lessened the pressures of the authority over the civil society and many organizations, parties and associations began to work (Baç, 2005).

Date	Type	Major Changes
3 October 2001	1st Constitutional Package	34 Amendments to the 1982 Constitution
November 2001	New Civil Code	Gender equality in marriage
February/March 2002	2nd Constitutional Package	Constitutional amendments
2 August 2002	3rd Constitutional Package	Abolish death penalty/revised anti-terror law, allowed broadcasting in languages other than Turkish
3 December 2002	4th Constitutional Package	Operationalize previous reforms/revise Penal Code for torture
4 December 2002	5th Constitutional Package	Retrial of all cases decided in State Security courts
May 2003	6th Constitutional Package	Adopt Protocol 6 of the ECHR, convert all death sentences to life imprisonment/repeal Article 8 of Anti-Terror Law
July 2003	7th Constitutional Package	Revise the National Security Council
7 May 2004	8th Constitutional Package	Ten amendments of the Constitution, freedom of press, and gave priority to supranational treaties over domestic law, abolish State Security courts.
24 June 2004	9th Constitutional Package	Change Article 46 of the Penal code, revise the Higher Education Board and the Censure Board.
25-26 September 2004	New Turkish Penal Code	Revise laws on violence against women and children/change the penalties for various offences and redefine offences.
Table 2-Turkish political reforms 2001-2004		
Source:(Baç, 2005, p. 22)		

Since the establishment of civil society organizations was within the framework of adopting the neo liberal policies by the government, the injustices resulted from socio economic policies implemented after 1980 necessitated mobilization of many of such organizations which specifically worked for the socio economic justice e.g. housing, informal neighbourhoods, domestic violence, etc. In other words, extensive privatization and de-centralization of the government as well as dominance of market economy and less public funding on different services for the citizens were of the dilemma which the population faced after the adoption of new policies.

In response to the emerging unprecedented socio economic injustices, the civil society organizations stepped in and responded to these needs e.g. establishing schools, constructing dorms, holding courses on human rights for judges (Bikmen and Meydanoglu, 2006), teaching and mobilizing the workers against the work accidents, relief efforts at the time of natural hazards, etc.

A study in 2005 (Bikmen and Meydanoglu, 2006) reveals that the number of civil organizations in Turkey compared with the entire population of the country is low and the Turkish citizens are generally disconnected from them. For instance at the time of the research (2006), the registered membership rate was 5800 out of every 100,000 citizens. Still, the role of the civil society organization in helping the people in very different realms of life and struggle is undeniable.

Gezi and the aftermath

Of the incidents which took Turkey walking another path rather than the peaceful collaborative measures of 'civil society' was *Gezi* Park protests in June 2013. In other words and as mentioned above, what a population takes as its political or social stance at a certain turning point is definitely based on its experiences as a group of people through its long history and cannot be jammed in limited definitions of civil society as a non-violent by-helper structure for the state apparatus. *Gezi* Park revealed that when necessary and at right times, the people might get back to the old tradition of 'struggle on the streets' rather than 'peaceful negotiations' with the system.

Gezi park protests (June 2013) which sparked because of cutting of trees of a popular park in the city center of Istanbul requires a special attention considering that it was the first major blow to neo-liberal government of AKP ruling the country with landslide victories in three consequent elections since 2001. The protest began with the objection to conversion of a favorite congregation place of the people in Taksim square to a shopping mall reflecting the Ottoman past and the current neo-liberal policies. The urban transformation plans were being progressed for quite some time before the protest, but it was the first time that the people loudly voiced against it and it was heard by the international media. The same urban transformation plans were both targeting the low income neighbourhoods as well as demolishing historic cafes, cinemas and stations and constructing flashy shopping malls and fashionable brand boutiques.

Actually, the 'problems' with Taksim square began in May 2013 when after a couple of years of free congregation on the occasion of May Day after 90s, the government banned it. The clashes between the protestors and the police resided after a few hours but the discontent over the ban went on further and finally reemerged on July 13 when the bulldozers of municipality of Istanbul with the back up support of riot police went to cut the trees in the middle of the night. The people who received the news via public media flooded to the place and clashes with the police erupted. The clashes and the brutal reaction of the police using excessive force on a massive scale against the peaceful protestors went viral on the public media and attracted many more people to the square.

For almost two months further on, the protests continued in *Gezi* and occupied the news headlines all over the world.

Cutting a few trees in *Gezi* Park turned the park into a magnet of diverse arrays of discontent in the city and in the country (*yasar adanali on occupygezi*, 2013). In other words, since the neo-liberal policies of AKP government were targeting different strata of the society, the *Gezi* became a common foundation for all of the groups who were affected by those policies. In a way, the bulldozers leveling the low income neighbourhoods as well as exerting pressures over the civil society via suppressing the ideas, life styles and thoughts united very different people with each other. For instance, the traditionally rival football fans and the habitually adversary nationalist and ethnic opposition began to find allies in each other. In a nutshell, the protests showed to be 'not about a couple of trees, but about democracy' (*yasar adanali on occupygezi*, 2013).

2.4.5 Civil society organizations and the state in Iran

Constitutional Revolution, Oil Nationalization Movement, 1953 Coup

The 'contemporary' history of Iran and the struggle of Iranian civil society in its general sense dates back to Constitutional Revolution (June 1905-August 1906) which clearly was under the influence of Russian social democratic revolution of 1905. The major achievement of Iranian Constitutional Revolution was that for the first time in its history the country gained a Constitution establishing a constitutional system in which the king was confined to specific responsibilities and limited reach of power. The first parliament of the country was established afterward and first groups of associations of women and 'intelligentsia' (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 5) were founded. It was the earliest time ever that the organizations based on traditional bonds of kinship and blood was substituted by modern associations based on geography, class, trade and community.

During the fervor of the Revolution, of the social groups who were activated were women who established several associations in different cities of the country e.g. Tehran, Rasht and Tabriz. The most outstanding movement in which the women played a significant role was the so-called 'Tobacco Movement' in which the grant of tobacco concession sparked widespread protests and opposition. During the movement the women in the household of the king banned the use of tobacco and broke all hookahs in the palace (Ranjbar Omrani, 2012).

The Constitutional Revolution turned to a turning point in the life of the country towards modernity, but due to weakness of social forces and the strong power of foreign meddling could not achieve its main goal i.e. establishing a democratic system. The defeat of Constitutional Revolution paved the way for emergence of an autocratic power and the coup of Riza Shah in 1919.

Riza Shah centralized resources and instruments of power, created national alliances, established a modern army, weakened the scattered powers of warlords, forced resettlements, disarmed tribal clans, created modern bureaucracy and financial reform, putting down the foundations of a modern, autocratic state (Razzaghi, 2010). He established new and modern system of infrastructure e.g. first system of railroad, post, national bank, etc.

The next turning point of recent history of Iran is the Oil Nationalization Movement in 1951. During that time, M. Mosaddeq the then prime minister of the country led a national movement which resulted to the nationalization of the oil industry previously under the reign and control of the international corporations and particularly British Oil Company. The movement helped flourishing the social activities of different organizations of workers, peasants, women, youth and other social groups. The two major political groups at that time were the nationalists and the communists with the latter leading and organizing thousands of people affiliated with them in different associations and organizations. The movement was halted and aggressively suppressed by a CIA-plotted coup in 1953 (Abrahamian, 1982). Hundreds of people were prosecuted, arrested, put under trial and even some were put before fire squads. Many of democratic and civil associations were dismantled and the level of social activities in the country declined considerably.

Revolution 1979

The following defining moment of Iran was the Revolution 1979 which paved the way for an extensive flourishing of all kinds of social and political activities of very different groups, associations, parties and organizations following all types of ideologies from secularism to religion and Marxism to nationalism.

The turbulent and excited upheaval of the first months following the official triumph of Revolution in February 1979 were terminated by the vast suppressions of opposition groups from religious organizations to civil associations in early 1980s. The subsidence of all political and social activities was the 'natural' result of vast and profound repressive actions of the system. Besides, the war with Iraq which lasted eight years (1980-1988) brought the country to the emergency situation which did not leave any space for civil organizations to breath as the easy and at the hand justification brought up by authorities was that 'The country is in danger' and 'the security is under threat'.

The end of the war resulted to the emergence of the 'Construction Government' (*dowlat-e sazandegi*) to power (1989-1997) which was led by pragmatic president of that time- Rafsanjani. The Construction Government paved the way to pseudo-neo liberalization of the economy, but the 'free' market policies did not lead to any political open up. In other words, the government that began to open the doors to vast privatization of services did not extend those 'freedoms' to the realm of political sphere. In other words, the Construction Government did not lessen the pressures over the civil society and the repressive politics of the previous years were followed.

It was just during the presidency of next president, Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), the Iranian reformist president that the liberalization was extended to the political and cultural spheres. During that time, many newspapers began to circulate, cultural centers were opened, different clubs were established and hundreds of book titles were published. Of the major development those days were the NGOs and civil organizations which began to flourish. Civil organizations mounting to hundreds in numbers included NGOS, charities, associations, cooperatives and many groups alike. They were active in different areas e.g. women's rights, street children and child labor groups, women's employment initiatives and so on.

Abrahamian (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 191) summarizes the political and social policies during Khatami's presidency as such:

The reformers also channeled state funds into non-government organizations: local clubs, theaters, and cultural centers; newspapers – the number of dailies increased from five to twenty-six and their combined daily circulation rose from 1.2 million to 3.2 million. The number of journals rose from 778 to 1,375; and the number of book titles from 14,500 to 23,300 with a total circulation of 118 million – in 1986 the number of book titles had been as few as 3,800 with a circulation of fewer than 28 million. *Hamshahri* (Citizen), a daily owned by the mayor's office in Tehran with a circulation of 460,000, became the first paper in Iran to survive through advertisements. The consumer market had finally come to Iran. The liberals scored their most celebrated cultural success in the international film community by winning prizes at Cannes and Venice...Cinema dealt with social issues, especially the plight of women, children, the poor, and war veterans. One of the most celebrated directors was a former Revolutionary Guard. Of course, the movie industry was heavily subsidized by the state.

When compared with the previous periods in the life of Islamic Republic of Iran, during Khatami's presidency which is of the recent major flourishing periods of life of Iranian civil society, the country experienced a slight change in the political milieu to turn to a limited democracy, relative freedom of press and a stronger involvement of citizens in social and political life. Although the hardliners gave a hard time to Khatami and the civil society during and after his presidency, they could not hinder the efforts of the citizens for a more humane condition. Indeed, the younger generation which was politicized during those years continued its presence in political arena and played a major role in mobilizing the people in the following years. In a nutshell, the eight years of Muhammad Khatami in office can be marked as the freest period all through the life of Islamic Republic of Iran.

Post-reformist era (2005-now)

The next president following Khatami came to power by a populist agenda and claims of fighting against the rich and getting back to the initial objectives of Iranian Revolution i.e. justice and sound distribution of wealth and opportunities for all. The turning of the events in the years later proved exactly oppositely when the new government involved in extensive corruption, acts of money laundry and grabbing national wealth and resources for the benefit of a few. But worst of all, the government in office paved the way for the seize of power by military. Military officers who merely 'resigned' from their posts and left their military ranks and barracks while keeping their military mindsets, flooded to occupy different positions all over the state apparatus from the cabinet to governorship, from parliament members to CEOs of banks, holdings, contractor companies and telecommunication firms. In a nutshell and although the interference and meddling of the military into domestic and foreign affairs was not unprecedented (Golkar, 2012; Safshekan and Sabet, 2010) , the eight years of 2005-2013 can be categorized as the period of strong emergence of military (Razzaghi, 2010) into the government and state structure and grasp of socio-economic and political power in the country by this group.

During those eight years (2005-2013) when the reformist government gave its place to the conservatives-sponsored president, in parallel to negative developments in the top, the life of many of civil organizations was cut short. During that term the existence of civil organizations faced grave threats. Although it was not mentioned in the law, authorities practically criminalized many of the activities of civil society by detentions, prosecution, trials and jailing of the activists. Razzaghi explains the era as such (Razzaghi, 2010, p. 6):

A new class of political power strived to act as the only player in politics, society, economics, and culture. It interfered in all areas of Iranian society according to its own beliefs, occupied all civil spaces, and prevented other discourses. This has resulted in a curtailing of the socio-political freedoms and constraints on civil society. This new political force has used culture as a tool of civic dominance, distorting the identities and the mentalities of individuals and socio-political groups in order to harmonize thought and silence or sideline opposing voices. In recent years, organized attacks on the media and universities have been based on just such strategies. This emerging political class is pursuing the strategy of controlling and monitoring the flow of information and imposing a hegemonic culture of silence and stagnation on Iranian society.

Despite all the odds and when the authorities did not welcome the activities of civil associations any more, the civil society which had got a new energy during the eight years of reformist era went on living and being active in many realms of social and political life of the country. The influence and presence of the civil society was specifically highlighted during the election times. The Green

Movement which was initiated by protesting against the controversial results of election 2009 is one of the demonstrations of this silent but active presence.

Green Movement

'Green Movement' as its supporters and members affectionately call it (Dabashi, 2013) was a massive movement in protest to the results of June 12, 2009 presidential election. Green Movement began with the question over the citizenship and having a voice. It manifested itself in the simple slogan of 'Where Is My Vote?' and later on spread further to include many layers of civil society. Practically, the Movement could gather very different thoughts, ideologies, and mindsets in a common front. In a nutshell, it could include all reasons of dissatisfactions of people from the malfunction of the system, to corruption to lack of individual and social freedom and so on.

Sporadic protests and cases of clashes with the riot police erupted in central parts of Tehran at early hours of June 13 when the official announcement of election results surprised millions who believed the election was rigged and the results were untrue. The footages showing the brutal beatings of the protestors by the riot police and militia went on air and through the social media and dragged many more people onto the streets the next day. At the climax of the events and on Monday June 15, 2009 millions of people poured on the streets of Tehran and showed a new face of Iranian civil society to the world- something which nobody had ever seen after the turbulent days of February 1979. Robert Fisk (Fisk, 2009) the Independent correspondent who witnessed the rally on June 15, describes it as such:

It was Iran's day of destiny and day of courage. A million of its people marched from *Engelob* Square to *Azadi* Square – from the Square of Revolution to the Square of Freedom – beneath the eyes of Tehran's brutal riot police...Not since the 1979 Iranian Revolution have massed protesters gathered in such numbers, or with such overwhelming popularity, through the boulevards of this torrid, despairing city. They jostled and pushed and crowded through narrow lanes to reach the main highway and then found riot police in steel helmets and batons lined on each side. The people ignored them all. And the cops, horribly outnumbered by these tens of thousands, smiled sheepishly and – to our astonishment – nodded their heads towards the men and women demanding freedom. Who would have believed the government had banned this march?

The movement could stay on the streets of Tehran and some other major cities of the country for at least 10 months and again at time of emergence of protests in Arab countries (Arab Spring) showed its power by dragging hundreds of thousands of the people onto the streets. The Movement apparently has subsided when nobody is on the streets and tens of activists are either in jail or exile or simply muted, but the ghost of it is still alive since the system all the time is trying to batter all the remainders of it keeps repeating it like a horrid mantra as '*fetne*' (seduction).

2.4.6 Summary of the discourse of participation

Out of many diversified and wide ranging theories of participation, this research constructs its notion of participation based on Sherley Arnstein's theory of "Ladder of Citizen Participation". By illustrating the participation as an eight-rung ladder she corresponded each rung to one specific level of participation. Like Arnstein this research takes the partnership as the first level of real participation in which a redistribution of power between the citizens and the power-holders occurs through negotiation.

Referring to the civil society, voluntary associations and NGOs which in today's world are mentioned whenever the problems of poverty and participation are discussed, this research concludes that the solutions to poverty and social injustice as well as informality cannot be found in the hands of NGOs and civil society organizations. Basically growing after 1980s along with the growth and spread of the neo-liberal ideas and economies in the world, these organizations were supposed to fill in the gap of governments abandoning their roles as the providers of the common good for the population. Vast privatizations of water, education, health care, social security, post and transportation system created a gap which no civil society organization has ever been even close to touch.

Instead of 'civil society', this research is strongly based on the A. Bayat's theory of 'Un-civil Society' with regard to the researched cases. The idea of un-civil society discusses the 'ordinary practices' of 'everyday life' of the informals which through 'silent encroachment' make significant changes in their milieu. As Bayat explains, 'these practices represent natural and logical ways in which the disenfranchised survive hardships and improve their lives'. Through their 'mundane, ordinary and daily nature' of demands, they impact on the environment which they try to survive in. As he discusses further, the specificity of these silent encroachments is that they are not mobilized and are not organized. They happen in a scattered way and are 'un-institutionalized' but are dominating the urban politics of many developing countries.

2.5 The discourse of rights

"It contains 1,400 houses, inhabited by 2,795 families, comprising a population of 12,000. The space within which this large amount of population are living is less than 400 yards square (1,200 feet)¹, and it is no uncommon thing for a man and his wife, with four or five children, and sometimes the grandfather and grandmother, to be found living in a room from ten to twelve feet square, and which serves them for eating and working in...If we really desire to find out the most destitute and deserving, we must lift the latch of their doors, and find them at their scanty meal; we must see them when suffering from sickness and want of work; and if we do this from day to day in such a neighbourhood as Bethnal Green, we shall become acquainted with a mass of wretchedness and misery such as a

¹ About 334 square meters

nation like our own ought to be ashamed to permit...There is not one father of a family in ten throughout the entire district that possesses any clothes but his working dress, and that too commonly in the worst tattered condition; and with many this wretched clothing forms their only covering at night, with nothing better than a bag of straw or shavings to lie upon."

The picture illustrated above by a preacher in mid 18th century and quoted by Friedrich Engels (Engels, 2010, p. 60) is more or less familiar for us living 165 years later in a way that the name of the neighbourhood in Manchester, England (Bethnal Green) can easily be substituted by many other names across the globe. The rest of the statement can be kept untouched.

'We are mostly day laborers and household help, living below the poverty line. We have somehow built a shelter of our own. If our homes are broken and we are evicted from the shanties, we have nowhere to go' (Chatterjee, 2006, p. 74).

And the words of illegal squatters living in Gobindapur Rail Colony Gate Number 1 in Calcutta mentioned above can be juxtaposed to the words of many millions living in informality all over the world. Living in informal neighbourhoods, getting their income through informal jobs and dealing with the system of power in informal ways, these people are wrestling with hardships of life on a daily basis while all they need is a proper livelihood, shelter, food, education- in a nutshell, the right to a decent life.

The overgrowing problem of urban decayed areas suffering from sub-standard condition of living is disfiguring the face of the cities and is affecting the lives of a sizable number of the people. These problems go on existing as long as the relationship based on profiting from the cities at any price is preferred to taking policies which puts the provision of basic needs of the citizens at the core. These problems threatening the sustainability of life of majority of humankind demand a profound change in trajectory of urban policies- making 'the cities for people, not for profit' (Brenner et al., 2011, p. 1). By doing so, the political priority of constructing cities would be materialized so that they would 'correspond to human social needs rather than to the capitalist imperative of profit-making and spatial enclosure' (Brenner et al., 2011, p. 2).

The right for living a dignified human life is reflected in international declarations and agreements. One of the outstanding ones is the Universal Human Rights Declaration (hereafter, UHRD) in which in different articles the rights to social security, work, food, clothing, housing, medical care for all people apart from gender, sex and class is explicitly stated (United Nations, 1948). The UHRD is important to take into consideration specifically due to the reality that many countries of the world have signed it. The states which according to the UHRD are the duty-bearers are legally bound to

observe the UHRD articles and reflect them in their policies. In other words, they are the direct body to provide the social services which are mentioned as the 'human rights' in the Declaration.

2.5.1 Human rights-based approach

According to the description of UN (United Nations, 2006);

A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.

Harvey explains that in the current world the ideals of human rights are getting into the center of political stage. He argues that 'a lot of political energy is put into promoting, protecting and articulating their significance in the construction of a better world (Harvey, 2012, p.3). The emergence of these rights focusing on collective rights is in contrast with the concepts based on individualistic interests and property-based notions. The right-based approach takes fulfilling these rights as final objective of all policies taken by states.

The noticeable point here is that although there is always a danger that right-based approach might be mainstreamed and marketized, it is pertinent to say that as Appadurai mentions, 'the global spread of the discourse of human rights has provided a huge boost to local democratic formations' (Appadurai, 2001, p. 26).

The human right-based approach is established on the premise that;

- a. all human beings apart from sex, gender, ethnicity have universal, non-discriminative, indivisible, right to enjoy the rights stated in UHRD including participation, the rule of law, food, social security, housing, education, social services, etc;
- b. the primary duty-bearers are the governments and they are legally bound to provide and guarantee the basic needs of the citizens within the jurisdiction of their country.

The general idea of right-based approach is seeking the solutions in macro level and in the structure which produces the problem of injustice namely mal-distribution of resources and opportunities. As the result, this approach seeks tackling with the root causes of injustice rather than redressing its symptoms. For instance, it aims at 'eradication' of poverty as a matter of socioeconomic injustice rather than 'alleviating' it and dealing with it on a minor level.

According to this approach, the human rights should be the basis and at the heart of the policies made and taken by a system in order to change the policies which provide the interests of certain

groups in power rather than the population. Thus, for realizing the ‘change’, a systematic change in the entire structure is necessary. For instance, since the injustice is basically featured in distribution of resources and opportunities, this approach seeks the redistribution of existing resources on a fair, indiscriminatory and universal way.

Furthermore, since this approach finds the problem within the system and structure of power, it mainly focuses on the work among the population, organizing and mobilizing the citizens from bottom who are affected by the injustice imposed by the system. In other words, instead of state-centered measures and top-bottom approaches, it seeks collective action, bottom-up initiatives and focuses on alliances within different groups of population. In a nutshell, rather than being partial and time-bound and limited set of measures it follows deep profound and extensive policies aiming at extensive changes in the system.

The *right to the city* movement

Writing about ‘rights’ and ‘right-based approach’ the *right to the city* highlights itself as it is a notion which is established on the premise of the rights of populations to governing their cities, making decisions on distribution of the resources aiming at an indiscriminate justice for everybody in the city. The reemergence of Lefebvre’s *‘right to the city’* was after 1990s when following years of neo-liberal policies i.e. a regime which ‘had privileged the expansion of economic opportunity, at the expense of social justice and environmental care’ (Healey, 2005, p. 83), the necessity of an alternative notion and perception seemed urgent.

Lefebvre depicts the *‘right to the city’* as ‘a cry and a demand’:

The cry was a response to the existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city. The demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical, open to becoming, to encounters (both fearful and pleasurable), and to the perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty (Harvey, 2012, p. x) .

Not only the debates are made over the idea of *right to the city*, this discourse is becoming a slogan to practice mobilizing the people around the globe in diverse urban movements. As ‘an umbrella phrase’ it is becoming a ‘source of inspiration’ attracting Brazil’s Ministério das Cidades to Hamburg’s Recht auf Stadt-Netzwerk. From small NGOs to UN Habitat, it is praised and defined as a global objective (De Souza, 2010). It is binding movements across the north (Mayer, 2012) and uniting the movements for housing in global south (Herrle et al., 2015). One of the prominent mentions of *the right to the city* is definitely the Brazilian constitution of 2001 which guaranteed the right to the city for all citizens (Harvey, 2012). Currently, right to the city movements are in action in many cities around the world. In the US for instance, all those who are sick of ailing cities of

theirs have circled around an alliance with the same name- Right to the City Alliance (Right to the City Alliance, 2015).

After the current reemergence of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *right to the city* there are numerous debates on what it means and what objectives it is aiming at. The idea of *right to the city* is being praised by International development agencies and UN and at the same time, radical groups which generally demand for the eradication of capitalist system as a whole, applaud it as well.

Harvey explains that there is a close link between the development of capitalism and urbanization (Harvey, 2008, p. 1) and puts the *right to the city* with respect to the distribution of the surplus in the city which normally 'lies in a few hands':

Urbanization has always been a class phenomenon of some sort, since surpluses have been extracted from somewhere and from somebody ... while the control over the disbursement of the surplus typically lies in a few hands. This general situation persists under capitalism, of course, but in this case there is an intimate connection with the perpetual search for surplus value (profit) that drives the capitalist dynamic... Since the urban process is a major channel of use, then the right to the city is constituted by establishing democratic control over the deployment of the surpluses through urbanization.

Lefebvre himself gives a very splay idea of the notion of *right to the city* and explains as such:

'the right to information, the rights to use of multiple services, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in urban areas; it would also cover the right to the use of the center'(Lefebvre, quoted by (Marcuse, 2009), p. 189).

If the confrontations over the resources in the 'city' are all about shaping power over the processes of urbanization or as the cities are made and re-made, then the question before us would be: what should be the direction of 'change' in the cities? And who should decide over it?

Lefebvre also calls the right to the city as a 'demand', in which the interpretation of Marcuse (Marcuse, 2009) of the 'demand' is as follows. It indeed explains when we discuss about *right to the city*, about whose rights we are talking (Marcuse, 2009, p. 31):

The demand comes from those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled: the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, the persecuted on gender, religious, racial grounds. It is an involuntary demand, those whose

work injures their health, those whose income is below subsistence... '*Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Morale*'¹, as Brecht said.

Beside the issue of distribution of wealth and resources and enhancing a just and sound practice of urbanization, there is also the notion of democracy and democratic power of the citizens which comes to attention. The logics behind the argument is that when the dominant policies in the current world is disenfranchising more and more number of the population and the power is shifting 'from citizens and their elected governments to transnational corporations and unelected transnational organizations', then, we are facing a real threat to the cause of democracy (Purcell, 2002, p. 99):

Activists identify large corporations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and various other institutions as the architects of a neoliberal project that pursues a specific form of globalization: the increasing functional integration of all people and places into a single, laissez-faire, and capitalist world economy. Opponents of this form of globalization fear that the growing power of capital and its pursuit of neo-liberalization will increasingly disenfranchise the mass of people, excluding them from the decisions that determine the course of globalization.

This threat would have a deeper meaning when the right to participation and having a voice is taken into consideration with regard to the interests of different groups of populations (not) reflected in plans and policies.

Conflict as a possible product of human rights-based approach

The correlation between socioeconomic injustice, disparity and poverty and conflict has been researched widely (Bradlow, 2013; Brinkman et al., 2013; Brown and Stewart, 2015; Sriskandarajah, 2005). When conflict is a production of the socioeconomic injustices, the structure which produces the injustice normally is of the targets of these conflicts.

The human rights based approach has a strong stance toward the role of State as the duty bearer. In other words based on this approach that is the State which should take actions on inequality and injustice. According to this approach, the State should provide the basic, impartial and universal needs of the population. In many countries this is not the case meaning that the State not only does not practice its legal obligations to provide shelter, food, social security and so on, but also opposes measures taken by the population to satisfy their basic needs. In other words, the same system which produces and contributes to injustice and disenfranchisement resists the attempts of the population to oppose the unjust and unfair policies.

¹ First comes the feeding, then the morality.

2.5.2 Collaborative approach

Since many of the grassroots and civil society organizations use a complex set of tactics to deal with the authorities in different levels of power to achieve their goals and because many of them have a collaborative nature, this approach is given a special consideration in this dissertation. As Mitlin mentions, such strategies and activities often do not challenge the system or the rules by which it operates, rather, they seek to ensure that the state offers more, rather than less, to the urban poor (Boonyabancha and Mitlin, 2012). She rightfully adds that in return for the services they offer, both politicians and state officials commonly seek a variety of personal and political benefits.

Contrary to the right-based approach which focuses on the rights of human being to proper housing, enough food, reliable jobs, social security, etc. the collaborative approaches (need-based, charity model, and alike) are pragmatic and focus on achieving instant results at any price within a short span of time. For instance, the need-based approach which is favored by many of donor organizations and governments are based on the premise that the needy can express their requirements and there is no need by donors to arbitrarily decide on what the poor need. Or, instead of the donors to decide what to donate that are the poor who can 'participate' in identifying their real needs and the means to respond to those needs.

Being prevailed more than half a century now, the collaborative approach never has followed the change in the very system which produces 'the people in need' and never has been targeting the systematic dilemma of injustice. Beside the humiliation and class arrogance defining this approach which looks upon the people in need as beneficiaries of the donation who always stretch their hands for help, it never seeks any obligations for the governments or policy makers for providing any real change. In this way, the people are left at the charitable whim of the 'benevolent' (Marcuse, 1978, p. 1) donors/governments/state to 'nicely' donate whenever they have the resources to spare.

This approach seeks the strengthening of relations between low-income community organizations such that they can create a synergy with the state so that finally they could be recognized 'as legitimate and highly productive residents and citizens of the city' (Boonyabancha and Mitlin, 2012, p. 1). In short, the collaborative approach is based on the pragmatic collaboration between the people and the system to achieve some limited goals mostly in non-violent ways and using legal paths and formal procedures. NGOs, cooperatives and many of the community organizations usually can be classified as the bodies which follow a collaborative policy in their work.

2.5.3 Summary of discourse of rights

Since the people in the case study in Istanbul have been using a complex set of tactics to deal with the authorities i.e. the Turkish state and the Municipality of Istanbul in order to achieve their goals, the discourse of Rights is discussed and elaborated here to enable us to view the whole picture through a proper eyelet. The two main categories of the discourse of Rights are human-right-based approach and the collaborative approach.

The human right-based approach is constructed over the premise that all human beings have the principal right to enjoy the human rights e.g. the rights to proper housing, enough and nutrient food, social security, etc. Moreover, the responsible body for provision of those rights are the states which are called as 'duty-bearers'. This approach is aiming at seeking solutions in macro level, structurally and thoroughly. Instead of redressing the problems of injustice, poverty and sub-standard housing, this approach follows the ground reasons for these dilemmas rather than dealing with the symptoms. Conflict can be a possible scenario in case this approach is the framework of dealing with the dilemmas.

The collaborative approach in contrast includes strategies which do not challenge the structure or the system as a whole and tries to seek solutions based on provision of more amenities and facilities by the state. This approach is more pragmatic and focuses on achieving results. It is based on collaboration between the people and the system to achieve some benefits for the people in need.

As mentioned above, the reading of the developments in the case study in Istanbul needs both of these approaches as what the people are doing on the ground is maneuvering between these two approaches.

3. Istanbul

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has two major parts; Istanbul and Derbent neighbourhood. In the first part, after a glimpse to the migration and the formation of informal neighbourhoods in Istanbul, it surveys the neo-liberal policies beginning in 1980s and intensifying after 2001 when the government of Justice and Development Party raised to power. Within the research about neo-liberal policies, different issues including urban transformation plans and modifying the legal system to match with the new policies are discussed.

In the second part, the chapter aims at giving a picture of Derbent neighbourhood as one of the case studies of this research and the struggle the people are conducting to save their lives that they have built over the course of long years. The chapter begins with data and information extracted from a research project conducted in the neighbourhood between 2011 and 2014 and the interviews that I did with the people in Derbent and in Istanbul. Then, it goes forward to communal specifications of the neighbourhood to put them in contrast with the objectives of urban transformation plans. Later on, the chapter follows to the organization issue and discusses the Association and the Cooperative as two main bodies of organizing the people. At the end, the legal fight that the neighbourhood is going through is discussed and with a timeline of the developments in the neighbourhood, the chapter closes glancing at the possible future of Derbent.

3.2 Squatter housing (*gecekondus*)¹s in Istanbul

Istanbul went through major population changes because of the rapid urbanization and the rural-to-urban migration (Erman, 1997) in different periods of her history. In the years between 1980 and 2000 when Turkey ranked third among countries with the highest urbanization rates in the world (*TOKI*, quoted by (Uzun et al., 2010), Istanbul as the major metropolitan of the country got its own share of this urbanization by receiving sizable waves of migration.

These neighbourhoods established on public land in the need for a shelter were called *gecekondus* literally meaning 'landed overnight'. The inhabitants of the *gecekondus* who were known as '*gecekondulu*' were the people migrating to big cities in search of employment and better livelihood (Erman and Eken, 2004) as well as more humane opportunities for life. The only exception of reasons for the migration, was the big wave of population move in 1990s due to political turmoil and military conflicts in Kurdish areas of the country (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). This time the mass migration of Kurdish population who fled their homes occurred in order to find a safe haven in Istanbul in order to flee from the troubles and death in their villages and cities in Kurdish parts of Anatolia (Biehl, 2012).

Generally, the term *gecekondu* refers to a spontaneous action to deal with the housing issue while neither the state (through promotion or regimentation) nor the capital (through profit generation) were ready or able to intervene (Esen, 2008). In other words, establishing a *gecekondu* was practically a win-win solution for both the government who did not want to pay the 'costs of urbanization' (Esen, 2008, p. 5) and the inhabitants who could find a roof over their heads and make a decent shelter for their families. It was the first step the *gecekondulus* took to grab their own share of better opportunities for life.

The population movement from villages to Istanbul had a major geographical departure source; eastern part of the country or Anatolia. As *Riza*² mentions, they came from Anatolia to Istanbul to establish a life in the city:

‘We could not subsist in Anatolia and came here. Some people sold their wedding jewelleries, some their possessions in the village to build houses here’ (Pinar, 2010).

The areas in which the *gecekondus* were established always were close to the industrial centres and were not desirable by others; steep slopes, river beds and spots alike. That is why the name of many of these neighbourhoods includes the word *tepe-* meaning ‘hill’ in Turkish (Erman, 1997).

¹ Pronounced as ‘ge-je-kondoo’

²Riza, 53, a member of former Neighbourhood Association and the current member of directing board of the Cooperative of *Derbent*

The problem of inadequate housing for the citizens has always been a major issue in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 (Bugra, 1998) and the migration waves just intensified it. The emergence of *gecekondus* in Istanbul followed industrial developments alongside four main axes of the city; the Golden Horn, the historical northern ridge of the *Büyükdere* in the north and two motorways both of which also served some older industrial settlements behind the Marmara coast (Esen, 2009).

When the prevailing myth indicates that the migrants have established their shelters seizing the lands, the statistics reveal that merely about 18% of these lands were seized by the squatters directly and the rest of the lands were enclosed by others which the *gecekondu* people had to purchase from (Semerci, 2013). These people who are known as land mafia were practically considering the urban areas as a production source for exchange value. The story of *Selvi Kaynak*, her neighbours and land mafia in one of *gecekondus* of Istanbul is one in many of similar cases (Neuwirth, 2007, p. 8):

'Kaynak is a squatter. Together with her brother, she built her home 15 years ago just a few kilometers down the road from Sultanbeyli¹. The plot is 130 square meters. She bought the land from a man who lived nearby for approximately 80 USD. Selvi understood that this purchase didn't mean she in fact bought the land. She knew the piece of paper he gave her was worthless. She knew that he didn't really own the property, and therefore neither did she. But he was part of a land mafia and had taken control of the parcel. He would have ratted her out to the authorities without the payment. So she paid. About a dozen other families did the same thing.'

The rate of the migration and establishment of *gecekondus* has always been considerably high. In fact, *gecekondus* became 'a noticeable phenomenon' (Neuwirth, 2007, p. 6) in early 1940s. At the end of 1990s, 75.84% of public land in Istanbul was covered by *gecekondus* (Bugra, 1998). Finally, according to a survey conducted by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2003, in the entire city there were 85'423 *gecekondus* units (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011). Undoubtedly, this vast expansion of the *gecekondus* in Istanbul and other major cities of Turkey could not happen without the consent of the authorities (Bugra, 1998).

As Demirtas explains (Demirtas-Milz, 2013) after the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, the status of urban land in the Ottoman State was re-evaluated. It means that some areas that had been privately owned during the previous regime were declared to be state land - assigned as protected green areas. Most *gecekondu* settlements were built on state-owned land of this type. The status of state land has thus been continuously contested by private individuals, who have claimed rights in these areas, either by means of invalid Ottoman title deeds or through informal sales that are later formalized by means of notary contracts. The 'informal' owners of these lands, who

¹ A *gecekondu* in far east side of Istanbul

claimed a right to them by dint of their 'title deeds' (although such deeds have no legal status) then sold these state treasury lands to

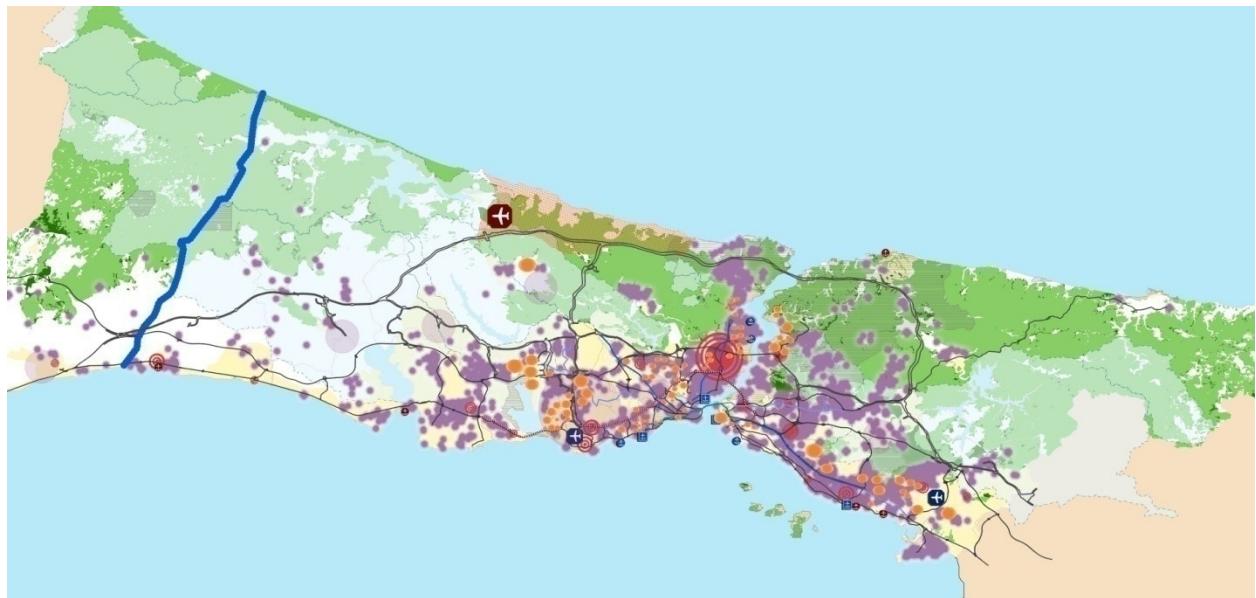


Figure 1- Map of *gecekondus* of Istanbul

Source: (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

the rural-to-urban immigrants who came later.

The number of *gecekondus* in Istanbul and the population living in them have always had a constant increase. When, in 1958, the number of the *gecekondu* houses in Istanbul was 40'000 with 280'000 people living in them, by 1963 it increased to 120'000 houses with a population of 660'000. Around 1984, a state statistics revealed that the number of *gecekondu* buildings in Istanbul leapt to 208'000 (Neuwirth, 2007). In other words, between 1958 and 1963 the number of the population living in *gecekondus* of Istanbul was tripled and reached to 120'000 houses with a population of about 660'000 people or close to 35 percent of the entire population of the city (Neuwirth, 2007). In 2013, about 90% of these settlements were erected over the state lands (Semerci, 2013). According to the head of management of Istanbul *Sariyer* municipality, In Istanbul now the *gecekondus* cover 60-70% of the entire area of the city¹.

The reaction of the authorities to the establishment of *gecekondus* has been different through the years. Since the land seizure allowed the government to shrug off the costs of housing provision onto the migrants (Esen, 2009), during some periods the authorities even provided municipal services, schools, transport and public parks for the settlements creating relatively decent life for

¹ Information obtained from personal interview with the head of Design Department of Municipality of District of *Sariyer*, Istanbul

the residents (Keyder, 2009). Specifically in the early 1960s, these neighbourhoods became an officially accepted solution to housing for the majority of new migrants (Esen, 2009). Also, later the issue of illegality of these neighbourhoods turned to a pawn in the hands of the politicians to gain votes with the promises of legalization of these communities (Esen, 2009; Özler, 2000; Yalcintan and Erbas, 2003). As the result of all of these circumstances, gradually the permits were obtained and shacks were turned into brick and mortar apartments (Keyder, 2009). At some other periods of time the Turkish government tried to regulate these settlements (Neuwirth, 2007). For instance, two sets of laws enacted in 1944 and 1966 ruled to demolish the already built *gecekondus* while hindering establishing new ones (Uzun et al., 2010).

3.2.1 Different developments in *gecekondus*

In 1970s and when the borders of Istanbul crept further and the *gecekondus* were integrated into the city borderlines, these neighbourhoods became appealing spotlights for the land speculators and attracted them. During those years the brokers and speculators began to buy the lands and build the new apartments over them (Erman, 1997). Thus for the first time in the history of these neighbourhoods, the ‘use value’ of them in favour of the inhabitants interchanged with an ‘exchange value’ to benefit the land speculators and developers and last but not least, the government.

Gecekondus went through different developments over the years. In terms of in/formality, there were several amnesties given by the government legalizing some of these informal housing. In fact in Turkey urban amnesty is obviously one of the most implemented among the formal practical solutions (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011) to deal with these settlements. Furthermore, issuing these amnesties up to 1984 (Uzun et al., 2010) was one of the major policies used by politicians to attract the votes of *gecekondu* people. As Riza remembers:

There were 29 development amnesties. If you check the domestic law, well, as long as I remember, there were 29 amnesties. Maybe it was even more. In every election, there were some amnesty developments.

Another man from *Derbent* mentions:

‘And the government turned a blind eye to us building houses. Several times they issued development amnesties’(Pinar, 2010).

These amnesties as means of political favours and clientalistic relations have turned these *gecekondus* to ‘twilight zones’ which contain both the legalized and unauthorized housing stock (Erman and Eken, 2004, p. 57). Also, the amnesties helped changing the *gecekondus* from temporary status to permanent standing (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011).

The developments were not solely confined to the issue of formality. In terms of physical specifications and over the years these neighbourhoods have experienced alternations as well.

After an amnesty in 1984 by the government legalizing the re-developing of *gecekondu* areas and increasing their density, the housing style changed from one story building with simplest features to multi-storey apartments in many parts of Istanbul (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011).

Esen classifies these developments and periods of life of *gecekondus* into two terms, '*gecekondu*' and 'post- *gecekondu*' (Esen, 2008). When in the *gecekondu* period, the migrants built their own one-storey houses and neighbourhoods out of need for shelter with their own hands, in the post-*gecekondu* period beginning in 1970s, it was the developers who bought these buildings and converted them to multi-storey buildings. These people who were called '*yapsatçı*'¹, modified the 'use value' status of these buildings to 'exchange-value' of them. Because of these developments of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods in 1970s, now many of them are hardly recognizable from the middle class apartments neighbourhoods in Istanbul (Esen, 2009).

Geographically and along with the sprawl of Istanbul to farther borders through the years, these neighbourhoods which originally located on the margins of the city were 'included' into the city. That is specifically this group of neighbourhoods which is targeted by urban transformation² plans.

Over all, this is also the class texture of these neighbourhoods which have changed over the time. When still most of the population of these neighbourhoods are low income groups, in some of these localities, there are cases of middle-class housing projects (Erman and Eken, 2004).

3.2.2 Land tenure in *gecekondus*

Historically and during the reign of Ottoman Empire (ruling the region from 13th century to the early 19th century), the land was the property of 'sultan' (Neuwirth, 2007). In that system of land ownership, some few were favoured to receive imperial grants of land when the ownership was still in the hands of sultan. The landholders could collect the rent and had a right to sell that 'right' to others or pass it to their own heirs.

As late as 1858, the empire law allowed the citizens to seize the vacant parcels and use them by giving the land some function. Istanbul as the centre of the empire inherited that tradition. The land ownership like what is known to the northern Europe was introduced by the second half of 19th century.

When the new republic of Turkey was established in 1923, the country adopted the Roman law endorsing private ownership. But the Ottoman laws were the basis of the new set of laws. Still, in the country both systems of laws are working and coexisting. In many Turkish cities including Istanbul, big parcels of land are owned by a shared title³. This is the law that many migrants

¹The builder-seller, developer

² "kentsel dönüşüm" in Turkish

³"hisseli topu" in Turkish

coming from Anatolia have been using without even knowing it; these people established their neighbourhoods on the lands whose owners were not one or two persons but a group of people. In fact, when there are parcels of land which never have been divided into lots, it might mean that the ownership of those lands is shared and do not belong to a private owner. Besides, the exodus of non-Muslim population (Greeks, Christians, etc.) from the country in early 1920s added to the vacant lands in the hands of the state (*Urban Age Istanbul'09*, 2011).

3.2.3 Land seizure, the only feasible solution to housing problem

For many of the migrants with no job in formal sector, occupying the land has been the only feasible solution to make a roof over their heads. Because, although since decades ago membership in a cooperative has been an important means of access to home ownership in Turkey, this advantage has been merely open to those who have had a clear employment status in formal sector (Bugra, 1998). And not just for the migrants, but also for the state, this 'irregular pattern' (Bugra, 1998, p. 309) became also a formal socioeconomic policy of the government to avoid; a) dealing with the housing shortage, b) intriguing unrest and objections of those who were not provided a shelter in the city. As *Riza* mentions:

We built the houses that the government was supposed to give us. When there was not a government to help...we were not a burden and worked for just a few bucks in the factories, municipalities, parks, etc. We are workers by origin (Pinar, 2010).

Beside the land tenure, the other factor affecting the establishment of *gecekondus* is one of the country's laws indicating that apart from the ownership of a parcel of land, if the people could build their shelters over it, nobody can evict them without taking them to the court. It means that anybody who was able to put up four posts and a roof overnight was entitled to keep it (Esen, 2008). That is why the *gecekondus* were practically established very fast, over a night and that is how they took their names from.

3.3 Neo-liberal urban policies in Istanbul

3.3.1 1980s+ 1990s

The main features of neo-liberal policies in Turkey originating in mid 1980s have been implementation and planning of mega-projects, major changes in real-estate investments and domination of finance and service sectors in the city's economy and urbanscape (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). These policies were manifested in 1984 law establishing structural changes in financial and administrative governance of Istanbul. These changes shifted the management of some of agencies from ministries in Ankara to the fully control and jurisdiction of Istanbul mayor. Stacking more power in the hands of Istanbul municipality helped the local municipalities to act as a market facilitator. As the result of these changes, Istanbul municipality and the mayor himself

directly got involved in a couple of urban renewal projects in late 1980s (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008).

The above mentioned projects were big in scale and Hausmannian in nature, opening wide axes in different parts of the city e.g. *Tarlabası* boulevard in central part of Istanbul. Also, these projects contributed to the demolition of industrial sites along Golden Horn in the historic European side (Öcü, 1988). To realize the project of making Istanbul as a global financial hub the plans were aimed at beautification of the city for the purpose of appealing of global market and turning it to a marketable commodity (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008).

New policies; privatization and land speculation

Reviewing the history of establishment of *gecekondus* reveals that until 1980s the process of erecting these neighbourhoods remained relatively free from large-scale capitalist interventions (Esen, 2008). Before that in 1970s the scarcity of empty public lands which most of the *gecekondus* were built over began. Still, that shortage did not stop the migration and the demands for new housing continued.

Turgut Özal the then prime minister of the country discovered a 'huge potential' in the scarcity of land and shortage of housing. To fulfill his plans for the economy of the country, he legalized many of the *gecekondus*. According to *Özal*, the legalized *gecekondu* estates were vintage seed capital. He declared Turkey as "Little America" and the *gecekondus* began to look like a Wild West scenery (Esen, 2008, p. 8). The developments were expanded to the administration of the municipalities as well. Under the new regime, the 'municipalities were given more autonomy and their budgets increased. Through those policies Istanbul was allowed to chart its own course in terms of infrastructure and productive investment' (Ç. Keyder, 2010, p. 2). The privatization of formerly municipal services e.g. transportation and provision of natural gas, added to the difficulties of the low income families.

The man accompanying and realizing the plans of *Özal* in Istanbul was *Dalan*, the first mayor of greater Istanbul (1984–1989) who was taken to the stage by the prime minister. He as the 'unchallenged boss of the city imprinted the urban space with a radically new conception' (Ç. Keyder, 2010, p. 4). In a nutshell, *Dalan* was the same to Istanbul as Haussmann was to Paris or Moses to New York (Ç. Keyder, 2010).

The second wave of land seizure

Later in 1990s, the political migration from Anatolia this time due to military conflicts in Kurdish areas contributed to the housing shortage in Istanbul. The shortage reached its peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s before it came to a temporary standstill with the 1999 earthquake shaking the Mediterranean areas including Istanbul and the national economic crisis in 2000s (Esen, 2008). The second wave was considerably stronger than the first wave and affected the cityscape more.

When the first wave of land taking and establishing the *gecekondus* was for the purpose of sheltering, the second wave was aiming at profit reaping. The bottom-up act of land seizing with its roots in principles of equality and solidarity was substituted by 'mafia-style substitutes' (Esen, 2008, p. 9). Riza remembers that period as such:

Between 1984 and 1986, even later, in 1990s, after the coup, the real estate people began to come to the neighborhood. Things began to occur then. The real estate people began to gather up the public land here.

Briefly said, like other cities in Istanbul 'urban spaces became the most profitable source of investment in the country and adopted an aggressive place-marketing strategy to attract capital. Therefore, it became extremely difficult for the urban poor to survive in their living spaces due to increased real estate values' (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010, p. 5).

3.4 From 2002 to date (AKP time) - the period of 'blessed demolitions'¹

Justice and Development Party (hereafter, *AKP*²) took the government in general elections of 2002 and the majority of municipalities in local elections of 2004. The party adopted a general economic policy of liberalism mixed with pragmatism in favour of big bourgeoisie and capital (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011). In fact, after seizing the power the 'moderate' *AKP* showed to be 'extremely' pro-business (Keyder, 2009) in Turkey and specifically in Istanbul. As the result of policies of *AKP* after 2000s, neo-liberalism became 'more visible, deepened and more entrenched' (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008, p. 8).

3.4.1 Urban policies of AKP

The urban policies of the triumphant Party had two major pillars;

- Instead of increasing the densities in existing urban areas through new plans, shifting the location of urban plans to *gecekondu* areas;
- Prevention of the 'unhealthy and ugly' urbanization and beautifying the cities.

The new policies also encouraged constructing luxury residential areas, gated communities, shopping malls, office buildings, housing complexes, five star hotels, convention centers, private hospitals and universities and in general, implementing prestigious projects. To accommodate the foreign 'new business services sectors, real estate investments for upscale residences and luxury leisure had to be accommodated with more certainty'. For tourists the city 'had to look clean and

¹ Referring to a speech by the Turkish prime minister, *Tayyip Erdoğan* about the latest developments in Istanbul *gecekondus* in 2013 in which he detailed about demolitions in a number of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods including *Derbent*, calling the bulldozing of the neighbourhood as 'blessed demolitions' (*Erdoğan*, 2013).

²*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*

ordered' (Keyder, 2009, p. 4) matched with the taste of international visitors (Keyder, 2009). The plain translation of these major urban policies was slum cleansing and *gecekondu* clearance. It also was decided that in order to compensate the lands and houses which were planned to be taken from the *gecekondu* people, 'affordable housing' would be produced for the people in remote peripheries of Istanbul (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011).

As the result of the policies and urban transformation plans adopted by AKP some groups gained huge amount of benefits. At the same time, people at the opposite side of the picture not only lost the small capital they had collected for long years, but also occupied no place in the glittering future of the city (Van Griekingen, 2011). In a nutshell, these urban policies caused the increase in the value of urban land, the displacement and replacement of significant numbers of people, the relocation of poverty, and motivated dramatic changes in the urban and social landscape of the city (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). One of the main bodies to implement these policies was the Turkish Mass Housing Company (*TOKI*)¹.

3.4.2 Urban transformation plans and the Turkish Mass Housing Company (*TOKI*)

The 'neoliberal urbanism in Istanbul as embodied in a restructuring of local governance, a set of legal changes that bypasses former checks, controls, and balances, large-scale urban development projects, and changes in real-estate investments' (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008, p. 17). Of the bodies which its structure was totally modified to match that objective was the Mass Housing Administration (hereafter, *TOKI*).

TOKI is a governmental organization established in 1984 to 'regulate the housing sector, prevent the expansion of *gecekondus* and to provide solutions to the housing shortages in Turkish cities' (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). *TOKI* has provided credits to housing cooperatives mainly consisting of different strata of middle class. For instance, since the beginning of the work up to 2001, the administration could help about 950'000 family houses with cheap credits (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). It means that, the state budget basically helped solving the middle class housing problems. The organization never helped the *gecekondu* people with their housing problems.

Restructuring of *TOKI* after 2001 by AKP government turned the administration to the strongest institution in real-estate market of Turkey. To give *TOKI* its new role and help it to conduct it, several laws were passed between 2002 and 2008 (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). These laws gave the legal right to *TOKI* to follow different tasks. Of the most controversial of these tasks were executing 'urban renewal' and '*gecekondu* transformation' projects and revising planning and zoning regulations in 'transformation' zones (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). These rights gave *TOKI* special power to define whatsoever zone in the city as the 'transformation zone' and execute whatsoever plans the administration found necessary to implement.

¹*Toplu Konut İdaresi*

To conduct these '*gecekondu* transformation' projects, *TOKI* supported and backed by local municipalities of Istanbul bulldozed the *gecekondu* areas and evicted the inhabitants of them and re-located them in the apartments constructed by *TOKI* in remote peripheries of the city. The former *gecekondu* areas now have become the scene of mass projects of luxury housing for different strata of upper class.

With the special legal rights granted to *TOKI* after 2001, this administration as the most powerful real-estate player in 'Turkey could single-handedly determine and shape market dynamics' (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). In a nutshell, *TOKI* has gained a dual legal status and a twofold role; it has become 'a public agency (directly tied to the premiership)' when acting and operating as 'a private developer in the market' (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). In other words, many of the roles and responsibilities of Ministry of Development and Housing was replaced by *TOKI* and municipalities (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011).

Since *TOKI* is considered as a public agency it can receive public lands. For instance, between 2002 and 2008 *TOKI* was allocated about 6600 hectares of public land for free. According to the law, *TOKI* could either sell this land to other private developers or use it for constructing profit-making housing to sell in the market. To grasp the amount of the job which *TOKI* is involved in, it is useful to check the numbers: 'Between 2003 and 2009, *TOKI* built 354'633 apartment units, 331 trade centers, 414 schools, 42 hospitals, 268 mosques, and many other buildings' (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009, p19). *TOKI* is also involved in constructing other structures and some megaprojects.

Between 2002 and 2007, *TOKI* has succeeded to increase its assets about 10 times more; from 980 million to 9.4 billion USD (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009).

TOKI is not only constructing housing units, but also is involved in other activities in construction sector. For instance, the Company has built a football stadium in Istanbul on the public land and has plans to construct a theme park in the city (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009).

TOKI is exempted from any official fees or municipal charges and taxes. Besides, by amendments of law the Company has been exempted also of the auditing mechanisms which normally are conducted by the Turkish Court of Accounts (Karatepe, 2013). Also, since the Company has been part of the national budget, it has not been affected by any austerity policy which the public or governmental agencies are prone to (Karatepe, 2013).

Since the outset *TOKI* has been an identity to work for the middle class and the low income groups practically have been exempted of its productions. But the restructuring it after 2002 has converted the Company to an institution to work majorly for the upper classes. The number of shopping malls and high end residences constructed by *TOKI* is significant (Cavusoglu, 2011, p. 48; Ozdemir, 2011, quoted by Karatepe, 2013). Due to vast set of activities and enormous economic and political power

given to the Company, *TOKI* has gained a bold position in Turkish economy and specifically in construction industry.

Within the new set of adopted urban policies of *AKP*, the ‘co-workers’ of *TOKI* in all of the urban transformation plans have been the municipalities of Istanbul. To harmonize the activities of municipalities and *TOKI* and materialize the urban policies of *AKP*, new set of laws were devised and passed.

3.4.3 Changing the legal setting in favour of urban transformation projects

In continuation of the governing changes in 1980s giving even more power to the mayor of Istanbul, some new set of laws were introduced in 2004 and 2005 (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). Among the empowering laws, the most significant one was the law ‘giving the municipalities the authority to designate, plan and implement “urban transformation” areas and projects’ (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008, p. 13).

Furthermore, in parallel to some laws to support and strengthen *TOKI* there were some other laws threatening the *gecekondu* people and their lives in their settlements. Although the laws against the *gecekondus* were not unprecedented, it was the first time ever in the history of the country in which establishing a *gecekondu* was considered as a ‘criminal act’ (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). These laws contributed to demolishing many of *gecekondus*. For instance, between 2004 and 2008 about 11,453 of *gecekondu* units were demolished in Istanbul (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009).

In 2004 and by announcement of a large scale urban regeneration project to the press, the Metropolitan Municipality gave the news about the start of clearance of 1.500 *gecekondus*. It added that 85.000 *gecekondus* more would be demolished and their habitants would be re-located and re-settled to the social housing units of *TOKI* (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011). In a nutshell, what the authorities planned for resulted to ‘a complete replacement of both physical and social structure and the relocation of the original inhabitants to the city’s fast growing periphery’ (Van Griekingen, 2011).

The Istanbul city officials have declared that via execution of urban transformation plans two-third of the 1.5 million housing units of the city should be redeveloped (Van Griekingen, 2011). Natural disasters and specifically earthquake have been the major pretext for these plans in Istanbul. For setting a strong basis for those profound developments, laws were changed. Likewise, if in the past decade there has been a boom in speculation of land property (increase in number of megaprojects, five star hotels, shopping malls, gated communities, etc.), it has not happened without setting a proper legal support for them (*Urban Age Istanbul’09*, 2011). The reflection of this setting is vividly and specifically seen in the infamous laws of 5366 and 5393.

Law 5366

Officially called ‘the preservation of the historic and cultural dilapidated immovable entities through renewal and their sustainable reuse’ (Act 5366), this law was ratified by the Turkish Council of Ministers in 2005 and was put into effect in July 2006. This law which is executable for historic areas gives new expropriation power to the local municipalities of Istanbul. Besides that, the law allows the municipalities to implement renewal projects in the assigned areas. ‘Law 5366 enables a “deteriorated historic area” to be taken outside the normal planning system and for local authorities to propose far-reaching and potentially drastic development schemes’ (UNESCO, 2006). Interestingly enough, although the law is supposed to act in historic areas, it merely focuses on those parts of the city which has tenure complications. By stating that the main policy would be ‘demolition and rebuilding’, the law explicitly reveals its essence to be ‘conservations through renewal’ (Dincer, 2010).

This law puts two options in front of the resident of a housing unit in the assigned area; either to be a ‘partner of the renewal project prepared by the authority or a company assigned by the authority’ or ‘to sell his property to the authority and take money or another property elsewhere in the city’ (Dincer et al., 2008, p. 1). The important issue is that the property owner does not have the right to say “no thanks”. If he does not make an agreement with the municipality, the municipality has the full right to expropriate his property (Dincer et al., 2008).

Law 5393

To complement the Law 5366, Municipal Law No. 5393 (Article 73a) granted the responsibility for making the decisions related to urbanization and urban development to municipalities In July 2005 (Van Griekingen, 2011). This law practically entailed those parts of Istanbul which were not touched by Law 5366 and authorized the officials to enlist them in the urban transformation projects. This law authorized the municipalities with a wide spectrum of tasks i.e. ‘reconstruct and restore the ruined parts of the city; to create housing areas, industrial and commercial zones, technology parks and social facilities; to take measures against the earthquake risk or to protect the historical and cultural structure of the City’ (Van Griekingen, 2011, p. 4). The aforementioned areas were supposed to be reconstructed by joint operation of municipalities and *TOKI* or might solely be delegated to *TOKI* (Van Griekingen, 2011).

3.4.4 Changes in perception toward the *gecekondu* people- stigmatization issue

Despite the previous social perception on *gecekondu* inhabitants as innocent and marginalized people, since 1980 onwards the perceptions changed and the officials began to label the *gecekondu* people with names. In fact, stigmatization of the inhabitants of *gecekondus* has been working as a part of urban transformation projects acting as a justification for these policies (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). Prime minister *Erdoğan*’s speech in 2013 calling the opponents of the urban transformation plans as the members of ‘terrorist networks’ is merely one stance in many

(Erdoğan, 2013). One of the other infamous labels of all used against the *gecekondu* people is ‘*varoş*’. Originally, a Hungarian term meaning ‘outside’, in today’s Turkey, this word means as outlaws, mobs and criminals. In fact, the rise of the ‘*varoş*’ terminology in the 1990s was more than a simple definition but a total discourse (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011) reflecting all the problems bound to *gecekondus* and their inhabitants. ‘The *varoş*, was oppositional to the city and is setting itself against the city; it was hostile and antagonistic to the city...[It] is attacking the city, its values, its political institutions and, more importantly, the very core of its ideology and its social order’ (Erman quoted in (Erman and Eken, 2004, p. 59)).

In 2006, the chairman of *TOKİ* openly stated: ‘We should in a way keep poor people away from the city of Istanbul’ (Van Griekingen, 2011, p. 2). In 2007, he explicitly associated *gecekondu* populations with crime and chaos and ‘terror, drugs, psychological negativity, health problems and oppositional views’. He added that for integrating with the world and joining the EU, the country should get rid of those dwellings (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). The statements of *TOKİ* chairman are just one in a pile of other statements by Turkish government officials talking the same language against the *gecekondu* people.

3.4.5 Megaprojects in Istanbul-The bigger, the better!

Like other global cities choosing the neo-liberal policies for re-defining the urban spaces, in Istanbul these policies have necessitated a new form of governance, where local governments assume ‘entrepreneurial roles’ directly or through partnerships with private actors (Miraftab quoted by (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010)). Megaprojects have an important role in this regime shift as they open ways to investment in highly profitable spaces i.e. old industrial zones, waterfronts and inner-city slums (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). When some of the projects invade the historic neighbourhoods of the city (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008), some other threaten the ecological wealth of Istanbul.

A number of these projects have involved world-renowned architects like Zaha Hadid and Ken Yeang to design projects for entire districts. Zaha Hadid’s project for Kartal, an industrial district on the Asian side, involves relocating industries to the outskirts of the city and designing office buildings that will accommodate service industries, five-star hotels targeted towards international visitors, and a marina catering to cruise tourism. Another project is designed by the internationally known Malaysian architect for the southern part of the Küçükçekmece district on the European side to turn this low income neighbourhood into a touristic and recreational area (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008).

Beside the previous sites inside the city, the urban transformation projects are encroaching toward formerly un-utilized and un-habituated parts of the city. This fact is profoundly worrying for professionals and activists because according to the 1/100'000 scale Istanbul Provincial Environmental Plan adopted in 2006, it is forbidden to construct anything in northern part of the city due to its sensitive ecology. There are several megaprojects designed or under construction in

north of Istanbul, despite the fact that as the major natural ecological resources of the city, this area never has been used as a habitat for any group of people in the history.

Beside the location and the serious threat the megaprojects make against the natural fauna and flora around Istanbul, all of them are similar in terms of the huge amount of budget they swallow, the magnitude of their scale and irrelevance of them as well as the objections and protests they ignite among several spectra of professionals and activists. There is a consensus (Dişli Zibak, 2013) that these projects would attract more population to the city, would expand the residential areas to the north and would gravely and negatively affect this 'ecological fragile zone and the water protection areas' (Esen, 2008) and ultimately they would impact the ecology and climate of the entire city. The timing of these projects is coinciding with the second wave of land seizures (Esen, 2008).

One of the megaprojects is the Istanbul third airport. The (29 billion USD) airport which can be seen from the air (Dişli Zibak, 2013), locates in Yeniköy and Akpınar close to the Black Sea area in the north of the city. This airport which is planned to be opened in 2017 is going to handle a capacity of 90 million passengers and would 'break the record' to 150 million passenger capacity (Dişli Zibak, 2013). The airport is named after the president *Erdoğan* and like other megaprojects of Istanbul would cause a major tree cut of thousands of acres trees (Sharkov Damien, 2014) and will cover about 76.5 square kilometers of land (Anadolu Agency, 2014a). The airport faces many critiques from different groups of civil society, professionals and individuals. For instance, there are two different lawsuits opened by Turkish Chamber of Environmental Engineers against it (Anadolu Agency, 2014a).

The second megaproject is the third bridge over the Bosphorus. The 1275 m long bridge will connect two far northern points of Asian and European sides of Istanbul (Garipçe and Poyrazköy) right at the connection point of Bosphorus and Black Sea. This 1.9 billion dollar project like other projects is bragged to be the longest suspended bridge in the world. When even the previous two suspended bridges of Istanbul did not contribute to the traffic circulation (Azem, 2012), construction of the third one, in the heart of green area of Istanbul does not seem to follow a rational logics. Quite oppositely as the previous experiences in Turkey have proved when a transportation route is built, new residential areas will develop immediately nearby. Similarly, in 70s and 80s Istanbul expanded toward the north as the result of construction of two bridges over the Bosphorus (Kundak and Baypinar, 2011).

Aerial photographs reveal a major destruction of hundreds of square kilometers of land amid the forests in the north to open the space for the bridge and the expressway connecting it to the rest of the city. Beside the damages caused by cutting the trees, the chemicals which will be used for de-icing of the roads in the cold months of the year, would contaminate the underground watersheds (BARIŞ ALTINTAŞ, 2013). Banning the areal photographing of the area reveals the real story behind

the initial promises of the officials that there would be no major developments in the area beside the expressway (BARIŞ ALTINTAŞ, 2013). Ironically, Mr. *Erdoğan*, the 1994-1998 serving mayor of Istanbul had called constructing such a bridge as an act of 'murder' when in 1995 he had mentioned that 'A third bridge is a murder... It is nothing but massacring the remaining green areas in the city's north by zoning the area for construction. I hope the government will change without this murder being committed', now he is one of the feverish supporters of constructing the bridge. Like other megaprojects, this project sparked strong oppositions from experts, professionals, environmentalists and civil organizations (Letsch, 2012). Although these objections and protests have not halted the course of the construction, this bridge is of the focal points of discussions over the property-led policies of Turkish neo-liberal government.

The third project 'canal Istanbul' is called a 'crazy project' by Mr. *Erdoğan* – the president- (Srivastava and Harvey, 2014). According to promotion video of the project (*Kanal İstanbul projesi*, 2014) the project would be a water channel parallel to Bosphorus for large ships, a city for 7.5 million people and would include the world's largest airport as well as many cloned landmark buildings from all over the world (Adanali, 2014). The project will be a private-public partnership project as it will be undertaken according to a build-operate-transfer-model (Anadolu Agency, 2014b). According to Mr. *Erdoğan*, the canal will have a length of 45-50 km. with the depth of 25 m and the width of 145-150 m. It is estimated that about 55.000 vessels per year will pass through the canal (Kundak and Baypinar, 2011). Although the Turkish law requires Environmental Impact Assessment for projects at this scale, no assessments as such have been conducted for this project. Apart from the bragging effect of these projects and political benefits of them for the ruling party and specifically the master mind of these projects Mr. *Erdoğan*, these construction activities all aim at making the huge amount of surplus.

3.4.6 Gated communities

Before 80s, the main features of Istanbul residential buildings were apartments and *gecekondus* (Geniş, 2007). These two groups of buildings reflected all sorts of divisions from look to class and to culture; apartments were majorly owned and or occupied by the middle class and the latter by the working class. In fact, the major changes in terms of class segregation in Istanbul happened after 1980s; before that Istanbul was a softly segregated city (OguzIsik and Guvenc, 1996).

Neo-liberalization of Turkish economy in 1980s, favoured turning Istanbul to a global city which could be marketed globally and attract international investors (Tanulku, 2013). These policies favoured making Istanbul to a showcase hosting festivals, with glittering shopping malls and art galleries. Istanbul was selected as 2010 European Capital of culture and became a 'success story' (C. Keyder, 2010, p. 1) in global market competing with the international rivals. The new policies to re-define the urban space, sell it and make profit out of it, led to the first round of establishment of gated communities. In other words, gated communities were of the clear signs of neo-liberalization of Turkish economy (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). Inside, these communities had shopping malls,

cafés and restaurant chains and private schools and universities. The location of these primary groups was close to the city centre (Tanulku, 2013). Now in 2000s, the gated communities are the primary form of housing complexes all aiming at attracting the middle and upper class (Geniş, 2007). The only major difference is the location; now many of these communities are established in the north and far from the city centers. Living in their own ‘island’ without any direct connection to Istanbul city centre they ‘seem to be clueless about parts of Istanbul other than the few middle- or upper-middleclass neighbourhoods. They can hardly name neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city’ (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008, p. 32).

The emergence of the gated communities in Istanbul had different reasons; the neoliberal economic policies turned the lands as a source of profit making and paved the way for the large developer to get involved into housing and construction sector. Also, the new money coming to the hands of upper classes paved the way to search for a ‘higher standard’ of life (Tanulku, 2013).

Beside the global reasons for these communities to be established in other parts of the world, the Turkish case has its own grounds to add to the international experiences of these communities. Of these reasons are imitating the western life style which is considered a ‘higher’ level of life. And since Turkey and specifically Istanbul is of a more polarized class structure (Tanulku, 2013) and environment, the formation of these communities as the settlement of upper classes seems to be inevitable.

Therefore, gated communities which were established as a demand of a new social class appearing in the liberalization period after the 1980s (Tuzin Baycan and Gulumser, 2007) started to appear in Istanbul in the same decade following economic and political changes in the country (Tuzin Baycan and Gulumser, 2007). Afterwards, these communities have been intensely observed in Istanbul (Yonet and Yirmibesoglu, 2009). Today master planned gated communities are mushrooming all around the city. For instance, at the end of 2005, they were 650 and it was planned that up to the end of the same year the number was supposed to increase to 150 more (Geniş, 2007). These towns are organized and governed by companies established by shareholders or Homeowner Associations (Geniş, 2007).

3.5 Derbent neighbourhood; brief history, facts and figures¹

Located in *Sarıyer* district of Istanbul in European side of the city the neighbourhood of *Derbent*² indwells about 12,500 people. *Derbent* is built over a hill with the slopes overlooking to the Black Sea in the north and Bosphorus in the east.

¹ This part is extensively using the data extracted from an unpublished research project conducted in *Derbent* (Yalcintan et al., 2014) between 2011 and 2014.

² Officially called *Camlitepe Mehellesi*

First group of the people settling in *Derbent* came to the area decades ago. As a group of women of the neighbourhood recall from the memories of their parents, their grandfather was of the first people arriving in the area. These people settled in *Derbent* years before 1930s. These people settled in *Derbent* years before 1930s. As one of the women from the family says:

We are the first group. The one who established this neighbourhood was my grandfather. My dad was born here in 1937.

Although the first groupers were involved in agriculture for a while, they later began to work in the surrounding industries including the *Istiniye*¹ shipyard. The same group of women indicated that both their father and their grandfather worked in the shipyard. In chats with the elderly people, almost everybody mentioned her/his job as a former factory worker, cleaner, janitor and low paid professions alike. For instance, a retired woman living on pension told me that she was a tea-woman in a factory nearby. Another man in his 70s recalled stories of their struggles in *Disk*² in 1970s and 1980s.

Derbent was established by the volunteer work of the people of the neighbourhood. Migrating from Anatolian cities i.e. Sivas, Rize, Sinop and other parts of Turkey to Istanbul, they did almost all parts of the infrastructure by their own hands. For instance, for providing the electricity for the neighbourhood the people paid for the posts and dug the ditches. In 1978, a centre for education of the people was founded by themselves. The roads in the neighbourhood were asphalted in 1979 mainly by the work of the inhabitants. Similar to what Esen writes about other informal neighbourhoods of Istanbul (Esen, 2009), the people of *Derbent* did the construction, transport and distribution of consumer goods, and sometimes even the infrastructure needed for water and electricity supply for their households. According to *Riza*, for a long time the people did not have any urban infrastructure and all what they gained through the years was made and worked by the members of the community. He who came to *Derbent* in 1975 with his parents and siblings remembers those days:

¹ A neighbourhood nearby in the same district of *Sarıyer*

² Turkish Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konferadasyonu*) established in 1967

We didn't have roads, neither water nor electricity. We made our neighbourhood according to the principles of *IMECE*¹. In 1977, there were lots of constructions going on in the neighbourhood.

*Elvide*² recalled the situation as follows:

In 1980s, the people decided to make the roads. Because they thought when somebody is sick he should be carried to hospital. Also, there were weddings, funerals, fires ...then they decided to construct the roads.

About the communal solidarity in the old days, she tells a story:

During the time of Demirel³, there was a crisis of gasoline and diesel fuel. Then, my father owned two trucks... it was in the first half of 1970s. My father was an active person and had relations with officials. He asked them (the officials) to help the neighbourhood for constructing the road. They said: 'We have machines but we don't

have any fuels. If you could find fuels, we would send the staff and the machines and we will construct the roads'. My dad took both of the trucks, roamed around Turkey, found the fuel, bought it and brought two full trucks of fuel to the neighbourhood. It was then that the roads were constructed.

¹*IMECE* means volunteer work and financial contribution of all members of a community as affiliates of a solidarity group for doing common works and jobs, e.g. constructing road or sewage system, a religious or community centre and so on (Vikipedi, 2014).

²*Elvide*, 44, sculptor

³Prime minister of Turkey between 1965 and 1993



Figure 2 - Derbent

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 3- Overlooking Derbent

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)

Kamil, 33, security employee repeats the same information as he comments:

All of the people living here, have constructed their houses with their own sweats (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

And *Mehmet*, 46, manager, mentions the importance of constructing one's own house and explains the bound he feels toward it:

Here everybody has built his house with his own sweat. He is identified by it. (His) house is like his child. Being separated from it is like getting separated from his child, being torn off from the child (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

According to a research (Yalcintan et al., 2014) and remarks of the people, most of the services to *Derbent* as well as the surrounding areas and other *gecekondus* neighbourhoods of *Sariyer* was provided after 1990. For instance, the metro line reached to *Derbent* to *Darrushafaka* station. The minibus line crossed the neighbourhood. The natural gas network began to operate. All of those factors increased the (economic) value of the neighbourhood as well as the probability of urban transformation plans.

In 1980s and because of the increase of the value of the land in *Derbent* and other *gecekondus* and as the *Özal* government adopted neo-liberal policies for the economy of the country, the direction of the attention was dragged toward *gecekondus* neighbourhoods as a real source of money. It was the time that the real estate agents began to come to the neighbourhood. As *Riza* remembers:

Between 1984 and 1986, after the coup¹, the real estate people began to come to the neighbourhood. Things began to occur then. The real estate people began to gather up the public land here. They sold one patch of these lands to some fellows in the neighbourhood. They kept some patches in their own hands.

The other point to mention is that the main increase in the population of the neighbourhood occurred in 1970s completing the formation of the neighbourhood. The increase in the population of the neighbourhood was because of the increase in the activities of the surrounding industries and the opportunities for employment in these industries.

¹ Turkish military coup d'état in 12 September 1982 (Wikipedia, 2015)



Figure 4- typical one story *gecekondu* building in *Derbent*

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 5- Multi story buildings in *Derbent*

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 6- It is not easy to walk up the un-engineered roads or climb the many staircases in *Derbent*
Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)

3.5.1 Socioeconomic specifications of *Derbent*

During the past fifty years, the social structure of *Derbent* has changed considerably. The people of this *gecekondu*, have changed the identity as 'innocent victims' (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011, p. 2) to the people who socially are not much different from formal neighbourhoods. Of the other changes is the role of the women in the families. Now, the women play a more significant role in the life of the families. Working inside or outside of their homes, they earn money out of their work and are standing in a more highlighted position. Moreover, the level of schooling has increased considerably. When in the old days the illiteracy was a bold problem, now it has decreased to 16.6% of the population.

In *Derbent* most of the people 'own' the place that they live in. It means that they might be the owner of the whole building or the unit they are living in. As it is discussed in other parts of the thesis, by 'owning' they mean an informal type of tenure which is solely recognized among the community.

I own my place and do not pay rent	70%
The place belongs to a relative of mine- I do not pay rent	12%
I am a tenant	17%

Table 3- House ownership in *Derbent*

Source of data: (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

The income rate of households is also important to consider. It should be noted that according to the Turkish laws, the least amount of income (*askeri ucret*) is 700 Turkish Lira (TL¹). As the table indicates, the biggest part of the population earns less than 2000 TL per month. About 75% of people have indicated that with their income they can afford the costs of life while about 16% stated that they have to borrow money. (The table does not include all the data and merely covers the most populated segments of incomes):

500-1000	22.7%
1001-1500	29%
1501-2000	24.5%
2001-2500	8%

Table 4- Income rate of the households (TL)

Source of data: (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

¹ The conversion rate to USD on Dec 06, 2015 was almost 0.35.



Figure 7- A panoramic view of Derbent

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 8- Derbent (left) and MESA gated community (right side of the picture)

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 9- Derbent, the street as an extension of the inner space- a wedding ceremony held on the street

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)

Culturally, different ethnic or religious groups live in the neighbourhood, Sunni Muslims and Alewites. Also there are different ethnicities; Turks, Kurds, Lazes living in *Derbent*.

3.5.2 Strong sense of community in *Derbent* - 'like Tigris River'¹

Being established about 80 years ago, the people in *Derbent* have a strong sense of community and attachment to their neighbours as well as to the land. Talking about their problems, concerns and their lives, the people usually express their positive feelings toward their community and neighbourhood. The research of Yalcintan et al., 2014 reveals that the social bond is quite strong in *Derbent*. For instance, when asked about the number of the residents they know in their neighbourhood, about 65% of the people have indicated they can say who lives in 0-250 houses and 25% of the people have mentioned they know the people in 250-500 of the houses. The reason for this bond As *Zeynep*, 42, housewife, states is that they feel that the neighbourhood is their home:

For me, my home is not just four walls. All my childhood was spent here. My childhood, my everything is here. My memories, or as a friend put it, all my life is here. My roots are attached to here. Some of my friends have left this place. But I definitely won't leave. My grandfather loved this place too. Also did my father. I love it as well. I have a grown up child; he loves this place too. We are from here (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Zeynep, 48, retired worker expresses similar feelings comparing the life in *Derbent* with the life in 'apartments':

If something goes wrong, no matter if it is at night or during the day, at any moment, any time, the people around me in my neighbourhood, can knock my door or that of the other person at the other side of the street. But in the apartment life, when a door even one meter away from yours opens, nobody says hello. Nobody knows anybody (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

For another woman, *Zeynep*, 32, babysitter, *Derbent* is home:

When I step in *Derbent*, it feels like I step into my own house (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

The research of Yalcintan et al. indicates that 82% of the people feel comfortable in the neighbourhood. For *Kamil*, 33, security employee, the relationship with the people around him is the defining factor for his attachment to *Derbent*:

¹ "With each other, we are like Tigris river", *Nevriye, Kazim Karabekir* neighbourhood, 24, student, worker in a shopping mall (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

All my life was formed here in the neighbourhood. I talk to all the people. Even when there is the slightest problem, everybody can look directly into my eyes and ask if there is anything wrong. I can chest off my problems too. We made this neighbourhood out of nothing. We are here since half a century ago. Our grandfathers, our fathers lived here. If God helps, the ownership (of the neighbourhood) would be ours as the place itself is ours (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Also, he feels comfortable in the neighbourhood and is not willing to exchange *Derbent* with anywhere else in Istanbul:

I won't find peace or I can't take fresh air anywhere else the way I find it here sitting in front of my house. If for example they give me the most beautiful place in *Mecidiyeköy*¹, I won't accept it. (If they give) the most luxurious place, a gated community, I won't accept it (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

In another comment, he binds his entire life to *Derbent* and expresses strong sentiments toward the neighbourhood:

For me, house, life, means this. I was born here. I opened my eyes (to the world) here. How am I supposed to spare my religion or my family? My home is here(Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Zeynep, 42, housewife, shares the same sentiments toward the neighbourhood:

Well, if there is a problem, we knock each other's window. I mean, if there is any sorrow, we talk the sorrow to each other. If there is any joy, we also knock each other's window. I am from *Derbent*, but I lived for a while in *Mecidiyeköy*. Here, the people support each other. They even cook for each other. If I don't cook, my neighbour prepares something for me or invites me to her place. This way, we resolve everything based on solidarity. Here, there is love. And there is friendship. Over there, you won't feel this(Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Despite the feelings of comfort and attachment to their neighbours and the neighbourhood, the life of the people has not been easy in other senses. *Derbent* has lived under the threat of eviction for many years. Land tenure is of the gravest complications causing this situation.

3.5.3 Land tenure; illegal but legitimate

As discussed above, the biggest dilemma that all *gecekondu* neighbourhoods in Istanbul including *Derbent* face is land tenure and the 'informal' status of them. What makes the problem more complicated is that over the years, the commodity value of land in

¹ A low income neighbourhood with a population of 150,000, in *Beyoğlu* district of Istanbul

gecekondus has increased. In case of *Derbent*, construction of several modern facilities in its vicinities, e.g. a modern sport centre, a high end hospital, metro station at the northern entrance of the neighbourhood, as well as the ‘nice’ location of the neighbourhood over a hill looking upon Bosphorus and Black Sea in West and North and over an adjacent forest area, have been of the reasons for the land value increase.

In parallel to the increase of the land value, the demand for it rose up and subsequently, the problems with the Municipality of Istanbul were instigated. As the result of the developments, the people began to realize that the treat of eviction was an imminent menace which hung over them more seriously than ever.

Elvide explains how the increase in the commodity value of the land has caused the pressures against the neighbourhood. She seeks the solution as submitting the job of regeneration to the people:

They say your houses’ condition is not good. Well, if they could provide us something acceptable, for instance, if there could be a small garden, a house, for instance, provide a plan; we are ready to construct it. But we ourselves should do the job.

*Nurjan*¹ gives more information talking about the news they have heard about the details of transformation plans:

They are talking about 50 square meter units. But just imagine me over there, me who have lived in such a house with garden, me who haven’t done anything against the law or system...This place is mine. (They try) to deceive me and send me to a different place... we are against that!

Elvide puts the objective of the transformation plan simply as follows:

They say now that the value of the lands has increased, you are excessive here.

Nurjan confirms that stating:

Actually, they say this place is too much for you. Yes, they say, this place is too valuable. The wealthy should live here.

Another woman in the group, *Dilek*² explains how some patches of land were seized by MESA houses:

¹*Nurjan*, 48, artist,

²*Dilek*, 44, retired

This place that now is MESA is the place we had dedicated for our cemetery. I don't know how things were done those days. We were kids then. After taking that patch, the land grab appealed to them, so, they thought 'Let's grab the rest of the lands. We will crush them (the neighbourhood people)'- they said.

The main rivals over the land

1. Ataturk Auto Industry Housing Cooperative

The Ataturk Auto Industry Housing Cooperative¹ (Hereafter, AAIC Cooperative) is the main entity which is competing with the people of *Derbent* over the land. Founded in 1986, this cooperative bought the public land on which *Derbent neighbourhood* was established decades before. Beside the 336 housing units built over 7.7 ha of the purchased land, the AAIC Cooperative is supporting the urban transformation plans approved by Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanism for *Derbent* to gain the proprietorship of the entire land. Being sure of the success and realization of the plans, AAIC Cooperative made a contract with a construction firm even before official announcement of urban transformation plans for the neighbourhood (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

2. MESA houses-The adjacent gated community

'MESA Houses' is a gated community adjacent to *Derbent* on its northern rim. As Yalcintan et al. explain, to build housing units for its members, the AAIC Cooperative submitted a construction job to MESA Housing Company. Based on the contract between these two parties, in 2005 about 336 housing units were built within 7.7 ha of *Derbent* on a patch of purchased land. The area of these luxury houses now called MESA houses, is walled around and is guarded. The entrance to this site is at the entry of the neighbourhood and quite close to *Darıüssafaka* metro station.

Increasing the value of land and housing in the area as well as merely the existence of MESA housing have contributed to the threats against *Derbent* neighbourhood (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Counteracting against the threat of eviction and urban transformation plans as well as putting forward the claim for the land has been discussed among the people of *Derbent* since long ago. Indeed, it is the hottest topic they usually discuss among themselves, whether in their ceremonies or in their gatherings. To the threat of eviction based on the lack of tenure, the people have simple logics. They believe that although they do not own the land formally, they have been living over it for decades and furthermore, they have

¹Atatürk Oto Sanakarları Konut Kooperatif

established a life and a neighbourhood over it. To them, despite the reality of their ‘informal’ness, there is another countering and converse reality which makes sense to them and justifies their claim to the land: the issue of legitimacy. *Ismail*¹ puts the entire argument simply as such:

Yes, we are not legal, but you see, we are legitimate.

3.5.4 Organization and mobilization

The methods which the people are fighting through against urban transformation plans has changed over the years; from resisting through clashes, erecting barricades on the streets of the neighbourhood, to dissident alternatives, they have tried different ways to strengthen the foundations of their struggle.

Since the people have been living with each other as a neighbourhood for decades the communal and solidarity feelings shared among them have eased the organization of the people. Generally speaking, the people of *gecekondus* are not unfamiliar with organization. Neighbourhoods like *Derbent* have always been foci for the activities of political parties. Later in 1970s, some organizations began to focus exclusively on the neighbourhood social, cultural and physical problems.

Like all spheres of struggle in the country after the 1980 coup d'état, the resistance in the neighbourhood descended to low tides. But after the ease of political and social activities following 1990s and with the threat and pressures of urban transformation plans after 2000s, significant changes happened in regards with the organizing activities in the neighbourhood- once again the inhabitants considered organizing themselves.

Traditionally and since the old days, the neighbourhood associations have been active in *Sariyer gecekondus*. These associations were involved in different cultural and social activities e.g. held classes for the young ones, took the people to group picnics, organized music courses, etc. Originally organizing people from a specific village or the followers of a particular religious sect, these associations came together through the years and found a common field of interest- the neighbourhood.

After years, the people decided they want to have a broader umbrella of organization rather than the small ones including people merely from a specific religious sect or town. That is why later they decided to establish a cooperative besides the traditional associations which they had for years in the neighbourhood.

The organizations which now are active in *Derbent* are as follow:

¹*Ismail*, 44, current employee of *muhtarlık* (the office of *muhtar*- the elected headman of the neighbourhood in Turkish cities as well as rural areas)

Neighbourhood Association

These associations established in many of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods in Istanbul were usually founded in 1970s. In the case of *Derbent* as *Riza* one of the founders of *Derbent* Association recalls, the association began its work at the same period:

In 1975, there was an association in the neighbourhood. Then, it was called '*Gecedkondu* Protection Association'. There was just one here in Sariyer, *Derbent* and there was another one in *Umarniye* neighbourhood in the Asian side. Here, we are in European side.

The work of these associations was majorly focused on dealing with different needs of the people. They organized cultural activities, picnics, courses for the children and activities alike. After the 1982 coup these organizations like many other organizations in Turkey faced repressions. They were dissolved and in some cases their members who were probably active in leftist political activities as well, were arrested and even some ended up in prisons. *Riza*, remembers those days:

After the coup, they dissolved our association. After the coup, many were under suppression. Many people were arrested and tortured. Ugly things happened. Several others were under suppression (in) poor neighbourhoods like ours...Then, I was arrested for 8 days. Following the release and after one month, I was sent to military service.

Two decades later in 2000s, the people decided to re-establish the Association. *Riza* describes the situation:

Coming to 2000s, our parents, the first-groupers, understood that we are definitely losing the neighbourhood.... then when they tried and couldn't achieve anything, we decided to establish an association... the young ones established the Association. After six years we held the general assembly.

The association was officially called 'Beautification, Solidarity and Help Association' (hereafter, Association). This association dealt with the different social and physical issues of the neighbourhood.

In March 2006, with the excuse of establishing a health centre in the neighbourhood and accompanied by the riot police, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality teams tried to demolish the building of the Association. A day long protest took place in the neighbourhood. At that time, the protests in the city had increased in number because at the

same time the mayor of Istanbul had issued a written order to demolish 960 houses resulting to a joint protest of all the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods. Turkish prime minister, *Tayyip Erdoğan's* speech (*Erdoğan*, 2013) calling the opponents of the urban transformation plans as elements related with 'terrorist organizations' is solely one in many of the official stances of the government against *gecekondu* residents. Calling the protestors as 'terrorists' in the news and media, offended the people.

The Association was stationed in a small building at the northern entrance of the neighbourhood. *Riza* remembers the demolition operation in 2006 when the municipality people with the help of riot police attacked the neighbourhood:

They (riot police) demolished our Association. For demolition of Association thousands of them came in 4:30 in the morning and stayed here up to 12 pm. Clashes erupted. The people resisted the demolition (of the Association). That day we experienced bitter things.

Ismail believes that although the excuse for demolishing the Association building was erecting a health centre instead, the real reason behind the attack was 'testing' the neighbourhood. According to him, the municipality was checking if there were any resistances in the neighbourhood in case the plans for eviction or demolition took place:

In 2006 they came to demolish the Association. They faced a real resistance from the neighbourhood. They thought if these people are acting like this resisting the demolition of the Association, what will they do when they face the demolition of their homes?

*Aydemir*¹, the current *muhtar* (headman) of *Derbent* tells the story of demolition of Association building in more details:

The riot place filled the neighbourhood. They surrounded all the exit points of the neighbourhood... Well, (before that) we had received the warning and we knew that there would be demolition operation. Our young friends, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood were giving shifts waiting. Because we knew that they would come at night and would try to demolish. We were waiting and guarding the Association building, so that the demolition didn't happen easily. We asked them why they are demolishing (the building). They said because this neighbourhood is illegal. (We said) but this neighbourhood was established in 1972 and this neighbourhood has a history... is this the only illegal *gecekondu*? What was their objective? (I think) it was testing the power of *Derbent*. They thought 'we will demolish the Association'

¹*Aydemir*, 44,

building, if the people didn't react, we will go on demolishing the whole neighbourhood'. Well, naturally, we fought back, but they demolished the building anyway. (Despite) the resistance we did, the government, the police having the power, they demolished the building. So, here there were clashes. The police attacked and detentions happened. The people defended themselves. Then the people poured onto the streets. They protested and resisted the operation.

As all the interviewees in *Derbent* recall, when the police attacked the neighbourhood the people fought back and clashes erupted in the neighbourhood. The media coverage of the incident did not let the story to be kept just in the neighbourhood. Very soon, a representative of the Turkish parliament came to the neighbourhood and got involved in the incident. The visiting MP talked about the confrontation afterwards in the parliament. These questionings forced the authorities who were involved in the 'operation' to try to justify the violence. *Aydemir* tells the story as follows:

A parliament member (*Mehmet Sevigen*) came to *gecekondu*, took the tear gas cartridges and showed it in the parliament questioning the prime minister. Mehmet Ali *Sahin*, was the head of the council then, he also came here with the then mayor of *Sariyer*. Before the operations, nobody had given us any explanation on why they did the operation, but after these people came here, they claimed that the Association building was demolished in order to construct a health centre on its place. Actually, (before that) the people of the neighbourhood were trying to convince the officials to establish a health centre, but nobody had listened to the people. The people even had suggested that they would construct the building and the government just should have sent the doctors. So, it looked as if the people of the neighbourhood were to blame.

As said, *Aydemir* and *Ismail* interpret the operation of demolition and the violence of the police against the people as an assessment of the possible response of the people toward the transformation plans. *Aydemir* also links the incident with other plots going on secretly against the neighbourhood. He puts the idea as such:

The coincidence of the legal claim of the AAIC Cooperative over the ownership of the lands here and this operation was not an accident. They had signed a contract with a construction firm. What was the contract about? It said that with the condition of evicting the people of *Derbent*, we would share the job with each other. The firm's name was *Cemre* Construction Inc. So, they (*Cemre* Construction Inc.) said, we will evict the people from *Derbent*, and then we will get the 25% of the interest. It was a formal contract. Thus, this coincidence is not an accident.

Of the other incidents affecting the people of *Derbent* was the evacuation of forty families from the neighbourhood. These evacuated people were mostly politically affiliated with *AKP* and were convinced to leave the neighbourhood to have apartments in *Kağıthane*, another neighbourhood in Istanbul. The departure did not go easily and confrontations took place with the police forces that were protecting the leaving people from possible attacks of angry neighbours. *Ismail* states that the people of *Derbent* tried to discuss with the leaving people to convince them not to leave. He expresses his negative thoughts about the people who left as such:

They are the kind of people who can sell the neighbourhood. They are involved in the ugly jobs everywhere. I believe that they are (morally) weak people. Their mentality is like this- whatsoever *AKP* or Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality says is correct. (We ask them) how is it correct? We say, let's discuss. They don't discuss. Simply they say 'Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality doesn't do anything wrong!', (we say) 'but bro, how it is not wrong?' It is three years now that we are holding these gatherings. We have explained everything. Believe me, if we explain these things to a seven year old kid, he would comprehend that and would say: 'You are right!', but these grownups cannot understand. Why? Because they are rigid. They are like that; whatever the Party orders, they would do that. They feel fear toward the Party. They are not kind of people who stand against injustice. (We tell them) but this Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is suppressing you. But they would say 'well, what can we do?', as you see, we have stupid people here. These forty families they are that kind of people. They are kind of people who sold the neighbourhood in order to save themselves. Imagine some 5-6 foxes, connecting themselves with the system with the hope of gaining something from the interests produced here.

Nurjan finds the reason of leave of those forty families as such:

They (those who left) understand the things in a different way. It is not a political reason for us. (Among us) we have those who vote for *AKP*, those who vote for *CHP*¹ and those who vote for *MHP*². Those who left the Sivas³ (part of the) neighbourhood, let's not insult them, but they have a more important task rather than the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Cooperative

When the people decided that for the gaining the land ownership and fighting against the urban transformation plans an association was not enough, they began to seek a legal means to gain the land ownership. They also decided that the future ownership should not

¹ Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)

² National People's Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*)

³ She means that the part of the neighbourhood in which the people from Sivas live

be solely for the people who are the existing members of that organization. Thus, the people of *Derbent* decided to establish a neighbourhood cooperative to deal with the issue of ownership and to gain legitimacy within the existing legal system.

In fact, before establishing the cooperative, the people had begun discussing about different activities. In the meetings, the people discussed about improving the work of associations i.e. the activities regarding the establishment of their cooperative as well as dealing with the daily issues of the neighbourhood. To these meetings all the people of the neighbourhood were invited. After a while, those who were not members of associations began to participate in the meetings.

The Cooperative has helped the residents to articulate their demands. As the interviewees explained, before the establishment of the cooperative, when there was a news which was spread in the neighbourhood about a new plan or project, the reaction of the people was confined to collecting petitions and signatures and trying to meet with the municipality authorities. After the establishment of the cooperative, the demands became more clear and concrete.

When asked about the Cooperative and why she is a member, *Ayche*, 82, housewife shows her point finger and explains, 'When you are not a member, you are on your own and you are like this', and then she fists her hand and explains on, 'But when you are a member, you are like this'.



Figure 10- Cooperative of *Derbent*

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 11- Muhtar talks at a meeting with activists at the Cooperative of Derbent

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)

Interestingly enough, the idea of establishing a cooperative for the neighbourhood was offered by the mayor of Istanbul. In a meeting with the people, he told them that since the people's demands could not be followed individually, it was a feasible option if they organized themselves in a cooperative. *Aydemir*, the *muhtar* tells about the story of meeting the mayor and his suggestion in details:

We didn't give up after they demolished our Association. What we did then? I think it was in 2011 in which the current mayor of Istanbul, Mr. *Kadir* came over there (in *Sarıyer*). Through a political party, we asked for a face to face meeting with Mr. *Kadir*. We thought, (as) he is our respected mayor, we will share our problems in *Derbent* with him and will ask him what to do. Then, we didn't have any cooperative. We just had an association... the mayor said that this issue could not be done individually. He said: 'Today, you have come, tomorrow somebody else would come. You go and establish a cooperative.' So, we got back and thought the mayor is right, because here, I don't know, many thousands people live and everybody would say

something. (We thought) what we will do? We (decided) we will establish a cooperative.

Aydemir gives more information and details on how the cooperative took shape and how those who were involved, organized it:

What's a cooperative? It can do the construction. It's a legal entity...At the beginning we didn't have a place of course. So, we sat with other concerned fellows and thought: how should we do this? Sometimes we gathered in coffee shops - after demolishing the (Association) building and we thought, 'Let's establish a cooperative!' When we decided over that, we didn't have any money. There was no income (for the Cooperative) as well...The formal establishment was in May 2012.

The people who were involved in establishing the Cooperative were not many. About seven people registered the Cooperative but the discussions resulting to this decision on organizing themselves came after several meetings. *Ismail* states that his involvement in the life and struggle of the neighbourhood began when the forty families decided to leave the neighbourhood. That incident was a motive of *Ismail* and some other numbers of the people to think about the problems. He tells the story as such:

I became active when they moved the forty families out of the neighbourhood. There were serious conflicts occurring in the neighbourhood (at the time of evacuation). The police got involved full forcedly. After that, me and a group of my friends (I was 35 then) decided that we have to get involved in these issues. We have to get our struggle to a higher level. So, we thought what can we do? What should we do? We decided we have to gather the young ones. About 70 young people gathered.



Figure 12- A sign on the wall of Cooperative of *Derbent* reads: '*Derbent* is ours, it will remain ours!'

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 13- A slogan on the wall in *Derbent* reads: 'There is no pass for demolition!'

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)



Figure 14- An electoral poster in *Derbent* reads partly: 'The house is ours, the neighbourhood is ours, delegate our lands to us...We have made our choice- our party, our choice is our neighborhood!'

Source: MMansoorian (Oct. 2014)

He explains that for finding the solutions they were seeking, they were not alone on their own. At this time, they began to approach the *Bir Umut* NGO. *Ismail* tells the story as such:

We sat and looked at the developments. We, with Mr. *Erbay*¹, talked about 'what can we do?' This way we learned things. At some periods we had meetings every week.

¹One of the founders of *Bir Umut* NGO

Then, to avoid the people getting bored and exhausted, we made the meetings once in two weeks.

The outcome of those discussions was that for keeping the neighbourhood and resisting the eviction, they had to formalize their organization. *Ismail* explains:

At that time, we had the problems of moving those families out of the neighbourhood. We had several problems. We talked with the people about those things. To stop the gossips in the neighbourhood, we tried to register everything. Something like this: I have a house here. I have to fight for it. We have to have papers, documents (in order) to make things formal. The issues should be followed up. Now, everybody is trying to do something. All of us try to do something. Then, I had a job. I was manager. I decided to give a break for some time (because here) we had things to do; working with internet, spreading the news, sharing the news with the public media, etc. Things began like this. We registered the Cooperative ... In this country the process is like this. So, to become legal and formal we had to establish the Cooperative.

He looks at the registration process and formalization of their organization as a feasible way to push their struggle ahead. He describes his views:

We learned that to gain our rights it is not just enough to resist. We have to make it legal and the means to do that is the Cooperative. We think of the Cooperative as a vehicle for practicing our struggle. Well, cooperatives are commercial associations. But we don't look at it as something commercial. It is a means to reach our goal. Cooperative is a new thing, a new blood, a new understanding (for us). Now, every week the people gather, we discuss things. Period.

Specifications of *Derbent* neighbourhood Cooperative

The Cooperative of *Derbent* is registered as a commercial cooperative but the people with the help of *Bir Umut* have changed some changes in the articles of the constitution which makes it different from other similar cooperatives in the same category in Turkey.

The first difference is that it is a 'neighbourhood' cooperative when actually there is not such a category in the classifications of cooperatives in Turkey. The other major difference is that when a specific cooperative is registered, it should have fixed number of members. In *Derbent*, since the cooperative is a 'neighbourhood' Cooperative, it does not have any fixed number of members. According to the constitution of *Derbent* Cooperative, all those who live in the neighbourhood can be and potentially are the members of the Cooperative. This is why the number of the members has been increasing since the establishment. When the initial members were a few, the number has increased to about 500 over the past three

years. With this change in the constitution, no outsider can come and become a member if she/he is not living in the neighbourhood. This simple difference stops any interest making attempt for the members. *Aydemir* who is also one of the founding members of the Cooperative explains the difference:

The objective of this Cooperative is this: those who live in *Derbent*, meaning those who have documents from *Sarıyer* estate department can be the members. Out of this, those who are following the commercial purposes, they cannot be the members.

Another difference of *Derbent* Cooperative with other commercial cooperatives is the establishment of a board within the Cooperative which discusses the important issues. Without the presence and discussions of this board no important decision can be made by the directing board. Called as 'advisory board', it includes 20% of the entire number of members of the Cooperative. *Aydemir* explains about it:

The directing board cannot decide over important issues by its own. It has an advisory board (to work with). This advisory board includes 20% of the members. This board is not a competent authority but a body to discuss things with. They can bring up ideas but the final decision would be made by the directing board. Anyways, the advisory board should sign all the decisions.

The third difference is the membership fee. Everybody who becomes the member of the Cooperative should pay 100 Turkish Lira for signing in the Cooperative plus 15 Turkish Lira for the annual membership fee. According to the constitution, the new members should pay the same amount of the money as the old members. *Riza* explains about it:

The other difference is that, the new members of the Cooperative must pay the contribution of the previous months since the beginning of the work of the Cooperative. So, a new member and a five-year member have the same money in the Cooperative. This regulation is for the purpose of justice. If a householder moves out, the membership passes to that person's heir. We have to take serious precautions for the sake of the neighbourhood. In addition to this, the Cooperative has the right to represent every resident of the neighbourhood in the court apart from the membership of that person. These are the articles No 7 and 19 of the constitution.

Legal fight against the urban transformation plans

Since the gain of power by *AKP*, the urban transformation plans not only have been transforming Istanbul physically, but also have had strong impacts on socioeconomic status of many neighbourhoods. Targeting the *gecekondus* to a major extent, these plans have been dictating a top-

down method of planning, financing and implementing without any involvement or consent of the inhabitants.

The urban transformation plans which for quite some time could easily bulldoze the low income neighbourhoods now seem to face a hindrance- the resistance of the people. After about 10 years, this resistance is getting momentum via the protests, organization, mobilization and acting through court cases.

In fact, since the beginning of establishment of *gecekondus*, demolitions and conflicts with authorities were not unusual but the ‘resistance’ took place in other ways. For instance, when demolition did occur, new homes were frequently reconstructed on nearby lands when former lots were taken over by migrant groups backed by more influential political actors (Esen, 2009).

Currently, the first step of implementation of an urban transformation plan is the official assignment of a neighbourhood as a ‘risked area’. Based on the previous experiences in other neighbourhoods, almost everybody in the so-called ‘risked area’ knows that the next step would be emptying the neighbourhood and evicting the people, displacement of the inhabitants and demolition of the place. Thus, for many of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods in Istanbul, the troubles i.e. the threat of eviction and displacement as well as the danger of losing their long established life begin with the official assignment of the neighbourhood as a ‘risked area’. In the case of *Derbent* like other neighbourhoods of Istanbul, the outset of the problem in recent years was in January 2013 when the officials announced *Derbent* as a ‘risked area’.

After the disclosure of the urban transformation plan for *Derbent*, the people have been to court three times. *Aydemir* explains that they have been to the court to fight over the appropriation of the land and over their life in the neighbourhood. In fact, as he explains further on he reveals that the three times in court has been for two cases and one appeal to one of those cases:

You see, there was a transformation plan for the neighbourhood. The first case was for the cancellation of that plan. As the management of the Cooperative, we opened this case. As you know, you can go to different courts for one specific case. In the second case, our lawyer as the attorney of the members of our Cooperative opened another case. (It was) the same case as the first one. To strengthen that, we opened another case; this time on behalf of our Association. So, totally we opened three groups of cases in seven courts. Why? Because for a case, a court issued one specific verdict when for the same case, another judge issued a different verdict. Finally, the court ruled that the people of *Derbent* were rightful and that the transformation project could not be conducted. This way we won the case.

The second case was objection to the assignment of our neighbourhood as a 'risked area'. As mentioned before, since the first step for implementing a transformation plan is calling it a 'risked area', the people took the case to a court in Ankara. *Aydemir* explains:

The second case was objection to the assignment of our neighbourhood as a risked area. We also won the second case in Ankara.

Likewise, *Aydemir* explains other cases which still the people have to deal with and there are prison sentences which they have to spend:

After the demolition (of the Association building), they opened a case against me and 18 other friends of us. This case took seven years to complete. We were exonerated. It was the case for those 19 people who were arrested in 2006¹. They opened the case under as a 'public complaint'. They called (our resistance) as a 'disruption', a 'resistance against the enforcement of the law'. They said it was a clash, was messing up. Behind this complaint, it was AAIC Cooperative, *Cemre* Construction and their lawyers. It was a terrorizing policy. We were exonerated from the complaints. Me and my other 18 friends (were exonerated). Then, since there was another protest in our *gecekondu*, in 2007 they again opened a new case. I met with the judge, talked to him; there were reports and documents provided by us. Despite that, they didn't listen to us. They listened neither to me nor to my friends. We were convicted to punishment in this case. We received 7 months and 15 days of imprisonment. It is not practiced yet.

He explains that they received different verdicts; some were sentenced to several months of imprisonment and some were fined. *Aydemir* explains that although they were willing to make an appeal, the lawyers of the neighbourhood recommended them not to. The court cases were not finished then. Again, there was another court case against the active people. This time, the story began with detentions of several people. The time of the operation which was early in the morning and the fact that the arrested people were not interrogated while in custody, proves that *Aydemir's* viewpoint regarding the 'terrorizing policy' adopted by the authorities is correct. *Aydemir* tells the story as such:

On 13 March 2012, the head of the Association and I and some other friends, totally 14 of our neighbours... they² attacked our places at 4:30 in the morning, took us out like we were terrorists and arrested us. The legal process for us took 4 days while we were kept in detention. They didn't interrogate us. Only on the fourth day they did. We knew the reasons why. To terrorize us, to tire us, to make us to give up, to suppress us... On the fourth day, they took us to the prosecutor. He released five of us. The rest of us – 9 people- were taken to the judge. Naturally, we were not quiet. They didn't have any reasons (against us). The judge was a lady. She released us on bail. Our file still is going on in a kind of hidden way. So, in any case they may open the case again. The arrested people were released and we were welcomed by the entire neighbourhood.

Explaining in details on how excited and happy the people were when the detainees were released, *Aydemir* reveals the dark side of the story as well:

¹ He is referring to the protests which erupted while demolishing the Association building

² The police

Well, because of the troubles, my son lost one year of education. I don't feel regret. Why? When there is a right way to walk, we will go to the end of it. We will pay money if necessary. If a person gets muted, (then) another person would get muted,...this way we cannot live. We were not muted. We believed in our rightfulness. Either they get us and kill us or they leave us alone. We already know that. Sometimes you have to pay a price for something... the most important thing is not a house- although it is important. Here, we own our dreams, we own a community. When they came to arrest me, they forced me to lie on the street. My mother who couldn't stand it came to protect me. Just imagine the scenewe suffered a lot. Why we tolerated that all? (Because) I didn't steal anybody's money, I didn't do anything wrong. I just am involved in protecting the rights of the people. I have just one life and I want to live it like this.

The people of *Derbent* have succeeded to win three court cases so far when still there are other cases to follow and some cases and convictions against the active people of the neighbourhood suspended somewhere in the judicial administration.

Organizing a platform of action along with other gecekondus of Sariyer

After the escalation of the pressures of urban transformation, all those neighbourhoods in *Sariyer* which were affected by the process began to contact and exchange ideas with each other. As the result of these connections, the Platform of Associations of *Sariyer* District (hereafter, *Sariyer* Platform) was established in 2003. *Kamil* tells about this Platform:

We, in the associations and cooperatives of *Sariyer* get together and discuss about what can be done. We seek for a common movement to conduct. Now, it is like the quietness before the storm, but we are working and working and we will not stop.

We, the people of this neighbourhood like all the people of *Sariyer* are making a kind of organization and movement. Maybe currently (the achievements) cannot be seen, but soon we will pick the fruit (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

One of the members of *Sariyer* Platform is the Association of *Derbent*¹. Like other member associations, the Association of *Derbent* fights against urban transformation plans, collects petitions and signatures and opens court cases. At the same time, the Association of *Derbent* helps the children, young ones and women with their activities, regulates the common spaces of the neighbourhood and organizes events.

The *Sariyer* Platform plays a significant role in organization of the people. It not only spreads the news about the urban transformation plans as well as the activities of all of member neighbourhoods, but also it teaches the associations on how to organize the people and how to react quickly.

Furthermore, in the regular meetings of the associations and cooperatives the people share news and views giving way to more cooperation and collaboration. In April 2013, they held an event

¹ Officially called as 'The Beautification, Solidarity and Help Association of Çamlıtepe (*Derbent*)'

called '*İşte Çözüm*' (Here the result!) organized by all associations and cooperatives of *Sarıyer* in which they out cried their views and suggestions as the result of years of discussions within the neighbourhood, with public opinion and the politicians.

Elvide mentioned the similar developments in other *gecekondus* of Istanbul. Likewise, she explained how difficult it was to deal with the legal procedures and complications of the entire processes:

Everywhere in Istanbul is like this. For instance, they announce here as a risked area. We complain against it in the court. We win. Right after that, they begin another thing. And then we open another case against this (new) one. We win this one too. Right after that, they open another case. You see, I am a sculptor and I must do my sculpting. But then we should learn everything. I am talking seriously; we are gaining the knowledge of a lawyer. There is a team at the other side. I am an ordinary person, I don't know as much as them....you see, everywhere is like that. The troubled neighbourhood is not just us. We share our experiences with each other.

3.5.5 The final objective, gaining the land tenure

Legalizing the tenure has been a long lasting issue in Turkish *gecekondus*. Still, it is one of the main cores of disputes and *Derbent* is not an exception in that regard. As Karaman writes (Karaman, 2013) 'during the early 1980s, a total of five pieces of legislation were passed to legalize the *gecekondus*. Among these, law 2981 which was passed in 1984 was the most significant one, as it effectively issued an 'amnesty' for all *gecekondus* that were built on state-owned land before 1984. According to that law, the *gecekondu* 'owners' were issued the 'title assignation documents'¹. This is a document that recognizes the occupant's right to use the space, entitling the document holder to legal ownership after a 'cadastral plan' and a subsequent 'improvement plan'² are prepared and approved by the local municipality. Indeed, this temporary document certifies a transitional status.

The important fact to consider is that 'even now there are still many neighbourhoods where the residents are granted the 'document' in 1980s and do not have the permanent and fully legal status leaving the residents in suspension, as the document solely grants the occupants the right to stay and use the space, but it does not confer full ownership rights' (Karaman, 2013, p. 722).

Like other *gecekondus* in Istanbul, the people of *Derbent* demand the ownership of the land. They are planning to transfer the land to the Cooperative of *Derbent*. This is their feasible way of gaining a secure future for the people. *Riza* explains the process that they are going to proceed in order to achieve their goal which is following legal processes along with other *gecekondus* of *Sarıyer*:

¹in Turkish; *tapu tahsis belgesi*

²in Turkish, *imar islah planı*

We demand a group transfer. This is also our natural right. The government does not do its job. This is a problem. We are collecting petitions. If we couldn't reach to a positive result through the petitions, we are going to go to court. We are not alone. In *Sarıyer* district, 21 neighbourhoods will go to court. The neighbourhoods like us would demand this from the Metropolitan Municipality, from the government. If the government doesn't practice its duty to transfer this land to us, then we would sue the government.

3.5.6 Resistance against urban transformation plans

The urban transformation plans propelled a thrust after the 2012 Anti-seismic Law. The formation of the legal tools provided real leverages to 'deeply reconfigure the social and urban fabric of the targeted zones' (Logie and Morvan, 2014). This law which was provided and followed and implemented under the supervision of Turkish Ministry of Urbanism and Environment practically boosted the construction sector activities. When the command and supervision has been conducted by the Ministry, the implementer of the urban transformation plans on the ground have been Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as the main player and local municipalities in all 39 districts of Istanbul as the minor contenders. The urban transformation plan of *Derbent* was one of the plans followed after implementation of Anti-seismic Law.

Prior to official announcement of transformation plan and before informing the people of *Derbent* about any project, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and *Yorum* Construction Firm announced a detailed project and model for the neighbourhood in August 2012 under the title of 'The 1/5000 and 1/1000 Revision of Development Plan of Çamlıtepe (*Derbent*) Neighbourhood'. Before the announcement, the rumours about the project had been spread in the neighbourhood. According to these rumours, the project aimed at demolition of the houses in the neighbourhood and constructing mass housing instead of them. The plan was announced in a real estate exhibition in France in 2013. According to the exhibited project, out of 13.2 ha of land on which currently the habitants of *Derbent* are living, merely about 3.2 ha would be allocated to them. The rest of the land would be dedicated to construction of luxury houses for AAIC Cooperative.

Previously and before the recent developments in *Derbent*, in 2005, about 336 housing units were built within 7.7 ha meters of the purchased land in the neighbourhood. To construct the housing units for the first group of members of AAIC cooperative, this Cooperative submitted the job of construction of the houses to MESA Housing Industries. *Riza* explains that the location that these houses were built on belonged to the neighbourhood:

That place, the location of MESA houses, belonged to our neighbourhood. We didn't know that some of our people had the deed for that patch of land.

He also recalls that for the construction of MESA houses, they demolished some houses belonging to the people of *Derbent* and the demolitions erupted problems:

In 1998 just close to the school, at the site of MESA houses, they won the case at the court. After that, they demolished 98 houses over there in 2001. For demolition of those houses some people were compensated very little. Some were given nothing and were kicked out by the force of the police. MESA had said that 'we want to construct our houses on our land'. The riot police came and demolished (our houses). Then, it was at the time of mayor *Sedat* (when) they demolished the houses. Between 2004 and 2005 there were 160 members who were given the houses at the site of MESA. There are 360 apartments over there. Out of those 360 apartments, 200 apartments were constructed for selling.

As the consequence of demolition, as *Riza* states, 'bad things happened':

Ninety eight houses were demolished to open a construction space for them. The people went here and there. Five or six of those families had to get separated from their families. Many bad things happened. It was very bad. The people lost the place they were born in... They (MESA) won lots of money... gaining lots of money, and building those 200 apartments; of 231 apartments they used just 90 apartments. They told the neighbourhood "you give us the place here, we promise to give you the same somewhere else", then when they saw that they are gaining a lot of money, now they want the entire neighbourhood.

The transformation plan for Derbent

In the plan designed by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in collaboration with *Cemre* Construction Inc. and *Yorum* Construction Inc., 1652 housing units are planned to be constructed (Arima Architects, 2012). Between the two kinds of housing units (the luxury ones and those for current inhabitants of *Derbent*) a wide expressway is designed to separate these two groups from each other. The plan has not revealed the fate of the rest of the houses and the land. *Zeynep*, 42, housewife, expresses her negative feelings toward the plan:

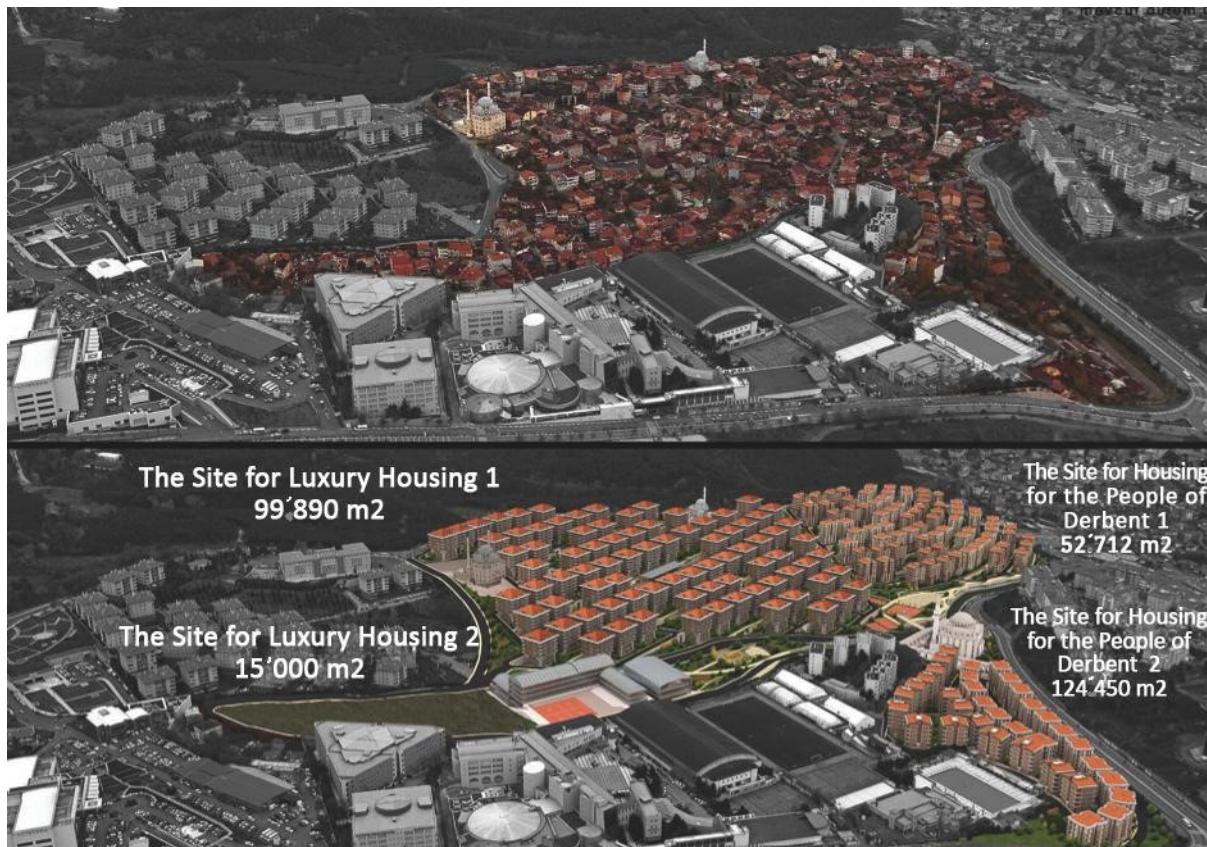
Now those who like to own the neighbourhood will squeeze the entire neighbourhood people in tall buildings and tiny flats...a feudal kind of system which is following a project that does not fit in our relations, in our family relations, in our

neighbourhood relations. That is why I am totally against this project¹(Yalcintan et al., 2014).

Toward the plan also *Kamil*, feels the same:

In *Dikmen*² and in *Sulukule*³ they promised the people that they are going to give everything to the people. The people even had the deed. With the promises of giving a house, they threw the people out. Then the problem of 'no zoning' came up. Because of that they (told the people) that they are going to send the people far behind the walls of the city. They told the people that the people can pay the loan within 20 years. All of that was a lie (Yalcintan et al., 2014).

When the transformation plan of *Derbent* was disclosed, it caused negative reactions and sparked protests in the neighbourhood. Also, a court case was opened against it.



¹ The people call the urban transformation plan of *Derbent* as 'project'

² A low income neighbourhood in Ankara

³ An 800 year old neighbourhood of Roma people in historic heart of Istanbul demolished in 2008

Figure 15- Top: Current situation of *Derbent* (top); Bottom: Details of urban transformation plan for *Derbent* exhibited in 2013 real estate exhibition in France

source: Sariyer Municipality Daily quoted by (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

Although according to the seismic report conducted by Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA) in 2001, the *Sariyer* district was declared as one of the strongest areas against the threat of earthquake, in February 2013 and when still the legal proceedings against the project were going on, the Turkish Council of Ministers declared *Derbent* under the domain of Law 6306. This law about the areas under earthquake threat necessitates the transformation of the assigned location. Along with *Derbent*, two other neighbourhoods in *Sariyer* district (*Fatih Sultan*



Figure 16- Protests against assignment of *Derbent* as a 'Risky Area' in 2013

Source: (Yalcintan et al., 2014)

And *Baltalimanı* neighbourhoods) were announced areas under earthquake threat too. All of these neighbourhoods opened a court case against the decision of assigning these locations as the risky area in the Council of State. After this appeal, the Council of State dismissed the assignment of *Derbent* as a risky area.

The main subject to make the court case was the fact that *Derbent* neighbourhood as a part of *Sariyer* District was of the areas under the supervision of Bosphorus Law No 2690. Legally, the development plans for these neighbourhoods should have been prepared by the objective of conservation of the area. Despite this fact, the plans were prepared based on the Law 6306 and not law for conservation of Bosphorus area and that was the legal basis for dismissing the plan.

Signing the recognition

The people of *Derbent* and other *gecekondus* of *Sariyer* have learned to translate their demand of living in the neighbourhood into politics. In fact, they are demanding their houses, their neighbourhood and their way of life in the neighbourhood as their political

quest. In their protests and on the walls of the Cooperative, they have signs reading 'My house is my party' or 'My neighbourhood is my politics'. Furthermore, to have their voice and say being heard in the system, at one point they negotiated with the candidates of parliament and asked them to sign a written agreement on the promises that the candidate will make. The people turned this signing as a big congregation of people of all *gecekondus* of *Sariyer* to witness the ceremony. Three consequent nights hundreds of people gathered, got to the stage, talked about their demands and listened to their fellows in other *gecekondus*. At the end of the ceremonies two of three candidates accepted to sign the recognizance and one rejected to do so. The one who rejected was from *AKP* whose the then mayor of *Sariyer* was a member of. In the next election one of the candidates who had signed the recognizance, won the election and the *AKP* candidate lost the competition. *Riza* tells the story as such:

The *Sariyer* neighbourhood associations signed a recognizance with the candidates of the *Sariyer* local government. There were some who signed it and there were some who did not. The one who won, was of those who signed it. That one who did not sign, lost the election.

3.5.7 The future; how the people see it

After living about four decades under the threat of evictions, currently the spirits are getting higher in *Derbent*. Now winning three court cases and electing a *muhtar* 'of their own', the people feel stronger than the past and more hopeful towards the future. It does not mean that they are sure of the future, but not seeing any other options rather than staying and fighting, they seem to be more clear on what they want to do and how to get there. Through the years and experiencing different methods, ways, negotiations, plots and even confrontations and clashes, they seem to be learning more and more. For instance, *Ismail* expresses his thoughts over the unreliability of the politicians and their promises. When asked how hopeful he is that they are going to gain their rights he answers as such:

100%. At the end we are going to gain whatsoever rights we have. You see, we don't have any illusions. We fought for all this. We don't like this project¹ thing. We tell them (AAIC Cooperative), if you have something, come and talk to the people openly. We will ask you the questions we have. You'll answer and will convince us. You see, never ever we are going to empty the neighbourhood. If we empty the neighbourhood, the chance for return, would be zero. Even if the government promises that, I won't believe it. If the government claims "I would be the guarantor!"-that's a lie. We will stay here. We will do our houses- because there is nobody standing beside us. If it is the government or the IBB², it doesn't make a

¹ The people call the urban transformation plan as 'project'

² Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (*Istanbul Buyuk sehir Belediyesi*)

difference. The politics of them is totally clear. They want their own share of the cake. We don't want the cake. We just want this place to live in...well, I say I am sure we would win 100%, but you see, we don't know what gonna happen tomorrow.

The people have their reasons for fighting. Simply they see no future without each other and without their current life in the neighbourhood. They feel strongly connected to each other and to the land because their relationship was founded years ago, so that now they cannot see themselves living another kind of life in another place. For example, *Elvide* expresses her bond to her neighbours as such:

We might have problems within ourselves, but nobody can break our unity (another woman claps hands in encouragement). We have a cause to fight for. We are neighbours. So, if they give me something and put my neighbours in pain, how can I accept that? She is my childhood friend, my everybody.

Nurjan confirms her friend's words saying, 'We won't accept that'. *Elvide* goes on:

We grew up with each other. We have played with each other. We have quarrelled with each other and have made peace with each other. We have climbed the trees with each other. We have lived with each other here.

Dilek adds:

Our mothers and our fathers were each other's friends. We were born as friends. We have a deep feeling of friendship.

Elvide gives an example of their common past:

When there was no electricity, we had one TV set. We carried it wherever we could. We put it somewhere high and everybody watched with others. Very early in the morning there was a boxing competition between Muhammad Ali¹ and another boxer. We all watched it together. Yes, here, we have lived the feelings of friendship, our families and our old humane helping, sharing things with each other, (there is a) sense of life and we are going to go on like that.

Nurcan continues her friend's words:

Here it is a culture of a neighbourhood. That's why we don't want it broken. I myself live in *Mecidiyeköy*, but I even don't go to the people in my own floor.

Aydemir, pictures the future and the reason for their resistance as for the sake of their dignity, life and community. In his emotions for his people and neighbourhood, he feels profoundly strong:

¹ Muhammad Ali Clay, the infamous American boxer in 1970s

We didn't give up the struggle. My philosophy is like this. Everybody lives somewhere; some pay rents, some have their own home. But I definitely think you can't find a neighbourhood like *Derbent*. Because here there is a life. What is life? Somebody goes to military, Somebody's funeral or somebody's wedding is going on, we all gather. I believe that this life should not be modified. You cannot feel a sense of community like this anywhere else. Well, I have a 100 square meter place in this *gecekondu*. I am living here with my mom for over 40 years- since my childhood. I am happy with my home. MESA is ready to give me 700 thousands Turkish Lira. If they say we'll give you 2 flats instead of this place in *gecekondu*, I will not exchange it. I have seen MESA houses. Over there, there is no spirits; there is no love over there. There are no friends over there that I could chest off with. Here, if I just get out of my door, and I say I am hungry, the people would feed me. This is the thing I cannot find anywhere else... Here, we own our dreams, we own a community.

Aydemir puts the outcomes of their struggle in court cases as such:

But (with these triumphs) I don't think that for us the job is done. I always tell the friends we never should drop off our defense. There is a competitor against us. If we give up and fall, they would defeat us. Now we have won (the court cases), but the story is not finished. We have to continue our work.

When asked about the future and if he thinks they can resist the eviction, *Riza*, is quite decisive to mention:

We might not be able to gain the deed, but we definitely will not leave.

1970-1975-The main increase in the population of the neighbourhood occurs in 1970s and it is because of the increase in the activities of the surrounding industries and the opportunities for employment in these industries.

1970-1980-The electricity was brought to the neighbourhood with the efforts of the people. The people paid for the posts and dug the ditches. The neighbourhood association was established in 1976 and in 1978 the people centre for education was founded. The roads in the neighbourhood were asphalted in 1979.

1984-Before 1984, most of the house units were waiting for or had temporary deed.

1985- The bus lane was established in *Derbent*.

1987-*Derbent* was assigned as an independent “Muhtarlik”¹ in the district of *Sariyer*.

1995-2000-The natural gas network was constructed and the commodity value of *Derbent* increased even more.

1997-The forest park was established.

2000-2005- The MESA houses were built.

2004- After 2004 and to ease the process of court cases, petitions and issues alike, a unity among the people was formed in *Sariyer* district. Since 2005, this unity has turned to a platform of action.

2009- MESA was founded. *Acbadem* hospital was established

2010-*Darışsafaka* metro station began to work.

2010-Rumors about the construction of the third bridge in *Sariyer* district were spread.

April 2004²-*Sariyer* Municipality announced *Derbent* as an ‘urban transformation site’.

March 2006-The building of the Association was demolished because as officials claimed it was built illegally. During the demolition, clashes erupted between the people and the police forces.

February 2011-As since 1990s the AAIC Cooperative had succeeded to have the ownership of a vast part of the lands in which the neighbourhood had been established over, they demolished 40 buildings of the residents. During the demolitions clashes occurred.

August 2012-The provincial management of Ministry of Environment and Urbanism took the development plan out of suspension³.

January 2013-The Turkish Council of Ministers announced *Derbent* as a ‘Risked Area’ under the rule of Disaster Law.

March 2013-In a real estate exhibition in France, the forthcoming construction project in *Derbent* was introduced.

April 2014-A case was opened in department No 14 of the Council of State⁴ to object the assignment of *Derbent* as a risked area within the Disaster Law demanding for the dismissal of the decision.

An Istanbul court branch dismissed the 1/5000 scale development plan for transformation of *Derbent* prepared by Turkish Ministry of Environment

¹The lowest level of division in local government in Turkey. The *muhtar* (headman) as the head of the *Muhtarlik* is elected by the people in local government election.

² The developments after April 2004 are taken from (mega projeler istanbul, 2014).

³ It means that the plan was finalized and ready to be implemented

⁴ A judicial monitory body in Turkey

and Urbanism.

The Department No 8 dismissed the joint project of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and *Cemre* Construction Firm. In the ruled decision it was stated that 'since Department No 14 of Council of State has dismissed the decision of Council of Ministers for announcing the neighbourhood as a risked area, the permission for implementing the project will be groundless'.

Table 5-Timeline of developments in *Derbent*

4. Tehran

4.1 Introduction

Primarily in this chapter, Tehran before the Revolution 1979 is glanced over. Within this part, the problem of informality and the reasons of its making are discussed. The chapter continues to Tehran, in the aftermath of the Revolution 1979. After discussing the major urban policies which direct the national wealth and resources to the big cities and specifically to Tehran, it goes forward to survey the housing problem and housing policies. Through discussing these policies and the shortcomings in providing adequate shelter for the low income groups of population, this chapter reveals that there are not any other alternatives for these groups of people rather than setting up their informal settlements in peripheries of the cities or finding a shelter in the decayed neighborhoods of inner cities. The next section is about the phenomenon of informal settlements in the peripheries and inner city decayed areas, the roots as well as the current situation of these settlements. The following section reviews the urban regeneration policies in Islamic Republic of Iran including some participatory policies and establishing facilitation offices in the decayed areas of Tehran.

The final part is dedicated to Farahzad neighborhood as the case study in Tehran. After a detailed and thorough investigation about the socio economic and physical situation of the neighborhood, the chapter goes further to the measures taken by the Facilitation Office of Farahzad and Renewal Office of Farahzad as well as the outcomes of the participatory intervention conducted in the neighborhood in two different periods.

4.2 Tehran before Revolution 1979

Located on the skirts of one of the two mountain ranges of the country and at the foot of Mount *Damavand*, Tehran stretches itself from low plains in the south to high altitudes of 1800 m in the north. Like many other metropolitan areas in the global south, the city places two significantly different cities inside itself in which a minority of rich and a majority of low income groups live. It is noteworthy to mention that the physical and geographical profile of this metropolitan overlaps and matches with its socioeconomic contours; the city is parted in two, along its 'north-south divide' (Madanipour, 1999, p. 59). In the affluent north and on high altitudes where there are lush green areas and fresh air, the luxurious condominiums, spacious villas and fancy skyscrapers towered by penthouses with beautiful view to the

city, the wealthy live a segregated life. In fact, the first gated community of the Middle east (Bayat, 2010a) was set up in this part of the city in *Niyavaran* neighbourhood just close to the palace off or Iranian Shah. In contrast, in the south and in the dense and compacted neighbourhoods with low quality houses and improper facilities and amenities, millions of people struggle for the basics of a decent life. In between, there are the middle strata which geographically occupy somewhere between the physical north and south. Briefly said, although Tehran has been absorbing a significant part of the national wealth and amenities, it does not mean that all the inhabitants of the city have been favoring the affluence in a similar manner; the deep class gap between the rich and the poor in the city, has gifted the biggest portion of this prosperity to the wealthy.

The dividing axis between the poor 'south' and the affluent 'north' of Tehran has been *Enqilab-Azadi* street which not only physically divides the city into two, it also plays a significant role in the political and social life of the city and the country. Passing through one of the most important squares of the city (*Enqilab* square), it borders Tehran university as the vibrant cultural heart of the country. The axis of *Enqilab* street has witnessed historic rallies of revolution 1979 and major protests of Green Movement in 2009 (Bayat, 2010a).

Tehran faces sizable major problems from air pollution to traffic congestion, ecological dilemmas to over-population. At the same time, being the political economic heart of the country it is the chief destination for migrants moving from other cities and towns to search employment and better opportunities of life. This load of unplanned migration adds to the problems that the city encounters. One of the foremost problems is scarcity of proper housing and adequate shelter which the city is not able to provide for the new comers. In the upper class neighbourhoods in the north, there is no room for the majority of the migrants. Rent and housing prices in these areas and in all other parts of Tehran are soar high and are increasing with a speed which never seems to stop or slow down. That is why that for the people who cannot afford living in formal neighbourhoods, there is nothing left except for living in the areas which these people can afford to live.

4.2.1 Tehran in the old days

The first large-scale town planning exercise in Tehran was undertaken in 1553, with the construction of a bazar in the center and setting up city walls surrounding the city with gates on four sides (Madanipour, 2006). Afterwards, the city grew in significance and in 1785 was selected as the capital city of the country resulting a population increase from 15,000 to 150,000 in 1860s (Madanipour, 2006). The second large-scale town planning exercise in Tehran was conducted for accommodating the growth caused by the assignment of the city as the capital of the country.

At the beginning of the 20th century and following the 1905 Revolution in Russia, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 in Iran intensified the process of modernization in the country. For instance, for the first time in history, the administration of a municipality called '*Baladiye*' was established in 1910. The new administration lacked the city council or municipal autonomy which the revolutionaries had asked for.

Tehran as the capital city of the country has witnessed the most important episodes of life of Iran including the oil nationalizing movement in 1950s, the CIA backed coup d'état in 1953, the 1979 Revolution which changed the political regime and finally the Green Movement of 2009 .

4.2.2 Modern planning of Tehran

For many years the uncultivated land in the peripheries of Tehran belonged to the person who developed it. From 1951 afterwards, the government appropriated these lands (Salek, 2008). Afterwards, the government tried to develop projects which could deal with the housing issue of the citizens, but these attempts all fell short of solving the housing problem of hundreds of thousands of the people migrating to Tehran.

The first attempts to conduct a planning scheme for Tehran were in 1966 when a joint work of an Iranian firm and an American company run by two prominent architects and urban planners (Farmanfarmaian and Gruen) produced a master plan for the city (Salek, 2008). Called Tehran Comprehensive Map, one of the major measures taken by it was defining a land-use pattern for Tehran. According to the Plan with a modernist spirit, the most severe problems of the city were classified as high density in city center, expansion of commercial activities along the main roads, pollution, inefficient infrastructure as well as widespread unemployment in the poorer areas (Madanipour, 2006). Since one of the major problems of the city was recognized as high density in the inner city, the growth of the city was envisaged to be westward trying to decrease the density and congestion in the city center (Salek, 2008). The American architect, Gruen was a master mind of shopping malls (Emami, 2011) and he was the one who contributed to plan of Americanizing Tehran with lots of shopping malls, administration centers, suburbs and satellite towns all interconnected with expressways (Salek, 2008). Most of the suggestions made for the improvement of the situation of Tehran were physical. It divided the city into 10 districts with a half a million

population each, separated by green belts as well as constructing high rise buildings along with commercial centers (Madanipour, 2006). Although the master plan had mentioned the continuous migration of the people to Tehran as a major 'problem' of the city, it did not address the issue of the housing for the poor and did not provide any solutions to it.

4.2.3 Land reform in 1962; displacement of the rural population

The land reform program implemented in 1962 re-organized a broad and deep social change in rural areas and changed the system to capitalist (Fanni, 2006). Afterwards, in 1970s the oil boom injected a significant amount of revenue to the economy of the country. As usual, Tehran prospered the most from this wealth. At the other side of the developments, millions of peasants who had lost their source of income abandoned their villages of residence and moved to the big cities and particularly to Tehran. As the result, from 1970s onward, the city expanded chaotically in all directions, particularly to the east, north, and northwest (Salek, 2008). The former peasants moving to Tehran contributed to the population increase of Tehran from 2.7 million in 1965 to 4.6 million in 1975 (Bayat, 2010a).

The money extracted from oil accelerated the process of modernization and a remarkable growth in that time changed the big cities and Tehran to a significant extent. The wealth channelized to the city helped to change the quality of life in Tehran. The city as the social and spatial manifestation of the gained wealth was thrived by new fashion of life style. Tehran transformed to an American model of ever-increasing consumption; nice cafes and chic restaurants spread out in central and northern parts of the city (Bayat, 2010a), ski resorts were opened near the city and the first cable way of the country was inaugurated in the northern mountains overlooking to the city. Fancy cars, shopping malls, leisure and entertainment facilities surged in the city (Bayat, 2010a), and Tehran paced toward international community with even stronger steps.

As said before, along with the flourish of prosperity in Tehran, the migrants looked to the city as a source of reliable income and safe shelter. At that time, the number of the landless peasants who were released by the land reform amounted to approximately three millions (Bayat, 2010a). During the 1960s until 1970, many industrial activities were established in Tehran and its surrounding areas. In Tehran the migrants tried to re-build the life they had lost back in their villages. The poor rural migrants along with other strata of the low income groups settled in the expanded south, southeast, and southwest districts. Indeed, Tehran's comprehensive plan which was produced in 1967 had a great impact on physical alternation of Tehran. The industries in the vicinity of the city and many work places inside were the destinations that these people tried to find a reliable source of income (Madanipour, 2006; Madanipour, 2010; Madanipour, 1999; Bayat, 2010).

4.3 Living in the periphery- ‘hashiye neshini’

The flood of migrants to the city demanded housing which the plans had not charted for. The urban plan in 1966 and the following plans later on defined legal borders around the city. These zoning regulations forced the mostly low income migrants to the areas outside of the legal borders of the city. Shanty towns and slums mushroomed all over the city peripheries in where hundreds of thousands of people began their ‘urban’ life in lack of basic amenities.

Coming from all over the country and mostly speaking in languages and dialects rather than Persian (Bayat, 2010a), the migrants not only were physically thrown out of the city, but also culturally and socially were segregated from the rest of Tehranis. In following years of land reform in 1960s the neighbourhoods in far south on Tehran e.g. *Javadiye, Shaba zJonoobi* and *Bisim*(Bayat, 2010a), were the refuge of the low income groups. Being stigmatized as ‘*dahati*’(rural, backward) or *amaleh* and *hammal*(laborer, inferior), those who lived outside of the city were called ‘*hashiyeneshin*’ and their way of life became ‘*hashiye neshini*’ (Bayat, 2010a). Although taking other forms and features, the phenomenon of *hashiye neshini* has been living ever since.

The different terms and words in Persian which are used for the informal neighbourhoods reflect the magnitude of the phenomenon in Iranian urban areas. Beside the specific and local terms which are popular and specific for these neighbourhoods in each city of Iran, these informal and poor neighbourhoods are called for instance;

- ‘*Zaghe neshin*’ and ‘*kapa rneshin*’, both meaning inhabitant of shanty towns;
- *halabi-abad*, tin-town, referring to the roofs of many of these settlements which were made from the tin boxes;
- ‘*Zoor-abad*’, a place occupied and developed by ‘*zoor*’ (force). It refers to the informal way of seizing the land and construction,
- ‘*Eslam-abad*’, a place occupied and developed by Islam. A term prevailed after Revolution 1979, referring to many of the informal neighbourhoods all over the country. The migrants substituted the word ‘*zoor*’ (force) with the word Islam to benefit from the Islamic ideology of the new regime. By doing so, the migrants tried to withstand the possible threats of eviction and demolition by claiming that their neighbourhood bears the sacred name of Islam on it,
- *Tah-e-khatt*, end of the (*khatt*) line, referring to the location of these neighbourhoods which generally were at the end of bus or minibus lines,
- *Akhar-e asphalt* (*end of asphalted road*) referring to location of many of these neighbourhoods at the end of asphalted roads,
- *Kharej az mahdoode*, out of *mahdoode* (the city borders),

- *Gowdneshini*, a settlement in a *gowd* (ditch), referring to some of the informal neighbourhoods in south of Tehran set up in deep ditches in the city. In a news mentioned by Keyhan Daily (Keyhan Daily, 1978) on the election of representatives of the *gowdneshins* of south of Tehran, the name of 15 of these settlements is mentioned.

In Tehran, these neighborhoods might be generally called '*jonoob-e shahr*' (south of the city) and the people living in these areas are '*jonoob-e shahri*'(a person from or living in the south of the city) which clearly bears a class and social and economic connotation within itself. Beside the prevailing terms mentioned above, after the Revolution 1979 and in formal and scholar documents, these neighborhoods are referred as '*baft-e farsoode*' (decayed area) or '*baft-e mas'aledar*' (problematic area).

In the informal settlements, the people always have used different tactics to survive. At some point they grabbed the land, set up their shacks and in parallel to that when it was possible they tried to negotiate with the authorities to gain the necessary infrastructure and improve their life condition. At the same time, they took direct actions and did whatever they thought was necessary for survival; they wired electricity illegally from the power poles, gained water whenever and wherever they could and for making a living began vending either in their neighbourhoods, its vicinities or in other parts of the city (Bayat, 1997b).

Nowadays, *hashiye neshini* phenomenon is considered of the biggest problems of the country. In a press conference, the head of national police considered the phenomenon as a dilemma along with other complications i.e. drugs, population growth and land speculation (IRNA, 2015a). Calling the peripheral settlements as one of the 'biggest problems of the country', recently the interior minister declared these areas as a 'safe haven for crime and social dissonance' (Radio Farda, 2014). In a recent interview, the deputy health minister referred to '*hashiye neshini*' as a source problem and as a consequent of other socioeconomic problems (IRNA, 2015b). In another interview, the conservative head of city council of Tehran goes that far to warn that these neighbourhoods which are 'swelling like balloons are swallowing' Tehran (IRNA, 2015c). The facts and figures about the phenomenon in the country are ambiguous and different numbers are given for the population living in the peripheries of the cities. For instance, the first deputy of Iranian president stated recently that 11% of the population of the country lives in these areas (IRNA, 2014a).

4.3.1 Provision 100 of the Municipality Law and house demolitions

Before the Revolution 1979, the buffer zone around the city (Bayat, 2010a) which was assigned by the planners for further developments and was supposed to place the future expansion was the area which many of the informal settlements were set up. To the settlements, the reaction of the authorities was opposing the erection of the settlements and demolishing them. For instance, Provision 100 of the Municipality Law authorized the demolition of 'illegal' constructions erected in

these areas. The problem of house demolitions continued all through the years till the revolution of 1979. To resist the demolitions, sporadic protests and physical conflicts as well as mass protests against the demolitions occurred in 1978 almost one year before the Revolution. In a 150 page report, an Iranian clandestine political group gives elaborate details about these confrontation in 15 shanty towns in vicinity of Tehran (Sazman-e Cherik-hayefadaiy-e khalq-e Iran, 1979). In that report it is stated that occurring at the night time, the operations were conducted by the allied squads of gendarmerie and military, the police, the firemen as well as several groups of municipality personnel and squads who demolished the houses by bulldozers and mechanical equipments.

4.4 Tehran after the Revolution 1979

The growth rate of Iranian population increased significantly after the Revolution 1979 when the people were encouraged to do so by the new regime and were promised with free land and housing. As the result of these policies and promises, the population growth rate grew to 3.7% in mid 1980s. Since the cities were the places that those promises were supposed to be realized, in mid 1980s for the first time in history of the country the urban population exceeded the rural population and counted for the 53% of the entire population. According to the latest national census in 2011, of the 75 million population of the country, about 71% live in the cities (SCI, 2011).

Urban policies in Iran have changed from time to time, but the main chore of these policies which is giving a notable position to major cities and particularly to the capital city Tehran has endured all through the years both before and after the Revolution 1979. Of the specifications of this lop-sided urbanization is the inequality and discrimination between the 'city' and the 'village'. Besides that, also there is discrimination in favor of the big cities of the country winning bigger part of the national wealth. In other words, Tehran and other major cities of the country have lived on the resources of other regions of the country (Fanni, 2006). Channelizing most of the resources to the major cities, these policies have made the big cities as the heart of political, economic and cultural changes (Hesamian and Eatmad quoted by (Fanni, 2006). For instance, in 1999 Tehran accounted for 30% of the country's employment in manufacturing industry, 24% of water, electricity, and gas consumption, 29% of wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotels, 44% of financial services, 48% of high ranking officials, 34% of clerical workers (Madanipour, 1999). In return, and as the result of the discriminative policies, the major cities have attracted migrants from all over the country, both from rural areas and small towns in search for better opportunities of life. Of the other elements contributing to this migration has been the eight year war between Iran and Iraq in 1980-1988 which pushed many people from war stricken areas in the south west and western provinces to the safer cities including the major cities (Abrahamian, 1982).

In Tehran like other recipient cities of migration, those who could not afford living in the inner cities had to settle in satellite towns or even live informally in the peripheries of the cities. Once in an interview aired on the national TV, Rafsanjani (the then president of the country, 1989-1997) explicitly 'recommended' those who could not afford living in Tehran to leave and live in other cities. As research shows (Zebardast, 2006), in Tehran 23 informal settlements were formed along the three exit corridors of the city; *Saveh* Road and *Khorasan* Road as well as *Varamin* Road.

4.4.1 Housing in Iran

In Iran, housing sector occupies a significant place in national economy. For instance, in the early years of new millennium, about 40 percent of total annual investments of Iran has been poured into the housing sector generating more than 8 percent of the GDP. According to a report (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004) along with assets such as gold and foreign exchange, housing has been always a 'preferred asset' to Iranians. This value has always given a speculative nature to housing market. According to the same report, studies have revealed a link 'between price expectation in the housing market and the price expectation in the foreign exchange market'. In other words, foreign exchange control by the government pushes the investors to invest in housing market. For instance, in 1995-1996 when the government imposed tight control over foreign exchange market, it caused 28% and later on 35% increase in housing prices. In Tehran, the situation was even more critical when the price of housing units was raised for 58%. The speculative value of the housing is specifically important to the low-income groups in which 'the only possible vehicle for wealth accumulation' is housing (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004). Rising inflation specifically affects the housing demand of these groups because the inflation not only lessens their economic ability of purchasing a housing unit, but also it forces them to sell their housing asset to be able to cover their consumption needs.

Despite the important role of housing sector in national economy, Iran faces scores of problems in provision of adequate housing for the citizens. A 2004 report by Iranian ministry of housing mentions a scores of reasons for the constraints to this sector e.g. high and volatile inflation¹, low purchasing power of the majority of the population with regard to unemployment rate² or low-paid jobs (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004). Moreover, the mismatch between the housing demand and supply has added to the dilemma. The above-mentioned report points out the three groups of housing markets in the country to be upper class, middle class as well as the low-income groups. When the upper class accesses its own market through its vast financial resources, the middle class is majorly supported by government backed and subsidized programs. At the bottom of the housing market pyramid there are the low-income groups who find housing through their own efforts which might be formal and legal or informal.

¹ 49% in 1995-1996 and 12% in 2000-2001

² About 14% in 2002

Beside the economic reasons, the political developments have recently affected the economy and subsequently the housing market. According to a report by Iranian Statistics Organization in winter 2012, the price of the land in Tehran experienced a 157% increase when compared with the prices in 2012 (BBC Persian, 2013). Within the same period, the price of a housing unit was increased for 72%. This considerable increase was of the impacts of the shocking decrease in the value of national money in October 2012 because of the sanctions against the country imposed by the western countries and the consequent inflation and economic crisis inflicting the national economy.

Housing sector has always occupied a significant role of Iranian economy. According a report during the time between 1980-2000, about 40 percent of the total annual budget of the country (8 percent of the GDP) has been poured into the housing sector (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004). The share of the housing sector in national economy was increased to a gravely high amount when the then government in the Office (2005-2013) launched a new housing program called '*Maskan-e Mehr*'¹supposedly providing housing for the poor.

Housing administration

The main state body in charge of housing sector in Iran is the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism. This ministry is not the only governmental institution dealing with the construction and housing. The other bodies with regard the housing are Housing Foundation which mostly deals with the construction in the aftermath of natural hazards and provision of housing and development in rural areas as well as the Ministry of Construction Jihad which is also working for the infrastructure and service provision in the villages.

Among several other policies to make decision over, the Iranian Ministry of Housing and Urbanism is the key body responsible for planning and implementation of housing policies. These policies are planned with the financial and technical support of the Management and Planning Organization. The dissolution of the Management and Planning Organization and halt in the work of this Organization during 2007-2013 by the government added to the complexity of economic situation of the country including the housing sector.

Housing laws

¹This program will be discussed later in this chapter

The right to proper housing is explicitly mentioned in articles 3 and 31 as well as article 34 of the Constitution of the country (IRI Constitution, 1989). For instance, in the article 3¹ under the title of 'The Goals of the State', it states that provision of housing for all is of the elements of setting a just economic system'. Or in the article 31 which is entirely dedicated to the issue of housing it mentions that housing is 'the right of every Iranian individual and family to possess housing commensurate with his needs'. The same article adds that 'the government must make land available for the implementation of this article'. Article 31² mentions the disenfranchised people as the main target group for provision of the housing by expressing them as 'those whose need is the most, in particular the rural population and the workers'.

Based on the Constitution, several laws were passed after the Revolution;

- Urban Wasteland Ownership Law (1979);
- The Urban Land Law (1982) and;
- The New Urban Land Law (1987)

The 1987 Law provided for State ownership of all 'unused urban plots' which refers to the plots bigger than 1000 square meters belonging to one individual. The 1982 law allows a specific state administration in charge of urban land (Organization of Urban Land) to purchase all urban farmland and 'abandoned land' for a fixed price set by the government. The 1987 law extended the rule of the previous law to the war-stricken areas.

In a nutshell, all these laws put limitation and set control over the area of land which one specific owner could own (UN, 2006). According to a research investigating the impacts of the enactment of these laws on the housing condition (Majedi, 1996), they helped the low middle class and low income groups to access affordable housing in the first decade following the Revolution.

House ownership

Along with gold or money, 'house' is a valuable asset for Iranians. For them, of the first objectives in life is to own a house. Illustrating the house ownership as 'the most valuable assets of all life which increases the feelings of prosperity and welfare, accelerating the economic grow, providing the family security and identity and an increase in social and political activities' by the Jihad

¹Article 3 [State Goals]-Item 12

The planning of a correct and just economic system, in accordance with Islamic criteria, in order to create welfare, eliminate poverty, and abolish all forms of deprivation with respect to food, housing, work, health care, and the provision of social insurance for all

² Article 31 [Housing]

It is the right of every Iranian individual and family to possess housing commensurate with his needs. The government must make land available for the implementation of this article, according priority to those, whose need is greatest, in particular, the rural population and the workers.

organization of Iranian universities (Jihad Organization of Iranian Universities, 2003), expresses the prevailing attitude of millions of Iranians toward house ownership.

Depending on the economic status of the individuals, this 'house' can be big in size, luxurious in decoration and amenities and can locate in high end parts of the cities or it simply is a small shelter in a poor neighbourhood of a city. Generally, housing is of the biggest concerns of all citizens and it is a valuable heritage that the people leave behind for their heirs. Although the house ownership rate has decreased in the recent years, according to a report by Iranian Central Bank, still 64% of Iranians own their houses. Considering the steep increase in the rents which forces the people to have more than one job to cover merely the rent (Wikileaks, 2006), the reason for the tendency toward house ownership is comprehensible.

Housing policies

The new Constitution of the country ratified a few months after the Revolution 1979, promised to provide proper housing for all the people in need especially the workers and the peasants who could not afford it.

These laws and several other laws were aiming at putting limitations on owning big parcels of land (more than 1000 square meters) by one individual as well as controlling the land prices and prohibiting the Commodification of the land.

Due to the baby boom following the Iranian Revolution, the ratio of youth population of the country to the entire population is one of the highest rates in the world; in 2012 more than half of Iran's population was under 35 years old (worldpopulationreview, 2014). Besides the education and employment, this group of population needs housing. An official report indicates that currently the demand for housing units when the young ones mature and demand for housing, would be 89,000 per year (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004) amounting the annual demand for housing to 570,000 units in the country . Therefore, the young generation is adding to the width and depth of the problem of provision of adequate housing already existing in the country since many years before.

Housing programs

The policies and laws passed by the Iranian government after the Revolution supported the mass housing projects through setting up financial and banking system for them. The target groups of many of these policies were the people in need of adequate housing. At several periods of time, supporting the young couples for having a shelter has been of the other foci of the aforementioned policies.

As a research (Zebardast, 2006) shows, after 1979 Revolution and during the first Five Year Development Plan (1989–1993) the major housing policies shifted from provision and construction

of low-cost housing to allocation of land at the prices less than the market price as well as allocation of low-interest housing loans. Most of the plans of the second Five Year Development Plan (1995–1999) which planned for thousands of units for young couples were not implemented. The initial plan was changed to affordable small housing units and ultimately did not favor many of the urban poor. At the same period, the provision of subsidized land for the cooperative reached to a minimum level. In the third Five Year Development Plan (2000–2004) the policy changed to provision of rented houses for the newly established families, female-headed families¹ and low income households, with the possibility of purchasing them. In a nutshell, the policies devised in the five year plans have not shown any tangible outcomes on housing situation yet.

The failure of the system for the provision of houses for the majority of the people including the low income strata can been seen more clearly when credit allocation is taken into consideration. In Iran, the value of long-term housing loans comprises only 3% of the GDP of the country which is low in comparison with emerging economies (Zebardast, 2006). A research by World Bank (World Bank quoted by Zebardast, 2006) indicates that financial support through the banking system for purchasing new houses practically represents of a low proportion of the value of these properties. As a study shows (Abedin-Dorkoush, quoted by Zebardast, 2006), when in 1980 a middle class family needed 9 years to be able to buy a house, now the necessary time has increased to 34 years of saving to have the same house. And since these credits necessitate a considerable amount of saving, the share of the urban poor in these allocations is even less than the rest of the income groups. Over the years, the waiting time to purchase a home has increased considerably.

The problem of lack of proper and adequate housing for the low income groups and middle strata is more evident in Tehran when the city covers 30% of the production in housing market (Rafiei quoted by Zebardast, 2006). As a study reveals, the lowest 40 percentile of the income groups in the capital city cannot afford housing in formal sector (Yazdai, Rafiei quoted by (Zebardast, 2006)). The gist of these policies is reflected as concerns in an UN report (UN, 2006) stating that 'prohibitive costs of housing in the country and policies and programs which do not seem to result in improved access to adequate housing for the very poor'. This report mentions some elements contributing to the failure of the policies as;

- a- Inaccessibility of government credit facilities;
- b- Distortions in government incentives to large-scale builders for the production of low-price housing units;
- c- Lack of coordination between different government branches, agencies and organizations responsible for implementation.

¹ In Iranian law, 'normally', the man is the 'head' of the family. Female-headed families are the families that for some reason, the man of the family cannot practice his role as the 'head' of the family.

Housing provision

Right after the Revolution 1979 and in response to increased need for housing, the Iranian government adopted a supply-driven housing strategy. The government responded to the families in need of housing by an urban land redistribution program and the provision of 'social' housing which were supposedly smaller than 50 square meters (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004). By mid 1980s this plans failed and were followed by other plans and incentives in the next decades. As a research by the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism show, the estimated household savings from 1992 to 2001 by income docile (in 1992–93 prices) proves a real reduction in savings for all income groups over this period. This has resulted in a reduction in the rate of homeownership for all income groups and in particular for the lowest docile, for which the housing ownership rate fell by 3 percent (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development IRI, 2004). Of the latest programs to provide housing for the poor has been the *Mehr* Housing Scheme.

***Mehr* Housing Scheme (*Tarh-e Maskan-e Mehr*)**

This Scheme was a substitution for the previous plans for providing housing for the low income groups in Iran. The former government in office before 2005 had approved to prepare a comprehensive housing plan in 2006. The Plan included action plans for issues e.g. housing finance; urban land; housing tax system, housing for the low income groups; social housing and rural housing (Alaedini and Fardanesh, 2014). The new government coming to office in 2005 decided to put it on hold and instead introduce the *Mehr* Scheme Plan.

Promising to solve the housing problem of the country till 2013 and being called as strange as 'the finest undertaking since Adam' by the then president of the country in office (Guardian, 2014), the program called *Mehr* Housing Scheme was launched in 2007. The objective of the Scheme was announced to be providing affordable housing for those who did not have adequate housing especially the poor and the low middle class. In the Scheme, the developers were offered unused state lands out of the service zones of the big cities to build affordable housing units for first-time owners.

The qualifications of the applicants of the *Mehr* Housing were profoundly diversified and apparently not specifically targeting the low income groups. These qualifications were as such (Alaedini and Fardanesh, 2014, p. 53);

- ‘1. Applicant households must not have any member in possession of land or dwelling or who has received housing subsidies after 1978.
2. Eligibility is restricted to married couples or single household heads that are either:

- Female household heads over 35 years of age; or
- Disabled household heads over 20 years; or

- Outstanding in academic terms.
3. Applicant households must have lived for a minimum of 5 years in the city in which the application is made (not applicable to migrants from metropolitan areas); and
 4. Applicant households must have the ability to pay back the loan and cover other costs in addition to the loan'.

Since many of the applicants did not have enough savings to pay for the mortgages, they were given 99 year mortgages guaranteed by the state. In that system, the banks acted as intermediaries between developers and the government. The necessary budget and financial support for the Scheme was ambitiously gigantic making it of the biggest financial programs of the contemporary history of the country.

From a financial point of view the Scheme has been swallowing huge amount of money from the national budget. For instance, comparing the 33 billion USD which is the value of the bank notes printed in the country since the foundation of Iranian Central Bank in 1960 to the 14 billion USD which is the budget spent in *Maskan-e Mehr* can reveal the financial magnitude of the program. Figures and numbers reveal that as January 2011 the banking sector has doled out 10.2 billion USD to the applicants (Guardian, 2014). That is why besides channeling billions of dollars to the Scheme, the government began printing fiat money which added to the inflation in the economy. The coincidence of this inflation with intensification of economic sanctions against the country in 2007-2013 took the problem to an unsolvable level.

From a technical and operational point of view it can be seen that several modifications were made to the primary plans. For instance, the initial area of the units were designed to be 50 to 70 square meters, but it later had to be doubled and modified to 100 square meters due to the cultural norms of the people which assume a 50 square meter unit 'too small'. This factor added to the complications of implementation of the program.

Many of the houses which were built in the barren lands in the vicinity of Tehran and other major cities of the country were left half-structured because the developers did not have the enough economic incentives to finish the projects. Besides, many of these buildings lack the necessary amenities and are not ready to use. In one case for instance, in *Pardis*, a newly built town near Tehran, the number of the housing units without electricity, water, heating or sewage system and other basic amenities mount to 200,000 (Guardian, 2014). Also, considering that most of the users of these houses are of the low income groups, the maintenance of the buildings and continuation of provision of services for these units is facing grave problems.

As pointed out above, these problems which majorly are structural were intensified and deepened when the economic sanctions against Iran imposed by western countries caused a stern decrease in

the oil export revenue. Considering the economic hardships which the country has been facing and to deal with economic shortages of the Scheme, the initial target groups of this housing program shifted from the poor people to middle class groups who could afford the costs of a new house.

Adding 17 new cities in the peripheries of the big cities as the construction site of the Scheme encouraged a broader migration to these cities. When the primary objective of the Scheme was constructing 4 million housing units up to 2013, still many of the promised housing units are (in 2015) under construction. It means that after six years following the launch of the program, the financial pressures of the program on the vulnerable economy of the country is going on at the time of the research and it is still swallowing a considerable amount of the national budget.

Facing many complications on the way, not only this initiative did not solve the problem of housing in Iran, but also it contributed to the economic problems of the country. According to the Iranian president currently in office, the sizeable money dedicated to this program (16.6 billion USD) was the origin of 40 percent of inflation rate of the country in 2014 (IRNA, 2014b). It can be said that the program has been a big failure contributing to the economic problems of the country.

Despite the promises of the Revolution and a number of policies in different periods of time to provide affordable housing for the people, the housing issue has been an unsolved problem for almost entire life of different governments in Iran. Currently, accessing an affordable shelter remains a complicated dilemma for a big part of the population. In a report published recently in an Iranian daily (Iran Economist Daily, 2011) it is stated that the waiting time for purchasing for a 75 m. apartment in Tehran is getting longer year by year. According to the same report, for the low middle class and low income groups it can mount to 40 years of waiting. Therefore, for many of the low income groups the only feasible solution left is either living in informal settlements in peripheries of Tehran or settling in decayed areas of inner city.

4.5 Revolution 1979 and the promise of provision of housing for the poor

Even before the establishment of the new regime, the poor people of the country were promised with provision of free electricity, drinking water and proper housing. In an infamous speech in *Behesht-e Zahra* cemetery on 2 February 1979, merely a few hours after getting back from the 13 year old exile, Ayatollah Khomeini the leader of the new establishment cried out these promises before millions of the people listening to him eagerly (Khomeini, 1979). Later on, the provision of the housing was explicitly mentioned in the new Constitution of the country which was ratified by a national referendum in Spring 1981. Besides, the paradigm of the new regime was announced to be supporting the oppressed, the disenfranchised and the downtrodden- the *Mostaz'afeen*. They were called to be the 'owners' of the Revolution and satisfying their demands, quests and needs became the official paradigm of the new system. The new government called itself the 'government of the 'mostaz'afeen' and 'khukh-neshinan' (slum dwellers). Materialistic wealth, economic richness and

class segregation turned to the rejected values which were buried with all signs and remained values of the old regime. Despite all the ups and downs of the life of Islamic Republic, this paradigm has lived ever since and being repeated all over the media, the official tribunes and ceremonies for over 36 years now.

Right during the turbulent days of 1978 and after the triumph of the Revolution when there was a void in the force of authority, the poor tried to squeeze themselves in the environments they never had any access to. Those who were living in the peripheries of the Tehran rushed to grab lands in inner cities or to occupy the abandoned houses left behind by the affiliates of the former regime. The old regime which was facing the waves of angry protests of the people all over the country retreated from the previous position and surrendered to the demand of the poor. In summer 1978, the government in the Office accepted to integrate many of the 'informal' neighbourhoods and shanty towns into the city and practically formalize them. The government promised to provide them with municipal infrastructure, electricity, running water and proper roads (Bayat, 1997b).

Since the roots of the problem i.e. inequality, unemployment, poverty, class segregation, disparity between the center and the periphery, lack of proper housing and dilemmas alike were not addressed to through those hurried and ad hoc actions by a regime which was evidently inhaling its last breaths, those measures did not solve the issue of informality. The newly 'formalized' people were substituted by the new waves of migration to Tehran. In other words, when the former peripheries were integrated into the city enlarging the city for 500 hectares, then again, in the new peripheries new informal towns were formed. Hundreds of satellite villages around the capital city (Bayat, 1997b) accommodated the big waves of migrants rushing to the capital city to search for a better condition of life, employment, housing and in one word, human dignity. Still, the shortage of the housing lived on; it is estimated that in 1980, one year after the Revolution '300,000 homes were needed to keep up with the population expansion' (Bayat, 1997b, p. 81). As the result of the population movements, the area of Tehran was doubled within two years after the Revolution 1979.

4.5.1 House squatting in the aftermath of the Revolution 1979

Squatting

Beside the land grab during the climax of the revolutionary days of February 1979 and afterwards, many of the poor took over empty buildings and apartments. Led by political activists who believed in the right for housing for everybody, the people moved hurriedly to occupy the empty houses, villas and complex buildings (Bayat, 1997b). Living in a 'time of duality' (Bayat, 1997b, p. 144), when the old power was disappeared and vanished and the new power was not established yet, the people practiced their right of having a proper shelter by claiming it through occupying the empty buildings. These deserted buildings belonged to the wealthy, many of which had fled the country

because of their bonds to the old regime or affiliation with the political system of Shah. Some of these buildings were not finished yet and were half-constructed, but still compared with the shacks that the people used to live in, they were quite a luxury residence.

As Asef Bayat details on the silent movement of occupying the empty houses (Bayat, 1997; Bayat, 2010) in the first years of Revolution 1979, the people informed each other through the family relationships and links and acted in groups and collectively. They were usually led or organized by a religious or secular leftist group and tried to consolidate their action by putting banners on the buildings. As one of the interviewees explained:

We would begin our invasion in a specific time. Then men, women, and children carrying their utensils, rugs, heaters, beds and whatever would join in the occupation (Bayat, 1997b, p. 62).

After arrival, the people tried to settle in the new place and if the building was not completely constructed, they tried to finish it and make a new life for themselves and their families. They installed doors and windows, finished the walls, painted them and tried to begin a normal life (Bayat, 1997b). The new life merely did not include a new shelter; it also meant a new place for work. In some areas, the men began opening their small businesses to make a living. In those days and in those areas, street businesses began to mushroom; street butchery, street grocery and so on. Despite the hardship that the people faced in their new life, having a shelter of their own was a long dream coming true and the people were not willing to leave it off (Bayat, 1997b).

The new collective life necessitated a collective organizing effort. To restore the order back to the affairs of running the occupied complexes, the people set up councils. In the councils the people elected representatives who took care of different issues. Of the responsibilities of the councils were upgrading the community, dealing with the day-to-day problems, maintaining the cleanliness, resolving disputes and holding cultural events. Also, they were in charge of negotiations and relationships with the neighboring buildings or neighbourhood in general or even the original owners of the buildings (Bayat, 1997b). In one word they were 'protecting and upgrading the occupied' houses (Bayat, 1997b, p. 66).

Eviction of squatted houses

Just like Damocles Sword, the heavy shadow of eviction was consistently weighing over the occupiers. Although the paradigm of the new regime and prevailing discourse in the country was the support for the *mostaz'eeen* calling them the real owners of the Revolution, the people knew that they were violating an important rule in the country; the sacredness of the private property. Circumstances in the following months proved that the people were right to be concerned.

When the new system began to consolidate its rule all over the country, one of the first measures it took was coping with the house squatting. The act of house squatting was against the new order; firstly it violated the private property law which was respected by the new system, secondly it had the support and organizing force of the leftist activists behind. So, with eviction and dealing with the occupiers and squatting, the new regime eradicated a problem on the ground and at the same time eliminated the leftist support for the action.

The new system changed the tone when dealing with the squatters. At the end and to give order to the 'chaos' upsurge by the revolutionary fervor, the new system established two foundations in charge of confiscated houses and properties to formalize the issues. They were the Foundation of Veterans and *Mustaz'afeen* (a Qoranic term meaning 'the oppressed') as well as the Foundation of Housing of Islamic Republic of Iran. As the result of all the circumstances, the occupiers had to leave the houses and had to submit them to the new formal institutions run and established by the new regime.

The measures to force the people to leave the occupation included different actions from propaganda and denouncing the squatting as 'un-Islamic' to divide and rule tricks to cutting the electricity and water and finally the armed attacks (Bayat, 1997b). The reaction of the people was different and diverse, but at the end, after two years the squatters left the houses, villas, hotels and properties.

4.5.2 Neighborhood councils

In the turbulent days of 1978 and 1979, a bottom up initiative in the low income neighbourhoods and shanty towns as well as middle class neighbourhoods of Tehran was set up to help people with their daily needs. Since these councils were formed out of the need of dealing with the hardships of daily life of the people in the days which the regular order was absent they were not pre-planned and had an ad hoc nature. The active people in these councils were not elected by the people but were respected by them. In fact, the members of these councils were those who desired to work voluntarily for the community. They gathered around and began the work of organizing, distribution of the goods, controlling the order and responsibilities alike in the neighbourhoods.

In those days the regular life of the country was halted by waves of strikes and protests and consequently several items of goods, fuel and food became scarce. Dealing with the hardship and scarcity and trying to counterbalance the acts of the greedy hoarders, the neighbourhood councils were quite helping. The first of these councils was established in the poor neighbourhood of *Yakhchi-Abad* in south of Tehran. In winter days of 1978 and 1979, specifically fuel was a scant item so that for purchasing one gallon of petroleum or diesel fuel the people had to wait for hours in front of fuel distribution centers or gas stations. The members of the councils helped distribution of the scarce goods even by taking these goods to doorsteps of the elderly, sick or anybody who could not wait in long lines. They overlooked the distribution process and tried to stop hoarding or

misdistribution. Among the active people of the councils were women as well who kept a watchful eye on everything around in the neighbourhood (Bayat, 1997b).

The decentralized councils not only were involved in distribution and maintaining the order in the authority ‘vacuum’, but also took care of political activities and organization. They distributed revolutionary pamphlets and were active in news distribution and organizing the people for taking part in the political rallies.

These bottom up organizations were all unprecedented initiatives which for the first time ever ‘brought the experience of the Revolution’ to the low income and poor neighbourhoods (Bayat, 1997b, p. 51). When the Revolution gained the official victory in Feb 12, 1979, the work of these councils faced obstacles.

The political fervor and excitement was extremely high in the aftermath of the Revolution 1979. In the minds of millions of the people, the Revolution had an egalitarian nature and was supposed to give equal opportunities of development and advancement specifically to the working class living in the poor neighbourhoods of Tehran and other cities. Many of the young activists who mostly were affiliated with political groups instantly began to work among the people of these neighbourhoods. They used every possible opportunity to teach the people and to learn from them. They held different courses in every possible location. They were active in literacy campaigns both for men and women and held tailoring courses for women. They organized the youth, set up football matches in the alleys for them and tried to strengthen the communal solidarity.

When the political repressions began in 1980s, the community organizations were of the main targets of the attacks of the system against the activists. In other words, along with the mounting repressions and attacks against secular or religious leftist groups who were active in the neighbourhoods, these grassroots associations were practically forced to stop working.

4.6 Informal settlements in the aftermath of Revolution 1979

In Iran, the legal city boundary¹ or the service zone² is the boundary in which the zoning regulations are enforced and the municipalities are legally obligated to provide municipal services to the residents. There is another boundary outside of the legal boundary which is assigned for the further developments. This boundary³ which includes the periphery of the city is the area in which most of the informal settlements are established.

The first informal settlement established in peripheries of Tehran was *Eslam-shahr* in mid 1970s (Bayat, 2010a). Later on, when the city sprawled and *Eslam-shahr* was integrated into the city and

¹Mahdud-e qanuni

²Mahdudekhadamat

³Howze-ye estehfazi

legalized, the same happened to this newly legalized area and the newly arrived people or those who could not afford living within the legal boundaries were pushed out to the peripheries. This group of the people were those who established two new settlements in the peripheries of *Eslam-shahr* (Zebardast, 2006).

In the past two decades, the number of the population living in informal settlements in Iran has been growing to an alarming extent; one fifth of the current population of the cities of the country live in informal houses (Zebardast, 2006). A UN report on housing in Iran (UN, 2006) mentions that the informal settlements comprise 25 to 30 percent of the entire urban settlements of the country. The share of Tehran is even bigger in the number; according to the head of the development group of the Iranian parliament the people of informal settlements of Tehran comprise one fourth of the entire population of the city (BBC Persian, 2014). The 40% increase of the population living in these areas (UPARC quoted by (Zebardast, 2006)) in the past two decades reveals the amplification of the problem of informal and degenerated areas of the city.

4.6.1 Informal settlements vs. inner city decayed areas¹

In this research the informal settlement in today's Iran is referred to the areas which have grown and expanded on vacant lands or in the vicinity of a rural settlement without any formal development plan (Zebardast, 2006). Despite the past decades when the population of informal settlements migrated from the rural areas of the country, a recent research (Zebardast, 2006) reveals that the current inhabitants of many informal neighbourhoods in Tehran come from other informal neighbourhoods of the city. In other words, the population of these neighbourhoods is settled as a result of an inter-city migration. The same research mentions that the main reasons for this intra-city migration are access to an affordable housing as well as proximity to the work place.

For the inner city decayed areas, the Iranian Higher Council of Architecture and Urbanism has defined three parameters which are all physical. These factors do not include or even hint to the socioeconomic problems of these areas. The factors are; impenetrability (unplanned and improper network of the roads), fine texture (smallness of the plots), sustainability of the structure (Alaedini et al., 2013). The factor of impenetrability refers to the condition when the percentage of the alleys and roads which the width is less than 6 meters is more than 50% of all roads in the area. The second factor (fine texture) is the condition in which the percentage of the houses less than 200 square meters is more than 50% in the area. And the third factor refers to the improper and low quality structure as well as non-standard building materials. According to these three factors, the decayed areas are divided into three classes of relatively decayed, highly decayed and extremely decayed (Alaedini et al., 2013).

¹Baft-e Farsoode

According to the Iranian law, the responsibility of regenerating the decayed urban areas of Tehran is upon two administrations; the Ministry of Urbanism and Roads as well as Tehran municipality. During the time of former president (2005-2013) and because of the political disputes between two rival factions in the above mentioned administrations, the Ministry of Urbanism and Roads shrugged off the responsibility practically submitting the job entirely to a certain department in Tehran Municipality- the Regeneration Organization.

Tehran			Decayed areas of Tehran		
Area (ha)	Population	No of units	Area (ha)	Population	No of units
62,100	7,797,250	2,345,000	3,268	1,152,173	261,786
% of the city			5	15	11
Table 6- Data on Tehran and the decayed areas of Tehran					
Source of Data (TCRO, 2010 quoted by (Alaedini et al., 2013, p. 3))					

4.6.2 Social and physical specifications of informal settlements and decayed areas

As mentioned before, the habitants of the decayed areas and informal settlements in the peripheries of Iranian cities are the people who at a certain episode of the history of the country following the land reforms in 1962 have migrated to the cities for a better life. The people living in these areas face severe problem of either unemployment or having a low-paid job. Many of them lack education and do not have specific skills for the jobs with better payments. This reality makes the poverty as a prevailing phenomenon in these areas. The people usually do not have savings or bank account and are living on a day to day basis.

Since there is usually no control over the construction of these settlements, the quality of the houses are generally low. The buildings are either built by non-standard materials or the materials are used ad hoc and without following any construction rules, plans or regulations. And since the basic need of having a shelter is the major concern of the households, many of the buildings in these areas do not have proper façade (Alaedini and Fardanesh, 2014).

Also, lack of plan for the neighbourhood contributes to the chaos in the entire neighbourhood in terms of water distribution or sewage discharge. In many of these neighbourhoods, the sewage discharges into shallow or deep open gutters or simply running into the alleys.

In addition, since the organization of these neighbourhoods is majorly improvised and unplanned they also lack other facilities e.g. adequate schools, green spaces, health care centers, sport centers and amenities alike. As a research by Urban Development and Revitalization Organization shows (Alaedini and Fardanesh, 2014) compared with other parts of the city, these areas have less facilities and amenities. Yet, since after the Revolution the government and specifically the Ministry of Energy has the responsibility of distributing gas, electricity and water to many of these

neighbourhoods, there is no major problem regarding the provision of these facilities. More importantly, even when there is no provision of energy or water by the authorities, the people gain them through illegal ways.

4.6.3 Land tenure in informal settlements and decayed areas

The tenure in the informal settlements includes different types of ownership. Usually, the documents for these settlements are solely recognized by the inhabitants of these areas and do not have any formal identification. One of these kinds of documents is the 'promissory note'. These notes as Zebardast explains (Zebardast, 2006) are prevailed in some of the informal neighbourhoods of Iran. These written documents act as a type of transaction exchanged between the supposedly 'buyer' and 'seller' in the presence of two witnesses. Indeed, they are similar to what Kreibich calls 'social regularization' (Kreibich, 2012, p. 160):

The concept of social regularization is used to underscore the 'informal authentication' of individual rights on a property, especially on land in the absence of state support or intervention. The term is supposed to signify initiatives in the informal land management sector which improve the rights acquired on land. The introduction of agreement forms for land transactions which are signed by buyers and sellers and authenticated by local leaders and other witnesses as well as other norms and procedures for securing ownership rights and protecting the value of investments in land in informal settlements are institutional activities which can be categorized under the term of social regularization.

In many of decayed inner city the problem of lack of formal tenure is usually the same as informal settlements in the city margins and they lack a formal deed. The main reason are (Alaedini and Fardanesh, 2014, p. 65);

- 'Slow development of a cadastre system;
- Person-based standard format of deeds with inadequate and ambiguous geometrical reference; and
- Widespread attempts at overstepping regulations with the hope of paying a low fine to receive deeds'.

Since gaining any formal deed for the land or the house in these neighbourhoods is time consuming and may cost a considerable amount of money, the prevailing trend among those who lack an official deed is ignoring the reality and forgetting about it. In fact, the legal process includes survey of the property and an official announcement in the relevant press to seek for any claim for the property by another legal or natural person.

Lack of official and formal deed is one of the obstacles of regeneration of the housing units. It means that even if the owner had the financial sources for regeneration, no major physical

modification could be implemented because the first legal step for taking any measure is providing a legal document. Lack of formal deed is another reason for the low market value of the lands and houses within the decayed areas.

4.6.4 Magnitude of ‘the problem’ of informal settlements in post 1979 Revolution era

The Revolution came with all its wonders in 1978 and changing the political and socio economic environment and milieu of the country so drastically. Although the very low income groups of urban areas were not the enthusiastic and fervent participants of the street protests, they were the ones who tried to use the new space and sphere in favor of themselves.

For hundreds of thousands of the low income groups, the housing as an unsolvable dilemma was of the bold spotlights of many developments in that time of turbulence. In the turbulent days of 1978-1979 Tehran as the major destination for the migrations Os received the biggest share of the population movements. In the created void of authority during the Revolution, new informal settlements were set up in different parts of the city; both in the inner city as well as the margins and the peripheries. For instance, a small informal patch in the western part of the city (*Zanjan street*) was enlarged 140% and other similar spots popped up near the central square of the city (*meydane Enqelab*) and even one opposite to luxury high rise of a housing complex in the north of the city. The number of the households of different informal neighbourhoods of the city in those days increased to 100 thousands in 1980s (Asef Bayat, 1994).

In the peripheries, the developments had a more rapid turn in which the southern plain of the city witnessed the mushrooming of many new shanty towns. By 1986, the number of new informal settlements increased to 20, six times more than their size in mid 1970s and with a population of 460,000 people mounting the total number of these settlements around Tehran to 100 towns at the end of 1980s (Bayat, 1994) .

The Revolution, the turbulent and chaotic atmosphere dominating the country in 1979 and a couple of years afterwards paved the way for new migrations. Consequently, the need for the new houses increased from 200'000 in 1970s to 300'000 in 1983. The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in summer1981 channelized the biggest part of the budget to the war fronts and deepened the housing problem even more. For instance, in 1982 at the climax of the war just 11'600 housing units were built in Tehran when according to a housing official of the country 200'000 people were homeless in Tehran (Asef Bayat, 1994).

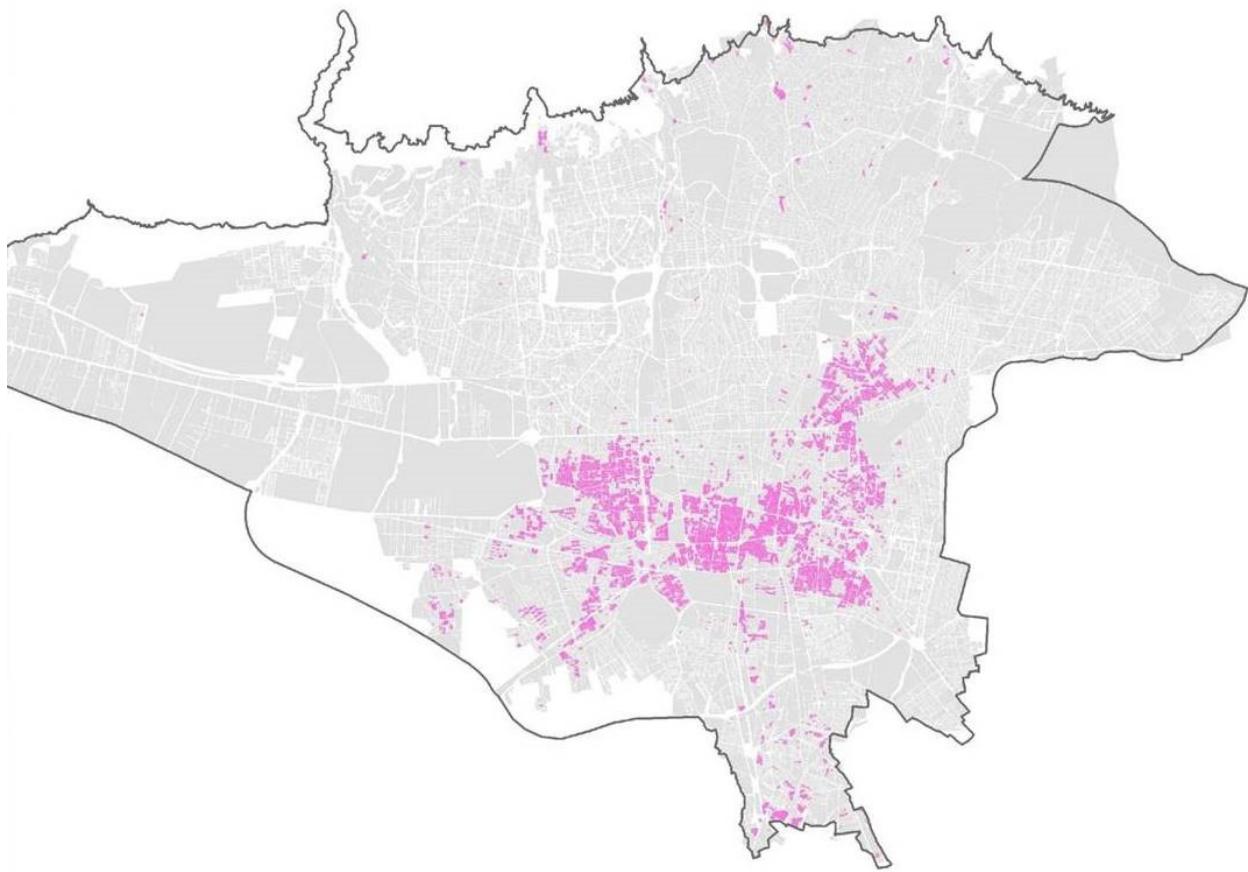


Figure 17- Tehran decayed areas (the purple colour patches)- assigned by the Renovation Organization
Source: (Hajialiakbari, 2011)

4.7 Neo-liberal turn in 1990s

Since the outset, the prevailing paradigm of Islamic Republic has been supporting the oppressed, the *mustaz'afeen*. In other words, this paradigm has lived since the beginning of the life of the new system and has always been dominating the public sphere. The idea of supporting the poor has gone that far to claim that the 'The Revolution belongs to *mustaz'afeen*', 'the government is at the service of *mustaz'afeen*' and 'the officials are proud to say they are there just to provide services to *mustaz'afeen*'. In other words, although the economic policies of Islamic Republic have fluctuated over the years, the main core claim constantly has been the support for the poor. Yet in terms of practical measures to take in favor of the poor, the Islamic Republic has left a controversial workbook behind.

The Revolution and the system has been trying to devise plans to address the issue of the housing for the low income groups of the society, but these policies rarely have been successful. Simply, the

shortage of housing has always been a major issue for the people especially for the young generation or other low income groups.

Following some egalitarian policies, the low income groups and the poor did not face any major economic deprivation in terms of basic needs during the hard time of the Iran-Iraq war and the system could provide those needs through strict rationing and price control. In those years general shortage and the low quality of many consuming goods was evident, but despite the hardships the 'Government of the war time' of Mir Hossein Mussavi paid special attention to provision of the basic needs and manage the distribution system in a way so that the all strata of the population could have a relatively fair share of the goods and services.

End of the war and the need for reconstruction of the country paved the way for the emergence of a new paradigm. The government running the country after the war calling itself as the 'Government of Construction' (*dowlat-e sazandegi*) selected neo-liberalism as the main policy for the development of the country causing major shift in the economic policies. The Construction Government liberalized the prices and foreign exchange rate and increased the price of basic needs i.e. fuel, bus and taxi fare as well as postal services (Bayat, 2010a). As the result, the inflation rate increased to 60% (Bayat, 2010a). At that time, Rafsanjani the president in the Office suggested to those who could not afford living in Tehran to leave and settle somewhere else. To him, reverse migration was the solution for problems in the capital city.

The other major shift in policies of the new government was toward the informal settlements. When before then, the informal settlements were tolerated and even were given services, during the 'Construction Government' the main policy changed toward the intolerance and demolition. To counter these policies, the people did not stand still and fought back the demolitions. For instance, in one case in 1991 in an informal settlement in south of Tehran (*Bagher Abad*) the people attacked the municipality agents who had come to demolish their shacks. The people even went that far to set the vehicles of the municipality on fire (Asef Bayat, 1994). In addition, the rapid increase in prices did not go without reaction from the people all over the country. The most severe one was the three day riot in *Eslam-Shahr* in 1995 which 'left one dead and dozens injured and hundreds arrested' (Bayat, 2010a).

The other cases of house demolitions in 1980s in different parts of Tehran did not solve the problem of informal settlements. Still, the socio-political complication of demolition which targeted the poorest of the poor caused the anger of the people and sparked clashes and physical confrontations. The outcome was totally far from the plan; the evicted just went and settled somewhere else or moved to the periphery. They usually did not leave Tehran, simply because they did not have a major chance of survival in their towns and villages of origin.

Generally speaking, since the dominating discourse of the system has always been the support for the *mostaz'afeen*, the Iranian government never could copy and paste the policies of other governments in the Middle East in eviction and demolition of the settlements. Or if in some circumstances they tried to do so, it had to be limited and could not have grave impacts on the situation. Thus, the only left option for different governments in Islamic Republic all through the life of the system has been solving the problem in more peaceful and sustainable ways. It means that although these measures have not succeeded yet and they are far from achieving any tangible outcomes for the majority of the people, they definitely are not identical to the policies practiced in many other countries of global south.

The 'Construction Government' was followed by the reformist government (1997-2005). Although the reformist era (1997-2005) opened the political environment in the country to some extent, it did not touch the economic situation of the millions of the low income classes in a profound way. According to a research (Salehi-Isfahani, 2009) during the reformist era both the poverty and inequality decreased in the country but the policies did not affect the situation of the poor in a broad and deep way. Of the successes of the reformist government which was facing a drastic drop in oil price and subsequently the oil revenue was that it could decrease the inflation rate and lessen the economic burden over the shoulders of millions of low income groups.

4.8 Brief history of urban regeneration in Tehran

4.8.1 Urban regeneration before the Revolution 1979

The first attempts of urban renewal in Tehran were made in 1920s at the same time like Turkey, when Reza Khan the Iranian king initiated a top down intervention in unplanned texture of Iranian cities. Establishment of the first Iranian municipality (*Baladiye*) in 1930 paved the way for practicing those attempts. Following the establishment of the municipality and having the proper legal support for the interventions, the straight lines cut through the cities and scratched the face of urban textures with wide modern streets.

In the modern city at the time of Reza Khan, the wide streets, electric tramways, underground metro as well as sewage system were considered necessary. In the first map of Tehran published in 1931, the city was organized in streets and squares and had a totally different appearance in comparison with the texture of historic old cities. Many of Iranian cities in those days were cut into different geometrical parts via cross-like streets which bisected the old bazars and historic urban textures giving a profoundly different feature to the cities (Andalib, 2010).

The first attempt of establishing an urban management system was made in 1942 after the fall of Reza Khan when in 1949 the Organization of Planning was established. This state organization developed the first national development plan which was following the urban and social reforms

through physical alternation and providing amenities i.e. electricity, tap water, asphalting the roads as well as establishing a health care system for the cities (Andalib, 2010).

Land reform in 1962 and unplanned industrialization of the country were of the major developments in 1960s in Iran. In Tehran and other major cities of the country i.e. Meshed, Qazvin, Shiraz, Isfahan industrial zones began to form and operate. Coincidence of establishing these industrial zones in the cities and land reform attracted hundreds of thousands of migrants to these cities and specifically to Tehran. At that time, many of the poor neighbourhoods of Tehran were set up to locate the migrant workers who were seeking a job in Tehran. Later, some of these neighbourhoods were integrated in the city as the Tehran sprawled and some remained in the margins. *Khazane Bokhara'ee* as a poor neighbourhood is one in many in which indwelled the workers of brick kilns nearby or in *Qoo Ghee* Factory as well as Tehran Textile Plant in the vicinity of the neighbourhood (Eskandari Dorbati, 2013). Neither this neighbourhood nor any other neighbourhoods in southern part of Tehran were mentioned in the 1966 master plan of Tehran. That is why the informality and informal expansion of the neighbourhoods like *Khazane* was the only way these neighbourhoods could be developed over the years.

4.8.2 Urban regeneration after the Revolution 1979

Soon after the Revolution in 1981 the country was dragged into an eight year war with Iraq. During the war years, most of the budget of the country was channelized to the war fronts or was consumed to provide the basic needs of the population. As the result, the first measures of urban revitalization were conducted after the end of the war in 1989.

Like other governments of Iran before and after the Revolution, this yet another top-down physical regeneration during the time of Construction Government (*Dowlat-e Sazandegi*), paid a special attention to the capital city. The then mayor of Tehran, Karbaschi was the Iranian version of Haussmann in Paris and Moses in New York. One of the first controversial measures of Tehran municipality during Karbaschi's mayorship was constructing a north-south expressway in Tehran called *Navvab*. When this bold and controversial project was totally physical, the other revitalization project (*Khub-Bakht*) had a stronger tendency toward participation of the locals and for the first time, took the social impacts of the project into the consideration.

***Navvab* expressway (1991-1994)¹**

The first draft of design of *Navvab* expressway dates back to 1964 and before the Iranian Revolution. The initial plan of the expressway designed it as a major 45 m expressway (Karbaschi,

¹ The construction of the expressway was finished in 1994, but the apartment blocks along it took years to complete.

2013) extending another north-south expressway deep into the southern part of Tehran. In 1990, the municipality of Tehran decided to implement the 45 year delayed project by purchasing the land as well as 5000 housing units and office places in the area (Karbaschi, 2013). Since the project did not have enough financial resources to pay for the compensation, the final design had high rise buildings with mixed use (residential and commercial and office use) in both sides along 5 km of the expressway. To integrate the new set of buildings into the plan, the municipality of Tehran approved the widening of the plan to 75-85 m. All these measures converted a simple 45 m *Navvab* 'expressway' to a huge *Navvab* 'project' which necessitated considerable financial as well as legal supports.

To provide the financial resources for the project, Tehran municipality took two measures. Firstly, it sold the buildings even before finalizing the construction at a lower price compared with the market. Secondly, the Municipality issued public bond with 'relatively reasonable interest rate' (Karbaschi, 2013) to encourage the people to invest in the project and cover the 50 million USD deficit.

The project has been a controversial urban renewal project and from the outset has been a topic for many discussions among the professionals and the citizens (Iranian Urban Studies, 2010). Of the major problems caused by the project was that it never considered or paid attention to the social impacts of the project and instigated a series of social problems in the area i.e. displacement of the people, as well as causing problems of place identity and vitality (Bahrainy H. and Aminzadeh B., 2007). In a recent research (Etemad, 2013), it is stated that the initial population is displaced to other parts of the city. One of the officials of Renovation Organization of Tehran Municipality (hereafter, Regeneration Organization) states¹:

During the time of 'Construction Government', the motto was 'financial independence of the municipalities' meaning that the municipalities had to provide the financial resources of the projects...*Navvab* project was designed and implemented according to that perception. The project caused an extensive displacement of the residents. About 600 families were forced to move causing lots of problems.

To explain the size of the *Navvab* project, he adds:

Just imagine that the amount of the steel consumed for the project tripled the market price of the steel.

The research of Etemad (Etemad, 2013) states that the new comers mostly coming from other parts of the city are more educated and are from higher income background. Despite the original

¹ One of the officials of Regeneration Organization

population who enjoyed a strong sense of communal solidarity, the new residents are stranger to each other. In the new *Navvab* area there is class segregation between the northern and the southern parts of it where higher and lower income groups live respectively. Also, in the old *Navvab* neighbourhood there was a more harmonious ethnic texture where most of the people were from Azeri speaking origin. The same research reveals that the new residents neither like their new life nor living close to an expressway where the old residents miss their neighbourhood and feel emotional pressures leaving behind their old life and neighbors. Still, when many of the professionals call the project 'a failure' (Bahrainy H. and Aminzadeh B., 2007), the former officials of Tehran Municipality including the former mayor praise it (Karbaschi, 2013 ; Iranian Urban Studies, 2010).

Khub-Bakht project (2007-2009)

The problems following the implementation of *Navvab* project emerged very soon and caused criticisms by the professionals. The physical mindset of the managers and officials had to be modified when new realities exposed themselves. Subsequently, the social impacts of physical-oriented projects could not be ignored any more.

Moreover, in 2002 a common survey about Tehran seismic condition by Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA) and Tehran Municipality revealed the grave dangers that the city was prone to. The report illustrated the human disaster which an average magnitude earthquake could cause for the city. Additionally, the earthquake in southern city of Bam in December 2003 which devastated the entire city and killed more than 40,000 people within a few seconds was another significant incident at that period. The deadly disaster had a serious impact on the minds of the urban managers. In a nutshell, the earthquake stressed on the urgency of addressing the problem of unsustainably of building structures in Iranian cities in general and in the decayed areas of urban areas in particular. One of the former officials of Regeneration Organization¹ tells about the situation as such:

After the release of the report of JICA, the issue of regeneration became urgent. But practically nothing happened before 2005 when the new management of Renovation Organization began to work on plans for regeneration of the decayed areas of Tehran. Then, the criteria defining 'the deterioration' was set by the Renovation Organization because there was not any other national or official document to define the criteria for the issue...So, the physical plans were worked on and then other questions emerged before us- what would be the mechanism to implement these plans? What would be the financial resources? Who is going to implement the plans? To answer these questions, the Renovation Organization decided to implement a pilot project and then based on the

¹Andalib, former head of Regeneration Organization

experience of its implementation, set a framework and proliferate it in other similar neighbourhoods across the city. To do that, the Renovation Organization selected *Khub-Bakht* neighbourhood.

Located in south east of Tehran, *Khub-Bakht* neighbourhood was selected as the area for implementing a participatory urban regeneration project. In this project, it was attempted to involve the people of the neighbourhood in the process. The plan included constructing a freeway in the area and renovating the neighboring urban texture.

During the implementation, the project faced several problems on the way. According to a research (Andalib, 2010), the social problems included lack of trust between the people and the municipality as well as lack of any grassroots organizations or institutions facilitating the process. The economic problems were of the major issues in the project; the people were extremely poor and they even could not afford paying for the formalities or the costs of construction. Also, the poverty dominating the area and cheap price of the land and estate discouraged any investments by the private sector in the project. The legal dilemma added to the complicated pile of problems in the neighbourhood; there were problems of collective tenure which necessitated land partition as well as inheritance complications. The predicament of tenure required legalities which lengthened the bureaucratic process and complicated the formalities (Andalib, 2010).

One of the initiatives in *Khub-Bakht* project was establishing a regeneration office by the municipality. It means that for the first time in the history of urban regeneration in the country, Tehran Municipality did not try to implement a totally top down project without any contacts and communications with the local population. In the Office of regeneration, the experts were supposed to encourage the people to involve in the project, but since the idea of 'involvement' was not clear even to the managers of the project, at the end, the municipality had to purchase the houses and spend a considerable amount of financial resources in purchasing the land and the housing units.

In June 2009, the project was halted by Tehran Municipality since it failed to achieve its objectives, but the experience of establishing a regeneration office inside the neighbourhood comprising experts and professionals was a lived experience. Later, these learned lessons in *Khub-Bakht* were used for developing facilitation offices in some other neighbourhoods in urban decayed areas of Tehran.

Establishment of facilitation offices (2009-2011)

Following the experience of *Khub-Bakht* neighbourhood, the Renovation Organization decided to establish a pilot project in five decayed neighbourhoods in Tehran. Setting up an office comprising experts in different principles to ease, accelerate and facilitate the process of regeneration was the main core of the plan in each neighbourhood. These offices were supposed to be erected inside the

neighbourhoods, communicate with the people, recognize the bottlenecks and find solutions to the problems that the neighbourhoods faced. The main idea was consequently mobilizing the people, finding investors and designing financial support for the projects to finally regenerate the entire neighbourhood.

Despite the previous experiences of renewal which were following an entirely physical alternation and resulted to a sizable amount of social problems e.g. displacement of the original inhabitants, these projects were supposed to pay attention to the human side of the developments and look at the neighbourhood texture as a whole instead of constructing a road or implementing merely a physical modification.

In the new setting of policies, the focus was defining small projects rather than following big plans and projects. This new policy relied extensively on the local people as well as the investors and was supposed to support the people who desired to change their houses for the better. The facilitators were assigned to ease the partnership between the private sector and investors at one side and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood at the other side and when necessary, to activate and mobilize the support of municipality and the banking system for joint projects.

In 2008, five offices in five neighbourhoods of *Ne'matabad*, *Emzade Abdollah*, *Bagh Azari*, *Robat Karim* and *Khaniabad* in the south of Tehran began to work as the pilot projects. The contract was signed between the Renovation Organization and the Office of facilitators and was set for one year.

One year later, the number of facilitation offices increased to 43. The neighbourhoods within the area of the work of these offices covered about 1854 ha. The terms of reference for the new offices included;

- Education and dissemination of awareness about the problems in the neighbourhood while suggesting that the solution was regenerating the neighbourhood;
- Establishing institutions which could mobilize the people and organize them with the aim of regeneration;
- Supporting the community-based regeneration and guiding the process of renewal;
- Channelizing financial supports toward the neighbourhood;
- Communicating with all the involving actors i.e. the private sector and possible investors and activating the participation of the people in all the steps of regeneration.

According to the documents provided by the Regeneration Organization, the measures of the facilitation offices can be summarized as such:



Figure 18- Terms of reference of facilitation offices of regeneration in Tehran

Source of data: (Hajialiakbari, 2011), Design of MMansoorian

In the analyses provided by Renovation Organization (Andalib et al., 2008 ;Hajialiakbari, 2011) different reasons are mentioned for the establishment of these offices, but it seems that the boldest motive behind all the efforts was that the problems of these neighbourhoods were too big, too diverse and too expensive to be dealt with the attempts of the central government.

Practically, when the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods were facing different dilemma, social problems, unstable structure and lack of amenities and infrastructure, the national government practically did not show any major intention to solve the multi-sided set of complicated predicaments in these areas. Therefore, establishing the facilitation office in which the professionals encouraged the inhabitants to help with the regeneration seemed to be a feasible solution to the dilemma.

4.9 Farahzad Neighbourhood

Located in district 2 of the Tehran Municipality and on the slopes of the northern mountains surrounding Tehran, Farahzad was used to be a summer leisure village for Tehranis decades ago. Contrary to all other degenerated areas of Tehran, the location of the Farahzad neighbourhood in the north of the city which is usually the residence of the rich, has made an exceptional situation for it. As the result of the geographical location of it, Farahzad is a decayed urban patch right in the middle of a wealthy district creating a high value for its lands.

The entire texture of Farahzad is both informal and decayed¹. Informal in a sense that almost all the housing units in the neighbourhood and specifically down in the valley have the problem of tenure. In other words, either the people lack any deed for the land or they have not obtained legal permissions for construction on the land. Generally speaking, the legal property status in Farahzad is ambiguous and unclear meaning that different organizations and legal or natural entities have claims over the land. Beside the neighbourhood itself, along the river valley there was a newly established community including very low quality housing units which indwelled the more recently arrived and poorer migrants which was bulldozed by Tehran Municipality in early 2015. What the Renovation Organization officially defined as the 'decayed area' was also the territory of the work of the Facilitation Office of Farahzad and did not include the informal housing deep in the valley.

4.9.1 Physical alternation of *Farahzad*

Previously a village on the north western side of Tehran, *Farahzad* was famous for its picturesque beauty and fresh air making it a desirable destination for many Tehranis trying to flee from the hot summer days of the urban area. During the turbulent days of the Iranian revolution in 1979, the village underwent major changes. The main reason was the location of the village in a wealthy district, so that as a result, the gardens, farms and agricultural lands and properties in the village were turned into houses and shops with a higher value and price.

Moreover, during the time of absence of law (Bayat, 1997b) when informal changes in land use was the prevailing trend, some migrants who flooded from all parts of the country to the capital city to have their own share of the Revolution (Bayat, 2010a), settled in *Farahzad*. During that time, many trees were dried, rooted up and even burned to turn the gardens into barren lands proper to trade and develop. As the result of the chaos in the years following the Iranian Revolution, an informal settlement began to shape in *Farahzad*.

Farahzad neighbourhood specifically went through further physical changes in the late 1990s due to the construction of an inner city expressway halving the quarter into two parts. The southern part of *Farahzad* totally vanished through the incursion of man-made constructions as the result of city sprawl leaving almost nothing of its previous greenery. The area of the research is the northern part which is still enjoying its old gardens and lush vegetation.

Because of its location on the slopes of a mountain, the form of the district is un-organized. In other words, moving through its meandering alleys and streets is not an easy task for residents as well as the visitors. The quality of access roads is not favourable and does not follow any sort of regularity in width or physical specifications. Walking or driving through steep and slippery ice-covered roads during the cold months of the year is one of the problems that the residents

¹Based on the three criteria defined by Iranian Higher Council of Architecture and Urbanism

face, making the low quality of the roads with bumps and ditches a major source of complaints from them. Car accidents and traffic jams especially at the junction of the expressway and entrance spot of the neighbourhood is a constant and daily experience of the residents as well as all those who to the neighbourhood to visit or for leisure purposes.

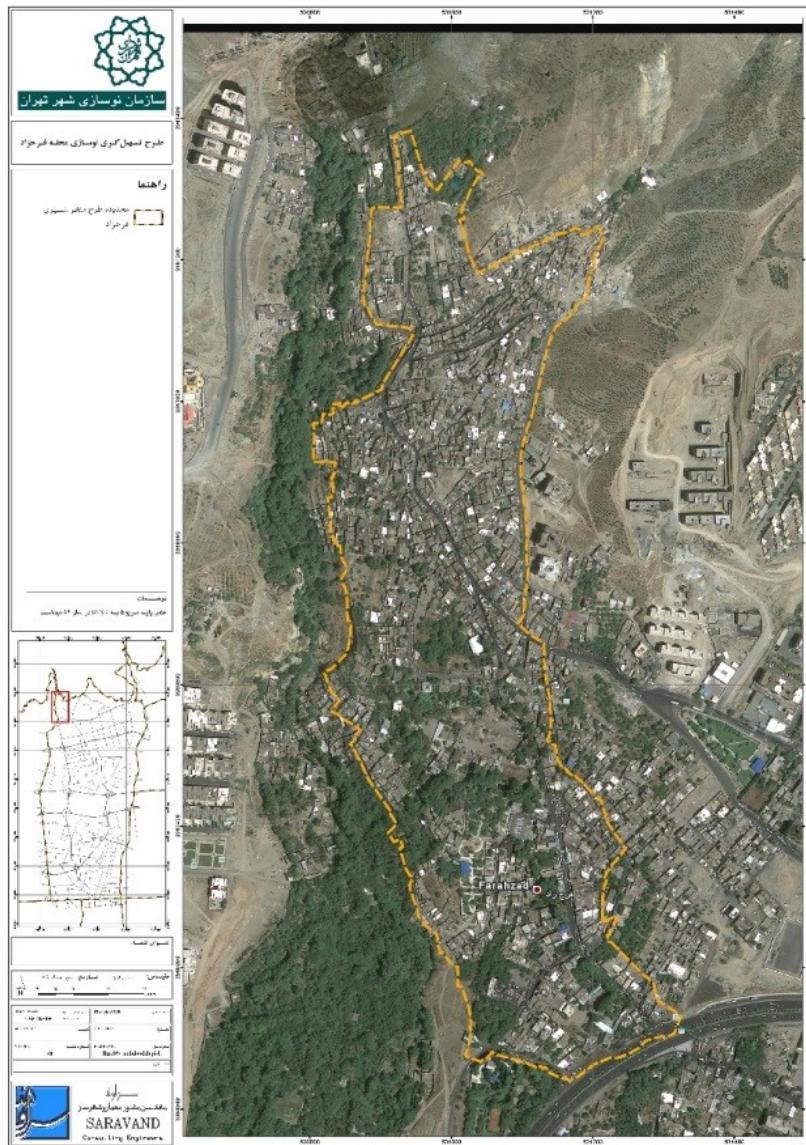


Figure 19- Farahzad and the assigned borderlines of work of Facilitation Office (yellow dashed line)
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)



Figure 20- View to the old part of Farahzad

Source: Maryam Vahedi (Oct. 2015)



Figure 21- Main street of Farahzad

Source: Maryam Vahedi (Oct. 2015)

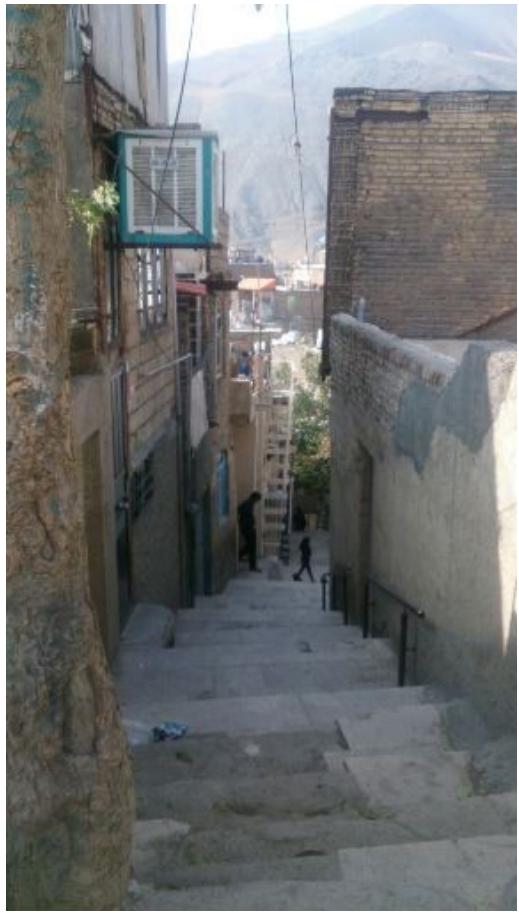


Figure 22- Samples of Farahzad access roads and alleys

Source: Maryam Vahedi (Oct. 2015)

4.9.2 Socioeconomic survey in *Farahzad*¹

The last official census about *Farahzad* at the time of outset of the work of Facilitation Office was from Statistics Centre of Iran (Statistical Center of Iran, 2008). According to that census the population of *Farahzad* in 2007 was about 11,000 of which 69% were literate. The family size was 4.08 and young people comprised 51% of the population (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010).

According to the same census, the family size in *Farahzad* in that year was 4.08 in which 40% of the males had some kind of jobs. Like many other dilapidated areas of Tehran, *Farahzad* was a destination for many of Iranian working forces migrating from other parts of the country to find a job and shelter in the capital city as well as Afghan and a few Pakistani immigrants. In the neighbourhood 21% of the people have migrated to *Farahzad* at some time and 14% of the entire population are non-Iranian immigrants.

According to the above mentioned survey (Statistical Center of Iran, 2008), the general information was as follows;

population	Population	10760
	Male population	49.3%
	Female population	50.7%
	Family size	4.08
	Age mean	23 years
Employment	Employed ²	40%
	Unemployed or seeking for job or student or housewife or at the military service	69%
Education	Literate	69%
	Illiterate	31%
House area	less than 100 square meters	80%
	between 100-300 square meters	15%
Table 7- General data about <i>Farahzad</i> Source: (Statistical Center of Iran, 2008)		

In the survey conducted by the Facilitation Office (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010), different issues were surveyed;

Population i.e. migration and ethnicity, gender, household size³;

Economic issues i.e. employment rate, level of income of the households, personal savings;

¹ All the data mentioned here are extracted from the survey done by Facilitation Office of *Farahzad*.

² 'Employment' according to the definition of the survey was any kind of job, with any amount of hours per week, whom the doer was paid for it. Therefore, if standard criteria applied, the real unemployment in *Farahzad* is higher.

³ Number of persons living together in one housing unit

Social capital i.e. the relationship among the neighbours, the trust toward the municipality as well as the neighbours,

Safety and security, crime and social problems;

Facilities and amenities i.e. electricity, water, road as well as schools, health centre;

Housing i.e. housing condition and the quality of the houses, numbers of rooms of each house, tenure status and housing ownership, the age of the building;

Tendency toward regeneration i.e. the willingness toward partnership for regeneration of the house as well as the neighbourhood;

Possibility of conducting any empowering or capacity-building activities in the neighbourhood

Leisure time and activities of recreation;

The methods used in the survey were filling out 530 questionnaires out of 26261 Families living in Farahzad and deep interviews with the dignitaries of the neighbourhood as well as the active people in Farahzad.

The survey conducted by Facilitation Office of Farahzad (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010) shows that about 22% of the people are originally from Farahzad and the rest of the population have migrated to Farahzad at some time. The percentage of the families whose parents are migrants is 56.5%. These migrants are those whose children are born in Farahzad and now have roots in the neighbourhood or are of those who have moved to the neighbourhood recently. The interesting point is the considerable number of those who have migrated to the neighbourhood from other parts of Tehran which is 52.3% of the entire population.

When asked about the reasons that the migrants have moved to Farahzad at some time, they have mentioned reasons including (the table does not include the entire population and all the reasons);

I could not afford living somewhere else	22.5%
Closeness to the work place	19.8%
My relatives were living here	9.6%
Table 8- The reasons for moving to <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

Also the research shows that 62.3% of the people have first degree relatives² in the neighbourhood and 52.1% have stated that they have at least one second degree relative³ in Farahzad.

¹ This number was based on the figures of 2006 national census.

² close blood relative including parents, brothers or sisters, children

³ a blood relative including grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews, aunts or uncles

It was also asked on the number of the years that the people have been living in their place. Most of the answers were up to 47 years. A small percentage (1.8%) of the people has been living in the neighbourhood up to 69 years (the table does not include the entire population).

I have been living in <i>Farahzad</i> between 1-23 years	72.3%
I have been living in <i>Farahzad</i> between 24-47 years	19.3%
Table 9- Duration of residence in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

The survey specifies that most of the residents in *Farahzad* are somewhat new comers to the neighbourhood and have moved to the area after mid-1990s.

The willingness on staying or leaving the neighbourhood was surveyed as well and it showed to be almost equal when some people did not have any idea and were indifferent to the issue (the table does not include the entire population);

I like it here and would like to stay	45.1%
I just have to stay here and I would prefer to leave and move to a better neighbourhood	46.4%
Table 10- Unwillingness of staying on in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

Those who were willing to leave the neighbourhood were asked whether they would change their minds if *Farahzad* was regenerated and the neighbourhood were modified for the better. About 54.4% of the respondents answered that if *Farahzad* was regenerated they would prefer to stay when 43.7% still desired to leave.

When the people were asked to specify four peculiarities of the neighbourhood, the four of biggest groups of answers were as follows in which a positive specification (fresh air) seems to be stronger than others;

Fresh air	41.1%
Improper and uneven access roads	7.4%
Drug addicts in the neighbourhood	7.4%
A mixed ethnic culture in the neighbourhood	5.3%
Table 11- Views of people on peculiarities of <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

4.9.3 Socioeconomic status of *Farahzad*

In 2010, the rate of employment of the active male population was 40% (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010) where the most common jobs were predominantly unskilled and simple careers i.e. vendors, peddlers, unregistered taxi drivers, repairmen, etc. *Farahzad* is indeed a neighbourhood offering different kinds of services and low-paying and informal jobs i.e. car repair work and cleaning professions for the neighbouring wealthy quarters. Of the working force those who do not have a settled and permanent job have to grasp whatever opportunities they find on the labour market.

Gastronomy is an important business in the district and *Farahzad* is famous for its restaurants, cafes, hookah shops and all sorts of snack selling stands. All types of catering centres (big and small) providing and sending prepared meals to the areas around are a new trend.

Like many other decayed areas of Tehran, *Farahzad* suffers from different social problems. Addiction, stealth prostitution and drug smuggling are some of the major problems that *Farahzad* faces to the extent that even the neighbourhood has gained a name for it. Every now and then, the neighbourhood experiences police raids attacking the gangs involved in illegal activities in its gardens and furtive spots. The restaurants, which had been a source of good fame for *Farahzad* for a long time and source of income for business, have turned into places of illegal activities and targets of residents' rage and frustration; there are news about the acts of fornication and all other kinds of untoward activities. Street children are another social problem. Families, who cannot make a sufficient subsistence, send their children for begging or selling trumpery on the streets. Amongst the children, there are many Afghan immigrants. Also ethnic tensions between those originally from *Farahzad* (*Farahzadis*) being envied by others and others who have migrated from other parts of the country as well as immigrants from Afghanistan is an element weakening the social bond and affecting the co-working potential and spirit and neighbourhood solidarity.

During the years, all those who could afford leaving *Farahzad* left and settled in 'better' areas. Leaving the neighbourhood is a strong desire for many residents (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010). To many people, despite the weather and nice greenery and nostalgic memories, the social and physical situation is gravely annoying. Still, despite the negative remarks about the neighbourhood many express their willingness to stay if things begin to change for the better (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010).



Figure 23- Second hand clothes stall in Farahzad

Source: Maryam Vahedi (Oct. 2015)

The survey on employment in the neighbourhood gave the following picture (the table does not include the entire population);

Employed	25.3%
Unemployed + seeking for a job	8.6%
Student	22%
Retired	4.4%
Table 12- Employment status in Farahzad	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

When the residents who had a job were asked about the type of the occupation that they have, they stated the answers in the following table. The table shows that the low-skilled and low-paid jobs (totally 80% of all) comprise most of the occupations (the table does not include the entire population);

Working in service sector	20%
Craftsman	19%
Administrative job	17%
Simple worker	21.5%
Driver	9.5%

Table 13- Work skill of labor force in *Farahzad*
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

When asked about the location of work place, about 38% stated that they worked in *Farahzad* which proves the importance of job locality in the neighbourhood. About 57% of the respondents mentioned that they worked out of the neighbourhood.

Since many people were reluctant to disclose the household income, the survey tried to grasp the reality about the issue indirectly i.e. through questions about the costs of life e.g. rent, education of the children, food and items alike. The survey shows that most of the people belong to the low income groups and occupy the lowest deciles of the income pyramid (the table does not include the entire population):

200-500 USD ¹	30.3%
501-800 USD	40.3%
801-1100 USD	18.3%
1101-1400 USD	8.4%

Table 14- Income rate in *Farahzad*
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

The

survey also included questions about savings of the families to investigate the possibility of their financial involvement in regeneration projects. The survey showed that 23.5% of the residents had a personal saving when a sizable majority (61.3%) lacked any savings. Also, 68.4% stated that they had a personal bank account when 29.3% did not have any bank account.

When the people were asked if they had loans or not, those who answered 'yes' mentioned the following resources for the loans (the table does not include the entire population):

Private banks	5.2%
State banks	13.8%
Islamic free interest fund ²	12.3%
Relatives, acquaintances and friends, neighbours	14.2%

Table 15- Loan situation in *Farahzad*
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

¹ At the time of the survey (2010) each 1000 Toman (the official currency) equalled 1 USD.

² These financial institutions are special kind of banks which provide low or zero interest loans. The amount of the loans is usually low as well. Currently, most of these institutions are not functioning different from normal banks.

Social capital was another topic to be surveyed in *Farahzad*. This issue was important to be revealed due to its importance for further cooperation within the neighbourhood and the possibility of any co-working for the probable upcoming regeneration projects. The people were asked on the issues they requested the help of their neighbours or had any sort of group activities. Each respondent was given different options to select:

Car-sharing	57.4%
Resolving the dispute among the neighbours	58.6%
Holding ceremonies and festivities	72.3%
Table 16- Sense of collaboration and cooperation within <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

The people were also asked about the type of the activities that they did not cooperate with others. The answers are as follow:

Solving work problems	75.9%
A job start up	89.4%
Establishing a work team	85.5%
Table 17- The activities that the people <u>do not</u> cooperate about in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

Trust toward the neighbours was another issue that was investigated. The answers are as follow (the table does not include the entire population):

Very much	13.4%
Relatively	47.2%
Not much	35.3%
Table 18- Trust towards the neighbors in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

Going into details of the social capital, the people expressed different views on the social solidarity. The answers come as follow (the table does not include the entire population):

People enjoy solidarity among themselves	51.1%
People within an ethnic group enjoy solidarity within the group	31.4%
People have no solidarity among themselves	14.2%
Table 19- Communal solidarity in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

The trust toward the authorities and whether the officials are responsive was another surveyed issue. The answers show that most of the people believe that the authorities are not responsive (the table does not include the entire population);

They officials are responsive to a big extent	2.8%
They officials are relatively responsive	18.9%
They officials are rarely responsive	13.1%
They officials are not responsive at all	64.9%
Table 20- Trust towards authorities among the population in <i>Farahzad</i>	
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)	

A participant in the group meeting held in the *Imam Khomeini* mosque:

We do not have trust towards the municipality. This lack of trust is caused by their way of function.

Another person in the group meeting held in *Imam Sadjad* mosque:

In *Farahzad* we feel a low level of trust toward the municipality. First of all, the municipality should prove that it has good intentions to urge the people for cooperation. They (the municipality) have to step forward for us to trust them.

A resident living in vicinity of *Imamzade Abutaleb* in *Farahzadi* n the group meeting in *Hosseiniye Khalkhali-ha*:

Unless the municipality does not step forward, nothing can be done. I really do not trust the municipality. They even have not dug a gutter in *Farahzad* .

A resident living in the western part of *Farahzad* in the meeting held in the public library of *Farahzad* :

We who live in a specific part of the neighbourhood are close to each other because we are relatives or are close friends. I do not think there would be any problem of organizing groups in the neighbourhood.

Ahmad, a member of *Farahzad* neighbourhood council:

The reason that the people do not go to the municipality is because they do not trust it. Many of the officials have come to the neighbourhood in the past making lots of promises. They never practiced any of those promises. Some even have talked about the demolition of the neighbourhood and none have looked upon *Farahzad* as a place which its problems should be solved. Those who have promised to improve the situation never have done anything.

I have had about 200 hours of meetings with different authorities including the former mayor of the district. I have talked about the problems such as improving the roads condition, the illegal constructions as well as the tenure dilemma and the problems such as drugs with no avail. So, why the people should trust them or me?

Table 21- Excerpts of views of people on their feelings of (mis)trust towards the Municipality

source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

Considering the different parameters defining social capital i.e. trust towards the neighbours, relationship with authorities as well as believing in the truthfulness of authorities and dignitaries, the survey results show that 23.5% of the population has a high rate of social capital while 42.1% has an average rate of social capital and 11.7% have a low rate of it. Ultimately the survey concludes that the social capital rate in *Farahzad* is at an average level.

In a nutshell, the survey revealed that feelings of mistrust toward the municipality as one of the major bodies in the regeneration process was a serious obstacle on the way of regeneration.

Amenities and facilities in *Farahzad*

Different items of infrastructure i.e. transportation, location of the shops, the views of the people toward the existing facilities in the neighbourhood as well as general concerns of the people were studied in the survey.

Transportation was majorly conducted by either the private cars or public bus. Motorcycles were another means of transportation (the table does not include the entire respondents);

Private car	43.2%
Public bus	51%

Table 22- Transportation means in *Farahzad*

Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

About the location of the bazar and shops in which the people bought the necessary consumption goods the answers were as follows (the table does not include the entire population);

Shops in the neighbourhood	22%
Public bazaar of vegetables ¹ and goods close to <i>Farahzad</i>	71.2%

Table 23-Shopping locations in *Farahzad*

Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

The survey on the level of contentment of the services provided in *Farahzad* i.e. garbage collection, public transportation as well as roads quality showed that in most cases a considerable majority of

¹ These bazaars are run by Tehran Municipality in which both the quality of the goods and their prices is lower than free market. The middle and low-middle income groups are the usual customers of these bazaars.

the people were unhappy with them (the table does not include the entire population and each respondent was asked about all of the items);

Type of the service	Very satisfied (%)	Relatively satisfied (%)	Slightly satisfied (%)
Garbage collection	21.6	21.1	57.3
Public transportation	19.8	37.5	42.7
Road paving	9.9	18	72.1
Sidewalk surfacing	6.8	9.3	83.9
Street illumination	13.3	18.6	68.1

Table 24- The most important problems in *Farahzad* according to the population

Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

In total, 69% of the respondents believed that they were not content with the services in *Farahzad*, when 21.4% were relatively happy and 5.2% of them were very happy with the services.

When the respondents were asked about the place they spent their leisure time, the biggest group (30.5%) were those who spent their time at the places of relatives or friends visiting them and the second group (22.7%) spent their time in the park.

Housing and buildings

The general information about the overall condition of the buildings in *Farahzad* was as follow;

Average area of the house (Sq. m.)	Average No of rooms	Average No of floors	Average area of the plot (Sq. m.)	Average Duration of residence (years)
87.84	2.15	1.87	112.72	13.89

Table 25- The general information on the overall condition of the buildings in *Farahzad*

Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

Ahmad, a member of neighbourhood council:

There is a house in *Farahzad* as small as 12 square meters which is built in two floors.

When the people were asked on the issue of regeneration and the municipality involvement in it, the majority were willing to get involved if the municipality provided clear plans for regeneration. The people responded as such (the table does not include the entire population);

If municipality provides plans for regeneration, we are ready to involve	64.2%
We just request them to pave the road and provide proper services ¹	23.1%

¹ They meant that they do not expect the municipality to do anything with regard to general regeneration. What they expect from municipality is merely practicing its usual duties in providing services e.g. transportation, garbage collection, etc.

Table 26- The views of the people over regeneration of *Farahzad*
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

When the people were asked about the reasons of their reluctance toward regeneration, the biggest group was those who said they did not have financial capability to do so (25.8%) and those who did not like to engage in a partnership (10.8%). The third group was those who did not like to live in an apartment¹ (2.3%).

In Farahzad, 72% of the people own their house when 23.3% are tenants (they are not the total population). The work of the Facilitation Office included the house owners and they were those who practically were supposed to be urged to participate in regeneration process. The tenure of this group of people like many other decayed neighbourhoods was mostly informal and unauthorized.

According to the inhabitants, lack of tenure and complications in ownership was the biggest dilemma of Farahzad which they believed should be solved by the municipality or the government. Since the first step in implementing any legal regeneration or reconstruction is providing a formal deed, it seems that the people are right to believe so. Also, the people believed that the problem of tenure can be solved just by the authorities. In face to face contacts, the people told stories about their failure in gaining the tenure when they tried to do so by going to the relevant administrations and proceeding the legal process:

A resident living in vicinity of *Imamzade Abutaleb* in *Farahzad* in the group meeting in *Hosseiniye Khalkhali-ha*:

Lack of tenure is the biggest problem of *Farahzad* which should be solved by the government.

A resident living in the western part of *Farahzad* in the group meeting held in the public library of *Farahzad*:

Here, there is no deed. Nothing can be done without deeds. We wonder if there are any measures that the municipality can take to solve the problem.

Table 27- Excerpts from people's views on the issue of Tenure
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

Talking about the obstacles before the regeneration of the neighbourhood the people mostly focused on the issue of tenure. The informality which was the prevailing phenomenon in the neighbourhood and the ambiguity of the tenure status of majority of the houses, made the people

¹ It is a serious issue for people in these neighborhoods since in current situation they have a small house with a court yard in which they grow plants, breed chickens, do catering, etc. Thus, living in apartments in the supposedly regenerated neighborhood is not their favorite style of life.

hesitant to step forward. As said before, they expected the municipality to address the problem so that the people could begin the work.

A resident living in the western part of *Farahzad* in a group meeting with facilitators:

We who live in one common part of *Farahzad* are very close to each other because we are either relatives or friends. I don't think we would have any problems in organizing a work group. I just don't know what the plan is all about.

We are four houses who are ready to agglomerate making a 420 square meter plot. But we expect this dilemma of tenure to be solved beforehand. Also we don't know about the allowed construction density and we have no idea on what would be the dimensions of the roads¹.

Table 28- An excerpt from a resident's views on the sense of community in *Farahzad*
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

About the regeneration plans the people had grave questions in mind. In the group meetings, several groups of participants shared their confusion about the plans. They had suggestions to make the issues clear so that they could decide what to do. For instance, in one of the group meetings, *Ahamd*, the member of neighbourhood council suggested that the facilitation office constructed some sample buildings for the people to begin trusting the plans. Another participant stated, 'We have to know what this is plan all about? How it is going to be implemented?' He also stated that the poverty was the most important dilemma of the neighbourhood and the people could not do the regeneration on their own.

A participant in the group meeting of the people in vicinity of *Emamzade Abu-taleb* in *Farahzad* in *Hosseiniye Khalkhali-ha*:

The small amount of money we had was spent on constructing the house we are settled in, simply because we were workers and state clerks with low paid jobs. The people cannot afford buying anything new simply because they cannot pay back the loans they have already got. We are in debt and are not able to pay for regeneration.

A participant in the group meeting of the *Quchani* people in *Hosseiniye Quchani-ha*:

The people here are poor whom 90% are workers. Their monthly income varies between 300-400 USD². Then, how they can afford building a house? How they can imagine having a better life? Well, if you could guarantee that there would be loans, deed and construction permissions, then we would willingly cooperate.

A young woman summarized many views as such:

The people do not feel secure and do not know what will happen if they agglomerate their houses. They have no idea on how the future would be. Many of the people are willing to participate in the regeneration, but they are afraid to do so, simply because they do not know about the details of the plans.

***Ahmad*, a member of neighborhood council;**

We have tried to agglomerate six houses making a 250 square meter plot. These people went to

¹ The width of the road is important because it directly affects the size of allowable plots. Therefore, it is of the major concerns for the people.

² Very low at the time of the survey

municipality and expressed their wiliness to construct a new building. They were told to sign some official papers which they didn't do because they didn't think it was a fair agreement. So, these six dossiers are left idle in the Office of neighbourhood council.

Parviz, a member of neighborhood council;

The people won't take any steps unless a regeneration project is conducted in the neighbourhood. For instance, if the municipality could construct the access road to *Emamzade Davood*¹, then the people would step forward. The people here cannot get any construction permissions simply because they do not have any formal deeds in hands.

Table 29- Excerpts from people's views on the economic capabilities of the residents
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

In other group meetings the people had similar views and ideas. They said;

The people do not have financial supports. They do not have tenure as well. That's why they can not involve in regeneration.

Addressing the facilitators, one of the participants said:

You want us to establish teams². This would just lengthen the bureaucracy. We do not have time to spare in these teams.

To summary all the views, the people said that they did not have the financial power to take any measures for the regeneration of the neighbourhood, so they needed bank loans and financial support supposedly provided by the government or the municipality. Besides, they did not know about the details of the plans for *Farahzad*. They were concerned on what would be their future if 'changes' happen. They also were sceptical to the entire system which they considered the facilitation office as a part of it. Moreover, they were worried if they made any changes in their houses, they might lose the little or even whatever they had gained.

The people had ideas about the 'change'. They liked to live in a better condition since they were well aware of the problems that *Farahzad* faced. They just did not know how it might happen because they themselves felt financially vulnerable and they did not believe that the system might help them to do so.

The people had suggestions on how the work should be done and how things could change for the better. Talking to facilitators, a participant in the group meetings expressed his views as such:

First of all, give us information about the detailed plans. Then, identify the dignitaries and leaders in *Farahzad* and communicate with them. Third, consider that the format of cooperative is something that the people are familiar with. So, that can be a solution.

The type of work and regeneration that the people preferred was also surveyed. The study showed that most of the people preferred to renovate individually either by the household savings or the bank loans. The other ways of regeneration followed the self-based regeneration i.e. regeneration

¹ A shrine up in the mountains which still is the destination of many pilgrims

² For the purpose of agglomeration

by support of different institutions, regeneration with a partner, regeneration with the neighbors, agglomeration and finally selling the house out and transferring the property to someone else. The respondents did not show a considerable tendency toward work in cooperation with others unless they had to do so because of the small size of their own plots:

Reconstructing individually	38.2%
Reconstructing with a partner	14.9%
Agglomerating with neighbors	25.1%
Reconstructing with bank loans	62.9%
Selling the housing	28%

Table 30- The views of the people on the possibility of cooperation in regeneration in Farahzad
Source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

4.9.4. Actor analysis in the *Farahzad*

People

The people of *Farahzad* are comprised of two major groups; those originally from *Farahzad*¹(21%) and those who have migrated to the neighbourhood. Migrants have come from different ethnic backgrounds of the country, whereas non-Iranian immigrants (mostly Afghans), comprise about 13% of the whole population (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010). Being in the neighbourhood for a longer time, *Farahzadis* enjoy a higher social power and are better-off in terms of income and envied by others. Regarding the fact that many in a specific ethnic group whether Iranian or non-Iranian belong to one certain tribe or family, the inter group social bond and trust is considerable.

Municipality

Farahzad neighbourhood is located in District 2 of Tehran City, zone 9. The quarter municipality (a sub-division of the Tehran municipality- District 2) is in charge of the local duties of the municipality i.e. collecting the garbage, controlling construction processes or regeneration of the houses. Although the Facilitation office was assigned by the municipality of Tehran Greater Area to work in the neighbourhood, throughout the life of the Facilitation office, the major absent player was the municipality. The key reason was a lack of coordination between the Renovation Organization of Tehran Municipality directly in charge of the pilot projects of urban regeneration and the district municipality as well as the quarter municipality.

Neighbourhood Council

Neighbourhood Councils are a new experience in the Iranian political arena and the *Farahzad* Neighbourhood council is the first one of its kind in the history of the neighbourhood,

¹called *Farahzadi*

established in 2008. At the time of survey (2010), it consisted of seven members; originally from *Farahzad* except one who was non-*Farahzadi*. Since the law for the establishment of these councils was quite ambiguous and the Council did not have any major legal authority, it usually tried to implement its plans through lobbying with authorities in different parts of the power structure whether it was a high rank official in the judicial power or the head of Tehran city council. The Council was either ignored or frowned upon by the majority of the people of *Farahzad*¹.

During the life of Facilitation Office, the neighbourhood council kept sending mixed signals to the Facilitation office; in some cases they showed to be quite willing to cooperate with the Office and in some circumstances they tried to bypass it. Generally speaking, it was not clear if they represented the people's interests or their own personal benefits. In other words, the facilitators could not see the council as a neutral and trustworthy convener of the diversity of the community on behalf of the common good. For instance, in the plans they recommended to the Office to implement or to work on, the personal interests of the members of the council could be traced.²

Steering Committee of Imam's Order

Established in 1981, the Steering Committee is a body in charge of confiscating the lands and properties of the affiliates of the former Iranian regime before 1979. In *Farahzad*, they apparently owned some parcels of land or at least they had claims over some lands. These claims were not supported by any documents i.e. deeds. They were also reluctant to be transparent and disclose the truth about the lands in their possession. The facilitators had reasons to conclude that the Steering Committee was not reluctant to benefit from the dominating chaos in the neighbourhood.

4.9.5 The Facilitation office of Development of *Farahzad* Neighbourhood (Jan 2010-Jun 2011)

In summer 2010 and in continuation of conducting pilot projects in degenerated areas of Tehran, the Facilitation office of Development of *Farahzad* Neighbourhood was established. Indeed, the facilitators were assigned for the job in January 2010, but it took six months to find a proper place in the heart of the neighbourhood which the Renovation Organization of Tehran Municipality could confirm as an appropriate place for a facilitation office. Thus, finally the Office launched its work in June 2010.

¹When I tried to find the office of the Council for the 1st time, even some neighboring shops a few meters away from it could not spot its location.

²Such as a road the council members were persistent to be constructed as they claimed 'to revive the old road to a holy shrine in the mountains'. The facilitators heard news that some members of the council owned lands up in the mountains; therefore, the road could ease the access and increase the value of their land.

The terms of reference submitted by the Renovation Organization of Tehran Municipality as the employer described various duties for the Office and the facilitators. The facilitators had to complete a thorough survey on the socio cultural and economic status of the people and were expected to depict the spatial-physical situation of the physical structure as well as the legal status of the lands of the neighbourhood. After analysing the data, the facilitators were supposed to devise potential plans, initiate the ways to urge public participation and attract investors. While defining the projects, the facilitators had to clarify any obstacles in the way of socioeconomic development of the neighbourhood and seek ways to overcome them. In continuation of the work, facilitators had the responsibility of helping the people to implement projects.

The first step taken by the Office was conducting an overall socioeconomic survey to grasp a more accurate and deliberate picture of the reality on the ground as well as interviewing some prominent figures of the neighbourhood.¹ The next step in the continuation of the work, was defining some quick-fix projects. By implementing those measures the facilitators tried to:

1. Identify active people and influential figures in the neighbourhood,
2. Let the people know about the commencement of the work of the Office¹,
3. Disseminate the information about the establishment of the Office in *Farahzad* to help them to improve their neighbourhood.

The first measure taken was identifying the active people of the community. Among them was a librarian who had been working in the municipality library for some few years. He had vast amounts of information on the neighbourhood, the relationships and who is who in the communities living in *Farahzad*. With a keen perspective on circumstances, he turned out to practically be a co-worker and ally of the Office. A middle-aged lady who was the founder and head of a religious charity working in the neighbourhood was another active person identified quite early on in the preliminary research. A former resident of the neighbourhood for more than three decades, she was quite helpful when there was a need for her interference. During the most difficult time of work when there was mistrust and scepticism against facilitators, she helped overcome suspicions and assisted people in realising that facilitators were not seeking any personal gain and were there to help them. Moreover, there were some active women who had tried to do something for their neighbourhood. Instead of complaining or waiting for changes to take place, these women talked to their neighbours, went to the municipality to urge them to do

¹To avoid the deepening of skepticism of the people who believed the louder the claims, the less the actual work, facilitators avoided having a festival or ceremonies to announce the start of the work.

something for the neighbourhood and tried to improve the condition of their lives. For instance, one of these ladies had followed the problem of garbage collection and had tried to solve it through talking to her neighbours and meeting with the municipality officials to come up with a regular schedule for garbage collection.

In a quick survey conducted by facilitators at the beginning of the work a few problems were focused upon which seemed to have rapid solutions. These problems were thought to turn to small-scale projects in the hope of inspiring new steps for the improvement of the neighbourhood. Projects included dealing with the problem of garbage collection and demolishing an unfinished wall which had turned into garbage piling spot with an unpleasant smell, as well as installing an escalator for an overpass crossing over the expressway. This overpass could help the residents who had to walk through the overpass to the other side of *Farahzad* and to the city.

At the same time, efforts to find and establish ties with dignitaries of *Farahzad* as well as other active people began and were followed. Of the institutions active in the neighbourhood, there was an NGO working for street children as well as a centre established by the Tehran municipality called 'Quarter Management', dealing mostly with medical needs and the psychological health of residents. The head of Quarter Management was also one of the people always ready to help out the Office or take help from the Office when in need.

At that time, the facilitators counted on the Municipality to help implement small projects, because they were of public interest and in the realm of responsibilities of the Municipality. Despite the attempts of facilitators, the Municipality showed no desire to help or even listen to the facilitators or hear the explanations they gave concerning the importance of the implementation of those projects. Lack of coordination between the responsible department of the Tehran municipality in charge of urban regeneration (Renovation Organization) and the district municipality or neighbourhood municipality showed its impacts in early stages of the work of the office.

People kept expressing their doubts over the ingenuity as well as effectiveness of the work of the Office and municipality by complaining about the lack of any projects for the improvement of the neighbourhood for a long time. Also, since the people could not distinguish between the Office and the municipality, in the early days of the work of the office, people were confused and could not differentiate between those entities. During that time, some people realised that although the facilitators were assigned to work in the neighbourhood by the Renovation Organization of Tehran, they were different from the municipality in terms of mission and tactics.

Very soon the facilitators discovered a new picture of the reality on the ground: problems were more complicated than expected. To add to the complexity of the situation the facilitators understood that despite the suspicion of the people, the facilitators had merely them to count on.

Measures of Office of Facilitation¹

Group meetings with the people

After some weeks of work in the neighbourhood, group meetings were organised by the facilitators. In group meetings the facilitators had the opportunity to talk to as many as people possible, communicate with them and explain the mission of the Office and reasons for establishing the Office in the neighbourhood. The facilitators planned to describe the situation; the plans that could be implemented and the help that the municipality could offer if the people stepped forward. Since the neighbourhood was mostly divided by invisible borders of ethnic divisions, the meetings were organised in different venues i.e. mosques, a public library and other possible places of congregation collecting diverse groups of people. As many men in the neighbourhood were simple workers and had to work up to the late afternoon, the meetings were held at night in which the feverish discussions went on for hours.

The facilitators hoped the meetings would help the people to articulate their demands instead of vague and unclear talking or simply venting dramatized emotions, practically resulting to nothing. Moreover, facilitators expected that after taking part in the discussions some part of the job of spreading the word could be done by the people themselves. In the meetings facilitators spoke about the necessity for regeneration through explaining all the unfavourable condition of life in both social and physical aspects and after detailed clarifications concluded that regeneration could not happen without the direct engagement of the people. In those meetings people vented their frustrations over many problems they faced in their lives blaming the officials and authorities for all the hardship. They were furious due to years of negligence and being ignored. To the people, their informal life was under constant threats of the municipality and they were suspicious of anybody whom they thought might be connected to institutions of power. It seemed that some people could hardly believe that the Office was a neutral and non-profit institution which solely worked to facilitate the process of regeneration and later, if possible, to assist it and help and direct it towards a tangible outcome of a better and more liveable neighbourhood. Besides that, the people were not sure if the Office had the power to help making changes because they felt too ignored and forgotten by the officials to believe that the Office could change that all.

¹ All through the life of the Facilitation Office, various measures on different scales were thought out and conducted by the Office. Here just the most outstanding ones are mentioned.

Giving voice to the voiceless- establishing a cooperative

In *Farahzad*, 63% of the people did not have any bank accounts (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010). Regarding the economic status of the households, no efforts for the regeneration of *Farahzad* could ever be imagined without enough funding and financial support. Additionally, a cooperative could convert the status of the members from a natural person to a legal person. According to the Iranian law, the banking system was obliged to give loans to cooperatives and that was part of the mission the facilitators were hoping to accomplish. In a housing cooperative, the small capital could be collected and directed for a common good and improvement of the life of all. This capital plus loans from the bank could make the dream of regeneration come true.

Moreover, according to the Iranian Law of Cooperatives, seven different cooperatives could establish a Union of Cooperatives gaining more power and legitimacy enabling them to lobby, negotiate and discuss with high-ranking bodies. The Union of Cooperatives even could include cooperatives from other degenerated areas.

Facilitators hoped that the cooperatives could turn into a financial institution directing its capabilities towards regeneration. Also, through the cooperatives, members could find jobs and be involved in the regeneration projects as the working force. Different training and educational and vocational support for members could be another task to follow.

The housing cooperatives for instance, could take the role of leadership of the regeneration process; they could plan construction or regeneration projects through adding small parcels of lands belonging to the members. Afterwards and through the support of municipality and the government these cooperatives could begin organising the implementation of the projects through attracting investors and developers to the neighbourhood. Because of the location of the neighbourhood in north of Tehran and the high value of the land, attracting investment seemed quite feasible.

During the short life of the Office, the plans to establish housing cooperatives were not followed in *Farahzad* but facilitators began the process of discussing with three groups of people living on three specific patches in form of focus groups to encourage them to work together. The initial talks with people were quite successful and most of the attendants expressed their willingness to step forward. The members of the focus groups were selected from the areas where,

1. the legal status of land tenure had the least problems,
2. the people had attended group meetings before and had shown their willingness in taking some initial steps.

The outcomes of those meetings were different from one to another, but generally, it was decided that the engineering group of the facilitation office and the people sat with each other and work on a project and study the feasibility of implementing it.

Women's Cooperative of *Farahzad*¹

In the following months facilitators decided that organising the people could be the most important and profound measure to take. Through organisation, people could learn to articulate and follow their demands. All as one united organisation they could find a legal identity, could be approached, negotiated, trusted and worked with. Since in Iranian Constitution, cooperatives are mentioned as one of the three major sectors of the national economy and even a Ministry was established in charge of cooperatives after the Revolution in 1979, trying to establish a cooperative with the membership of some groups of people in *Farahzad* was considered as a practical solution to solve many problems on the ground. A cooperative could be a measure for lifting the voice and mobilising the creative energies of diverse community members to improve the quality of life across all dimensions. As the target group, women were chosen to work with.

These women were mostly housewives and had more free time to participate in different kinds of activities. Dealing with the economic hardships of their families, they were quite willing to contribute to the money provided solely by their working spouses. Generally speaking, they were available more easily and were more comfortable to talk to. In one sentence, efforts focusing on women seemed to bear more or at least earlier fruits. Later in practice, they showed to be keen, active and ready to jump in and do something for good for their families and their neighbourhood.

Meetings with women resulted in the establishment of a women's cooperative. The cooperative organised the women willing to produce handicrafts. Through adding to the economic capability of the household, facilitators planned to empower the women and raise their share in the decisions made at home and take the horizons of the family further. Also through women, facilitators planned to talk to their spouses and convince them as well to be involved in regeneration. By helping women to make some money, facilitators tried to give families more courage and chance to engage in a financial activity because it was clear that when families could hardly survive economically, regenerating or even regeneration of the houses was not the foremost and most urgent objective before them.

4.9.6 Establishment of the Office of Renewal in *Farahzad* (Feb 2014-now)

After termination of the work of facilitation office in 2011 and along with other neighbourhoods

¹ Officially registered as '*Banuwane mobtakere Farahzad*' (The Innovative Women of *Farahzad*)

of Tehran in which the facilitation offices were working, another office began to work in the neighbourhood undertaking the responsibilities of the facilitation office. The new office was called The Office of Renewal and Development (hereafter, Renewal Office) and followed a new job description submitted by Regeneration Organization.

The job description for this office and other offices alike in Tehran, was changed several times but the latest one issued in January 2015 (Renovation Organization of Tehran Municipality, 2014) had a quite strong of focus on physical change rather than an integrated and comprehensive socio economic and physical regeneration. This job description defined the 'the objective' of the Renewal Office as;

General study of the neighbourhood,

Establishing an integrated information management with regard to local development.

According to this job description, the production of the survey should have been 'suggesting and defining plans and projects for implementation in the neighbourhood' as well as the 'producing data about the neighbourhood'.

Moreover, the new office was supposed to decide on an incentive package which could facilitate the renewal of the neighbourhood and was due to define a time table in which the responsibilities of different organizations and institutions for the support and implementation of the renewal projects should have been illustrated. Defining an extensive set of responsibilities, the job description went further to assign the duties of the Office as 'producing a renewal document and a five year operational plan for the neighbourhood' as well as a 'one year operational schedule for the work of the office'. The Office was supposed to also decide over the necessary annual budget for regeneration of Farahzad . The Office was also supposed to send control and progress report to the Renovation Organization regularly. In addition, the Office was also supposed to 'urge the support of the Municipality with regard to renewal' and channelize the financial resources and capacities toward the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the Office had the responsibility of rehabilitation of the environment as well as enhancing the quality of urban spaces with a special focus on dealing with the problem of impenetrability (unplanned and improper network of the access roads).



Figure 24- A group meeting of facilitators and the people of *Farahzad* in the neighborhood library

source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)



Figure 25- One of the meetings of Women's Cooperative of *Farahzad*

source: (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010)

According to one of the facilitators of the Renewal Office, the Office was established in Farahzad despite the opposition of the Regeneration Organization. The institution supporting the establishment of the Renewal Office was merely the Municipality of Tehran:

Municipality wanted the Renewal Office to be established here and the Renovation Organization was against it because based on the work of the Facilitation Office and the complexities of the dilemmas in *Farahzad*, they believed nothing could be achieved in the neighbourhood.

The Renewal Office is facing the same dilemma that the Facilitation Office was trying to address three years before. Still, the legal complexities of *Farahzad* are untouched. In a recent report on this issue, the Renewal Office has suggested a plan on two plots which the owners have signed an agreement to agglomerate. No future measures are taken yet.

Of the latest development in *Farahzad* has been the demolition of the informal settlement formed along the river valley in Feb 2015. The demolition of the houses had a grave impact on *Farahzad* since many think that the houses within the neighbourhood would be bought by the Municipality and consequently there is no need for 'regeneration'. One of the Renewal Office employees explained the situation as such:

The Municipality merely looks at the physical side of the neighbourhood and does not take the social impacts into consideration. When they (the Municipality) demolish the houses along the river valley, practically they are affecting the entire neighbourhood. If you don't take the social aspects, the experience of *Navvab*¹ would be repeated. Now, the people are talking about demolitions and some even claim that they have seen new plans for *Farahzad* .

Still, like the past, the Municipality measures the 'successes' by the number of physical regenerations. Emphasizing that the regeneration is a long term process one, of the Renewal Office employees stated:

The job description is quite rigid. The Municipality expects us to do the job according to this rigid job description. They change the mind and the attitudes every now and then. You see, it's like when you walk a way up to the mid of it and the local community expects you to continue it, when indeed the Municipality stops collaborating. Doing so, they (the Municipality) not only lose their own credibility, but also affect on our reputation in the neighbourhood. This has been repeated all over again all through the life of these offices in *Farahzad*.

Like the past, also the employees of Renewal Office are confused about the neighbourhood council. One of them says:

The people here are grouped in different ethnicities. In *Farahzad*, there is the neighbourhood council which necessarily does not represent the interests and demands of the people.

¹ The project of *Navvab* expressway, discussed earlier in this chapter

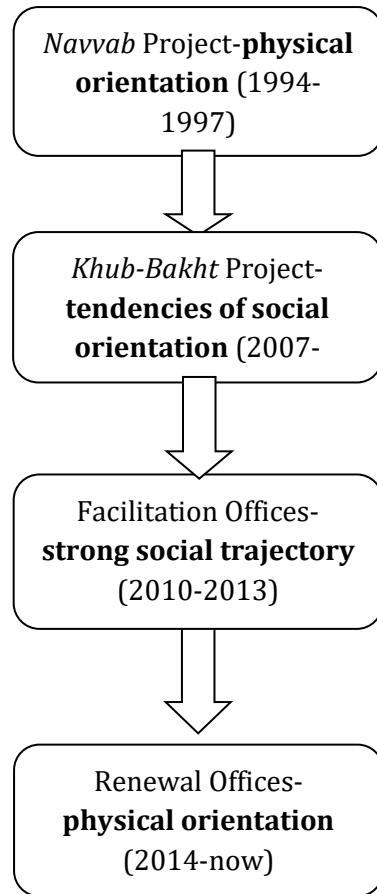


Figure 26- A schematic diagram of the regeneration process in Tehran after the Revolution 1979

Source: Design of MMansoorian

4.10 Final remarks about *Farahzad*

The situation has not changed in *Farahzad* during the work of both of the offices. In that regard, one of the officials of Renovation Organization summarizes the entire work of Renovation Organization as such:

The Organization has reduced the ‘participation’ to ‘partnership for agglomeration’ when we know that real participation means when the people can make the decisions. This is not happening...Actually the Renovation Organization is just trying to convince the people what is the ideal situation.

He concludes the situation of the decayed neighbourhoods with the following remarks:

Well, the regeneration in housing sector is happening. But nobody can guarantee that the quality of the buildings is good. Also, the population has increased and new problems have emerged i.e. excessive density, lack of open and green spaces as well as service centers...and there is no planning to place this population increase. Now it is the time that we have to

think about addressing these problems, because if we don't do it now, we cannot solve them in the future.

5. Linking conflict and collaboration

5.1 Introduction

The primary question of this research was dealing with dilemma on how in countries like Iran and Turkey with a rigid top down structure of urban policy, a participatory and comprehensive urban regeneration could take place? To answer this question, the research studied two countries of Turkey and Iran and the current status of urban decay and policies of urban regeneration in these countries.

Indeed, in none of the researched cases the structure of urban management is laid out for hearing the voice of the residents or observing the interests of them in urban policies in general and urban regeneration plans in particular. Moreover, in the case of Istanbul, the urban management practically acts as an adversary evicting and levelling the informal neighbourhoods.

Instead of focusing on the reasons why and how in Turkey the urban transformations are occurring in the manner they currently are, or why in Iran the regeneration plans generally fail, this research basically surveys the ways to address the problem of urban decay. In other words, this research explores the venues in which the residents of the urban decayed areas are acting towards restructuring the developments in favour of themselves.

The research specifically is drawing results and taking lessons by studying the ways that the residents of the researched gecekondu neighbourhood in Istanbul (Derbent) are countering the transformation plans and fighting for gaining a communal property right. In other words, when the scenario of urban transformation plans is the response that the neo-liberal urban management gives to the dilemma of urban informality and urban decay in Istanbul, this chapter carefully studies the response of the residents to this dilemma.

Here, I argue that the institutional change in urban regeneration policies as well as structure and laws are linked to the community struggle. In other words, the element which enables the realization of a participatory and comprehensive urban regeneration is the pressures that organized groups of residents exert over the system.

The chapter begins with a short overview on the case studies which were discussed thoroughly in chapters 3 and 4. In continuation and through doing actor analyses in the two countries of Iran and Turkey and the researched neighbourhoods in cities of Tehran and Istanbul, the chapter tries to drag out conclusions which seem to function in similar conditions e.g. cities of Middle East.

5.2 The primary setting of the problem of the research

The purpose of this study was to find ways to regenerate urban decayed areas sustainably in Tehran and Istanbul in which the structure of urban administration is not laid out for the participation and consequently does not reflect the interests of the people living in those areas. A situation in which the urban management is not interacting with the residents of the decayed areas nor is willing to do so and subsequently, the status of decayed areas has not progressed tangibly and the problems seem to be untouched and getting more complicated.

With some specific differences with each other, in both of the case studies of the research the residents of the informal areas did not have a voice in the structure of urban management and consequently their comments or ideas were not heard in the decisions made or taken. In cases that there were demands being articulated by the residents, they were not reflected into the plans within the national or local governments and as a result, the plans generally did not echo the interests of the residents of these areas.

Briefly said, the disconnection between the structure of urban management and the people of degenerated neighbourhoods has resulted in an overall failure; in Istanbul it has led to direct conflict between two sides i.e. the government and municipality at one side and the residents of these neighborhoods at the other side and in Tehran it has resulted to a total freezing of the condition in which no tangible improvement in the neighbourhoods has been achieved.

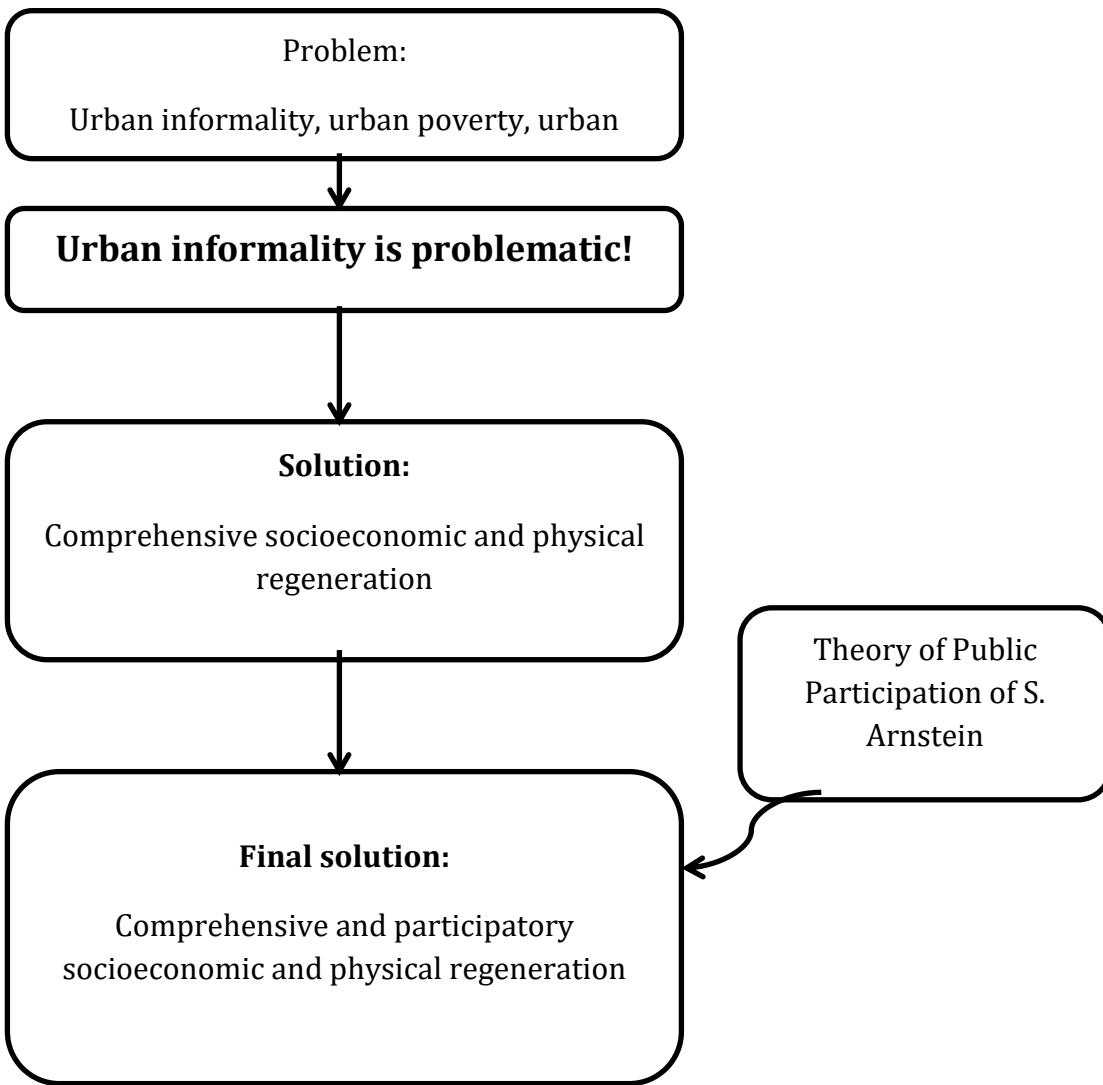


Figure 27- Primary setting of the problem of the research- from urban informality to comprehensive and participatory socioeconomic and physical regeneration

Source: Design of MMansoorian

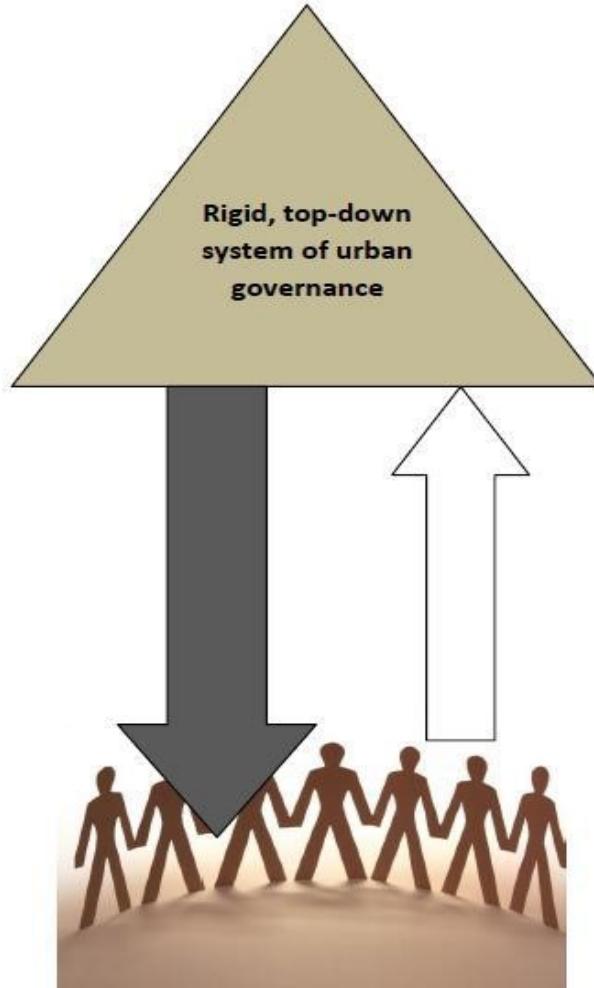


Figure 28- Primary setting of the problem of the research- a one way dictation of decisions by the top-down structure of urban policy onto the people living in degenerated areas

Source: Design of MMansoorian

Part I-Case discussion

In this part and in order to expand the question of the research, an extensive discussion would be conducted through comparative actor analyses of both countries/ cities/ researched neighbourhoods. In the analysis of each case, the three actors of state, civil society and residents of urban decayed areas would be conferred.

5.3 Expanding the question of research; actor analyses in Iran and Turkey

5.3.1 Urban regeneration actor analysis- Iran, Tehran

During the turbulent days of winter 1979 and the months following it, the poor people of Tehran invaded the formal and official city borders in several ways. Some who had squatted on the lands around the city borderlines crept into the city and occupied some parts of the formal city. Some new groups moved from towns and small cities of the country to Tehran to substitute the former groups. And finally some occupied the half-constructed or empty apartments, lots and hotels. With the help of political minded students some groups of people tried to organize themselves in apartment councils (*showray-e apartman*) to discuss the common issues of concern and regular problems (Asef Bayat, 2000). In parallel, land grab and illegal construction was followed. After the establishment of a temporary shelter the people began demanding infrastructure e.g. water, electricity and road paving. At the same time they constructed their own mosques, roads and small shops and tried to consolidate their status. Many of the neighbourhoods which currently are considered as informal settlements or deteriorated areas were established in that way and at that time.

After the subsidence of excitement of the era of political chaos of 1980s in which the rule of order was weak, there were cases of urban unrest¹ in different cities of the country which a number of them were related to urban issues and specifically to the housing problem. In Tehran, there were cases of outbreak of riots when the municipality personnel tried to demolish a squatter neighbourhood. The biggest of them was the three day rioting in *Eslam Shahr* one of the biggest informal settlements in south of Tehran in 1995. As Bayat reports (Asef Bayat, 2000), the people of *Eslam Shahr* protested against some

policies of 'Government of Construction' (*dowlat-e sazandegi*)² and demanded better supplies of fresh water and decrease of bus fare. Leaving one dead and scores of injuries, the protesters number soon grew to 50,000 (Asef Bayat, 2000). Within the same period and following the policy of

¹Asef Bayat mentions some of the protests and riots which were not directly related to urban issues. For instance, as he reports 'in Tabriz, three days of rioting in July 1992 ensued after a dispute between the moral police and some youths after a soccer match. In Qazwin in 1994, people rampaged when Iranian Parliament refused to grant the city, a province status. In Tehran and eight other cities, student unrest and widespread street demonstrations took place in summer 1999 following a deliberate attack by the paramilitary groups (the Baseej) against students in a Tehran University dormitory'(Asef Bayat, 2000, p. 5-6).

²Coming to power after the Iran-Iraq war, that government followed pseudo neo liberal policies and for the first time in years privatized some parts of public sector, began outsourcing and took some measures of downsizing the government. It helped establishing private universities and schools, made the people pay for some parts of medical services and took the government off of some of the responsibilities of provision of collective welfare for the population.

'slum cleansing' and bulldozing of the 'un-lawful' constructions, about 20,000 units of homes and businesses were torn down in Tehran and other major cities (Bayat, 2010a).

The riot of *Eslam Shahr* in 1990s and similar urban riots in different parts of the country at that time were explosive, spontaneous and violent and had a deeply counter hegemonic content. These protests reveal a feature of a status which still lives on; there was no 'institutionalized mechanism of conflict'

resolution'(Asef Bayat, 2000) for the establishment as well as the people to sit and make a dialogue. In other words, Iranian urban management is structured in a way that it considers no space for the voice of the people to be heard, discussed or taken into consideration. In a nutshell, there are no means for the both sides to negotiate rationally.

Pro-poor rhetoric of '*mustaz'afeen*'

Despite the cases of slum clearance and levelling the squatter houses particularly during the time of 'Government of Construction' (*dowlat-e sazandegi*) and after the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the prevailing paradigm in Iran after the Revolution 1979 has always been the egalitarian and pro-poor rhetoric of '*mustaz'afeen*'. In that rhetoric the government was supposed to be 'at the service' of the people and specifically the disenfranchised. This rhetoric which is repeated all over the official media and literature and is a strong part of the ideology of the establishment, still is quite strong and can be traced in many policies taken by the state structure.

Due to the power of the pro-poor paradigm, shifting to an explicit and aggressive set of neo-liberal policies similar to what is occurring in Turkey is quite problematic and almost impossible in Iran. In other words, as the result of the dominance of pro-poor paradigm and the balance of forces between the authorities at one side and the residents of poor neighbourhoods at the other side, the Iranian government for the most part has not been trying to 'solve' the problem by wiping it off the poor from the face of the city like what the municipality of Istanbul is currently trying to do. In that regard, the major policy of urban structure has been the de facto tolerance of these informal neighbourhoods. In addition, in cases where the demolition seemed to be unavoidable, the residents were generally compensated within a basically fair system of reparation.

Beside the tolerance of informality by the urban management, the story has another face too. The urban management policy has not favoured demolishing the degenerated areas for the most part, but this major policy also is practically turning the head from the problems of these areas. In other words, except for some recent measures after 2000s the urban structure basically has been ignoring these areas and not addressing the problems of degeneration on the whole. It means that when the overall urban policy in Iran is surveyed, there seems to be no considerable policies in

favour of the residents of degenerated areas and improvement of the condition of life of these people. Neither there have existed strategic plans to address the dilemma in a profound way.

As mentioned before, there have been some few measures to deal with the problems of degeneration which are usually short term and instable and do not seem to be supported by the overall structure of urban policy. For instance, in 2009 a program initiated by a specific department of Tehran Municipality started in some decayed neighbourhoods of Tehran. The program included establishing 'facilitation offices' in decayed areas of Tehran. Through employing expert facilitators, this program aimed at bridging between the municipality and the residents of the neighbourhoods in order to ignite regeneration process in these areas. The program needs a thorough and independent research to judge its achievements and failures, but currently and after years of ups and downs in the life of the facilitation offices, it seems that the existence and disappearance of these measures are related to the whims and transient decisions of the authorities of Tehran Municipality.

The absence of any force exerted by the system of urban administration against the squatter housing at one side has contributed to lack of counter-force by the residents of these neighbourhoods and ultimately has resulted to the solidification of the problems of these areas. Consequently and in the course of the years the dilemma of urban decay in Iran has been deepening, widening and becoming more complicated. In recent years, beside the overall socio economic problems of the urban management, the political problems i.e. international sanctions against the country have contributed to the enlargement of the dilemma. Currently, the dilemma of urban degeneration cannot be ignored nor neglected as they are impacting 'the rest' of the city where the people with higher income live. As the officials admit, presently the degenerated areas cover 15% of the entire area of Tehran and include 1.5 million people (Andalib et al., 2008).

The problem of urban degeneration is not only impacting other parts of the city, but literally is surrounding the formal structure of urban management. Interestingly enough, the poor neighbourhoods around the big bazaar of Tehran are less than half a kilometre away from Tehran city hall. The same neighbourhoods with narrow alleys and open gutters where the drug addicts dose in broad daylight and children are left without enough food or education. Briefly said, since the problem of urban decay is growing by the time as is not tackled with, it cannot be ignored or neglected any more.

Iranian NGOs, civil society organizations and urban decay

The presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), opened a new era in the country and gave way to emergence of hundreds of NGOs and grassroots organizations in all realms of life. These NGOs dealt with different social, economic and environmental issues and tried to impact on the lives of the citizens.

Although these NGOs were not targeting the housing problem or the physical degeneration, they tried to make changes in the lives of the people living in degenerated areas. For instance, by organizing the women of a poor neighbourhood in a catering organization, they tried to make some economic impact on the lives of these people. Some of these NGOs attempted to address the problem of children labor by establishing schools for them. Some were working with drug addicts and worked for establishing help groups or shelters to tackle the problem of addiction in these neighbourhoods.

The major flaw of the work of these NGOs was that although the work of some of the NGOs encompassed the poor neighbourhoods, they were not able to mobilize the people living in their neighbourhoods. Indeed, the activists working in these NGOs were basically from higher income groups who came from other parts of the city and tried to help the people of the degenerated neighbourhoods. As a result, the residents of the neighbourhoods did not get involve into the action for solving their common problems. Consequently, they were as Bayat puts it 'a shapeless mass, an aggregate of individuals and corporate institutions in which independent collective identity and action were seriously undermined' (Asef Bayat, 2000).

Besides, the depth of the problem of degeneration and the extensiveness of it proved to be too big to be addressed by the attempts and efforts of the NGOs. These problems necessitated the direct involvement of the urban governance, especially when in Iran as Bayat rightfully mentions, the government is the principle 'agent of development, and many relief and welfare activities are carried out by government' itself or the organizations within the structure of the governments such as 'Imam's Relief Committee, Foundation of Martyrs, Construction Crusade, Housing Foundation, and the Volunteer Women's Community Health Workers' (Asef Bayat, 2000). Many of NGOs define their responsibility as the helper to the state or a bridge between the people and the state. Thus, in a condition that the state and urban governance is absent in addressing the problem of urban decay, it is quite understandable that NGOs cannot impact the condition merely relying on their own resources.

Finally, the overall waning of the activities of many of these NGOs during 2005-2013 when the system did not welcome the presence of these groups in social and political life of the country added to the complication of the problem. Furthermore, since these groups did not have deep roots in the communities 'they failed to sustain themselves' (Asef Bayat, 2000) and were intimidated and even dismissed by the establishment. In such a condition and in the long run, they could not impact the policies. As a result, the people of degenerated areas were left to deal with their own problems in whatsoever way they found at hand.

'Quiet encroachment' vs. collective action of 'the ordinary'

Iranian urban areas have experienced mounting of social activism and examples of vast mobilizations in different episodes of their histories. Two upheavals of this mobilization were in the days of Revolution 1979 and later in 1997 when Muhammad Khatami a reformist candidate could win the presidential election. Despite the fact that these periodic mobilizations have been quite widespread at the outset of the formation comprising tens of thousands of people, they could not gain a sustainable situation due to lack of proper legal and structural bed for them.

'Quiet encroachment' of the ordinary as A. Bayat theorizes when arguing about the people of Middle East (A. Bayat, 2000; Asef Bayat, 2000; Bayat, 2013, 2012, 1997a, 1997b) is an approach which seems to fit into the actual situation of the degenerated areas of Iran. As he explains (Bayat, 2010b, p. 58);

The notion of quiet encroachment describes the silent, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on those who are propertied and powerful in a quest for survival and improvement of their lives. It is characterized by quiet, largely atomized and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action open and fleeting struggles without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization...For example, in order to light their shelters, the urban poor tap electricity not from their neighbours, but from the municipality power poles; to raise their living standard they do not prevent their children from attending school and send them to work, but rather they squeeze the hours of their own formal job in order to work a second job in the informal sector.

The quiet encroachment speeds up when there is a proper condition to do so. For instance, with regard to housing and shelter, when there are social or political upheavals in the country, the people accelerate their efforts and try to grab as much as possibly coming at hand. And after erecting the ad-hoc shacks the people push the authorities to gain the basic amenities e.g. electricity and water and when there is no response by the officials, they try to get these amenities illegally. Tehran in winter days of 1979 when the police and military forces were over-occupied dealing with political protests on the streets experienced such a mass social experience when the poor occupied lands and erected their shelters and set up their settlements in whatsoever 'suitable' places they found. The trend continued even after the establishment of the new regime and the poor practically expanded the area of Tehran from 200 to 600 square kilometres within a short span of time and increasing the number of shanty towns in the peripheries of Tehran to over one hundred after a short while following the Revolution 1979 (Asef Bayat, 2000).

At the other side, that is the urban governance which the people have to deal with. These systems as Bayat illustrates dislike collective demands and make them too risky to follow. Their bureaucracy makes the collective demands less effective as well. And by doing so, they force the people to survive through individual actions which also are risky because they are informal or illegal and

prone to 'harassment, insecurity and repression' (Asef Bayat, 2000). That is why the people are left with no other option rather than direct action and trying to grasp the opportunities that they can gain.

These individual actions are more widespread in the areas like *Farahzad* with ethnic or religious heterogeneity. Moreover and beside the overall lack of strong solidarity among different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, there is also the difference of tenure status of tenants and those who are renters. Although the legal status of the 'owners' is unstable and is not clear, the informal 'document' in their hands claiming that the house belongs to them puts them in a superior status in comparison with those who have rented the houses. This reality adds to the disparity between different groups of the people and impacts the communal solidarity among them.

The people who have not experienced a chance to learn a sustainable and long lasting group action and mobilization, follow their demands individually and through one to one relationships. As Bayat explains, these actions are atomized and serve the individualistic purposes. They are to cope with the hardships of life in a degenerated area and are a matter of survival. He argues that they are not 'the politics of collective demand making, of protest, but rather a cluster of individual direct actions'. Bayat argues (Asef Bayat, 2000, p. 27):

The grassroots might be able to secure many necessary provisions, jobs, and urban services and these are certainly crucial. But how can they obtain schools, public parks, health insurance, and security at home and work, which are linked to larger structures and processes?

It means that although the poor use the informal tactics to survive the hardships of life in degeneration, they cannot achieve any major changes in their lives exploiting such manoeuvres, specifically as a community and as a collective. Thus, briefly said, the 'encroachment of the ordinary' cannot change the problem of degeneration as a general socioeconomic phenomenon.

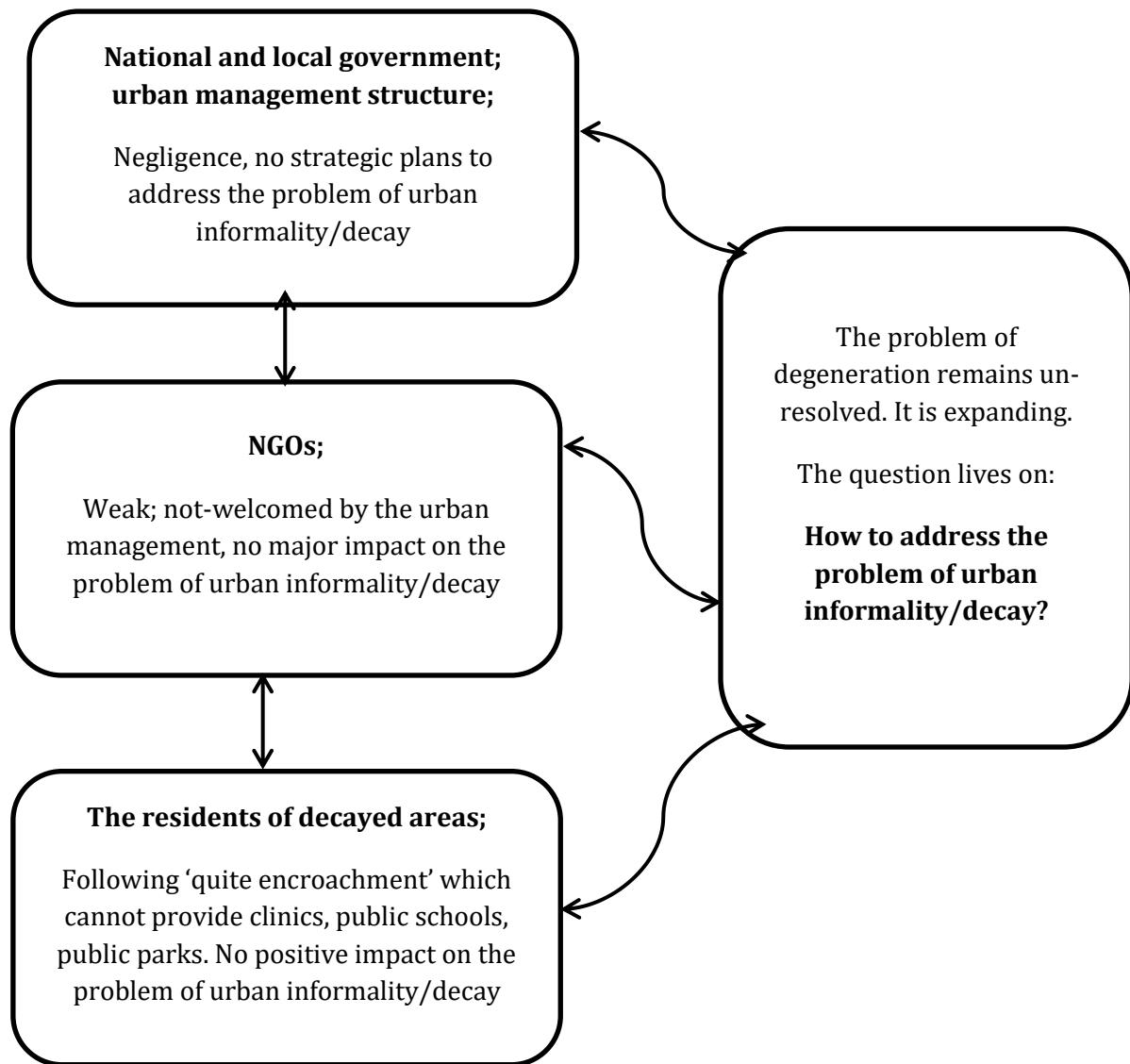


Figure 29- Urban Regeneration Actor Analysis in Tehran, Iran

Source: Design of MMansoorian

Getting back to the question of research it is necessary to ask again that in such a condition when there is a top-down structure of urban governance which neither is willing to hear the people nor has the capacity to do so, and when the people of degenerated areas have not been able to set their democratic organizations to articulate their demands for the betterment of their lives, what can be done to impact the situation for the better? In other words, how the perplexing and vicious circle of the problems originating from degeneration and contributing to it can be faced, tackled and resolved? How there could be a proper condition in which the residents of degenerated areas could 'think, use their abilities and act, that is, to participate' (Anisur Rahman quoted by (Bayat, 2000, p. 181)

22]) and within the existing top-down structure of urban management could change the course of developments productively?

5.3.2 Urban regeneration actor analysis- Turkey, Istanbul

The neo liberal policies adapted after mid 1980s made extensive changes in the governance of Istanbul. As the result of these policies, the management of many of governmental agencies and administrations were shifted to the mayor of Istanbul paving the way for structural changes in the municipality of the city. Subsequently, these changes transformed the district municipalities to land market facilitators. Becoming involved in these set of activities, the municipality of Istanbul stepped into implementation of a couple of urban renewal projects in late 1980s (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008) which for instance wiped off the former industrial sites along Golden Horn or dissected the city by boulevards or expressways (Öcü, 1988).

At the same time, by the direction of Turgut Ozal the then prime minister of the country, the informal settlements of Istanbul became a major target for land speculation and real estate activities. Till then, these neighbourhoods were free from capitalist interventions (Esen, 2008) but with the growing need to housing in Istanbul, *gecekondu* neighbourhoods attracted the land speculators. The prime minister was the one who 'discovered' the 'potential' of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods to materialize the required transformation. His famous saying proclaimed Turkey as 'Little America' and the *gecekondus* as the 'Wild West' (Esen, 2008, p. 8). As the first step of urban transformation the government legalized many of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. In addition, the municipalities gained more autonomy and were allowed to follow their own scenarios and budgeting. Furthermore, many of the previously governmental services e.g. transportation, post and provision of natural gas were privatized.

The neo-liberal policies in urban management got a new momentum after *AKP* rose to power in 2002. The Party adopted an economic policy of liberalism mixed with pragmatism in favour of capital and high income groups (Akbulut and BaşLik, 2011). *AKP* showed to be extremely pro-business (Keyder, 2009) which boosted 'more visible, deepened and more entrenched' (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008) type of neo-liberalism in economy in general and in urban policies in particular. To materialize the neo-liberal urban policies, *AKP* decided that Istanbul should transform to financial and service hub of international capital. The plans went on well and there has been a 'major influx' of European investment in the country making Turkey as 'an integrated production platform for European manufacturing industries' (Pierin, 2013). But to materialize this objective, the location of urban plans was shifted to *gecekondu* areas and basically targeting the low income groups living in those areas. By doing so, the city gained lands to execute urban transformation plans, was beautified and got rid of its 'ugly' *gecekondus*.

Thus, by attacking the *gecekondus* the urban policy management aimed at shooting several birds with one stone; the urban plans were supposed to free the lands and make space for implementing the projects. They also were planned to beautify the city and dispose the 'ugly' poverty. And last but not least the urban plans were thought to convert Istanbul to a city which was attractive for international capital by means of its modern five star hotels, gated communities, luxury shopping malls and wide expressways among many other modern facilities.

The city also was planned to attract tourists from all over the world. Thus, Istanbul 'had to look clean and ordered' (Keyder, 2009, p. 4) for the international vacationers to savour. To conduct all the aforementioned plans, *TOKI* (Turkish Mass Housing Company) played a significant role.

To summarize the status quo, one can say that urban policies in Istanbul caused the increase in the value of urban land, the displacement and replacement of significant numbers of people, the relocation of poverty, and dramatic changes in the urban and social landscape of the city (Candan, Ayfer Bartu, 2008). These plans also contributed to making piles of profits for the Turkish construction sector making it as 'one of the leading, most competitive and dynamic construction/contracting industries in the world' in 2010 (Hurriyet Daily News, 2011).

Urban transformation plans; evictions and demolitions

Winners and losers of urban transformation plans in Istanbul

If the course of developments after 2002 has not brought any good for the residents of *gecekondu neighbourhoods*, instead, they could make sizable amounts of profit for the real estate market as well as construction sector. Currently, Istanbul is one of the most attractive real estate markets of the world and as Karaman reports 'ranks second (right behind Munich) among 27 major European cities in terms of 'existing property performance' both in terms of 'new property acquisitions' and 'city development prospects' (Karaman, 2013, p. 720). According to a report by Daily Telegraph in Jan. 2014 entitled 'world's 20 best places to invest in property', Istanbul was one of these 20 cities in which the number of purchase of property has rose by 78 per cent in the first half of 2013 (The Telegraph, 2014).

The increase of land and property price has been a result as well as the cause for dispossessions. The dispossession process in Turkey and Istanbul has been mapped in a common project called 'Projects of Dispossession' conducted by several academicians and urban activists (Mülksüzleştirme, 2014). The project which is a collective data-collecting-compiling-mapping process, hundreds of companies, projects as well as organizations involved in urban transformation plans were surveyed. The Projects of Dispossession analyses the urban transformation projects and

the partnerships conducting these plans as well as the impacted people namely those who have lost their possessions as the result of the urban transformation plans. According to one of the involving academicians, the study 'reveals the close partnerships between different private developers, state actors and institutions and media companies' (Adanalı, 2015). Therefore briefly said, those who win and benefit from urban transformation plans are private companies and state players. Interestingly enough, they are the same actors who run the media as well.

At the other side of the line, there are those who lose in the competition over the land and practically are excluded from the urban space by being pushed to the remote peripheries of the city. More clearly said, they are the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods which originally located on the peripheries of the city and close to industries and now are being integrated into the city as the city has sprawled and enlarged over the years. Between 2004 and 2008, about 11,453 of *gecekondu* housing units were demolished in Istanbul (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). In 2004 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality announced a plan which was supposed to demolish 1500 *gecekondu* buildings. The same source added that 85.000 *gecekondu housing units* more would be demolished and their habitants would be re-located and re-settled to the social housing units of *TOKI* (Akbulut and Başlik, 2011).

What has occurred as the result of implementation of the urban transformation plans for many of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods has been eviction and demolition of the houses. For many others who have not lost their homes yet, the threat of eviction has put challenges before them. As the consequences of rban transformation plans, the original people of *gecekondus* are experiencing a complete alter of their social network as well as relocation to unknown remote places (Van Griekingen, 2011), making them the main losers of the urban transformation plans.

Case of Sulukule

The urban transformation plans being practiced after 2002 have been targeting the poor neighbourhoods and their residents. According to an official report (AGFE, 2009), the forced evictions before the demolitions are in clear violence of the 1996 Habitat Agenda which the Turkish government is a signatory.

Being one of famous cases of demolitions taking place between 2008-2010, *Sulukule* neighbourhood attracted extensive attentions by scholars (Aksoy and Robins, 2011; Dincer, 2011; Ezme, 2009; Gürsoy, 2009; Schoon, 2014), media and people. The case of *Sulukule* is important in that regard that it has been copied in some other neighbourhoods e.g. in *Ayazma* or *Tarlabası* and is the potential scenario for other *gecekondus* who have been assigned as 'risked area' and apparently should go through eviction plus demolition.

Sulukule which indwelled about 3500¹ or 5000² Roma people was demolished within two years and currently is being under construction of a gated community for the affluent with houses with prices 10 times more than the compensation fee which was paid to evictees (Letsch, 2011). The saga of *Sulukule* began in 2006 when the Municipality of Istanbul was authorized by the government to seize the lands of the neighbourhood and assign it as a transformation plan area. Although the activists and various NGOS began working against the plans, the demolition operation mostly took place in November 2009 in front of cameras of media, journalists, activists and the residents. Currently the whole neighbourhood has converted to a construction site for a gated community of condominiums.

The fate of the residents of *Sulukule* is interesting to notice. Those residents who had any documents proving the ownership of the house they were living in, were given apartments in mass housing projects implemented by *TOKI*, 40 kilometres away from Istanbul. The research shows that out of more than 850 families who were taken there, merely 4 have stayed in the area considering the job problem in that remote location and the rest have been dispersed and moved somewhere else. About 40% of the previous residents of *Sulukule* currently have got back to a hill nearby their old neighbourhood (Schoon, 2014).

The demolitions began with *Sulukule* but they were spread to some other *gecekondu neighbourhoods* as well. The AGFE report published in 2009, categorized the gecekondu neighbourhoods with regard to urban transformation plans and demolitions in five groups; demolition completed, demolition ongoing, planning process underway, designated as an urban transformation area and finally facing second wave of evictions (AGFE, 2009). The last group includes the people who were evicted twice because they could not afford to pay the monthly instalments or the buildings fees in their new residents- the mass housing projects implemented by *TOKI*(AGFE, 2009).

The demolitions were implemented by gaining special legal rights to *TOKI*, restructuring it and backing it by necessary modifications of laws to expand its authorization. Briefly said, many of the responsibilities of governmental bodies including Turkish Ministry of Development and Housing were granted to *TOKI*.

¹according to the Municipality of Istanbul

²according the *Sulukule* Platform, an NGO opposing the eviction of the people and demolition of the neighborhood

NGOS and civil society organizations

By and large and despite the odds, after 1990s and easing the pressures of the previous decades through the acceptance of the Copenhagen Criteria¹ and EU accession process, the civil society organizations in Turkey have gained a new life and energy. Currently, they are important actors of social change (İçduygu et al., 2011). Different incidents over the past two decades prove that the change in the political environment helped the civil society activities to flourish in Turkey. Here two of them are highlighted; the 1999 earthquake and *Gezi* Park protests in 2013.

Earthquake in Istanbul, 1999

Two major earthquakes rocking Istanbul and the western parts of the country in 1999 were incidents which opened an unprecedented situation for the civil society organizations in Turkey. Many of the documents about the earthquake and relief measures note the important and active role of the civil society and NGOs on reaching to the people in earthquake stricken areas. For instance, one of the reports indicates that this specific natural disaster was the first incident showing the roles of these organizations who took action by volunteering and donations (İçduygu et al., 2011). One of the interviewees (an activist/scholar) of this very research told me;

After 1999 earthquake some groups of academicians gathered together and helped the people who had suffered from the earthquake in Izmir and also in Istanbul, in *Avcılar* and some other parts of Istanbul. So they established some associations. They gave this kind of earthquake relief. They tried to help the people for their houses. They tried to make some court cases. Also they did simple things like providing tents. They helped the people to erect some tents. The professionals and academicians learned many things from that catastrophe. They thought that they needed to establish some organizations to help the people about everything.

As she explains further on, the state showed quite incompetent on relief actions and provision of necessary aids for the people. According to her, the 1999 earthquake was an eye opening experience for the civil society to see that they had to step in and take some responsibilities as much as they could afford because the state did not practice its legal obligations.

The associations and NGOs played a significant role in relief actions as well as providing post disaster aid. For instance, they defended the rights of the low income families as well as the rights of the tenants (Arslan and Ünlü, 2008) which were ignored by the state due to exclusive help of the governmental bodies explicitly for the house owners and not for the tenants. In doing so, the NGOs were involved in court cases and preparing law suits to help the people to gain their rights.

¹The Copenhagen criteria are the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union. The criteria require that a state has the institutions to preserve democratic governance and human rights, has a functioning market economy, and accepts the obligations and intent of the EU. These membership criteria were laid down at the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen (İçduygu et al., 2011).

After the earthquake and the help the NGOs gave, some members decided to continue their work with the neighbourhoods and the residents of *gecekondus*. The work with the neighbourhoods got a significant importance when the issue of 'urban transformation plans' and *gecekondu* demolitions began to emerge in early 2000s. Another interviewee (also an activist/scholar) explained about that time and how his and his activist friends began, as such:

In 2004 in *Sarıyer* district, *Reşitpaşa* neighbourhood, the people called us to a meeting. It was like this: different neighbourhoods of *Sarıyer* had gathered in one place discussing issues. Then, the issue of 'urban transformation' was not this urgent. Dissidence (against the plans) was not this popular also. Long before that, we had begun working in *Gülşen Gülsuyu* neighbourhood. There was where these friends from *Reşitpaşa* found us. They said:" There are problems here. They want to demolish our (houses), what shall we do?" So, we began to go to their meetings in 2004. Afterwards, according to the needs of each neighbourhood, we continued our works. Then we learned there was a need for technical issues. They also needed legal help. To understand these things, we continued our discussions with them. Then (for instance), they showed us the pamphlets for demolitions. We thought about the issues like 'what is the right'? 'What are the rights?' .we considered the technical aspects, also a mixture of technical and political issues. These dialogues went on...

The same group of activists who began working in the neighbourhoods established their NGO and continued working with the people. The long and complicated process of urban transformation plans put the people in different set of difficulties. They had to deal with the 'law' and 'power' and 'authorities'. In all these complications, some NGOs were standing with the people and helping them with the process. The first interviewee explained that their NGO was established with the purpose of helping the jobless to find jobs and later it was involved in the issue of urban transformation plans and threats of eviction:

In 2000 in Istanbul we saw lots of urban transformation projects. The excuse was earthquake. (The Municipality was saying) earthquake is coming, so you have to renew your houses. But we saw that all these projects were (defined) in poor neighbourhoods like old *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. Then we saw that these neighbourhoods were not in a very dangerous (situation). For instance *Sarıyer* is one of the safest places in Istanbul.

She explains on that their NGO which comprised of scholars and activists, established a solidarity studio and later held summer schools in different *gecekondu* neighbourhoods of Istanbul. The scholars and activists did research in the neighbourhoods and tried to encourage the people to organize. Also, they worked on an alternative project in *Gülşen Gülsuyu* neighbourhood instead of the urban transformation plan designed by the Municipality for the neighbourhood. In the

alternative plan the people from all small patches of the neighbourhood sent their representatives to the planning group to express their ideas and wishes for the neighbourhood.

Gezi Park protests, 2013

Besides working in the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, since the earthquake in 1999 and organizing the residents of these areas, what put urban activists at the front row of disputes over urban issues were the *Gezi* park protests in June 2013.

The protests began against urban transformation plan of Municipality of Istanbul converting a public square in the heart of the city to a shopping mall i.e. a replica of ottoman military barracks and a car friendly area without informing the people or consulting with them or the expert groups, academia or civil society organizations about the details of the plan. As it was disclosed after some time, eliminating the pedestrian strong presence in the square – as it has been for many long years- as well as razing one of the last reminiscences of green spaces in the city centre in order to make it compatible with the taste of tourists and finally foreign investment, has been of the objectives of the plan (Cassano, 2013).

The transformation plan of Taksim Square has been opposed since the onset for the past two years. Four years after the protests, the project is going on in 2017 and has left the Square to contestation when the plan itself is ‘contested in court, leaving Taksim in a state of flux—half pedestrianized, half underground, half controlled, half abandoned (Tolgay, 2015).

In a nutshell, Gezi was of the occasions that the deep split between the visions of the ordinary people who use the city as a place to live, work and entertain, with the mindset of the urban management which takes the city as a profit-making milieu unfolded. To accentuate this split, the urban activists and NGOs played a noteworthy role.

Learning about the actual status in the cities of Istanbul and Tehran and the actors in the structure of urban regeneration in each city, the question is still open and valid- how a sustainable and participatory urban regeneration can take place in these environments?

Here, the answer to the problem of urban decay in situations like Iran and Turkey with the specific dynamic between different actors i.e. the structure of urban management at one side and the civil society and residents of degenerated areas at the other side, might be given by the example of the people living in Derbent neighbourhood of Istanbul and the ways they are practically seeking to deal with the degeneration of their neighbourhood.

To discuss deliberately on how the path that the residents of Derbent neighbourhood of Istanbul are walking is contributing to the answer of the question of this dissertation, the subsequent parts would try to illustrate a thorough picture of the situation in Iran and Turkey. This attempt is done

by means of putting structural and legal specifications of the two countries, as well as their economies and their common history of top down modernization and un-planned industrialization and their mostly similar political environments alongside each other. By means of constructing these pictures and putting the similarities and dissimilarities of Iran and Turkey, Tehran and Istanbul and finally Farahzad and Derbent, it is attempted to explain within which realities the three analysed actors i.e. government, civil society, people of the neighborhoods are interacting with each other and what would be the outcome of these interactions.

5.3.3 Iran vs. Turkey; similarities and dissimilarities

Legal-institutional framework and main housing policies in Iran and Turkey

Institutional framework

The Islamic Republic of Iran is officially a theocratic republic formed by four branches of Government: the Leadership, the executive, the judiciary and the legislature. The Leadership is the uppermost authority, both in terms of political and religious power, with the Leader acting as the Head of State. In the amendments of the Constitution in 1989, the leader gained more power (UN, 2006). Generally speaking, he¹ has a vast set of powers in hand including definition of the general policies of the country, supervision over proper execution of the policies, being the head of military forces. He has the authority to officially announce the outset of a war and can decide over the peace. Also, the leader can order for a referendum to take place (IRI Constitution, 1989).

The Republic of Turkey is a secular sovereignty with legislative, judiciary and executive powers as its main pillars of structure (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982). The Constitution explicitly mentions the source of the sovereignty of the Republic is the nation.

The legislature

The Iranian legislature body is formed by the Guardian Council and the Parliament (*Majlis*). Legislation is approved by the *Majlis* and ratified by the Guardian Council afterwards and finally signed into law by the President. The Guardian Council is a reviewing body with the responsibility to ensure that all laws and regulations in the country are based on Islam, including articles of the Constitution. In case of disagreement between the *Majlis* and Guardian Council on issues relating to compliance with *sharia* or the Constitution, an Expediency Council which is appointed by the Leader decides on what would be the final outcome.

The parliament of Turkey (The Turkish Grand National Assembly) and its 550 representatives are elected via national elections. Beside the Government of Turkey, the parliament can propose laws.

¹ According to the law, both the leader and the president are males.

The parliament is exclusively the institution which can enact the ratified laws. The Assembly is also the organ which has the legal right to ratify the treaties and agreements with other countries. Furthermore, the Parliament elects the president of the Republic which is mainly a ceremonial position¹. Declaration of war and authorization of deployment of the armed forces are of the role of the legislative power in Turkey.

The judiciary

The Iranian judiciary consists of a Supreme Court and lower courts, divided into regular courts, clerical courts, revolutionary tribunals, and the Court of Administrative Justice. This court, under the supervision of the head of the judicial branch, investigates and judges any complaints by regular citizens against government officials, organs and statutes.

According to the Turkish Constitution, the judges are independent in the discharge of their duties. 'No organ, authority, office or individual can give orders or instructions to courts or judges relating to the exercise of judicial power, send them circulars, or make recommendations or suggestions' (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982). The judiciary conforms to the principle of separation of powers not only through its independence from the executive and legislative branches of government.

The judiciary is divided into two parts; Administration Justice with a high court called *Danıştay* (Council of State) and Judicial Justice with the high court called *Yartıgıt* (Court of Appeals).

The executive

In Iran, the executive is headed by the president elected for four years by direct votes of the people. The president can nominate himself for utmost two consecutive terms. After the 1989 amendments to the 1979 Constitution, the president's powers were extended. Currently, he is the second in power after the leader. He also coordinates the work of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. The president is assisted by a cabinet formed by 22 ministers. The minister for Housing and Urbanism, the head of the Crusade for Construction (*Jihad Sazandegi*) and the Minister of Interior who coordinates the work of the municipal councils are of the members of the cabinet.

The Iranian Ministry for Housing and Urbanism is the main body of the executive which is responsible for the planning, provision and implementation of housing policies. Such policies are planned with the technical and financial support of the Management and Planning Organization. Some governmental and quasi governmental organizations also carry out programs with direct or

¹ After the recent changes in Turkish laws in 2016 a lot more power is given to the president.

indirect impact on housing situation. For instance, the activities of Housing Foundation - as one of the quasi governmental organizations- is directed toward post-disaster reconstruction.

In Turkey, the president of the Republic is elected for five years and at most for two terms from among the members of the parliament. He/she is the head of state and should ensure the implementation of the Constitution and regular functioning of the organs of the state. The Council of Ministers of Turkey consists of prime minister and ministers. The prime minister is appointed by the President and from among the members of the parliament. The Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning is the main body responsible for the environment and urban planning in Turkey.

Main legal provisions

In Iran, the right to proper housing is explicitly mentioned in articles 3 and 34 as well as article 31 of the Constitution of the country (IRI Constitution, 1989). For instance, in the article 3 under the title of 'The Goals of the State', it states that provision of housing for all is of the elements of setting a just economic system. Or in the article 31 which is entirely dedicated to the issue of housing it mentions that it is 'the right of every Iranian individual and family to possess housing commensurate with his needs'. The same article adds that 'the government must make land available for the implementation of this article'. Article 31 mentions the working class people as the main target group for provision of the housing by expressing them as 'those whose need is greatest, in particular the rural population and the workers'.

In Turkey, in the article 49 of previous Constitution of Turkey (1961) it states: 'The State shall take measures to provide the poor and low-income families with dwellings that meet sanitary requirements'. In the latest version of Constitution (1982) which has gone through some amendments in 2010, the article referring to the issue of housing is article No 56 which states that living in a balanced environment in the right of everybody in the country. In article 57, under the title of 'Right to Housing', it states: 'The State shall take measures to meet the need for housing within the framework of a plan that takes into account the characteristics of cities and environmental conditions, and also support community housing projects'.

5.4 Top-down modernization

Iran and Turkey both initiated their process of top-down modernisation in the advent of 20th century by adopting authoritarian measures. In Iran, the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1909)

¹ Article 31 [Housing]

It is the right of every Iranian individual and family to possess housing commensurate with his needs. The government must make land available for the implementation of this article, according priority to those, whose need is greatest, in particular the rural population and the workers.

which had replaced the despotic system of former kings by a liberal constitution, witnessed the rise of Reza Khan, a military colonel by a coup d'état in 1921 (Abrahamian, 1982). In his era, for the first time in centuries the state was able to control the society through extensive instruments of administration, regulation, and domination. For the established order, the army was the main pillar. The materialization of the top-down change during Reza Khan's time included establishing national central bank, railroad system as well as modern educational system. Also, for the first time in history of the country, modern structure of the government comprising different ministries, western model of judicial system, national taxation system, etc. were founded.

In a nutshell; the county that Reza Khan aimed to establish was supposed to;

Contain European-styled educational institutions, Westernized women active outside the home, and modern economic structures with state factories, communication networks investment banks, and department stores. His long-range goal was to rebuild Iran in the image of the West-or, at any rate, in his own image of the West. His means for attaining this final aim were secularism, anti-tribalism, nationalism, educational development, and state capitalism (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 140).

In Turkey, Ataturk a friend of Reza Khan, followed the same path by a modernization process from above. As Keyder explains (Keyder, 1997), modernism in Turkey was defined as a 'project' with the driving force of the 'elite' behind it. They were trying to impose their perception 'institutions, beliefs, and behavior' over the people of Turkey. As he explains further, this type of modernity is not a self-generated societal process and includes measures imposed from above. The modernism in Turkey like its Iranian identical twin was totally under control of the state.

The major economic policy of the country until 1980s has been developmentalism which resulted to 'considerable development, national economic integration, urbanization, and increase in levels of welfare' (Keyder, 1997, p. 41).

5.4.1 Unplanned industrialization

In both countries the industrialization was unplanned and produced problems of unorganized migration and consequently causing the crisis of housing for the labour force migrating from remote parts of the country to major cities.

In both countries the labour force migrating to big cities for work established their own settlements, erecting makeshift shelters in the vicinity of work places and in the peripheries of the cities. As time passed, the people 'provided' the basic infrastructure for their settlements and tried to consolidate their presence on the occupied land. In so doing and over the years, they succeeded to establish a life for themselves. Also, working the low paid jobs in the factories, industries, shipyards, service sector or as un-skilled workers i.e. drivers, cleaners, janitors, repairers or

practicing informal jobs e.g. vending, ???, they succeeded to survive economically and earn some money to stay on in the new settlements.

The major difference between the two countries was the experience of Revolution 1979 in Iran which for a short period opened a massive energy of the poor into the socioeconomic and political life of the country. The new regime establishing afterwards, followed an egalitarian rhetoric of '*mustaz'afeen*' and announced itself as a government 'at the service' of the poor.

The reflection of pro-poor rhetoric with regard to housing policies is evidently seen in the Constitution of the country in which in several articles housing is indicated as a basic right stating the government as the principle provider of the shelter for the population. The same articles emphasize specific groups i.e. 'the peasants and the workers who cannot afford housing' as the bearers of that right.

Because of the dominating the rhetoric and the constitutional rights guaranteed in favour of the Iranian low income groups and the poor, the policies of a government coming to power following the Iran-Iraq war in 1989 could not change the course of national socioeconomic plans in support of pseudo- neo liberal policies which that government favoured. In other words, the level of demands and expectations of the poor has been upped to a considerable extent in Iran which so far has not let any government to attack these interests to a major extent.

The pro poor rhetoric is also reflected in the measures and policies taken with regard to informal housing. In Iran and despite the fact that the dilemma of informal housing is not touched profoundly, the aggression against the informal settlements has been limited. Also, as the result of the overall atmosphere and the extent of expectations of the poor, in cases of demolition the people were compensated to a satisfactory level.

In economy and urban policy and compared with Iran after the Revolution 1979, the course of the incidents in Turkey seemingly took a different route after 1980s and specifically after 2001 when the neo-liberalism became the official policy of the government. Following the gain of power by Party of Justice and Devolution (*AKP*), the policies of the government and municipality of Istanbul took an aggressive course against the inhabitants of the informal neighbourhoods and targeted specifically the poor and the low income people living in these neighbourhoods.

5.4.2 Economy

There is a major difference between the two countries and that is the general paradigm dictating different policies in these countries including the urban policies. In Iran, despite the major tendency of grabbing economic and political power in the hands of a few elite and specifically the military oligarchy, the government still calls itself the government of '*mustaz'afeen*'. It means that the legacy of egalitarian and communitarian objectives of Iranian Revolution of 1979 are still strong in the

national discourse. Contrary to Iran, the Turkish government openly follows the neo-liberal paradigm; converting the country and specifically Istanbul to a financial and service hub for the world. In this framework, the *gecekondus* should be levelled, the residents should be sent away to peripheries of the city and instead, shopping malls, gated communities and luxury projects should be erected.

Generally speaking, Iran is capitalistic but there is a strong presence of the government and public sector in the economy. According to Iranian Constitution, the economy of the country comprises of three components; public, private and cooperative sectors. Turkey is a capitalistic country and openly follows a neo-liberal type of socio political and economic system.

In Iran on the other hand, the laws to support the rights of the citizens to finally have a proper shelter are weak. For instance, there are not laws to help the tenants to resist the high rents and the sharp increase of house or rent prices and they are submitted to the market to be decided over. As the result, the prices are skyrocketing and the housing problem becomes an acute and complicated dilemma in the country.

Since 1980s, the dominant policy in Turkish economy has been neo-liberalism. Ozal, the then prime minister of Turkey was the pioneer of the direction and that was he who discovered the potential of the *gecekondus* to compensate for the shortage of land and housing in the inner city. That was why he helped legalizing the *gecekondus* of Istanbul. Following the policy framework of neo-liberalism he gave special authority to the municipalities via granting more autonomy to them and let Istanbul to provide the necessary infrastructure and services on her own. To realize these policies the state administrations of transportation and gas were privatized. These measures were intensified after the gain of power by AKP in 2002.

Land speculation, real estate activities and construction sector are of the major pillars of the Turkish economy. Urban transformation plans are a gigantic reality in the country and there are many scenarios occurring in the cities which push the lower income populations to the more remote peripheries of the cities. To accomplish such a huge amount of population and capital move, there are proper legal bases to support a powerful mass housing company (*TOKI*) to practice the scenario.

No legal identity, institutions or company in Iran comes even close to what *TOKI* is occupying in Turkish economy. The concentration of power in the hands of this company gives it a very significant place in Turkish economy which in Iran does not have any similar equivalent.

Due to this big difference, it clearly can be seen that in Iran the right of the shelter of the majority of the people is not threatened directly by the power of any institutions as such. In Turkey, *TOKI*

originally a mass housing company in 1980s, currently occupies a significant role in construction sector of the country.

TOKI was established in 1984 as a state run mass housing company to ‘regulate the housing sector, prevent expansion of unauthorized dwellings (*gecekondus*)’ as well as providing ‘sustainable solutions’ to the housing shortages in the country (AGFE Advisory Group, 2009). Since 2002 when the AKP power gained power and *TOKI* was reorganized, the role of *TOKI* in the housing market in Turkey has increased considerably. For instance, when in 1984 the share of the Company in provision of housing units in Turkey was merely 0.6%, it has increased to 24.7 in 2004 (Yuksel and Gokmen quoted by Karatepe, 2013). The value of the buildings which *TOKI* has constructed after 2002 up to 2011, has been amounted to 35 billion USD (Karatepe, 2013).

The power and the money allocated to *TOKI* are immense. In one case, in 2004 all the lands that were under the authority of Turkish General Directorate of Land Office were submitted to *TOKI*. Under the law, the company has the legal right either to sell the lands or develop them. To decide over the allocated land under the domain of *TOKI*, no legal institutions have any say rather than *TOKI* itself. *TOKI* has the legal right to zone these lands, sale them or utilize them for for-profit projects. It can establish partnership contracts with the private sector company and has the right to execute the urban renewal projects and transform the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. In these areas, *TOKI* even has the legal liability to revise the planning and zoning regulations to fit them into its own set of objectives.

Briefly said about the role of *TOKI* in Turkish economy and comparing it with the case of Iran, it can be claimed that despite the fact that housing and real estate activities are producing a sizable amount of profit in Iran and specifically in Tehran, up to now, they have been a source of profit merely for the private sector and not the state. Moreover, considering the fact that the significant pillar of Iranian economy is oil and gas industry as the main source of revenue for the country and there is no equivalent such as Turkish *TOKI*, puts a major difference between Iran and Turkey in this regard.

The government openly follows the neo-liberal paradigm; converting Istanbul to a financial and service hub for the world. In this framework, the *gecekondus* should be levelled, the residents should be sent away to peripheries of the city and instead, shopping malls, gated communities and luxury projects should be erected.

5.4.3 Political environment and space for activities of civil society

In both countries the political context was similar to some extent. Iran experienced a CIA backed coup d'état in 1953 and Turkey experienced three of the similar incidents in 1961, 1971 and 1980. These political developments put considerable pressures on civil society and associations so that

the reminiscence of brutal repression is a strong highlighted heritage of the past in the minds of the populations of both countries.

The short term period of relative open era in favour of civil and political activities after the Revolution 1979 which caused flourishing of many of political and civil organizations in early 1980s was followed by a harsh suppression of the opposition for the following decades. As the result and despite the ups and downs in the suppressive policies, the major and overall trend toward the civil society organizations, associations and NGOs has been refusal and rejection. This set of policies is still enduring.

In spite of Iran, Turkey began to experience a relatively political freedom after 1990s and specifically beginning the EU accession process. These legal and legislative reforms increased the social protection for the citizens and their free activities. The laws included abolishing state security courts, lifting death penalty, changing some articles of the Constitution of the country, etc. can be mentioned as the cases of major political change. Since then, a relatively proper bed for activities of civil society organization, NGOs, associations and political parties has been established.

	Turkey	Iran
LAW	The Constitutional law mentions the responsibility of the government on the issue of provision of housing for the working class and local income groups in the article 49 as 'The State shall take measures to provide the poor and low-income families with dwellings that meet sanitary requirements'.	There is a strong indication of responsibility of government in provision of housing for low income groups particularly 'workers and peasants' in articles 3 and 31. The latter states: 'It is the right of every Iranian individual and family to possess housing commensurate with his needs'
ECONOMY	Land speculation, real estate activities and construction sector are of the major pillars of Turkish economy. <i>TOKI</i> as a unique housing company is playing a major role in the construction sector.	Although housing and real estate activities place a significant role in Iranian economy, the main source of revenue of the country is oil and gas industry. There is no equivalent such as Turkish <i>TOKI</i> in Iranian economy.

SOCIOECONOMIC ORIENTATION	The country follows a neo-liberal capitalist type of socio political and economic system.	The country is capitalistic but has a strong presence of the government and public sector in the economy. According to Iranian Constitution, the economy of the country comprises of three components; public, private and cooperative sectors.
LAND ESPECULATION	The government openly follows the neo-liberal paradigm; converting Istanbul to a financial and service hub for the world. In this framework, the <i>gecekondus</i> should be levelled, the residents should be sent away to peripheries of the city and instead, shopping malls, gated communities and luxury projects should be erected.	Despite the major tendency of grabbing economic and political power in the hands of a few elite and specifically the military oligarchy, the government still calls itself the government of ' <i>mustaz'afeen</i> ', because the traces of Iranian Revolution of 1979 are still strong in the national discourse.
CIVIL SOCIETY vs. STATE	The political environment specifically following the amendments in Constitution and laws in 1999 and afterwards provides the necessary bed for a relatively free political or social activities.	In Iran the political activities independent from the system is almost impossible. The social activities face major problems.
Table 31- Comparison between Iran and Turkey Source: Design of MMansoorian		

5.5 *Farahzad* vs. *Derbent*; similarities and dissimilarities

5.5.1 General picture

Derbent is relatively a small neighbourhood (about 13.2 ha) in *Sariyer* district, in European side of Istanbul. Squeezed between the Black Sea on the north and the Bosphorus on the western side, *Sariyer* enjoys a unique location of natural beauty. *Derbent* in a corner of the *Sariyer* district stretches itself on the slopes of two hills connected by a valley which rooms the main street of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood was established before WWII by a group of people coming from Anatolian side of the country who migrated to Istanbul in search of job and a new life in industrial centres and shipyard of *Sariyer*. Currently, the population of the neighbourhood is about 12,500.

The same group of people who were consisted of low income groups still comprises the prime segment of the population. Most of occupations are in service sector, industries and other low paid

jobs. The people come from different parts of the Anatolia and socially and ethnically are diversified. The population increase of *Derbent* continued to 1970s when the neighbourhood reached to its maximum physical stretch. Since then, the modifications and physical changes have occurred within the neighbourhood.

Compared with *Derbent*, *Farahzad* is bigger in size (more than 80 ha) and indwells 18,000 people in itself which 20% of it are the original residents of the neighbourhood. The rest coming from other parts of the country are migrants who have moved to the capital city in search of job. Each ethnic group has occupied its own patch of land, so different parts of the neighbourhood are named after their ethnic group e.g. *Khalkhaali-haa*¹, *Quchani-haa*², *Nahavandi-ha*³, etc. Although any construction is ‘illegal’ within the neighbourhood, the people not only modify the houses, still there are new migrants coming to the neighbourhood and practically enlarging it.

The neighbourhood is extended on one side of a steep mountain and at the western side borders with a seasonal river. Just less than 10 years ago, a new group of poor migrants occupied the area along the river area and made a new colony for themselves. This part of the neighbourhood held the poorest of the poor and was demolished in summer 2015 by Municipality of Tehran.

Beside the Iranian citizens, there are also Afghan citizens living in the neighbourhood. Facing with racial bias and religious prejudice, they live quite a separate and segregated life from Iranians. Many of them are garbage collectors renting garden areas in which they have erected their shacks. I have seen their life condition in dire situation and quite unfavorable when compared with those of Iranians. According to Saravand survey, in 2010 they comprised 20% of the population (Saravand Consulting Engineers, 2010).

5.5.2 Physical specifications

As mentioned above, up to Revolution 1979 *Farahzad* was a village. Afterwards, when it attracted the migrants from other parts of the country, grew to an un-planned and un-organized urban texture. Being located on steep skirts of mountainous region of the north of Tehran, the neighbourhood in some parts rooms sharp gradients. As the result, the un-engineered roads of *Farahzad* are meandering, irregular and have a law quality paving. The buildings in *Farahzad* are varied in size, area and height but the common attribute among them is the sub-standard quality of the materials, design and construction. Most of the buildings are more than 20 years old.

Derbent entirely was built by its residents. The people not only did all the necessary jobs e.g. construction of the roads, piping, electricity wiring, etc. by their volunteer work but also paid for all

¹ People coming from *Khalkhaal*, a region in Iranian west Azerbaijan province

² People coming from *Quchaan*, a city in Iranian Khorasan province in north east of the country

³ People coming from *Nahavand*, a city in Iranian Hamadan province in western part of the country

the required materials. In *Farahzad*, almost all of the infrastructure e.g. water, electricity and gas is provided by the government.

In *Derbent* also the buildings are varied. Some are typical one storey *gecekondu* buildings and some are even as high as six storey buildings. The roads in *Derbent* do not have engineering design and that is why many of them have non-standard gradient which makes the mobility difficult especially in winter time but they have enough width and do have a good quality of paving.

When compared with *Derbent*, *Farahzad* is apparently more chaotic in spacial organization and does not seem to have a slight hint of design. The buildings in *Derbent* are more organized and have a better look.

5.5.3 Economic situation

Currently, the first groupers in *Derbent* are mostly retired from their jobs in factories and industrial areas around. The next generation in the neighbourhood are active either in industry or service sector and generally have low-paid jobs.

The same like *Derbent*, the people of *Farahzad* are involved in low paid or un-skilled jobs. Since the location of the neighbourhood is within a wealthy district, there are many car repair shops who give services to the rich neighbours. Restaurants and cafes are another part of the existence of *Farahzad* since the neighbourhood has always been a leisure place for the people of Tehran. A phenomenon which is hardly seen in *Derbent* but is quite rampant in *Farahzad*, is the child labour which *Farahzad* has got a name for it. There are many Afghan children or from other poor families who work to earn bread for their siblings. There is an NGO working in the neighbourhood specifically working with these kids.

5.5.4 The status of tenure, informality and degeneration

Almost all of the housing units in both neighbourhoods of *Farahzad* and *Derbent* have tenure problems and can be classified as informal housing. Thus, it is rational to rule that both neighbourhoods are informal.

The issue of tenure in *Farahzad* is a complicated and un-resolved matter which plays a significant role in current socioeconomic and physical status of the neighborhood. The people in *Farahzad* either have constructed their housing units on lands which are agricultural land and do not have legal permissions to construct a formal dwelling on the land which makes them illegal/ informal. The ownership of these lands is obscure and problematic. Although, some residents claim that they own 'documents' confirming their legal rights, the research never could prove their claim. Different

individuals¹ or entities claim to own patches of lands in the neighbourhood, but no valid proof was revealed when the facilitators of facilitation office tried to see them. It seemed that those people found it beneficial if in the chaotic situation they remained unclear and obscure with the hope they could gain more in the unknown future.

The land that the neighbourhood is located on has several claimants. First of all, there are some individuals whose land was appropriated after the Revolution because of their affiliation with the former regime. The other actor is a state-owned Foundation which is generally in charge of the confiscated lands. This Foundation is another claimant of several parts of the lands. Besides, there is the Organization of Natural Resources which generally administers the natural environments of the country. Finally, there are the residents of the neighbourhood who usually own documents e.g. promissory notes which do not have legal or formal status and are merely recognized by the other residents.

5.5.5 Social texture and communal solidarity

The people in *Derbent* have strong feelings of community. They share their joys and sorrows, their money and their food with each other. As the survey revealed (Yalcintan et al., 2014), more than 80% of the people borrow money from their neighbours when in need and their neighbours are the first people they turn to when there is a problem or trouble at home. Knowing quite a big number of other families in the neighbourhood, the people feel safe among their neighbours and they do not seem to be bothered with social problems as some other examples (Erman and Eken, 2004; Temelkuran, 2007) in Istanbul. In *Derbent* many people state that they enjoy living in the neighbourhood and feel at home over there and that is why they are not willing to leave the place and move somewhere else. Their utmost wish- as they say- is staying on the land they have built their lives on. It seems that the problems with the urban transformation plan and the threat of eviction has added to the communal bond or as one of the interviewees stated 'glued them to each other even stronger'.

In *Farahzad* the social bond is weaker than in *Derbent*. In *Farahzad* the people of a certain community with ethnic or traditional and blood relationship might have communal feelings but it hardly can be extended to other groups of people in the neighbourhood. The communal activities are mostly restricted to annual religious processions and congregations which solely comprise the people of one specific ethnic group. Despite *Derbent*, *Farahzad* faces many social problems e.g. drugs, prostitution, child labor, etc. Poverty can be seen in quite sizable number of the houses in *Farahzad*. Although the people express some positive feelings toward their neighbourhood and the memories about the past, they also state that they are exhausted with the life in the neighbourhood

¹ Of them was a wealthy family (currently living in overseas) who owned big parcels of lands before the Revolution and had lost some parts of it due to the land and property confiscations after Revolution 1979.

and its complications. That is why many express their willingness to leave the place and move to somewhere else.

Aside from the differences and similarities discussed earlier, the major difference between *Farahzad* and *Derbent* is the recent developments in the latter since 2012 which puts *Derbent* in a total different position when it comes to compare the circumstances in two neighbourhoods. The threat of eviction that has been dangling over *Derbent* since 2012 has sparked resistance in the neighbourhood and has put it in a different course of direction from that of *Farahzad*. In other words, common interests of the people as well as common threats against the entire neighbourhood and the consequent resistance have consolidated the solidarity among the population of *Derbent*. Clearly, that is not the case in *Farahzad*. The following part discusses these developments and the response of the people of *Derbent* and finally the lessons which might be learned from their experience.

Summary: Comparison between *Derbent* and *Farahzad*

	<i>Derbent</i>	<i>Farahzad</i>
population	12,500	18,000
Area	13.2 ha	80 ha
Establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid 1930s • A typical <i>gecekondu</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 100 years ago- formerly a village
Physical situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One story to six story building, with different qualities of constructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One story to 3-4 story building with different qualities of construction, some in very bad condition
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas, wood and oil, electricity, tap water • Mostly wide asphalted roads, improper engineering design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas, electricity, tap water • Un-organized roads, different width, different quality of finishing, no engineering design

Natural hazard(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthquake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthquake and flood
	Table 32- Comparison between <i>Derbent</i> and <i>Farahzad</i> - facts and figures, physical specifications Source: Design of MMansoorian	

	<i>Derbent</i>	<i>Farahzad</i>
Income level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally low income groups • Low paid jobs e.g. service sector, cleaner, tea man 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income groups; un-employed or self employed, low paid jobs e.g. janitor, cleaner, car repairmen
Ethnic composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different ethnicities from north and eastern parts of Turkey • Different sects of Islam, Alewites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different ethnicities • About 20% Afghan population • A few Bangladeshi
Spacial order	<i>Derbent</i> was built by the voluntary work of the people over two hills in far north of Istanbul.	<i>Farahzad</i> locates on a hilly side and was developed quite unplanned.
History of establishment	<i>Derbent</i> was established about 80 years ago and now the descendants of the first comers live in the area. The inter-communal neighbourhood solidarity is quite strong. The threat of eviction over the neighbourhood after 2012 has strengthened this solidarity.	<i>Farahzad</i> has a long history behind but the original people of the neighbourhood merely include 20 percent of the neighbourhood. The rest are migrants are from different parts of the country each occupying one specific patch of the neighbourhood. The inter-communal neighbourhood solidarity s not strong.
Social stability	The neighbourhood is a socially safe place to live. The people are quite connected to their life in the neighbourhood and enjoy living among their neighbours.	The neighbourhood faces major social problems of drugs and prostitution. <i>Farahzad</i> has gained a name for the illegal activities of criminals.
Attachment to the space	The people of <i>Derbent</i> define their life and future in the neighbourhood. They do not like to leave.	People of <i>Farahzad</i> are dissatisfied with their lives in the neighbourhood. Leaving <i>Farahzad</i> is on the minds of some people.

Political /social activities background	<p>Like many other <i>gecekondus</i> of Istanbul, <i>Derbent</i> is a safe haven for political activists. Besides, some of the residents of the neighbourhood are quite familiar with issues of political and social activism as they have been affiliated with different political parties in the past.</p>	<p>The political activities of a few is limited to their affiliation with the government as paramilitary militia- <i>Baseej</i>. The communal activities of some groups of people is limited to their participation in religious congregations on annual occasions. There have been no major independent political activities after Revolution 1979 in the neighbourhood. The people are majorly strangers to the issue of organization.</p>
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Table 33- Comparison between *Derbent* and *Farahzad* - social specifications

Source: Design of MMansoorian

5.6. *Derbent* and the threat of eviction- the course of developments since 2012

The threat of eviction and demolition as the people of *Derbent* recall has been over their heads since 'forever'. Some interviewees indicated that there 'always' has been the stigma of 'occupier' over the residents constantly intriguing rumours all indicating that the people were supposed to leave the place and would be forced to do so.

The main reason for the fear of eviction is the ambiguity in tenure and legal property status. Originally, the neighbourhood was established on a patch of state land about 80 years ago. As the people quote from their older members of the family, it was initially a forest area packed with trees and shrubs. The reason for selecting that patch of land basically has been its proximity to the work places in *Sariyer* e.g. *Istiniye* shipyard. Like other *gecekondus* of Istanbul, the land which the neighbourhood began to form on was on a hilly side and apparently invisible. Although the land did not formally belong to the people, they did not seem to have any other options rather than building their homes as the government had not provided necessary housing for the people who migrated to Istanbul to seek subsistence.

Lack of formal property right did not stop the people to build the neighbourhood and as they repeatedly stated in the interviews, they built everything in the neighborhood from scratch. It means that they not only built their houses, but also and over the course of years constructed the roads, electricity network, water distribution system, etc. Briefly said, the entire neighbourhood was built by the sweats, toil and the money of the residents.

Normally, the first step of implementation of an urban transformation plan for a *gecekondu* neighbourhood in Turkey is the official announcement of it as a 'risked area'¹. By 'risk' the officials mean the 'risk' of earthquake which entire Istanbul is prone to. Based on the previous experiences in similar neighbourhoods, the people in the assigned 'risked area' know that the following step would be emptying the neighbourhood and evicting the people, displacement of the inhabitants and demolition of the place. Thus, for many of the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods in Istanbul, the troubles i.e. the threat of eviction and displacement as well as the danger of losing their long established life begin with the official announcement of the neighbourhood as a 'risked area'. In the case of *Derbent* it occurred in January 2013.

Prior to official announcement of transformation plan and before informing the people of *Derbent*, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and a construction firm announced a common detailed project for the neighbourhood in August 2012. The plan was announced in a real estate exhibition in France in 2013. According to the exhibited plan, out of 13.2 ha of the land on which currently the habitants of *Derbent* are living, merely about 3.2 ha would be allocated to them. The rest of the land would be dedicated to construction of luxury houses for a wealthy cooperative (AAICC²) currently owning a gated community (MESA housing) and occupying the northern part of the neighbourhood.

The AAICC is indeed the main entity competing with the people of *Derbent* over the land. Founded in 1986, this cooperative bought the public land on which *Derbent* neighbourhood was established decades before. Since the urban transformation plan approved by Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanism for *Derbent* is practically allocating most of the lands to this cooperative, it is supporting the plans. Being sure of the success and materialization of the plans, the Cooperative signed a contract with a construction firm even before official announcement of urban transformation plans for the neighbourhood.

In the plan designed by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in collaboration with two construction companies, 1652 housing units are planned to be constructed (Arima Architects, 2012). According to the designed plan, two kinds of housing i.e. the luxury condominiums and those for current inhabitants of *Derbent* would be constructed which in between a wide expressway is designed to separate them from each other. The plan has not revealed the fate of the rest of the houses and the land.

¹ In Turkish, *riskli alanı*

²Ataturk Auto Industry Housing Cooperative

Since the official announcement of the plan and approval by Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanism, the legal disputes over the land have begun. In so doing, the people established a neighbourhood cooperative to represent them in their fight against the transformation plan.

5.6.1. *Derbent* Neighbourhood Cooperative

As said, to pursue their legal fight against the urban transformation plan, the people of *Derbent* established a neighbourhood cooperative. The first in its kind in Turkey, the cooperative was established to;

- a) Represent the people,
- b) Gain the communal ownership of the land.

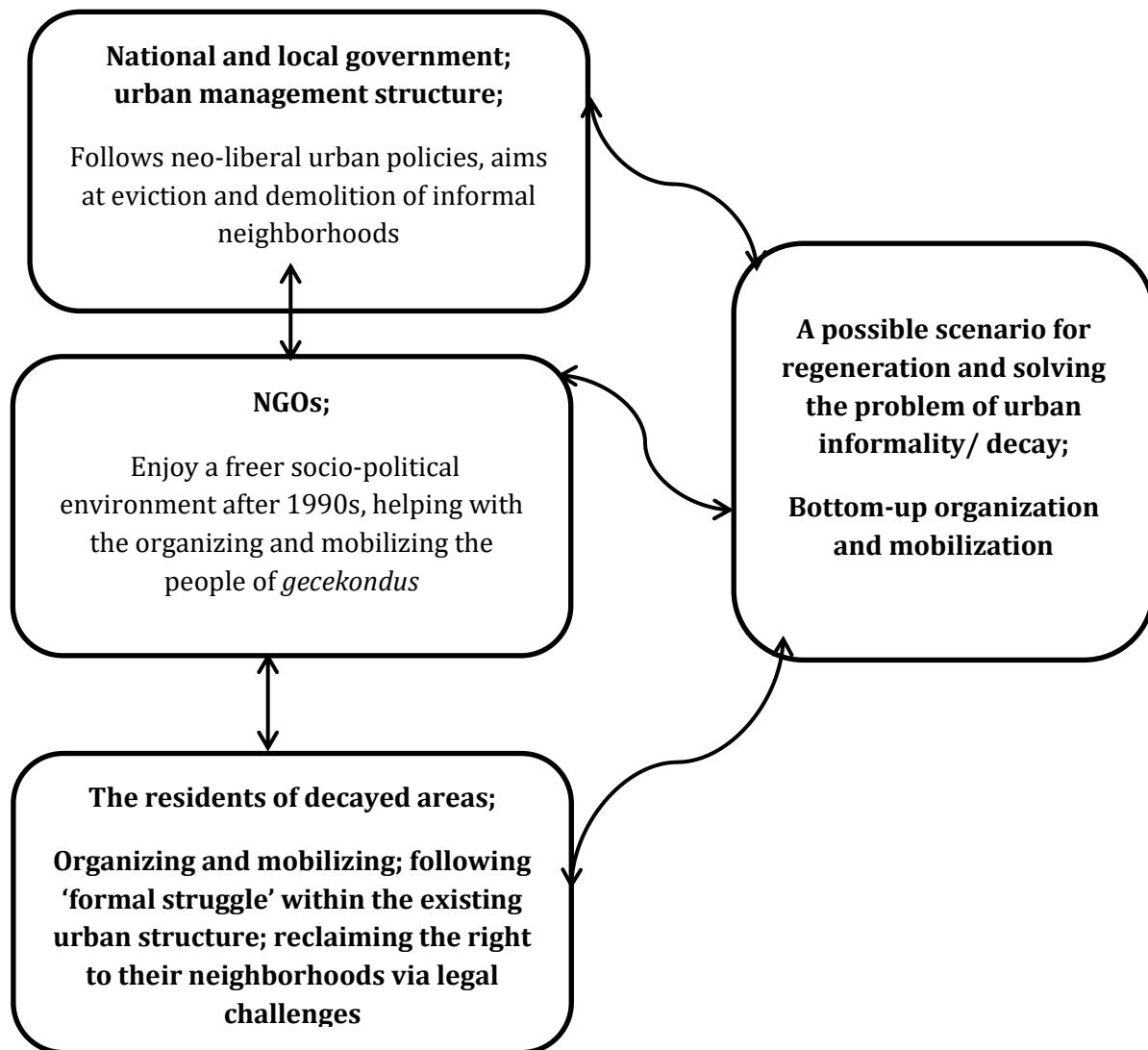


Figure 30- Urban Regeneration Actor Analysis in Istanbul, Turkey

Source: Design of Mmansoorian

Being a ‘neighbourhood’ cooperative, the constitution of the cooperative indicates that all the people who live within the official borderlines of the neighbourhood and have documents indicating their presence in the neighbourhood, own a legal right to be a member of the cooperative. This criterion hinders any membership for the purpose of individual interests especially from the outsiders. Furthermore, the number of the members is not fixed and can change over the time. This flexible framework enables the number of members to increase if new members were willing to join in.

Up to now, three court cases have been pursued by the *Derbent* Cooperative which all have been ruled in favour of residents of the neighbourhood¹. Besides, the people could have the head of the Cooperative as the *muhtar* of the neighbourhood and beat the former *muhtar* who was a supporter of AKP and the urban transformation plan.

Part II-Theoretical discussion

In this part, one of the core issues of the research is discussed- the issue of property right and how it can be considered as one of the main reasons of status quo in the researched cases. Through elaborating on the problem of tenure which makes the researched areas as contested areas, the solution that the people of the case in Istanbul have found is conferred i.e. organization and mobilization. Furthermore, this section reveals how the organizational initiative of these people can help settling the contestation over land in a just and fair way.

5.7 Spaciality of contestation; *Derbent* as a contested area

Urban transformation plans as claimed by Turkish authorities are for the sake of safety of the population who lives in a city which still carries in mind the vivid memories of deadly earthquake of 1999. Called as ‘blessed demolitions’ by the then prime minister of the country (*Erdoğan*, 2013)² and according to the head of Turkish Administration of Housing Development, these plans are supposed to transform ‘unauthorized’ and ‘earthquake vulnerable’ buildings to secure havens. Based on what he stated, the transformation plans begin in cities and later will go down to towns and finally to villages (Karaman, 2013).

The transformation plans which have gained a strong momentum after 2002 and gain of power by AKP have put a stark pressure on *Derbent* and many other *gecekondus* of Istanbul, but before that

¹ The details of the court cases are discussed in Chapter 3.

²Refers to a speech by the then Turkish prime minister Tayyip Erdogan about the latest developments in Istanbul *gecekondus* in 2013. In that speech he detailed about demolitions in a number of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods including *Derbent*, calling the bulldozing of the neighbourhood as ‘blessed demolitions’(*Erdoğan*, 2013).

the troubles with these property-led plans initiated in 1980s, when the *gecekondus* were marketized. For the purpose of selling *gecekondus* the 'amnesty' and formalizing them began then and were repeated several times. This 'tolerance' of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods was dismissed after 2002 when Istanbul was decided by the authorities to turn to a global city, a city of finance and service for the entire world.

In the new role defined for Istanbul, there was no place for the residents of the *gecekondus*. One of the primary laws passed by the government in 2004 was criminalizing the construction of informal settlements so that building of any informal house was considered as a crime which could bring 2-5 years of imprisonment for anybody who dared to violate that law.

The decisions over the conversion of the city to a glittering 'sanitized' place-one without its 'ugly' *gecekondus*- did not include consulting with the residents of *gecekondus* at any level or any stage of decision taking. Nor these decisions contained or observed the interests of the people living in *gecekondus*. In the case of *Derbent*, as explained before, the plan about the neighbourhood was exhibited in a real estate exhibition in Paris. Nobody in the neighbourhood knew about the plans, nor had anybody been talked to or consulted with. Clearly, the urban transformation plan of *Derbent* is the result of a typical top-down structure of urban management. This type of urban management has intrigued grave challenges before the people and has turned *Derbent* to a contested urban space.

5.7.1 Property right, the cornerstone of the spacial contestation in *Derbent*

Legalizing the tenure has been a long lasting issue in Turkish *gecekondus*. Still, it is one of the main cores of disputes and *Derbent* is not an exception in that regard. As Karaman writes (Karaman, 2013) 'during the early 1980s, a total of five pieces of legislation were passed to legalize the *gecekondus*. Among these, law 2981 passed in 1984 was the most significant, as it effectively issued an 'amnesty' for all *gecekondus* that were built on state-owned land before 1984. According to this law, *Gecekondu* 'owners' were issued 'title assignation documents' (in Turkish; *tapu tahsis belgesi*). This is a document that recognizes the occupant's right to use the space, entitling the document holder to legal ownership after a 'cadastral plan' and a subsequent 'improvement plan' (in Turkish, *imar islah planı*) are prepared and approved by the local municipality. Indeed, this temporary document certifies a transitional status.

The important fact to consider is that 'even now there are still many neighbourhoods where the residents are granted the 'document' in 1980s and do not have the permanent and fully legal status leaving the residents in suspension, as the document grants the occupants the right to stay and use the space, but it does not confer full ownership rights' (Karaman, 2013). In other words, this ambiguous status of tenure is the Achilles' heel of residents and

therefore the weakest link in their resistance against the *Derbent* Urban Transformation Plan.

Generally speaking, in Istanbul as well as in *Derbent*, the Municipality of Istanbul is putting pressures on the residents by their insecure tenure status. The final plan for *Derbent*- like the neighbourhoods previously evicted and demolished- is grabbing the high value lands and handing them over to MESA housing and the wealthy residents who are ready to fill in. Therefore, instead of public housing to indwell the original residents and without gaining the consent of the residents, they plan to erect another gated community to substitute the existing population. Of the entire land which currently the neighbourhood is built over, the plan of Municipality is merely leaving 25% to the residents.

Therefore, the property right is the initial point and the cornerstone of the disputes over the land in *Derbent*. The logics behind the demands of MESA housing and AAIC cooperative (supported by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) is based on the fact that the land originally had been state land sold to the AAIC cooperative. The same fact is practically the 'weak point' of the residents of *Derbent* who do not have such a firm legal status with regard to the land ownership.

The people of *Derbent* demand the tenure legalization to get out of the current situation simply because they know as long as the tenure status is not resolved in favour of them, the threat of eviction and losing the land will live on. Besides, that is also a fact that if the people could have the legal tenure in hand they could begin renovating their houses and regenerate their neighbourhood without the fear of losing everything. Moreover, when the price of tenure-less land is generally low in the market, gaining the tenure practically adds the value of their assets. Another reason behind demanding the tenure is that all the formal procedures e.g. gaining legal permission for modifications or constructing a new building or getting loans from banking system or subsidies from the government require a legal tenure. Therefore, obtaining the property right is a vital element for igniting any successful and sustainable regeneration process whether it is at the scale of a housing unit or for the entire neighbourhood.

5.7.2 Establishing an informal settlement- a bottom up initiative to materialize the right to shelter

The outset of formation of an informal neighbourhood is usually setting up a simple ad hoc shelter including four walls and a roof over them. The people erect these make shifts shacks with the simplest materials they can access to. Primarily, they build an impermanent shed i.e. some pillars with a temporary roof over to pin their presence and existence on the land. Afterwards, they add some components, extend and modify other parts and establish their 'house'. Years pass. The people build more to survive and try to strengthen the ones they had built in the past. Then, at some time, sooner or later, the new comers arrive, for the same reasons as the first groupers i.e. in

search of job and opportunities of survival. Over the course of the days and months, these ad hoc constructions proliferate. Later, the 'houses' get connected by bumpy and un-engineered roads. These people do the same as the previous groups. The existing families grow and the number of family members increases. The children grow up and establish their own families. Over the years, a community forms and an informal neighbourhood engenders. Informal neighborhoods are the spaces that indwell the urban informality.

Urban informality can be silent or loud. It can be passive or active. In many cases it is silent and passive, trying to survive the hardships of destitution on a daily basis. But it becomes loud and vibrant when there is a chance to be so. For instance, when for any reasons the law and order disappear for some time, e.g. hours or weeks, the informality acts hurriedly and energetically. Clearly, because the void in presence of rigid formality, law and order, is the opportunity in which the people can 'encroach' (Bayat, 2013, 2010b) into the enclosed and protected borders of formality. During the winter days of 1978 and 1979, the residents of informal settlements surrounding Tehran, encroached into the formal boundaries of the city. In so doing, the people tried to deny their marginality and attempted to regain parts of their rights as citizens.

Like many other informal neighbourhoods of Tehran, in *Farahzad*, informality boosted in fervent days of Revolution 1979 and the months before when the police forces were busy dealing with political protests on the streets of the city. In Istanbul, the people made their make shift shelters overnight when the watchful eyes of the police or municipality were absent. The informal settlements of Istanbul- *gecekondus*, have gained their name of this reality- built overnight, building at a time when the law is absent or slept.

Bayat explains that if workers or students can go on strike, the people of the informal neighbourhoods violate the rules and regulations whenever they get a chance to do so (A. Bayat, 2000). The people conduct all these 'illegal' activities in the 'absence' of authorities. Even currently, the night time is the active time for informal and 'illegal' constructions in the informal neighbourhoods, whether it is a small modification of the façade or adding a staircase in some corner in the house. They may add a kitchen in a corner, or build an extra room to indwell their newly-wed member of the family or affix a staircase to connect the yard to the recently constructed floor. For the people of informality at one side and the structure of urban management at the other side, this game of 'seek and hide', this constant advancement and retreat seems to be infinite.

Generally speaking, through their life experiences and over the course of time, the people of informality learn that one of the major means of survival is negating the law and order. They contradict or even confront the system of law and management which practically does not include their interests or demands, nor supports them or listens to them. These people who are left on their own to deal with the hardships of survival in informality learn ways to ignore these laws, bypass

them, break them and briefly said, violate them. The mistrust between the people of informality and the structure of urban management forms and strengthens in this way.

After years and when the structure of urban management continues to deny the basic human right of sizable number of populations to a decent shelter, the informality gets bigger, wider and deeper. With the extra economic hardships e.g. war, sanctions and economic crises, the number of people living in informality increases and the dilemma of informality becomes more complicated. In parallel, the solutions go further distant.

As the time passes, the split between the urban management and the people living in informality becomes wider. It seems that within one city, two structures are working along each other; one in the top with all its bureaucratic complications and the other in the bottom namely in the informal neighbourhoods which follows its own path and rules wrestling with its own problems.

The other side of the complexity of the situation reveals itself when we look at the general picture of pretexts like Iran and Turkey in which the presence of the people, 'the bottom', and 'the ordinary' is not welcomed into the structure of urban management, legally, formally, organizationally and structurally. In urban plans, there is hardly a place to hear the people. These plans are decided over and designed by planners employed by the government and relevant bodies of the state. Nowhere in the entire process, the impacted people are talked to or consulted with.

5.7.3 Organization- a means of realizing the right to shelter

In the Middle East in general, 'the prevalence of authoritarian states (of despotic, populist or dictatorial kinds), which are wary of civil association, together with the strength of family and kinship relations, render primary solidarities more pertinent than the secondary associations and social movements (A. Bayat, 2000, p. 14). But despite the fact that 'the poor are powerless, they do not sit around, waiting for the fate to determine their lives'. In so doing and beside the measures of survival, 'the poor strive to resist and make advances in their lives when the opportunity arises'. Bayat adds that 'in doing so, they 'create 'opportunities for advancement- they organize and get involved in contentious politics'(Bayat, 2010b, P. 38).

In countries as such, while collective entities such as the charity organizations and mosque associations do exist, they rarely lead to political mobilization of the popular classes (A. Bayat, 2000). In Iran, specifically and after the Revolution 1979 many of the religion-based type of entities are acting as socio-political bases for state propaganda and have strong affiliations with ideological part of military forces namely *pasdaran*. For this reason, organized and collective action may not be possible everywhere, and thus the alternative forms of struggle must be discovered and acknowledged. It specifically should be noted that considering the intricate condition of Iranian civil society as well as the violent history of the country i.e. physical elimination of the opposition

even in the recent past which make social or political activities pricey, for exerting pressures from the bottom, a complicated set of measures might function and bear tangible outcomes. In a relatively similar condition, the efforts of people in some *gecekondus* of Istanbul might help finding paths to materialize these bottom-up pressures.

5.7.4 Against the plans of dispossession within the formal structure

The core of the conflict in *Derbent* and other *gecekondus* of Istanbul between the Municipality of Istanbul at one side and the residents of *gecekondu* neighbourhoods at the other side can be looked upon in many different ways. To the question of urban informality and urban decay, two opposite responses are given; one by the state in general and urban management in particular, and the other, by the residents of the informal neighbourhoods. When the response of urban management is bulldozing these areas and erecting high end facilities instead, this research is trying to find out how the people are reacting? In other words, when the urban management is following the dispossession of the residents, how the people are trying to re-gain the property right and how they are fighting to counter the pressures of urban management to push its plans of dispossession.

5.7.5 Communal property right- the response of the residents to the conflict over the land

People of *Derbent* established their neighbourhood almost eighty years ago. The first group settling in the previously wild patch of land sought a better life had immigrated from Anatolian side of the country to Istanbul to seek job. The first groupers used to work in the shipyard nearby and did a limited agriculture on the land. Over the course of time, other groups joined them and gradually a community and a neighbourhood began to form. The physical formation of the neighbourhood beginning before WWII continued up to 1970s when the neighbourhood reached to its current borderlines. The community comprising different ethnicities and diverse religiosities spread its roots and the second and later on the third generation was born and grew up in the neighbourhood. Briefly said, a life was engendered in *Derbent* over the course of time.

Despite the reality that what the people of *Derbent* are conducting does not exactly fit into the definition of Bayat's non-movement, it is not very far from it in a sense that it is not vividly political or is merely following the mundane needs of life. The difference is that what the people of *Derbent* are following is for a communal cause using the tactics of organization and mobilization although as said, the content seems to be apolitical and merely for the cause of survival. Furthermore, just as the poor conducting the actions of non-movement which change the 'norms and rules in society of many dispersed people doing similar and encroaching' actions, what the people of *Derbent* do along with other people in neighbouring *gecekondus*, might have overall and general outcomes in favour of the residents of these neighbourhoods to make profound changes in the structure of urban policy in Istanbul or even Turkey.

Currently, the people of *Derbent* demand the possession of the neighbourhood, but in a sense they are claiming the ‘repossession’ of the life they have made along with their community over the years. For the people of *Derbent*, the primary initiative to reclaim their rights in the process of regeneration is preserving the life they have built over long decades. To realize that, currently the first step they have taken has been organization and mobilization within a neighbourhood cooperative and fighting through established formal paths i.e. judicial system to gain the collective property right. However, using the pursuit of law at this stage aims at preserving the neighbourhood as it currently is and does not seem to follow other objectives such as profound changes in the law or policies.

5.8 A deeper reading of the contestation over land; the ‘right’ to shelter and proper housing

To establish an argument over the issues of land and proper housing, here three main topics are discussed. Primarily, the idea of right-based approach which recognizes the right of every human being per se to a proper and standard shelter is elaborated. Then, the legal obligations that the countries of Turkey and Iran are legally bound to practice but fail to carry out are mentioned. They are the same obligations which make a legal bed for the claims of the people over the land. Finally, the legitimate demand of the people living on a land for a long time and establishing a communal life and consequently their right to have the legal property of that land is discussed. The three issues would be followed by the discussion over the contexts of Iran and Turkey and the manner that the issue of urban degeneration within the current top-down structures of urban policy in the two countries can be addressed. As it will be discussed, in these contexts the practical solution to the problem of urban decay is drawn out of the example of the struggle of people of *Derbent*, Istanbul against the urban transformation plan.

5.8.1 The legal obligations of the states of Turkey and Iran with regard to right to housing

The right for living a dignified human life is reflected in international declarations and agreements. One of the outstanding ones is the Universal Human Rights Declaration (hereafter, UHRD) in which in different articles the rights to social security, work, food, clothing, housing, medical care for all people apart from gender, sex and class are explicitly stated (United Nations, 1948). The UHRD is important to take into consideration specifically due to the reality that both countries of Iran and Turkey have signed it. These states which according to the UHRD are the duty-bearers are legally bound to observe the UHRD articles and reflect them in their policies. Moreover, they are the direct body to provide the social services which are mentioned as the ‘human rights’ in the Declaration.

Beside the UHRD, both countries of Iran and Turkey are of the signatories of HABITAT II, held in Istanbul in 1996 (UN, 1996). As this Document states, 'adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world' has been of the major themes of the Habitat Conference in Istanbul. In so doing, the document emphasizes on 'universal goals of ensuring adequate shelter for all and making human settlements safer, healthier and more liveable, equitable, sustainable and productive'. Within the framework of safe, healthy and liveable housing for all, the Conference pays significant attention to the dilemma of urban deterioration and alerts that it has reached to a crisis proportion.

Just recently, the two countries of Iran and Turkey have also signed the document entitled 'The Future We Want (Rio+20)'(Vision, 2012). Promoting sustainable development and a holistic approach to urban development, this Document explicitly emphasizes on the right to 'affordable housing' and pays major attention to the issue of 'urban regeneration':

We recognize that, if well planned and developed including through integrated planning and management approaches, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. In this regard, we recognize the need for a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements that provides for affordable housing and infrastructure and prioritizes slum upgrading and urban regeneration. We commit to work towards improving the quality of human settlements, including the living and working conditions of both urban and rural dwellers in the context of poverty eradication so that all people have access to basic services, housing and mobility. We also recognize the need for conservation as appropriate of the natural and cultural heritage of human settlements, the revitalization of historic districts, and the rehabilitation of city centres.

Beside the above mentioned international conventions, both countries of Iran and Turkey have included the right to housing for their citizens into the constitutions of the two countries. Compared with Turkey, the Constitution of Iran has a stronger emphasis on the right to proper housing, although the Turkish Constitution includes articles related to this issue as 'right to housing'.¹ To summarize all, it can be said that the inclusion of the right to proper and sound housing in the signed international conventions as well as the constitution of both countries puts a legal obligation over the two states to practice this responsibility.

5.8.2 Legitimacy as a ground for legality

¹ARTICLE 57- The State shall take measures to meet the need for housing within the framework of a plan that takes into account the characteristics of cities and environmental conditions, and also support community housing projects.

The researched neighbourhoods of *Derbent* and *Farahzad* were established decades ago. During the long years, the communities settling there have created their communal connections, have spread their roots and have established a life on the land. In the first place, the reason why these neighbourhoods were established was the refusal of the states on practicing their legal obligations namely the international declarations and conventions they have signed as well as the Constitution of their countries. The people in these neighbourhoods not only have been denied their human right of shelter, but also have been deprived of means of subsistence, jobs and proper employment. The overall condition of unemployment or lack of standard formal employment as well as the deterioration of the space which they have been forced to live in for years has made their living quite tough and complicated. Practically, for the most part the residents of these neighbourhoods have been left on their own with their problems to deal with.

In addition to the problems of informality, for gaining the basic amenities and to satisfy their essential needs, these people have struggled for generations. Whatsoever the people own or have built in the neighbourhood is mostly the fruit of the sweats and the work of the people. *Derbent* specifically is a clear instance of this claim. The urban transformation plan of *Derbent* which is targeting the original residents of the neighbourhood is in clear violation of the international documents and declarations indicating the right to proper shelter for everybody, which the State of Turkey has signed. The urban transformation plans in Istanbul which never have taken any consultation or participation of the residents all through the process of planning are also in explicit violation of the Constitution of the country which indicates the right of every citizen to a proper shelter. Similarly, in *Farahzad* the people have lived in dire condition of deterioration for many years. The disputes over whom -the municipality or the people- should do what, has been going on since forever. The people are living in a neighbourhood which suffers from both physical decay and social deterioration and stigma.

Based on the above discussed issues, the primary question of the research should be mentioned here again; how within the context of structure of urban policy in countries like Iran and Turkey which does not 'listen' to the people, the contestation over the 'space' in informal neighbourhoods should be resolved? How in such pretexts the dilemma of urban deterioration should be addressed? In other words, in a system where the state does not practice its national or international legal obligations, how the issue of urban decay should be tackled with? In other words, while this structure of urban policy is not set up to listen to the voice of the people or observe their interests, how the participatory urban regeneration can be materialized? To answer these questions, here once again I review the pretext of the problem and the overall scene of all the above mentioned dilemmas.

Contextualizing the politics of the people of informality within the entire political arena of Turkey before 1990s reveals that one of the main stages of struggle in this country has been the 'streets'.

Currently and with the changes occurring in the laws after 1990s and the process of EU accession, several positive transformations of socio political milieu of the country have taken place. Therefore, the struggles have obtained an opportunity to shift the stage from the streets to formal ways e.g. court corridors. But one thing to keep in mind is considering the reality that although the form of struggle is charting through formal paths, its support and energy come from the streets of the neighbourhoods. In other words, it seems that in all conditions, there are the organization and mobilization which is the key to the success of these efforts. That is to say that the precondition of success for the formal and judicial path is the organization of the people in the neighbourhood and taking the judicial cases as bottom up initiatives.

In case of Iran, although the history of the country is quite familiar with 'movements' and 'non-movements', currently there is a general lack of movements specifically focusing on urban problems. In other words, at present in Iran there are no such movements namely long lasting set of clear and concrete actions targeting specific objectives or a set of goals in the realm of urban issues. Generally in such a condition, the popular 'actions' tend to go toward two opposite directions; either they become confrontational e.g. the house squatting and land occupation in early 1980s and or even violent unrests e.g. urban riots in mid 1990s, or they get muted and seem to have no major impact on urban policies, nor on the living condition of the population. That is why currently, the problems of deterioration in almost all urban decayed areas are left untouched and unresolved.

Part III

5.9 Conclusions

Based on the evidences broadly discussed in chapter 3 and 4 about the cases of the study and the discussions made in this very chapter, this part investigates the broader implications for the theory in general and practice in the similar environments in particular.

The findings of this research contributes to addressing the problem of urban decay in the countries of Iran and Turkey and environments alike where the State in general and structure of urban management in particular,

1. Does not or fails to practice its legal obligations in provision of basic needs of the population living in urban decayed areas,
2. Does not listen to the voice of the residents of decayed areas and subsequently does not observe and reflect their overall interests as well as demands and needs in urban plans,
3. Is unwelcoming towards the democratic relationships with associations and grassroots and to the very existence of these associations.

It seems that the findings of the research which principally and primarily are the lessons learned from the struggle that the people of *Derbent*, Istanbul are conducting against the top-down urban policies, can be proliferated in similar conditions where there is a serious split between the 'top' and the 'bottom' in the structure of urban management as well as policies of urban regeneration.

The lessons which are based on the resistance of the people of *Derbent* against the top-down urban transformation plans are obtained as the result of organization and mobilization of the residents. These lessons are the reflection of the experiences that the people gain and the practical response that the people give to the condition of their life as well as the threats of eviction and displacement, initiated and implemented by the top down structure of urban management.

5.9.1 collaborative in path, conflictual in nature

This research studying the resistance of the residents of Derbent and other gecekondus of Istanbul against urban transformation plans which can be traced back to mid-2000s, strengthens the ideas (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010, p. 2) indicating that these resistance have had a tangible outcome in the past namely 'modifications in the initial plans'. The reason for the possibility of modification of the initial plans as these researchers reveal is that 'the neo-liberal restructurings in Istanbul are never pre-determined' (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010, p. 2). It means that the final plans are very much related to the ultimate balance of the power between the two contesting sides- the 'top' and the 'bottom'.

Moreover, the former experiences of resistance which opened ways for exerting pressures from the people to produce modifications in the initial plans in favour of them, proves that within the general perspective, the resistance can have strong impacts on the top-down system of planning-financing-implementing of the projects. These changes in favour of the people can be produced even within the structures which are not normally laid out for reflecting the interests of the people in the bottom.

Furthermore, the research divulges that in Derbent, the people have translated the general politics and big words of the 'top' into their mundane demands of daily life and their basic needs namely proper housing as well as sound and peaceful life. By calling their 'neighbourhood as their party', or by demanding the tenure as the pre-condition for voting for specific candidates of political parties, they not only try to protect their neighbourhood and community, but also remind the first and foremost objective of the politics as the preservation and materialization of common good. This is another venue along with the main path of resistance that the people have chosen to walk.

The findings of the research on resistance of the people of Derbent explore this resistance as an unavoidable response and an ultimate attempt to address the exclusion from the structure of urban policies. Within this resistance, different scenarios and possible alternative paths should be

surveyed. These findings might be able to answer the question of the research which was originally raised in Farahzad on how a participatory urban regeneration plan could be devised and implemented within a structure of urban policy which is not principally laid out for such initiatives.

The conflictual aspect

In the researched cases, the relationship between the urban management and residents of the informal neighbourhoods are based on mistrust and cynicism. Briefly said, people are suspicious to whatsoever plans that the municipality puts on the table. Their real experiences of the life over the long years have taught them that in general, those in the 'top' do not listen to residents of the neighbourhoods, nor do they care about them. The research includes several stories told by the interviewees in *Derbent* about the municipality even before the recent conflicts which bear a profound negativity. The same is the stories of residents of *Farahzad* against the personnel of municipality. All these stories and narratives indicate that there is a deep split between the people of these neighbourhoods and the structure of urban management. In this regard, the nature of the relationship between the two sides i.e. the urban management and the residents of neighbourhoods, is conflictual.

The conflictual side of the accounts indicates that there is no common path which the municipality and the people could walk along each other. The reason clearly is that in *Derbent* like other *gecekondus* of Istanbul, the municipality is behind all the transformation plans which are targeting the residents. Similarly, in *Farahzad* the people hardly can recall any constructive relationship with the municipality when the people have to wrestle with problems of deterioration without any helps. Although the attempts of Facilitation Office with social orientation were directed towards the betterment of the life of neighborhood, the result was far from any tangible outcomes.

The conflict between the 'top' and the 'bottom' in the researched cases can be comprehended more thoroughly when looking at the whole picture through the framework of human-right-based approach. As explained previously in Chapter 2, this approach takes the right to the shelter and proper housing as a universal human right apart from sex, gender, ethnicity or class. According to this approach, the 'principal rights' e.g. food, shelter, social security should be at the heart of the policies taken by the state in order to satisfy basic needs of the population. Moreover, this approach considers the State as the duty-bearer and the provider of those rights. The conflict arises when not only the state does not provide the basic rights despite its legal obligations but also opposes the initiatives of the population when the latter tries to access those rights.

The research suggests that the conflictual side of this relationship would be resolved to some extent if the pressures from the bottom could be reflected as changes in laws as well as the structure of urban management. In other words, the element of contestation finally might diminish if the groups or identities of 'the bottom' could have a voice in the system so that the interests of these groups

could be integrated into the policies. The experience of *Derbent* and the struggle for repossession of the neighbourhood can be an instance of such set of measures.

The findings of the research also indicate that to channelize the measures and initiatives of the residents to make the urban management to hear them, the organization of the population in the neighborhood can play a significant role. Building collective solidarity, strengthening the self-esteem of the residents, learning to articulate their demands, calibrating their expectations and requirements in order to define and gain a clear and untouchable position in the apparatus of urban management are the measures that the people can take when they are organized within a collective organization e.g. a cooperative.

Of the other impacts of establishing such solidarity is enabling the neighbourhood people to act as a robust partner within the partnerships with other actors of regeneration, i.e. municipality, state, as well as private sector in possible future scenarios of partnership for the purpose of regeneration. As a matter of fact, the power of the informal community to act as a partner within the formal structure of urban management lies in the support of the entire community. This is especially important when we consider that the structure of urban management neither has acted in favour of such role of the people nor it seems to have the organizational or structural capacity to do so.

Being said that all, the crucial point to bear in mind is that the ‘conflict’ is merely one side of the relationship between the ‘top’ and the ‘bottom’ in the researched areas.

The collaborative aspect

At the other side, as the research reveals, the ‘conflict’ is energy taking, costly and high-risk. In other words, because of complexity or even impossibility of a conflictual struggle ‘against the top’ in general and the urban management in particular, the people tend to put forward their agenda through collaborative paths and negotiational means.

The collaborative side of the relationship between the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ can be interpreted and read through the collaborative approach. As explained before in chapter 2, this approach focuses mostly on pragmatic solutions to the problems on the ground. The collaborative tactics of dealing with different levels of the power do not challenge the ‘top’ but aims at finding paths through the system in order to achieve clear and attainable results. Of these paths are legal means which the people of *Derbent* are employing to resist the structure of urban management.

Following the legal path and conducting negotiations with the people in ‘top’ is not unprecedented. People of informality in other parts of Istanbul or other countries namely South Africa or India have followed the legal route, but what makes the case of *Derbent* exceptional to some extent is that the people have mobilized themselves within a ‘Neighbourhood Cooperative’ which might not only eliminate the disputes over the land against the competing identities i.e. CCIA Cooperative and

Municipality of Istanbul but also might diminish the probable complications, disputes and confrontations within the community and among the residents.

When compared with *Derbent*, the establishment of Facilitation Office of *Farahzad* put the neighborhood in a fairly better relationship with the municipality. Generally, the Facilitation Offices in decayed areas of Tehran were supposed to establish a collaborative relationship between the 'top' i.e. the municipality and the 'bottom' i.e. the neighborhoods. Yet, the outcomes of the limited measures of the short-lived Facilitation Office were cut short and did not bore any concrete product.

Establishing a cooperative which is based on the 'location' is a new initiative in Turkey. The Cooperative of *Derbent* includes all the people who live in the neighbourhood and practically recognizes the rights of all the people living within the borderlines of the neighbourhood as the owners of the land- no matter if they are currently the members of the Cooperative or not. Besides, following a step by step agenda to put legal cases against the Municipality of Istanbul, this umbrella organization fights against the forces endangering the current life of the community in order to obtain the tenure of the disputed land.

In *Farahzad*, the initial plan of the Facilitation Office of the neighborhood was establishing a cooperative which could organize the people of the neighborhood. This cooperative was supposed to help the people to carry on the formalities to obtain the tenure, assist the members with the technical as well as financial procedures and facilitate the entire process of regeneration. Although the plans for establishing such an organization was not materialized in *Farahzad*, the experience of *Derbent* proved that founding such a structure within the neighborhood was a feasible and workable idea.

Moreover as the research shows, since the people have learned that their power is in their organization and unity, they not only work among the people of their own neighbourhood, but also are trying to find allies in other neighbourhoods which face the same problem of eviction and displacement. In this manner the people are uniting within their own community for preserving the land and the community, and at the same time are extending their unity to the other neighbourhoods.

Linking conflict and collaboration

The results of the research indicate that the example and experience of legal fight of the people of *Derbent* is one of the venues to defy the exclusion of people of informality. In other words, in the conditions like Iran and Turkey where the structures of urban management are not laid out for the participation of the residents of informal neighbourhoods and decayed urban areas, **a dialectical combination of contestation and compromise, pushing forward and retreating, advancement**

and withdrawal, disputing and negotiating, conflicting and collaborating may bear tangible outcomes. In such circumstances, it seems that the opportunities of change in urban issues in general and the urban or housing laws as well as the structure of urban management in particular in favour of comprehensive and participatory urban regeneration policy might be found through **relationships of contestation and negotiation linking collaboration and conflict** between the urban poor and the bureaucracy of the state as well as the structure of urban management.

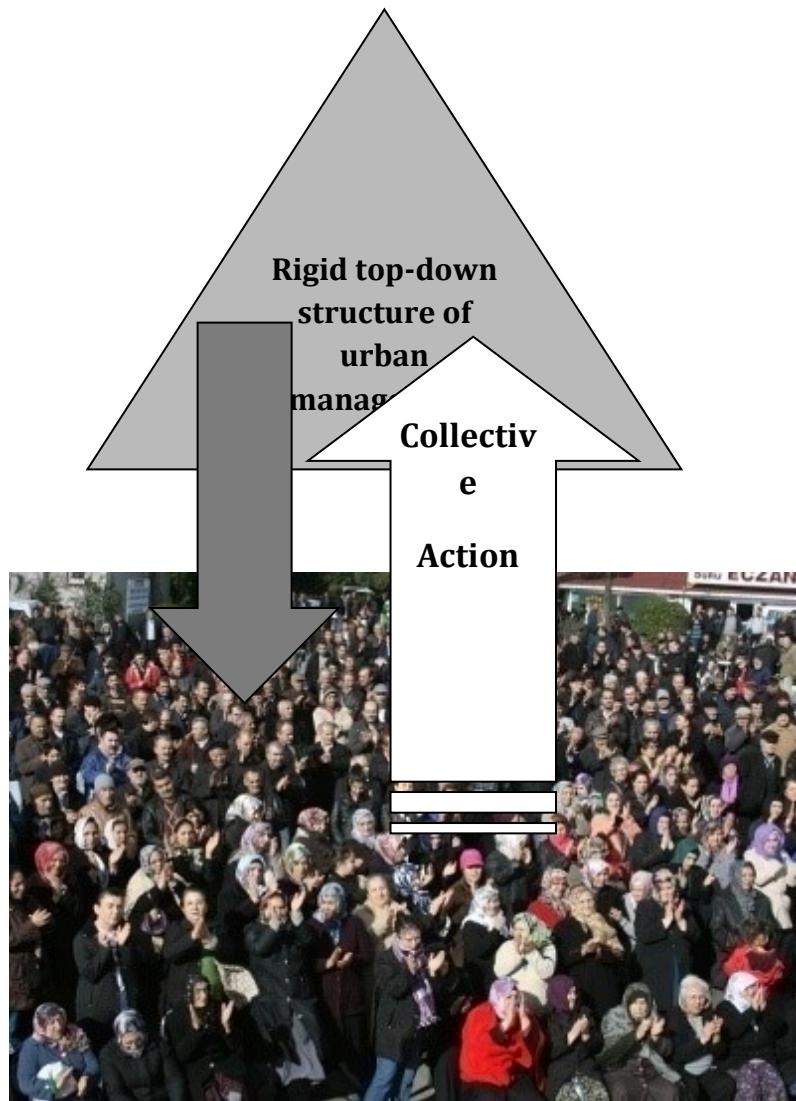


Figure 31- Collective action, a possible venue to impact the top-down structure of urban management from bottom

Source of the picture of protesting residents of *Derbent* against the assignment of their neighbourhood as 'Risked Area', (Yalcintan et al., 2014), Design of MMansoorian

5.9.2 Future perspective

The experiences of *Derbent* and *Farahzad* have valuable lessons on how to reflect the voice of the people of decayed areas into the structure of urban policy where the base foundation for involvement of the people is not established yet. As discussed earlier, these experiences reveal that in such a condition, the residents of decayed areas have to exert pressures from the bottom in order to create the basis for a mutual interaction with the structure of urban policy. When the residents of decayed areas usually and in the course of long years have been practically denied of their participation rights, even the least of these opportunities has to be made and constructed through their own attempts. Afterwards, when the attempts could bear fruits to force the structure to accept the very existence of these people namely when they could be heard by the structure of urban policy, then, the paths on how to interact with the system should be explored.

Finally, the research opens a new path in the practice of urban planning by indicating that for all of those who wish, plan or theorize and practice distinct and varied scenarios towards the change for the better in decayed areas of countries with similar conditions like Iran and Turkey, whether it is socioeconomic or physical, the right strategy to follow is investing on the inertia among the community for the cause of change. In other words, if we witness that the power of community is ineffective within a specific span of time, we constantly should bear in mind that still there is a rich pool of energy in the community which can turn into kinetic power towards a better condition for the neighbourhood namely the sustainable and participatory urban regeneration.

To conclude all, since the answer to the problem of urban decay in the researched areas is the organized and mobilized action initiating from the 'bottom' in order to exert pressures for change in the 'top' i.e. practicing a comprehensive and participatory urban regeneration policy to tackle the urban informality in general and urban decay in particular, then the research suggests that instead of doing efforts merely focusing on changing the rigid top down structure of urban policies from above in the countries like Iran and Turkey, the urban planners should look upon initiating these efforts from within the neighbourhoods and from the 'bottom'. The same initiatives which should be directed towards organizing and mobilizing the residents of urban decayed areas to finally exert pressures over the structure of urban policy to include the voice as well as the interests of residents of informal neighbourhoods into the urban plans.

5.9.3 Recommendations for further research

Firstly, the research suggests one specific lesson for urban professionals and scholars:

If this research could have one major lesson, it is altering the focal point of work and attention of urbanists from the formal structure of urban policy namely national and local governments toward the residents of low income neighborhoods. In the researched countries, the urban scholars and professionals are majorly involved in the formal structure of planning and design. They are either

employees of the governments or work within consulting engineers which are hired by the government. The planners and professionals plan and design despite the fact that after long years of work it practically bears no fruit on the ground. When looked from outside, it seems that the structure of urban policy and all those involved in it (including the urban planners) goes to one direction and the realities in the life of the people takes another course. This research suggests rectifying this problem by involving in bottom-up initiatives in the neighborhoods instead of sparing energy in the top.

Having said that, the experience of *Derbent*, Istanbul, needs special attention with regard to the influence of urban planners, activists and scholars over the lives of the residents of the informal neighborhoods. Although the research in *Derbent* mainly focused on interaction between the residents and the structure of urban policy, reading the relationships and influence of the NGO involved in the neighborhood (*Bir Umut*) needs a major attention and probably an independent study. This research can go further by surveying the connections of the people as well as the Cooperative of *Derbent* at one side and the activists and scholars working within *Bir Umut* at the other side. The further researches on such experiences can produce lessons which can be examined and proliferated in similar environments.

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Appendix A

Conducting the research

The comparison I made in my research between Tehran/ *Farahzad* and Istanbul/ *Derbent* begins with accidents of my own biography: I was born in Iran and lived almost all my life there and worked as a regeneration facilitator in *Farahzad* neighborhood for almost two years. The regeneration facilitation offices was an initiative run by a department within Tehran Municipality which accordingly was supposed to bridge between the residents of decayed areas of Tehran and other stakeholders i.e. national and local government as well as private partners to ignite regeneration process in those areas. Afterwards, life took me to Istanbul where I spent ten months doing readings on urban development and urban transformation plans in the city.

In my work in *Farahzad* I had faced with the principle question of working for regeneration in a specific environment when the people are not organized and therefore cannot be mobilized and at the same time have to deal with a system of urban policy where there seems to be no major plans in favor of the residents of poor neighborhoods. A system which apparently did not have any strategic plans to address the increasing problems of deterioration in poor neighborhoods but still could not ignore the grave impacts of the problems of these areas on ‘the rest’ of the city where the people with higher income and affluent people lived. For instance, the poor neighborhoods around the big bazaar of Tehran are less than half a kilometer away from Tehran city hall and geographically quite close to the policy makers of the city. The same neighborhoods with narrow alleys and open gutters where the drug addicts dose in broad daylight and children are left without enough food or education. Therefore, although the problem of urban decay was growing by time and was not tackled with could not be ignored or neglected.

Istanbul

As said before, the research in Istanbul was primarily based on my 10 month stay in the city in 2011-2012 and the two trips I made to the city in June and October-November 2014 (after becoming a PhD researcher) to find the case study neighborhood and finally to implement the field work.

In the first trip in June 2014, I tried to find a case study – a *gecekondu*¹ neighborhood- in which the people had succeeded to achieve ‘something’ by means of participation or civic engagement. In other words, I was seeking for a neighborhood probably under the threat of eviction in which the people had organized themselves and/or were protesting or were mobilized and had gained an achievement. What I was curious to investigate about was the ways that the people had mobilized themselves and had gained a positive outcome to resist the urban transformation plans. Beside the outcomes, I was willing to learn about the path; why they decided that they should resist, how the people had organized themselves, how things worked in the probable organization and if there were any achievements of their mobilization?

Why I was seeking for a ‘successful’ process was that the ‘negative’ cases in Istanbul in which the people were beaten by the power of the system, were evicted and dispersed to soulless apartments in peripheries of Istanbul were many. In other words, following the neo-liberalization of urban policies in Turkey and intensification of these policies after AKP² coming to power in 2001, the ‘negative’ cases in which the municipality of Istanbul had evicted the people, bulldozed their settlements and had displaced the original inhabitants were not few. In some cases, the municipality had succeeded to drag the people to the bargain tables. For instance, using the ‘divide and rule’ policy, the municipality of *Basibuyuk* in *Maltepe* district of Istanbul had succeeded to break the communal solidarity and make the residents to sell their plots (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010). Or in *Sulukule*, an 800 year old Roma neighborhood the municipality of *Fatih* district of Istanbul had demolished the historical neighborhood. These all had happened in front of the eyes of the media and tens of activists and the residents and were extensively researched, written about and discussed previously.

Selecting the case study in Istanbul

In my first trip to conduct the primary investigation and through talks with some friends, I came across an activist friend who had information about a neighborhood in *Sariyer* district of Istanbul which the people had organized themselves in a neighborhood cooperative. I was told that although there was not anything like ‘neighborhood’ cooperative in the Turkish cooperative law, the residents had established one and had sued the municipality and succeeded to dismiss the urban transformation plan for the neighborhood by the order of a court in Ankara. I learned that this mobilization had happened through the help of activists of an NGO and a group of academicians who tried to make changes in their environment by conducting such activities. The name of the

¹ Pronounced as *ge-dje-kondoo*, a term used for informal neighborhoods in Turkey literally meaning ‘landed overnight’

² The Turkish equivalent of Justice and Development Party, currently ruling the country

neighborhood was *Derbent* or as Istanbul municipality calls it officially- *Çamlıtepe Mehillesi*¹. After hearing the brief story about the neighborhood, I began to search information about the neighborhood in online publications and media. The ultimate reason to convince me that *Derbent* was the case study I was seeking for was a three year socio-economic research (Yalcintan et al., 2014) in the neighborhood conducted by the same academicians I knew. Having the experience of work in similar situation in Tehran as the other case study of my research, I knew how valuable those information could be and how helping those data were to have a preview on the neighborhood before stepping into the neighborhood and conducting the research. Therefore, I made my mind and selected *Derbent* as the case study of research in Istanbul.

Implementing the research in Istanbul

To conduct the study I decided to live in that neighborhood and do a non-participant research and collect information on how the problems had begun there, how the people had organized themselves, what they had done to fight the municipality and the eviction plans and what they had gained. I thought that settling there could speed up the research and could help me to have a direct access to the people and to the environment. I imagined I could chat with the people on a daily basis, observe their activities and learn about the neighborhood through direct contact with the environment and the people.

To do the ‘non-participant observation’ I planned to find a place in the neighborhood. Although it took long to find a place, finally and through the same activist friends I came in contact with one resident of the neighborhood and he kindly shared his decent place with me. I stayed in his small flat right in the heart of the neighborhood and began my process of direct learning about the neighborhood.

During my 40 day stay in Istanbul, I conducted 15 interviews talking with four groups of people plus one individual. The interviews were semi structured meaning that I had specific questions in mind to ask and then while interviewing I might add some more questions to grasp more information or to accurate some other information I had gained in that specific interview or other interviews. Since three of the interviewees had vast amounts of information, I held two interviews with each of them. For instance, in one interview I asked about the cooperative and the struggle the people were involved in and in the other I asked about the interviewee’s own life and his personal experience of living in the neighborhood. The groups I talked to were;

¹ Locating on the slopes of hills, the name of many of these neighborhoods in Turkey includes the word ‘tepe’ meaning ‘hill’ in Turkish (Esen, 2008).

The lay citizens, the ordinary people of the neighborhood. To do that, during the day, I walked in the neighborhood and chatted with the people, observed their lives and learned about their routines.

In one occasion I took part in the general meeting of the cooperative in which more than 130 people took part. In those meetings held almost regularly on Tuesday nights in the cooperative venue, the directing board gave report to the people on the latest circumstances.

One night I also took part in a religious congregation of Alewite people in the neighborhood (called '*Jem Evi*') to grasp an unfamiliar corner of their religious practices.

The active people of the neighborhood who were involved in the housing association or in the cooperative or in *muhtarlik*¹were another group whom I interviewed. To fulfill that, I interviewed three persons as well as talking to a focus group including six women. Two of these women were members of management of the neighborhood cooperative. I talked to the women because I was willing to hear the views and stories of women too. I could see although it was said that the women were active and usually in the forefront of the fights (sometimes actual fight with the riot police), they hardly spoke in general meetings in the neighborhood.

Four of activists in an NGO (*Bir Umut*) helping the people with their struggle since 2008. Also, in that group I conducted two interviews with two of them.

Since the cooperative was the organization that the people of the neighborhood had organized themselves in, I talked to a **university professor** who had broad knowledge about cooperatives in Turkey and the Turkish cooperative law and cooperative history in the country.

To hear the story of the 'other side' I also talked to **three of municipality people**. One was an expert of Istanbul Metropolitan Planning department and two others were the professionals of *Sarıyer* district municipality which *Derbent* was a part of it.

The gained information

The questions I made in the interviews changed from person to person. Generally speaking, through the chats with the people of *Derbent* and interviews with activists and academicians, I tried to learn about;

The history of *Derbent*; when the first group arrived and settled? What were their jobs? How things evolved in *Derbent* through the years? When was the first time the people learned they were

¹*Muhtarlik* is the lowest rank of the local government in Turkey and is of the bodies running the neighborhoods. *Muhtar* (the headman) is elected in the election.

'illegal'? How and when the threat of demolition and evictions was heard? What happened afterwards?

How the people organized themselves? How the housing association and later on the cooperative were established?

The threats and the confrontations with the police. The fight with the rich cooperative which had made problems for the people in recent years;

And in interviews with the municipality people, I tried to learn how the system of urban planning in Turkey and specifically in Istanbul worked and where and how –if any- the 'voice' of the people was heard.

For accessing the people of *Derbent*, I did not have any major problems because I had reached them through the activists whom the people trusted. Just once at the very beginning of my stay in the neighborhood and when the people still did not know me, I faced a minor problem. That day I took out my camera to take pictures of a half-built building to show that the neighborhood still was going through physical alternations. Some people curiously came to me and asked what I was doing there and why I was taking pictures. I introduced myself and the job I was doing and mentioned the names of the friends whom they knew. Immediately things changed and the story ended with smiles and hand shaking. To avoid any possible problems onward, the first thing I did right after that encounter, was asking the *Muhtar* to introduce me to the people. Therefore, at the first opportunity during the weekly cooperative gathering, the *Muhtar* introduced me to the people and gave a short talk about me and my work. He asked everybody to help me to do my research, and 'to show how hospitable the people of *Derbent* were'.

With the municipality people I faced some minor complications. Since I tried to avoid any possible skepticism and allergy, I did my best not use terms like 'urban transformation', 'eviction', '*gecekondu*' and so on. Given that my work was exactly about those specific issues, it was difficult to manage the process of the interview; how to talk about something that I should not talk about! Later on, I learned that it was just my prejudice predicting the problem. Actually, the people in municipality at the level that I met were quite familiar with these terms and did not have any problems facing the questions about those issues.

As anticipated, living in the neighborhood speeded up the information collection because all during the days and at home, I could ask questions from the people outside as well as my house-mate who was a valuable source of information on many issues there. For instance, almost all the people whom I talked to were telling me proudly that their life was peaceful and how they liked it. As the result, they were not willing to see that life broken. They did not like to move out from their place and go somewhere else. According to them, one of the advantages of their life was the peace and the

safety in the neighborhood. I as a female researcher at very early stage of the research felt that safety too. I could walk on the street late at night without any problems. But to add to my personal experience, I also took notice of what the people were telling me. They told me how everybody knew everybody else and how the possible intruders could be recognized easily. In addition, during my stay in the neighborhood I could see the people were sitting in front of their places talking. I could see men and women chatting on their way on the street and children regularly playing on the street. Almost in front of every house there were ropes which the house resident or the neighbors dried their clothes on. I did the same when I washed my clothes and nobody touched them.

I could see that the people felt comfortable to use the street and public space as the extension of their houses and inner space. For example, the weddings which seemingly were a kind of usual weekend ceremonies also were held on the street. In front of the place of groom or bride or on an empty lot nearby, the people put their chairs and tables, fruits and cookies on them and lit the place with colorful lamps. Dancing and music was performed in a corner of the same place which had turned to a temporary dance stage. People danced individually or in groups with folk tunes. It vividly showed that everybody had seen and held ceremonies like that always on the street.

Complications and limitations of research in Istanbul

The major complication in the research was my language skill. Since my Turkish was not fluent then, I always preferred to take a friend with me to give helps when I did not understand a proverb, a saying or a word or a specific dialect. One of these friends knew good English and the other one had a minor knowledge of English. When work went further, I learned that even a person with no knowledge of English could help because he/she could simplify the spoken Turkish and give explanation in Turkish to me to understand a specific term or idiom. Since my research in *Derbent* was about the general history of settlement and the struggle of the people, I could collect the information and the data I needed. But still, I believe if I was seeking more deep and detailed information, lack of fluency in the language might make problems.

Another issue that I was careful to consider was the richness of the neighborhood in terms of history and life stories. I learned that the richness could act as a diverting force drowning me in topics which should not have been my main concern because they were not directly related to my research topic. For instance, in *Derbent* the inhabitants had migrated from Anatolia decades before to that patch of land close to forest area in the north of Istanbul. They had begun with agricultural work and gardening and then working at the industrial sites and shipyards nearby. The first generation was absolutely Marxian proletariat. These people had no infrastructure when they arrived. For many years they lived in the same condition, trying at the same time to build a life for themselves, their families and their kids. Some involved in union activities. Some were engaged in political activities. When in September 1982, the coup d'etat took place in Turkey; these people had

experienced torture, detentions and suppressions. After 1980s, they had been attacked by neo-liberal policies of the government. The threat of eviction and demolition and losing their life they had built over the years through toiling and sweats had been suspended over their necks since then. In 2000s, things got worse; the threat became more imminent. The people had lived in fear for many years and that had made them feeling tired and fatigued. I knew all these stories were really interesting to follow. In other words, the neighborhood was a boiling source of information on diverse topics and it made me excited. But at the same time I knew my research had specific topics to follow and I had time limitations to subordinate. Sometimes it was really difficult not to slide into other territories in which I was not supposed to write my thesis about.

The other concern I had was the issue of ‘tourism of misery’, a phenomenon recently being observed in some parts of working class neighborhoods in Istanbul. As Duke puts the trend, ‘it refers to the ways people from wealthy, usually western nations “tour” the “developing” or “underdeveloped” world in order to “learn” something’ (Duke, 2012). I was neither a ‘wealthy westerner’ nor a ‘white’ observer. Also, the people in *Derbent* in no way could be seen or called ‘miser’ and the terms alike did not match their status in any way. But despite these realities the fear I always carried with me during the research was that I might stir unpleasant feelings as such in them; feelings of being watched by strangers or their privacies being invaded or intruded by outsider visitors. An activist friend of mine working in the neighborhood for a couple of years and collecting information for the research project mentioned above, put these feelings in this sentence: “The people rightfully ask what is the benefit of these researches conducted and these questionnaires filled out for them?”

Tehran

The entire idea of this research has roots in my work background as a facilitator of urban regeneration in a working class neighborhood of Tehran. The idea of participatory urban regeneration and involving the people in the process of regeneration of urban deteriorated areas is a new paradigm in Iran and dates back to 200?? The first of the attempts of this new paradigm was establishing offices of facilitation in the target neighborhoods. *Farahzad*, a neighborhood in district No 2 of Tehran was one of them and was the neighborhood that I worked in between 2010 and 2011.

Since there was no experience of participatory work by the Municipality before this initiative, being of the first groupers of such a job was complicated. That is why my colleagues and I faced sizable amounts of questions to answer to which a few of them were;

How to convince the people to trust us? In other words, how to overcome the skepticism of the people toward Municipality and us (whom they thought were employees of Municipality)? How to

solve the tenure problem? Who are the land owners in *Farahzad*? How to identify truth from lies? How we can take measures to urge the people to take even small steps?

Just like Istanbul, to select a case study in Tehran, I tried to find a neighborhood in which the people had achieved some extent of success and had taken steps forward for regeneration. After doing some investigation, I selected a neighborhood in the city center in south of Tehran to work on.

During the past five years and out of my own personal interest, I have been reading extensively about Tehran deteriorated areas. I had read books, articles and had followed the news and views regarding the issue. Thus, even before selecting a specific neighborhood as the case study of my work, I was quite aware of the course of developments in Iran with regard to degenerated areas and urban policies.

Later, when I went to Istanbul and worked in *Derbent*, I changed my mind and got back to *Farahzad* again. Similar to *Derbent*, the people in *Farahzad* had organized themselves in a cooperative. In other words, in both neighborhoods the people had practically selected means of organization which was formal and was recognized by the system. Compared with *Farahzad* in which the idea of cooperation was practically limited to a women's cooperative producing handicrafts, the cooperative in *Derbent* was a neighborhood cooperative and was something totally new in the system of cooperatives in Turkey.

Besides, in each of the neighborhoods an extensive survey on the socio economic situation of the neighborhoods had been conducted by others which eased my research. The three year survey in Istanbul had been conducted by the budget of Turkish government and was conducted by academicians. In Tehran, it was conducted by the same team I was a member of. Thus, in both cases I had not to begin from point zero.

In other words, I took my research in *Farahzad* as the continuation of my work in the neighborhood. During my work in *Farahzad* in 2010-2011, I had spent the entire work days in the neighborhood, had interviewed the dignitaries, had made contacts with active people in the neighborhood and had done long hours of work in there. Also, I had made several observations by walking in the neighborhood and gained a reading through the circumstances and the life of the neighborhood.

Therefore, my research in July 2015 was basically the second phase of my research in *Farahzad*. The people who were interviewed included **three of officials of Renovation Organization**. One of these people was the first head of Organization in the new stage of life of it in 2000s who had publications and reliable knowledge about participatory work in working class neighborhoods of Tehran. The other official used to be one of the managers of the Organization who was involved in

all activities of the Organization since mid 2000s and was directly working with facilitation offices. And the third official was one who still is working in Renovation Organization and currently is of the leading figures directing the renewal offices.

In the neighborhood, an interview was conducted by **two members of the renewal office** which has been working in *Farahzad* since last year up to now. Another interview was done with **one of the prominent dignitaries in the neighborhood**. This lady who is head of a religious charity has been working in *Farahzad* for more than three decades and is a keen observant for the circumstances in the neighborhood. She not only has been a knowledgeable person about almost everything in the neighborhood, but also has been an influencing figure in *Farahzad*. The third person interviewed was **one of the women working in the charity**. To gain more information, I also made a telephone conversation with **the head of the renewal office** again in which I asked her more detailed questions on the subjects.

In the interviews conducted, the information I had collected before were updated. Besides the general views on urban regeneration history and the experience of participatory initiatives in Municipality of Tehran in general and in Renovation Organization in particular, I gained knowledge about the current situation and how things had evolved in comparison with 2009 at the outset of those initiatives.

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